



Legend of the Five Rings™

Second Edition

G A M E M A S T E R ' S G U I D E





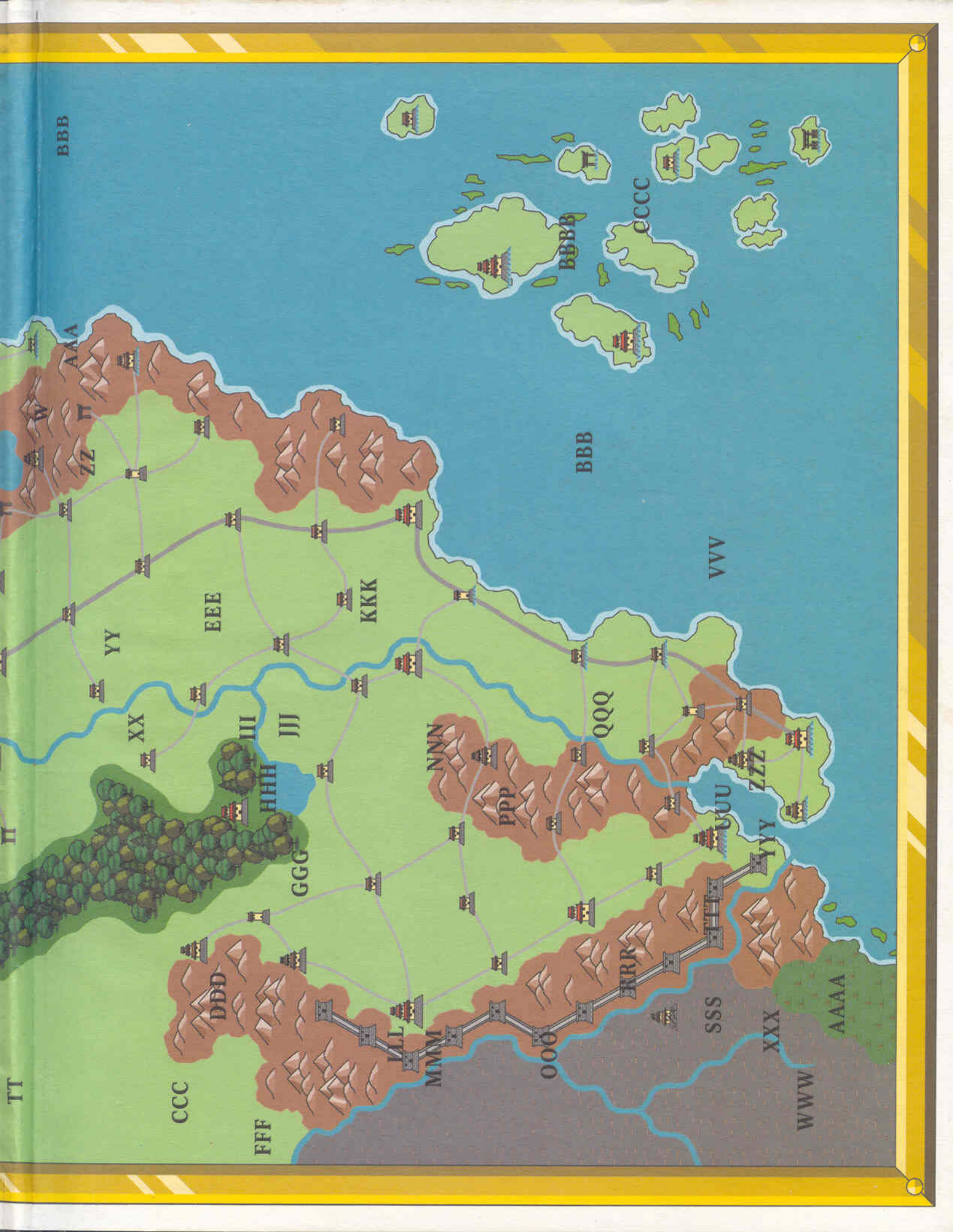


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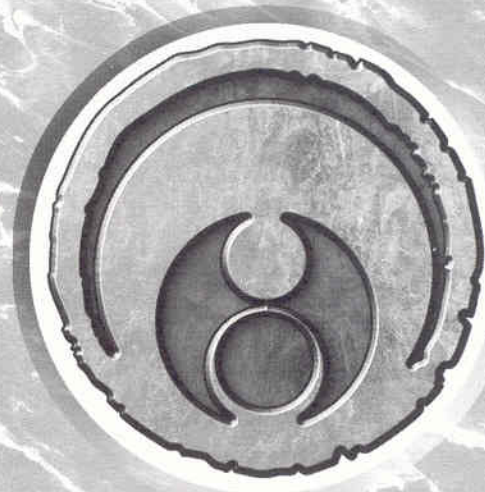
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Chapter One:

Void



“Hiruma’s Breath”

Eikihiro crouched in the blackened grass, waiting. For the last thirty minutes he’d been watching her, trying to divine the purpose of her presence, trying to guess her intentions.

She was young and slight, hardly past her gempukku. She had an elegant cast to her features. Her eyebrows were arched, her lips full, her eyes quick and dark. Her haughty bearing declared her a Kuni Shugenja as much as her red velvet robe. Eikihiro knew the faces of everyone who lived in Shiro no Ono, however, and she was a stranger to him. She seemed somehow familiar, but still a stranger.

If she was a visitor, why had she not come directly to the castle? Why was she sitting here on the edge of the Shadowlands? For a half hour, Eikihiro had been quietly approaching, waiting, observing. She had not moved from the spot. Perhaps soon he would find out what was going on.

A light chant drifted across the air to him, the high, trilling sound of the girl’s voice. At first he thought she must be casting a spell. Then he realized she was simply singing. A lullaby, perhaps? A song without meaning? No. Eikihiro recognized it now. It was a Crab funeral dirge, a grim and mournful thing. He knew the song well, but had not heard it since his father’s own burial.

Eikihiro moved closer. Like all scouts of the Hiruma, he had forsaken the usual heavy armament of a Crab samurai in favor of swift and quiet movement in the fatal wilds of the Shadowlands. Today the young samurai wore only his breastplate, shin guards, leg greaves, an armored sleeve on his left forearm, and a pair of tough leather breeches. A simple headband protected his scalp from the sun and kept the sweat from his eyes. The only equipment he carried was a knife on his belt, a katana strapped across his back, and a small bag of rations on his hip.

He was ten feet away from her now. A simple lunge and he would be close enough... For a moment, her regal mask crumbled and her quick eyes cast about nervously. She was afraid.

“Get down!” Eikihiro shouted, leaping from cover and drawing the blade. He swung downward in a savage arc, the steel slicing the air and finding its mark where the girl had been sitting a moment earlier.

She fell to the ground, turning as she did so and spitting out several words in the harsh chant of the Kuni. Eikihiro felt his muscles stiffen, the sword dropped from his hands, and he crumpled to his knees.

“A Hiruma scout,” she said, standing and brushing off her velvet robes, “Just what did you think you were doing, sneaking up on me like that?”

“You weren’t paying attention,” Eikihiro said simply, nodding weakly toward the rock where she had been sitting.

The head of an enormous yellow snake lay on the earth, severed from its body by Eikihiro’s katana.

“Thunders!” the girl hissed, “I thought my wards would keep away the creatures in this foul place.”

“There are more dangers in this land than the Dark One’s Taint,” Eikihiro said, trying to gather the strength to lift his katana. “I suppose it would be too much to ask for you to cancel your spell?”

“Oh,” she said, making a swift gesture. Eikihiro’s strength returned instantly, and he sheathed his katana in a single movement. “My apologies,” she said, bowing slightly.



"What is your name?" he asked, folding his arms and glancing her over with cold blue eyes. The color was an oddity in Rokugan; they were his father's eyes. He saw she carried no food, no rations, no weapons.

"I am Hiruma Sumiko," she said, smiling and bowing slightly again, "a shugenja from the village of Kashinto Mura."

"Kashinto?" Eikihiro asked, tilting his head slightly. "I have not heard of such a place, and I know every village within three days' journey. What are you doing so far from home, and what is a Hiruma doing in the robes of a Kuni?"

"My home was destroyed," she said, a slight flutter in her clear voice, "by Oni no Zenkai, a beast the likes of which even my revered sensei had never seen. It razed the village to the ground with its fiery breath in a single day. Then it lurched off into the wastes again, clutching a priceless scroll from our libraries. I was the only one left alive. As for my robes, I was a Kuni by birth. I am a Hiruma by marriage."

"That still doesn't explain what you're doing here," Eikihiro said, unmoved by her story. Though he was a young samurai, he believed he had hardened his heart to the horrors of the Shadowlands.

"I was sent by Osuno, my daimyo," she said softly. "He allowed me one question, to which he advised me to wait here. He said that the one who could assist me would come. I have waited long for you, Hiruma Eikihiro."

He hadn't told her his name, but Eikihiro was hardly surprised. The Kuni were experts at knowing what they shouldn't. He hardly doubted for a moment that she had used magic to read his mind and make her story sound more credible.

"Do you have any jade?" Eikihiro asked speculatively.

"No," she replied.

"Then we have to get you out of here. Come with me," Eikihiro said, "We're returning to Shiro no Ono. I am staying there currently." No one in the Hiruma family had a true home, and Eikihiro especially so. Still, Hida Saburo and the samurai of the Castle of the Axe had welcomed the young orphan with open arms.

"But..." Sumiko replied. "You are to help me. It is your destiny."

"Listen, Sumiko," Eikihiro said, turning with a dangerous glint in his eye, "you're in the middle of the Shadowlands with no jade, and for some reason you can not see the problem with that. I doubt any Kuni could be so foolish, so you must be falling prey to dementia. The best thing I could do for you now is to get you out of here. The last problem I need is an undead Kuni shugenja to deal with. Now are you going to follow me, or do I have to consider you a threat?" Eikihiro closed his hands into fists, cracking the knuckles.

"I will come with you," Sumiko said with a sigh, "but you will help me eventually. You have no choice."

"We shall see," Eikihiro said, keeping a wary eye on her. "Why don't you lead? The castle is that way." The young samurai pointed off to the east, his manner clearly indicating that the subject was not open to discussion.

Sumiko nodded and walked briskly past the samurai, her arms folded in the sleeves of her long robe. He watched her as she walked, careful for any other symptoms that the girl might be anything other than what she claimed to be. It was certain that something didn't seem quite right about her, but if she had truly been a monster she could have killed him when he was at the mercy of her spell. Perhaps she was simply mad. He would have to wait and see.

Two hours later, Shiro no Ono appeared on the horizon. Eikihiro's heart leapt in his chest. Though he performed a necessary role, he hated his lonely scouting missions in the desolate Shadowlands. He was happy to be home once more. The scent of smoke wafted to him on the air.

"Hiruma," Sumiko said, halting suddenly as she stared at the castle.

"Yes," the samurai said gravely, "I see it too."

Shiro no Ono was in flames. A large part of the jade-studded iron gates hung askew. The bodies of samurai, ashigaru, and simple peasants lay strewn everywhere, torn apart.

"Oni no Zenkai," Sumiko said, her eyes watering from the smoke or from the memory. "My village was very much the same. There was only one survivor. I hope we are not too late."

Eikihiro was angry, afraid, and confused. For a moment, the tide of emotion nearly consumed him. He remembered his training, focused his emotion, and pushed it all away into a small corner of his mind. There would be time enough for tears later. A Hiruma did not surrender to weakness. He drew his katana and moved quickly, quietly, into the castle.

He paused, crouched behind a pile of rubble, but nothing stirred within the castle. The corpses of Eikihiro's friends and kinsmen lay scattered about like dolls in a child's playroom. Flames lapped at the walls of the small shrine to Osano-wo, and had begun to spread to the castle keep. The tracks of a giant, hooved beast left their mark in the stone, headed directly toward the castle. Eikihiro noted that no matching set of tracks emerged.

"It is still here," Sumiko whispered, appearing at his side. "You must flee, Eikihiro."

"I'm no coward," he said gruffly.

"You cannot fight this thing with the weapons you carry," she said, gesturing at the courtyard full of corpses. "Look at them. Did their bravery help them? Did their perseverance save them? No. Run, Eikihiro. We must warn others of this beast, find the way to destroy it, and then, only then, may we return."



"Perhaps," the samurai said reluctantly, "but first I must explore the castle, and see if any of the others yet live. Wait here."

Eikihiro moved soundlessly across the courtyard, jogging toward the garrison with one hand on the hilt of his katana. The door hung wide, and smoke drifted from within. He could see movement somewhere, deep inside. Eikihiro darted through the door and melded with the shadows.

A large figure with a long grey beard sat propped up against one wall, clutching one hand to his chest. Dark red blood stained his bright red armor. He glanced up as Eikihiro's shadow passed the door frame, his eyes widening.

"Who's there?" he snarled, waving a wakizashi in his free hand from where he sat. "Demon of Jigoku! You shall not find Hida Saburo to be one who surrenders his life easily!"

"Calm yourself, Saburo-sama," Eikihiro said, emerging from the shadows and kneeling near the old man. "It is I, Eikihiro."

"Ah," Saburo said, relaxing slightly but not dropping the sword. "Ah, yes. The scout. You're a lucky boy, you are, to have missed this battle." The old samurai groaned, wincing as he adjusted his hand upon the large wound in his side.

"It is not over yet," Eikihiro said. "The oni is still within the castle."

"It has come searching," Sumiko said. "As it searched for Mokuna's scroll in my own village."

Eikihiro whirled on the shugenja, surprised at her sudden appearance. "How did you—" he stuttered. He had not even detected her arrival, and he prided himself on his keen senses.

"Who is this?" Saburo asked suspiciously.

"Hiruma Sumiko," Eikihiro said, watching her carefully, "from the village of Kashinto Mura. I met her while I was on patrol."

"A Hiruma shugenja?" Saburo inquired. "How curious."

"Hold still, old one," Sumiko said, kneeling beside Saburo as she drew a scroll from her pouch. "The wound is deep but it does not appear fatal. My magic can relieve some of the pain."

"No," Saburo said tersely, "Leave me with my pain. I've never had much use for magic."

"As... as you wish," Sumiko replied, hurt. She placed her scroll back in its pouch.

"Where did you say you were from again, girl?" Saburo asked, looking at Sumiko skeptically.

"Never mind that," Eikihiro interrupted. "What could the oni be after?"

"The girl mentioned Kuni Mokuna's scroll!" Saburo said suddenly. "Yojiro found a strange scroll while he was on patrol the other day. Even I had only been able to read fragments. We were waiting for the Kuni to dispatch a capable scholar. We had suspected it may be one of Mokuna's scrolls. This seems to settle the matter."

"The scroll in our village held secret of the beast's undoing," Sumiko agreed quickly, "That is why he took it from us. History repeats itself."

"Destiny is an unoriginal bastard," Saburo agreed.

"Where is this scroll?" Eikihiro asked tersely.

"In the shrine, hidden under the floorboards before Osano-wo's visage," Saburo said. "But it will do you no good. You will not be able to read it..."

Eikihiro was already out the door. Saburo turned to the young shugenja girl, but she had vanished, too.

The flames in the shrine had spread, covering the doorway in a deadly haze. Eikihiro stopped long enough to dampen his headband in the courtyard's well and tie it across his mouth. He lunged forth and shouldered the heavy doors open, charging into the shrine. The looming marble statue of Osano-wo towered above the flames, defying them with his divine presence. Eikihiro ducked and dodged through the burning timbers and falling debris. His breath choked; his eyes watered. He knew if he stumbled once, the fire would take him.

He skidded to a halt before the statue. Kicking aside the smoldering mat that lay before the Fortune's statue, he saw the trapdoor. As he drew it open he prayed that the scroll had not burned.

Suddenly, Sumiko was at his side again. "We are in luck," she shouted above the roar of the flames. "It is intact."

Eikihiro gingerly lifted the ancient scroll, clutching it to his chest. The two of them turned and ran from the shrine, narrowly escaping into the courtyard beyond as the shrine collapsed in upon itself.

"How do you keep doing that?" Eikihiro asked her with suspicion. "How do you keep sneaking up on me?"

"I told you, Hiruma," she said, "we are linked by destiny. Now give me the scroll." She reached out with one hand, her dark eyes pleading.

"This is too convenient," Eikihiro said, keeping his blade between the scroll and the shugenja. "How do I know you're not in league with this monster? How do I know that you are not the monster yourself?"

"The very idea!" Sumiko spat. She began to gesture and chant. Eikihiro was too quick this time, and clubbed the side of her head with his fist. She fell to the earth and he ran back to the garrison.

"Saburo!" Eikihiro shouted, bursting into the garrison once more, "I have the scroll!"

"Give it to me!" the old samurai said, reaching out eagerly. "Before that wretched girl returns!" He hardly seemed to notice his own wound. Eikihiro quickly complied, handing the aged parchment to his master. Saburo unfurled the scroll and glanced over its contents.



"What does it say?" Eikihiro asked.

"Ah, here we are," Saburo said, "Zenkai, the oni of destruction, the fire breather. Neither jade nor crystal nor steel shall harm him. His black heart will only be pierced by the blood of its victim, wielded by its own without hesitation." Saburo's shaggy brows furrowed. "Do you have any clue what that could mean, Eikihiro?"

"No, Saburo-sama," the young samurai admitted, "I do not."

"Good," Saburo replied, knocking Eikihiro across the room with a wicked backhand swipe. Eikihiro rolled with the blow at the last moment and kept his head, but his body absorbed the punishment as he crushed a writing desk against the wall.

"Saburo!" Eikihiro croaked, feeling about on the floor for his sword.

"Young fool, Saburo is dead," the old samurai said, rising to his feet. His eyes glinted with a deadly red light, and his teeth shone white in a smile. "I am Oni no Zenkai, and you have sealed your own fate. Now surrender your soul to the void, and I may be merciful yet." He crumpled the ancient scroll in one hand, tossing it aside.

"A Hiruma never surrenders," Eikihiro said through bloody teeth, rising with his katana in his hand.

"So be it then," Saburo said. He grinned wider, and a crack split across his face and down his throat. Hida Saburo's head fell away in two pieces. Zenkai's true face was a grinning boar's skull; flames rose from its empty eye sockets as foul laughter rose from its throat.

"Not this day, Zenkai," Hiruma Sumiko said from the doorway, the evening light framing her small body as a sudden wind tore at her robes. "Your victory shall not be so easy."

"The girl?" the oni chuckled. "I see your death in your eyes."

"More than you know," she said. "Do what you must, Eikihiro." The two Hiruma charged toward the oni.

Eikihiro smiled, briefly, and at last he understood.

Zenkai laughed, gathering wind in his lungs to spit forth flame. Eikihiro swung fiercely with his katana, changing direction in mid-stroke to strike Sumiko's head from her body. The girl crumpled to the ground, dead. Oni no Zenkai hesitated, stunned. Eikihiro's blade plunged into the monster's chest. The blade bit deep into Saburo's stolen body and it crumpled against the wall once more. Purple smoke trickled from the deep wound Eikihiro had inflicted, and cracks spread through his skull.

"But how—" the oni choked.

Eikihiro swung the bloody katana once more, severing the oni's head. He stared in horror and shock at Hida Saburo's mutilated body and the shugenja he had slain.

"Mother," he said, as Sumiko's corpse faded into smoke. He turned and left the garrison. In the courtyard, several more figures stood, the tattered survivors of Zenkai's attack. One, however, was a new arrival.

"So you see now?" said the man. He was a tall, muscular figure whose skin swirled with patterns of white marble and green jade. The moon's light reflected sharply upon his shaven head and craggy face.

"Osuno-sama," Eikihiro said. The assembled survivors of Shiro no Ono kneeled before Hiruma Osuno.

"You have solved the riddle and righted the wrong, Eikihiro," he said, his voice deep. "Zenkai created the tool of his own destruction. Twenty years ago, the beast took Mokuna's scroll and hid it away so none might know his weakness, slaying your mother and leveling your village. You were the only survivor. When the scroll was found once more, your mother returned to right the wrongs done against her, a ghost. Some would call her a shadow samurai. It took you long enough to unravel the mystery, but in the end you did and that is all that matters."

"Why didn't she tell me?" Eikihiro said, rising.

"Would you have believed her? And if you did and were given more than a moment to consider the act, could you have struck down your own mother?"

Eikihiro was silent, letting the question hang in the air.

"So it's over?" Eikihiro said at last, sheathing his katana across his back once more.

"For the time being, the battle is won," Osuno said sadly, "but for the Hiruma, nothing is never over."

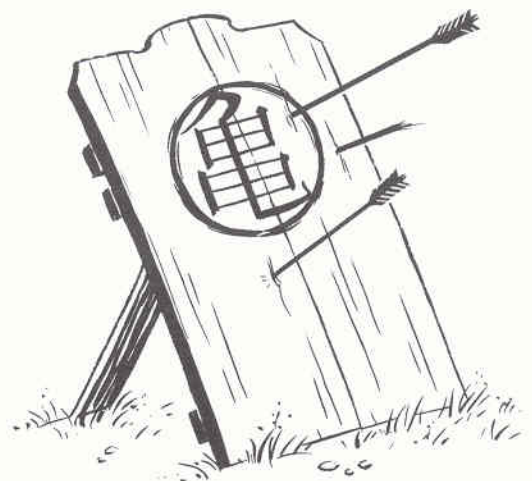
Eikihiro nodded and bowed. "And my father," he asked the Oracle, "was he killed by Oni no Zenkai as well?"

"No," Osuno said, "your father was not in Kashinto Mura."

"What was his fate?" Eikihiro asked eagerly.

Osuno smirked, showing the first trace of emotion that the young samurai had seen. "Why, Hiruma Eikihiro," he said, "you are only allowed to ask one question."

And Osuno was gone.





Mythic + History

Many times, Ikoma historians, Asako librarians, and other authorities have written the 'history of Rokugan,' and always, they have been proven inaccurate. On some occasions their accounts are clearly representational, while others may never have occurred at all. Certainly, there is little which remains to mark the site of many great battles spoken of in our folklore and history. Thus, it is with a poor historian's pen that I write this small text of our Empire's past for the Winter Court of the Seppun, hoping that its inconsistencies and inaccuracies may be overlooked in respect to the greater truths.

Wherefore I set my hand,

Ikoma Kaoku,

This twenty-first year of the reign of Hantei XXXVIII, IC 1123

The Ancient Time

First, there was nothing.

Then, from the nothing, came the time of the Three Gods Whose Names Cannot Be Spoken. The Sun Goddess Amaterasu and the Moon God Onnotangu were born from the thoughts of the Nothing and its servants, and they walked upon the world in peace. While they were yet young, they did not wish children, and so they chose to remain apart from the beasts of the world – the snakes, the rats, and the animals.

This was the Age of the Ancients, the time of the legendary Naga. This was the face of the beginning – said in myth to be the time when the Sun and Moon named all things upon the world and caused them to grow. Man was not yet alive, the children of the Sun and Moon had yet to be born, and the Celestial Heavens were one with the mortal world.

In time, Lady Sun bore Lord Moon nine children. As the nine Kami – Hida, Doji, Togashi, Akodo, Shiba, Bayushi, Shinjo, Fu Leng, and Hantei – came forth from their mother, Father Moon looked upon their faces. He thought to himself that he did not wish to share Lady Sun's love with any others, and thus, he sought to destroy his children by eating them. All of the children were swallowed by the Moon God, save for the youngest, Hantei. Hidden in a cave and fed by the animals of the earth, Hantei grew to manhood and faced his father in combat to free his mother's love. As he cut open his father's belly, the other children fell from the sky, landing upon the mortal earth among Lord Moon's blood and Lady Sun's tears. From this immortal blood and divine tears, mankind was born.

The Age of Myth

"In the Time of Shinsei, the land was quiet. The Clans were united, and the Darkness driven back. Ah, that those heroic times of war and salvation could come to us once more..."

– Akodo Kage

Humans banded together into primitive tribes, roaming the land, seeking escape from their troubles. Formed from the blood of the Moon and the Tears of the Sun, they waited for the Kami to come from the sky and lead them into civilization. This was the time of the Tribe of Isawa, the Oni known as 'Naga,' and all manner of beasts and evils. The people practiced *maho*, the dark way, and knew nothing of the Celestial Heavens. Then the Kami fell, and organized the primitive people into seven Great Clans. The land was enlightened and all manner of evil receded and withered. Under the guidance of the Kami, the first roads, palaces and temples were built. The Emperor Hantei I ruled from his sister's palace as the great city of Otosan Uchi was built. A stranger, using a thin blade, arrived from the mountains, and called himself 'Kakita.' He became the first Emerald Champion, proving that mortal man was capable of honor and duty, and married Lady Doji.

During this time, the two famous treatises of the sword were written: *Niten* by Mirumoto, and *The Sword* by Kakita. The people of the Seven Clans prospered and grew, spreading out over the Emerald Empire. Then, in the midst of their joy, tragedy and terror rose. The first attack by Fu Leng's hordes unleashed the Shadowlands upon human lands. Unable to understand their brother's hatred, the Kami declared war. For the first time in man's remembrance, all the powers of mortal man were called together, but despite the aid of the Kami, the humans began to lose.

Then, from the west, over the mountains from a strange land, a small man who called himself 'Shinsei' arrived at Otosan Uchi. The word means 'New Way,' and he was allowed to speak to the Emperor.



Shinsei, our immortal monk, the keeper of all secrets, impressed Hantei with his wisdom, and proposed a way to defeat Fu Leng. Shiba's record of Shinsei's words, filled with wisdom and the five keys to enlightenment, became the Tao of Shinsei.

Shortly thereafter, Shinsei took seven mortal followers, one from each clan, and journeyed into the Shadowlands. These seven samurai – Hida Atarasi, Doji Konishiko, Lady Matsu, Lady Otaku, Lord Isawa, Lord Mirumoto and Lady Shosuro – were the Seven Thunders of legend and myth, and by their hands was evil defeated. The last of Fu Leng's followers were forever banished to the far south, and the Crab, under the strength and dedication of Hida, swore to always guard Rokugan from the Shadowlands. Soon after, the Unicorn left for their journeys, following Shinjo.

The Thousand Years of Peace

There are two systems of dating the year in Rokugan. First is the Emperor's Right, referring to the time that the current Hantei has reigned: e.g. 'The fourteenth year of the reign of Hantei XIX'. This causes some difficulty when a Hantei dies, when suddenly the name of the year changes to the 'first year of the reign of Hantei XX'. Because these dates refer to the year in which the Hantei is crowned, not born, things become more confused. Also, the years are referred to, in the same order as the months, by the titles of the animals which favor them, such as: 'the second year of the Rat, in the reign of Hantei XIV'. Finally, with one mistake (remove 'of the Rat' from the above example, for instance) an entire historical scroll is ruined and the dates become incomprehensible.

A second, less common, way of referring to the year is Isawa's Calendar, which dates events since the founding of the city of Gisei Toshi. Of course, that city is purely mythical, but the Isawa have maintained the date for consistency's sake. The dates in the following section refer to the Isawa calendar, in the hopes that the Unicorn among the Emperor's court will be able to more accurately learn the history of this great Empire.

All dates have been taken from the scrolls in the Ikoma libraries, and are represented as closely as possible to their probable actual occurrences. However, as with all myths and legends, many of them no doubt never actually occurred at all, but rather are apocryphal in origin. Many obviously true events (such as the founding of the Hare clan) are not included at this time, due to insufficient proof of the accurate date, or dispute as to the origin of the information.



The following timeline was compiled by two very promising students at the Ikoma school, Ikoma Hikaze and Kuni Mon. It is a modern assessment of the historical events depicted, arranged according to the best information presently available. Although it no doubt contains some minor inaccuracies, this timeline is currently the basis of study for numerous historians across the Empire. It is likely to remain so for the rest of this generation.

It should be noted that, in return for their hard work, Ikoma Hikaze was granted a permanent position within the Ikoma library, and Kuni Mon was apprenticed directly to his daimyo, Kuni Yori – both received great honor for their work.

– Notes, Ikoma Kaoku, IC 1125

Rokugani History

First Century (1–100 IC)

Fall of the Kami: Established pre-calendar

It should be noted that this is an event to which no date can effectively be given. The fall of the Kami marks the beginning of time, and the separation of the Celestial Heavens from the world of Hantei and his siblings. It is obviously before the Day of Thunder, but whether it is the same year as the formation of Isawa's City (the lost Gisei Toshi) is debated by scholars.

The contradiction occurs when comparing ancient Phoenix scrolls. Many of the scrolls held by the Asako say that Isawa took his people north to build his own city just after the Kami fell. This account leads the reader to believe that the primitive tribes only existed for a short time before the arrival of the Kami, and that time began at the moment when the Kami first began their fall. However, documents controlled by the Seppun mention that the tribe of Isawa forms, then major events happen, and then the Kami arrive, indicating a much larger time lapse between the formation of the primitive tribes and the arrival of the Kami.



Basing our theories on the scrolls of the Seppun (closer to the Emperor's hand, and therefore obviously more accurate), we place the formation of the primitive tribes of Rokugan before the Kami's fall, and state confidently that time began on the moment when the Sun Mother and Lord Moon first conceived their children.

Early Events

Lost Gisei Toshi, the ancient (and long ago lost) Phoenix Clan city was established in the calendar year '1', immediately after the fall of the Kami. This city, now destroyed and its true location forgotten, remains the earliest sign of 'cultured' human habitation after the beginning of time.

The Day of Thunder: circa year 44.

The Day of Thunder, one of the greatest legendary events in Rokugani history, suffers constant disputation over its actual time of origin. During this great event, the prophet Shinsei gathered one mortal from each of the Seven Great Clans, and took them into the Shadowlands to defeat the fallen god Fu Leng. All of the Thunders died there, save one, who brought back the Black Scrolls. That Thunder, Shosuro of the Scorpion, died almost immediately thereafter.

Various Dragon texts mention that the death of Mirumoto (the Dragon Thunder) occurred in the 42nd year of the Empire. However, Scorpion scrolls mention that Bayushi died in the year 76, allegedly 30 years after the Thunders entered the Shadowlands.

In either case, the Day of Thunder can be accurately placed between the years 42 and 46 of Isawa's Calendar.

Birth of Hida Osano-Wo: circa year 48.

This date, too, is assumed but must have occurred shortly after the loss of the kami Hida's first son, Atarasi. Crab stories indicate repeatedly that Hida meets the Thunder Dragon three years after the Thunders defeat Fu Leng, and one year later she returns with his child: Osano-Wo. This would place Osano-Wo's birth four years after the First Day of Thunder.

Fox and Mantis Clans founded: circa year 80.

About four decades passed after the Day of Thunder before the founding of the Mantis (by Osano-Wo's Lion son) and Fox clans (from the remnants of the Unicorn Clan). These two minor clans argue over their dominance, and determining which was actually the 'first' minor clan is almost impossible. The Mantis were formed from a grandson of the Crab Kami, Hida, while the Fox were founded by those members of the Unicorn Clan (then known as the Ki-Rin Clan)

that did not choose to follow their Kami, Shinjo, into the Burning Sands to the west.

The formation of the Fox Clan is definitively placed – by Fox Clan scholars – in the year 80. Fox scrolls, magnificently detailed with regard to lineages but sadly containing little detail of outside events in the Empire, state that the 'Fox' stayed on Ki-Rin lands for a generation until they were removed by the Lion. Shortly afterward, they began their lives in Mori Kitsune, and were granted a family name of their own. This suggests that the Fox Clan formed one or two generations after the First Day of Thunder. The Fox also claim to be the oldest minor clan, a statement disputed by the Mantis.

The formation of the Mantis Clan is said to be during the years 80–85. For convenience, and for lack of better information, we must assume that the Mantis Clan was formed during the same short period as the Fox, giving them equal claim to prestige within the Empire. Certainly, the Mantis existed as a formal clan long before their ancestor, Gusai, was given the right to bear a family name. Although we hoped that Mantis scrolls would bear a greater amount of knowledge on this topic, we were politely but repeatedly refused when we went to their islands to seek access to the Mantis lineage documents.

We do know from studying the texts of the Crab that the Mantis Clan was formed by Kaimetsu-uo, son of Osano-Wo. If Osano-Wo was born four years after the Day of Thunder, then we may assume Kaimetsu-uo wasn't born for at least 20 years afterward. The various events surrounding the two children suggest that Kaimetsu-uo had been given his gempukku (typically, for the Crab, this occurs between twelve and fifteen years of age) before he organized the Mantis Clan.

Birth of Moto Soro: circa year 60.

Moto Soro was the first daimyo of the Moto, and Unicorn scrolls place his birth before the Unicorn's travels outside the Empire, mentioning that the Unicorn found him with his tribe, as an aged man of many years.

The Phoenix Clan find Uikku, the Serene Prophet: circa year 72.

Uikku, the prophet of Shinsei's Tao, was highly influential in our modern understanding of Shinsei's ancient work. Although Uikku was young and seemed out of touch with the world, his understanding of the Tao was legendary, and the scrolls containing his prophecies amaze scholars with their accuracy, even today. Phoenix documents claim that Uikku was discovered approximately 30 years after the war with Fu Leng. Assuming, then, that the earlier date for the Day of Thunder is correct, this must be the year of Uikku's birth.



Death of Uikku, the Serene Prophet: circa year 90.

If the Phoenix scrolls have been correctly deciphered from the scraps that remained after the Library's burning in IC 300, Uikku died at age 18, about 48 years after the war with the Shadowlands.

Birth of Shinjo Martera: circa year 100 (date conjectural).

Although Unicorn scholars demand recognition of the accuracy of this date, it is unlikely, because Martera is Shinjo's child. The Ki-Rin Clan had just left the Empire in the year 100. The Unicorn histories (all oral myth and story) say that the Ki-Rin Clan spent 100 years with the Ujik-Hai. Those 100 years do not seem to take into account the time it took for the Ki-Rin to arrive in the lands of the Ujik-Hai, nor the time between their departure from the Ujik-Hai and Shinjo's disappearance (the point at which the tales state she gave birth to her children). This date should be at least 200, probably closer to 300, but in deference to the honorable Shinjo Yokatsu-sama, we list it here as he requested.

Kuni Nanaku notices Taint on corpses: circa year 100.

The first signs of the Shadowlands Taint, and its effects, were studied by the Crab Clan as early as the first century after the Empire's founding. Their scholarly research has saved many lives, and the information they have been able to discover during the thousand years of peace have been truly remarkable.

Second Century (101–200 IC)

Creation of the Badger clan: circa year 110.

The Badger Clan, one of the smallest of Rokugani's minor clans, was founded around the year 110 in order to guard the northern passes of the Empire, and their purpose and culture have changed little since that time. The fiercely isolationist Badger are better left alone, despite the resource they represent to those studying the ways of the early Empire.

The first mention of the Naga: circa year 200.

According to Crab and Falcon records, a Crab named Kaiu Sudaro lost his son in the Shinomen forest. The boy was apparently saved by creatures with great snake tails and human bodies; by all accounts, this is the first notation in the Empire of the Naga, long thought to be mythical.

Death of the first Iuchi: year 200 (potentially much later – 300–500?)

Once more, the Unicorn Clan's oral tradition causes unusual discrepancies with Imperial dates. It has been suggested by ancient Ide scholars that time moves differently within the Empire than it did for the traveling Unicorn, or perhaps the awakening of time

caused by the descent of the Kami took longer in lands far distant from their fall. For whatever reason, the Unicorn legends suggest that Iuchi died shortly after the time when Shinjo disappeared to give birth (as it were) to her children. This date is more likely after 300, but no later than 500. However, if we accept the date of Shinjo Martera's birth, then we must also move Iuchi's death forward to this date.

Third Century (201–300)

Death of the kami Hida: year 210 (traditional date).

This date is included only for perspective, as the Crab historians openly admit that Hida's death is considered an apocryphal date that reflects the stamina of his clan.

Death of Isawa Akuma: year 283.

This date is important to note, as it correlates directly with the first emergence of the Oni no Akuma from the Shadowlands, also in the year 283. Oni, the demons of the Shadowlands, gain great power when they steal a name from their summoner. Akuma, one of the most powerful of all Oni, reportedly stole his name in this year from an Isawa shugenja who paid the price for ambition and power.

The Moto Family forms: year 300?

According to Unicorn legend, this would place Moto Soro, family founder, at over 150 years of age. His birth was most likely far later than the Unicorn legends describe. It should be noted that a more accurate-seeming piece of information can be found on an old Ide travel-scroll (unfortunately, carved on a piece of tanned leather, and most disgusting to behold). This text states that the first Moto established the family "700 years ago." We prefer to accept this second date, as it seems to make more sense. However, to further muddy the waters, the Imperial Heralds have informed us that the original Shinjo told the Emperor, on their return, that the Moto in the Unicorn split completely from the Ujik-Hai, and may or may not be related to the original Moto family that still roams the Burning Sands. It is most likely that the returning Shinjo family lied to the Emperor in order to cover for the lost members of the Moto family still roaming the Shadowlands. If so, the members of the Shinjo house descended from these individuals should be found and permitted to commit seppuku immediately to atone for their ancestors' dishonor.

Minor Wars

Many smaller disputes between the clans break out during this otherwise peaceful period. In particular, battles between the Crane and Lion and between the Crane and the Crab fill the historian's scrolls. Among these battles are the Battle of the Cherry Blossom



Snow Lake, a minor skirmish between the Phoenix and the Lion resolved with a treaty at Mamoru Kuotei Toshi, and many smaller battles between the Shadowlands and the Crab along the border that would later see the construction of the Kaiu Wall.

Fourth Century (301–400)

Birth of Hiruma Kazuma: year 302.

This is the beginning of the famed Ratling-Crab alliance (the existence of which the Crab continue to deny). Kazuma was known to have a rapport with the ratlings, and after his death, the ratlings often assisted the Hiruma in their exploration of the Shadowlands.

Victory With no Strike: year 353.

This famous battle occurs in three places in recorded text, and amazingly, all place its year of origin at precisely the same time. This is the first concrete and absolute piece of historical information, and should be used as a basis for other events, in relation to their distance from the time of this battle.

Asahina family founded: year 355.

Wedding records of Isawa Asahina, founder of the Crane family of the Asahina, and his bride allow us to place this event far better than any scrolls recording the devastation of the Crane lands. A pity

than the Crane find wedding documents of more importance than true historical events. Still, the information allows us to place the Asahina origin, and mark it in accordance with the Seppun texts.

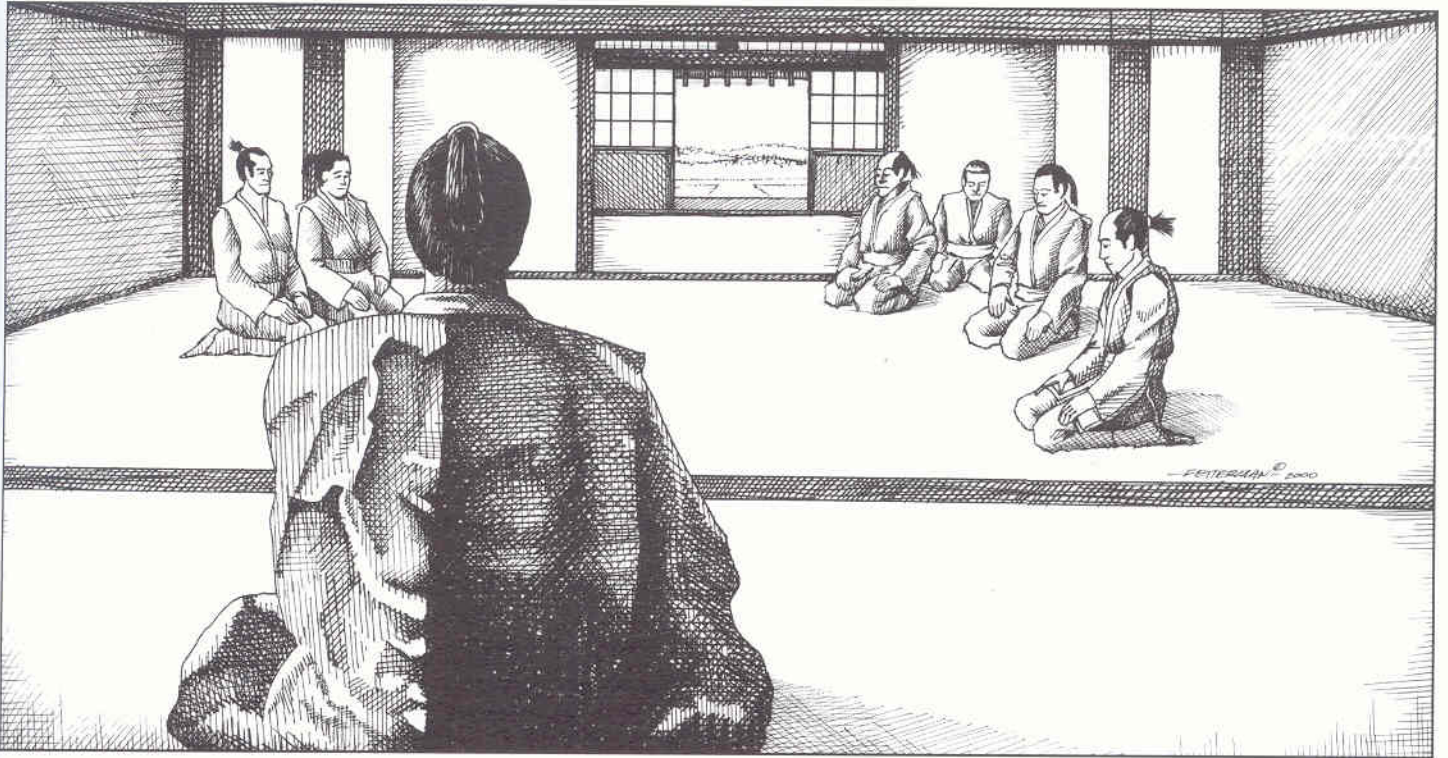
Kyuden Tombo: year 372.

The Dragon samurai Mirumoto Asijin and the Phoenix shugenja Isawa Maroko fell in love and married despite her previous engagement to a Lion samurai, Akodo Yokutsu. Yokutsu did not take this lightly, and battle ensued. The Dragon and Phoenix Clans supported their children, and forced the Lion to retreat. The couple formed the Dragonfly clan, and lived at the base of the Dragon mountains.

Years afterward, Akodo Yokutsu was insulted in court by an Agasha shugenja. In retaliation, Yokutsu attacked the Dragon lands. To bring the war to an end, Yokutsu dueled Mirumoto Asijin, and upon defeating him proclaimed himself daimyo of the Dragonfly by conquest. His claim was immediately challenged by Tonbo Kuyuden, Asijin's son, who slew Yokutsu, and began the enmity between the Lion and the Dragonfly clans.

The Yasuki split and the Crane-Crab War: year 387.

The great Crab-Crane war was the first large-scale internal war in Rokugan. Caused by the Crab seizing territory along the Crane's





southern borders (presumably to feed the Crab's beleaguered troops after a number of major battles against the Shadowlands), the war resulted in an Imperial Edict banning large-scale open warfare among the Seven Clans of the Empire. Since that time, only small battles have been permitted, and only with the Emperor's consent. The entire massed armies of the Seven Clans were not turned against one another from that day until the day of the Scorpion Clan Coup.

After the Crab-Crane war, one of the families of the Crane, the Yasuki, transferred their allegiance and their lands to the Crab banner, and have remained loyal vassals of the Crab ever since.

The kami Shinjo last seen: circa year 400.

This is the best practical date of the event that the Unicorn term the 'Blood War', wherein the Ki-Rin fights a creature of Living Darkness. According to their legends, this event happened approximately "500 years ago." Shinjo may have died in 400, but it still seems somewhat unlikely.

Fifth Century (401–500)

Hida Tadaka & Matsu Itagi in Shadowlands: year 412.

This is the famous event wherein a Lion Champion ventured into the Shadowlands, only to be rescued by the Crab. It is assumed by many to be a parable, but the Crab and the Lion both insist that the events of the tale actually happened. If that is the case, then this is the most probable date.

Gaijin Ambassadors Arrive at Imperial Court: circa year 440.

This date, recorded on Seppun scrolls, marks the first arrival of the honorless *gaijin*. Other corresponding accounts in various libraries of the Empire vary by only a few years to either side, and so, we choose the date revealed in the scrolls closest to the Emperor's hand. These *gaijin* attempted to seize the Empire, and were driven away by the might of the Seven Clans.

Battle of White Stag/Raging Seas: circa year 442.

Dragon texts, the clearest on this issue, state unequivocally that the *gaijin* were allowed two years to prove their honor and their respect for the Empire. At the end of that time, the *gaijin* were expelled, and retaliated with violence. Since this year, the *gaijin* have been strictly barred from Rokugan. They have not returned.

Castle of Faithful Bride completed for Matsu Hitomi: year 468.

The castle's legendary history says it was completed 27 years after Hitomi's death, to commemorate the first Hitomi's 27 years of life. However, the Lion insist that Matsu Hitomi only lived to be 17 or 18.

Sixth Century (501–600)

Battle of Stolen Graves: year 510.

This battle, a famous one in which the Empire battled the dark forces of the sorcerer Iuchiban, marks the beginning of cremation as the only acceptable means of funerary arrangements. Because the sorcerer Iuchiban raised the bodies of the dead in order to fuel his armies, the Empire resorted to cremation rather than burial in an attempt to stop such desecrations in the future. The sorcerer was eventually captured, killed, and entombed within a great structure that was enchanted to contain his blackened soul. After Iuchiban's defeat his lieutenant, Asahina

Yajinden, the Crane betrayer to the Bloodspeakers, was sentenced to have his mind erased, and became a gardener on the Imperial grounds.

Mantis family 'Gusai' removed: year 510.

The Gusai family name, attributed to the nobility of the Mantis Clan, was revoked after only three generations after it was given. Gusai Rioshida, Mantis daimyo, attempted a coup and held the Emperor's son hostage in the Mantis isles. The Prince was returned



What Does My Rank Mean?

Characters with Glory Ranks over 2 may find themselves thrust into positions of command and authority if they aren't careful. They'll be forced to spend long months training and teaching and drilling while others get to do more interesting things with their time.

However, responsibility does have its privileges. A simple *gunso* has two hundred men under his command who are sworn to him and are ready to die at his command. The *gunso* isn't allowed to just take off with his men on some fool's quest without permission, but if he gets into a bind, you can bet he's got a few friends to back him up.

- Rank 8 – Daimyo
- Rank 7 – Rikugunshokan (General)
- Rank 6 – Shireikan (Commander)
- Rank 5 – Taisa (Captain)
- Rank 4 – Chui (Lieutenant)
- Rank 3 – Gunso (Sergeant)
- Rank 2 – Nikutai (Corporal)
- Rank 1 – Hohei (Private)



and the Gusai family destroyed. Because the Mantis Clan chose to betray their Lord and execute his family because of their shame, the Mantis were allowed to retain their clan status.

Battle of Kenson Gakka: between 533 and 554.

Texts here are unclear; the battle for the castle destroyed most of its historical documents, and later texts have been too concerned with the honor of the battle to mention the date. A pity.

Seventh – Eighth Century (601–800)

Battle of the Sleeping River: circa year 712.

His soul freed from entombment by his crazed followers, Iuchiban once more wreaked havoc against the Emerald Empire. Every clan sent legions to do battle with the Blood Speakers and their undead hordes. Mirumoto Gojanuwan led the Dragon forces, and his shirekan was Agasha Hanujito. The Champion of the Crane was Doji Hejiu.

Battle of the Landbridge: year 715.

This historic battle marks the first sign of cooperation between the Crane and Crab houses since the great Crab-Crane war several hundred years earlier. In this battle, the Shadowlands forces were overwhelming the Crab at their easternmost border, and Crane reinforcements crossed the landbridge of the bay in order to assist the Hida guard. Although the Crane and Crab forces died, they were able to hold back the Shadowlands assault, and the Crab have ever since had a grudging respect for the Daidoji family, whom they call 'Iron Cranes.'

Loss of Hiruma Castle: year 716.

Battle of the Cresting Wave: year 716.

These two events mark the foremost invasion of the Shadowlands since the Day of Thunder. The forces of the far south completely destroyed nearly one-third the lands of the Crab, seizing Hiruma Castle, and turning the Kuni school lands into a great waste of grey ash. This resulted in the creation of Carpenter Wall, the largest single structure in Rokugan, spanning hundreds of li and crossing every imaginable sort of terrain as a bulwark against such invasions.

Kitsu Taiko becomes the Master of Fire: year 761.

The first and only instance of a non-Phoenix becoming one of the Elemental Masters, this seemed relevant for inclusion because of its unusual nature and unique importance to the Empire.

Fall of Morikage Toshi: year 782.

The castle at Morikage Toshi was destroyed. Ghosts have continued to haunt it up to present day. Numerous attempts have been made to 'retake' the castle; all have met with failure.

Ninth Century (801–900)

Mirumoto Kaijuko's ascension to daimyo: year 805.

Kaijuko was the first female Mirumoto family daimyo. This unusual event marks the increasing egalitarianism of the modern Empire.

The Return of the Unicorn: year 815.

The returning Unicorn Clan assaulted the Kaiu Walls, and thereafter fought the Lion and the Scorpion in the Battle of White Shore Plain. Within weeks thereafter, another large battle was fought on the Seven Day Battle Plain before the Unicorn were accepted back into Rokugan.

Kitsuki family formed: year 820.

Kitsuki's apprentice, Agasha Daijoku, discovered the secret of Agasha's coded messages in this year. Because of his prowess and his intellect, Kitsuki was granted the right to begin his own family name beneath the Dragon Clan mon. Although the Kitsuki are the smallest of the Dragon families, they are well respected.

Tenth Century (901–1000)

Shinjo Fujimaka / Ikoma Goheshu find Naga ruins in Shinomen: year 925?

Some scholars say this event denotes the 'awakening' of the serpent-men, who have apparently been seen by Scorpion and Crab venturing into the forest of the Shinomen in modern times. If this is accurate, then the Naga have been 'watching' us unobserved for nearly 200 years – a disturbing thought.

Twelfth Century (1101–1200)

Hantei XXXVIII takes throne: year 1103.

Birth of Hantei Sotorii: year 1107.

The last powerful ruler of Rokugan, Hantei the 38th, received the throne from his father as it had been passed down for generations. His son, Sotorii, was not as fortunate. Though treated to a life of ease and luxury while training to become the most powerful man in the Empire, the Hantei nevertheless had enemies – enemies which would be their downfall.

Scorpion Clan Coup: Spring, year 1123.

The single most important recent event in the Empire, the Scorpion Clan Coup may yet mark the end of the powerful Hantei



Emperors. All the imperial family was murdered by the Scorpions during Bayushi Shoji's attempt to seize the Emerald Throne, and although Hantei Sotorii, who was spirited away during the Coup and is now Hantei XXXIX, has control, his youth and continued sickness make the future of the Empire appear unstable.

During the Coup, the Scorpion seized control of the imperial City, massacred the Hantei family, demanded the right to rule the other clans, and were dethroned by a concerted effort of all the other clans. The Scorpion were banished from the Imperial Court, their family name and clan status removed, and their allies punished with death.

Also during the coup, the noble house of Akodo came under suspicion of treason, and their family name was stripped. Their daimyo and the Lion Clan champion, Toturi, was dishonored and refused seppuku, and now wanders the land as a ronin.

Hantei XXXIX takes the throne: year 1123.

Current date: year 1126, the Third Year of the reign of the Emperor Hantei the Thirty-Ninth, Lord of the Celestial Heavens, Emperor of the Emerald Throne, Master of the Chrysanthemum, Sovereign of Otosan Uchi and the Seven Hills.



*"Learn from the past... or it will become your future."
- Shinjo Yokatsu*

The First Day of Thunder

The Kami fell and founded an Empire. These events make up the foundation of all Rokugani belief. So, too, live the stories of the first war against the Shadowlands. It is remembered as the Day of Thunder, the day when Shinsei took seven mortal heroes into the Shadowlands - never to return.

According to myth, it was only a short time after the Kami's descent from the Heavens that Hantei established his court and created the provinces that his siblings would rule, founding modern civilization. From the far south, the place where the Dark One fell, an evil force rose against the fledgling Empire. One by one, fighting separately, the armies of the Great Clans fell. Before the rise of the Oni and the beasts of the south, the Emperor's men had no hope of victory - Fu Leng had caught them unprepared, building an army while the Seven Kami created an Empire.

Then, according to the legend, a mysterious monk calling himself Shinsei, or the "New Way", came into the Empire from the far west. He knelt before Emperor Hantei and told him that destiny could not be changed by the Kami, but only by mortal men. After spending an evening discussing the future of the Empire with Hantei, he was given permission to gather a mortal from each clan: Hida Atarasi, Doji Konishiko, Lady Matsu, Lady Otaku, Lord Isawa, Lord Mirumoto and Lady Shosuro. These heroes, collectively known as the Seven Thunders, went into the Shadowlands to fight the evil Kami there.

Only the Lady Shosuro returned.

The Lion-Phoenix Conflict

In the early Empire, provincial borders were unstable and changing, shifting as each clan grew in strength or lost power. The Lion grew rapidly, their armies swelling with soldiers as they retired from the fight against the Dark One's horde. Needing more land to feed their troops and unwilling to rely on trade, the Lion decided to supplement their dwindling supplies by seizing a portion of the land to their north - land previously controlled by the Phoenix Clan.

The Lion did not wish a two-front war, however, so they arranged a mutual non-aggression pact with the Crane. As soon as this treaty was concluded, the Lion forces moved against the Phoenix, long-time allies of the Crane. Although the Phoenix had not forgotten the combat magic taught to them by Lord Isawa, they were unable to keep the land that the Lion wished to gain. Driven back, they turned to their allies in the Crane. Although the Crane could not directly intervene, they obtained the Emperor's favor, and forced the Lion to retreat from Phoenix lands by Imperial edict.

The Battle of Three Stone River

Following the hostilities between the Lion and the Phoenix, both clans continued in mistrust with aggressive diplomacy. Eventually, another battle broke out, as the Lion found a weakness in the



Phoenix lines. A thousand Lion samurai attacked the southwestern Phoenix lands, which were defended against by a group of only 45 shugenja. According to the reports of this battle, the Phoenix used terrain to their advantage, but their true strength lay in the might of their spells.

Only a hundred Lion survived. After a treaty was arranged, the Emperor demanded that the Lion begin training shugenja for use in war, to protect against the possibility of invasion.

Victory with No-Strike

Outraged by the meddling of the Crane in a Lion-Phoenix conflict, a powerful shugenja named Isawa Asahina went on a rampage across the northern Crane lands. He was confronted by Doji Kiriko, a samurai-ko known for her honor and her kind heart. She blocked his path, refusing to fight him but preventing him from killing innocents by intercepting his battle magic with her own body.

At last, inspired and humbled by Kiriko's sacrifice, Asahina stopped his assaults. Later, to repay the damage he had done to the Crane, he married Kiriko and formed the Asahina family, loyal to the Crane.

The First War

The first true inter-clan war (previous attacks between the clans had been disconnected battles, skirmishes, and minor conflicts) occurred early in the history of the Empire. The Lion and Phoenix had settled their differences, and now a new difficulty had begun between the Crane and the Crab. The war started over the Crane's claim to the Kenkai Hanto peninsula and the rich fishing waters of its bay.

The war between the Crab and the Crane lasted nearly four years, with a constant line of battle drawn between Kyuden Hida and the Yasuki Yashiki, then under Crane control. In the end, the stalemate was destroyed when the Yasuki 'betrayed' (some say 'chose to leave') the Crane and were taken in by the Crab. Thus, the Crane monopoly on trade was broken.

The Crab, with their more powerful army, seized the peninsula and drove the Crane back to the walls of Kyuden Daidoji. In the end, the Doji used their control over the imperial court once again, and drove the Crab back to Yasuki territory.

The war ended rather abruptly, as political pressure was placed on both sides. The war had created a shortage of rice and fish throughout Rokugan, and the other clans insisted that the Crane and Crab ease their bickering and return to their Imperial duties. The land and the fishing rights were divided equally between the two clans.

The Battle of the Raging Seas

When the gaijin arrived on Rokugani soil they were accepted with reluctant grace by the Emperor and his court. By all accounts, the gaijin were rough, uncultured, and dirty. Their one saving grace was their trade: spices and gold from foreign lands. These pale men brought Rokugan's first contact with civilization from across the great sea, but records of the gaijin culture have since been largely destroyed. Little information remains other than descriptions of their fighting styles, their strange magic, and their roaring iron tubes.

Simply put, when the Emperor demanded that all gaijin leave Rokugan, the pale men from across the ocean refused. A large fleet attacked Otsan Uchi itself, but was driven away by united Crane and Mantis forces. Since then, all contact and knowledge of the gaijin – including the people from beyond the Burning Sands and from the distant southlands known as the Ivory Kingdoms – have been strictly controlled by the Emperor and his officials.



The Battle of White Stag

Possibly one of the most famous battles in the history of the Empire, the Battle at White Stag was the final conflict between the gaijin and the Six Clans. Although their fleet had been driven away from the Rokugani shoreline, a mass of gaijin troops had seized control of the strategic high ground of White Stag.

An assault by Lion infantry led to the death of nearly 2000 Matsu at the hands of the roaring magic of the invaders. One of these explosions killed the Emperor and his bodyguard, forcing the legions of the Empire to retreat toward Otsan Uchi. While the battles continued, the first Matsu champion of the Lion Clan was named, to serve for the duration of the war, and until the Ikoma could determine which Akodo had the truest claim to the position. That champion, Matsu Zaruko (also known as the White Lioness) rallied the Emperor's troops and gathered the forces of the Seven Clans into a final assault. The gaijin were driven back to the ocean by the fury of their attack.

Once the gaijin arrived on the shores of the Golden Sun Bay, they discovered that their boats had been destroyed by the Tortoise, and the fleet driven away by Mantis and Crane. Zaruko declared that no mercy would be shown to these invaders, and the gaijin were killed to a man on the shore of the bay.



The Battle of the Stolen Graves

The Empire's past contains many dark secrets, but none more bloody than the wars with the *maho* sorcerer, Iuchiban. He stole the bodies of the heroes who had been given honorable burial in Otsan Uchi's fields, and raised them from the dead to fight at his side. With this mighty army, Iuchiban assaulted the emperor's city and very nearly took over the Empire.

His plot was uncovered after an investigation by Soshi Takasaho and Akodo Minobe, who were suspicious of four powerful Bloodswords created by Iuchiban's lieutenant Asahina Yajinden at the sorcerer's command. During the final battles, Minobe led the Imperial Guard against Iuchiban and his undead minions, defeating them with the help of the Six Clans.

The followers of Iuchiban attacked Otsan Uchi with their army of zombies and the forces of the Lion and Crane met them in battle. The Crane broke through the lines and reached Iuchiban's lieutenant Asahina Yajinden, taking him captive. Locked away by the peaceful Asahina, Yajinden emerged with his mind erased and lived out his life as a gardener in the capital.

The Battle at the Tidal Landbridge

Several hundred years ago, the Shadowlands assaults against the Crab began to grow stronger, driving the Hida away from their claimed territory. While this happened, a sizable force attacked the southeastern end of what is now the Kaiu Wall. At that time, the position was held by a single watchtower, lightly defended by the Crab. The attack was led by the clever Oni no Kinjiro, a foul creature known more for cunning than for strength.

Overwhelmed, the local commander, a samurai named Hida Bokaru, tried to signal for reinforcements, but foul magic darkened the sky to the north and prevented the Crab from seeing the flare. As the watchtower guardians prepared for what seemed to be a final assault, a hunting horn sounded across the bay, and a group of Daidoji guardsmen rode to the Crab's defense. Their leader, Daidoji Masashigi, loaned the Hida his strength and drew the Oni to the south, into the waves of the tidal landbridge. There, Masashigi and his Daidoji men fought Oni no Kinjiro until the tide rose and swept them all away.

The Fall of Hiruma Castle

Less than a year after the attack at the landbridge and the death of Oni no Kenjiro, a massive invasion of the Crab lands began. It appeared that the original assaults by Oni no Kenjiro had been no more than a test, and now the true strength of the Shadowlands was released against the Crab lands.

A massive wave of oni, undead and other creatures flooded from the deep south, led by an oni known only as the Maw. Although the Maw has no name known to history, it is suspected that he had stolen a name from beyond the Empire - perhaps from the Ivory Kingdoms. The forces of the Maw overran the Kuni and Hiruma lands easily. In the assault, they burned and destroyed the library and ancestral homelands of the Kuni and seized Kyuden Hiruma for their own uses. The destruction wrought on the Hiruma keep remains to this day, and its ruined walls are almost impossible to defend.





The Battle of the Cresting Wave

After the forces of the Maw began to roll across the Kuni and Hiruma lands, the Crab started to fight with desperation. The body of their armies gathered at the edge of the Hida lands, but no respite from the unrelenting horde could be found.

The Kaiu Wall, at that point no more than plans upon an architect's drawing table, was the Crab's only hope. In order to give her clan time to raise the wall, a shugenja named Kuni Osaku created an enormous tidal wave that kept the enemy at bay for 73 days. Once the other clans realized what was happening, they gathered to assist the Crab in their defense. Supplies of jade and food came from the Crane and Phoenix lands, and military reinforcements from the Lion and Dragon brought tons of rock and metal with them, to assist in the building and fight against the minions of the Maw. The battle was successful; the Crab successfully held the newly-built wall against the Shadowlands, and the Maw was defeated.

Osaku collapsed and died from her immense magic, but her sacrifice will never be forgotten by the Crab.

The Battle of Sleeping River

Two hundred years after the imprisonment of the sorcerer Iuchiban, his spirit escaped once more. Again, he drew forth a horde of undead, but this time, he also created a widespread cult known as the Bloodspeakers to carry on if his attempt to destroy the Hantei line failed.

During his imprisonment, Iuchiban had learned how to shift his intelligence from body to body. He used this power to try to take over an *ise zumi*, who successfully resisted Iuchiban's power. The tattooed man returned to the home of the Dragon, and with the knowledge he had gained in fighting off the sorcerer's spirit, an army was raised to destroy Iuchiban once more.

But Iuchiban had grown stronger since he was first defeated, and it took the combined might of all six clans to defeat his legions of Bloodspeakers. Unprepared to face the massive force of the undead and the dark *maho* of the Bloodspeakers, the Rokugani forces nearly failed to protect the Empire. At the end, the Crane rallied, fighting alongside the powerful soldiers of the Lion, and the Empire gained the upper hand. The Empire was saved, Iuchiban was trapped again, and three massive tombs were created to hold the sorcerer's spirit. Since that day, he has not returned.

The Battle of the Blood Retreat

During a fairly peaceful time in the Empire, the Shadowlands struck again, sending a large force of undead through the northern passes of the Twilight Mountains. The army was concealed by the thick winter snows – weather that did not hamper the undead. When they realized that the Shadowlands had invaded, the Scorpion evacuated Ryoko Owari and moved their forces to stand within Beiden Pass, to defend the Emperor's lands. After five days of battle against the horde, the rest of the Empire joined the Scorpion in battle, and defeated the undead legions.

Return of the Ki-Rin

For eight hundred years, the Ki-Rin clan was gone from Rokugan, their descendants in the Fox Clan speaking for them in all matters. It was the Crab who first detected a large group of unknown warriors heading into the Empire – amazingly, traveling at incredible speeds through the Shadowlands.

The Crab prepared for the worst, convinced that these horse-warriors were nothing more than another trick of the Dark One. However, the Crab were not prepared to face the blinding speed of Unicorn cavalry, and the Shinjo troops raced through the Twilight Mountains and past the Kaiu wall.

Seven Day Battle Plain

After their forces entered the heart of the Empire, the Unicorn camped on the fields to the north of the Shinomen Forest. However, the clans of the Empire were not eager to make peace with these barbarians, and the Unicorn met the combined forces of the Lion and Scorpion. Using the terrain and the speed of their steeds to their advantage, the Shinjo escaped through Beiden Pass, and met with a Phoenix delegation that had been sent by the Elemental Masters to discover the truth about these foreign invaders. After only a short negotiation, a messenger was sent to the Emperor's court, requesting that the Hantei turn his personal attention to these matters.

When the Emperor sent a Miya messenger to the strange samurai, the response was swift: they were the Unicorn clan, descendants of Shinjo and formerly the Ki-Rin Clan, and they had come home. Like the Crab, the Lion and Scorpion clans did not believe the claim, and continued to attack the interlopers. Eventually, with the help of the Crane, the Emperor was convinced of the heritage of the strange horsemen, and welcomed them into the Empire.



The Crane-Lion War

The Lion and the Crane have fought each other since the early days of the Empire. The conflict between the Kakita and the Matsu is legendary within the Empire, and flared into numerous battles during the history of Rokugan.

It never was worse, however, than when the Lion began a full-spread war against the Crane only a few years past. The centuries of rivalry, arguments over land and border skirmishes flared up into a full-scale war. The battles at Kenson Gakka, Toshi Ranbo and along the Matsu border with the Kakita have caused many deaths, and eventually seem to have dragged the entire Empire into war. Modern historians suggest that an outside force precipitated this escalation into war; the Scorpion may have worsened the conflict in order to hide preparations for their recent coup attempt.

The Battle on the Plains of Gaiju Shindai

This battle, a massive conflict between the Lion and the Crane, saw the loss of nearly five hundred men on either sides. It is recorded as one of the bloodiest battles in recent history, and strongly suggests that the Lion and the Crane will be unable to solve their differences through diplomacy alone.

The battle rapidly escalated from minor border disputes, turning into a full war on the fields of Gaiju Shindai. Several events which occurred between the Lion and the Crane nearly resulted in both clans losing their invitations to that year's Winter Court, and cast a pall over the Emperor's winter visit to Kyuden Seppun.

The Battle of the Forgotten Tide

The second major battle between the Lion and the Crane, this event fueled the fires of the Matsu and Doji forces, resulting in the severing of negotiations between the two clans.

On the field of battle, Matsu Agare's seppuku was disrupted by an archer's arrow from the direction of the Crane lines. Taking the offending arrow as a deliberate insult, the Lion attacked the Crane, proclaiming that no mercy would be shown. The two armies clashed on the fields outside Toshi Ranbo. Peace talks, arranged for the first days of the siege, were quickly abolished, and the two armies descended rapidly into full-scale warfare. However, Crane magic seems to have affected the Matsu, and the Lion retreated from the battle entirely after only a short period of conflict. Many of the

samurai involved are reported to have awakened from the battle with little memory of these events.

The Scorpion Coup

Seeking to take the Emperor's throne for his own, Scorpion Clan Champion Bayushi Shoji and his clan assaulted Otosan Uchi under the cover of night, murdering the Emperor, threatening his son, and seizing the holy city of the Sun.

History writes that Shoji did not expect the other clans to be able to respond to his assaults in time to stop him completely, but the Unicorn arrived days before the Scorpion had expected. Because of the swiftness of the Shinjo, Shoji was unable to properly prepare Otosan Uchi for a siege, and the city suffered under skirmishes and isolated battles.

Shoji's last hope was the Crab. Hida Kisada, an outspoken critic of the Hantei line, marched toward Otosan Uchi with unknown allegiances. However, when he arrived, the Great Bear refused Shoji's offer of alliance and stood on the battlefield beside the other five clans. Shoji was slain in a duel with the Lion Champion, Akodo Toturi, in the throne room. While the city was besieged, the young Hantei prince was smuggled out of the city by the Phoenix. He was given his gempukku, and proclaimed Emperor.

The city was retaken by a force of all six clans, and in the absence of the Shining Prince (whom the Scorpion claimed to have killed), Toturi claimed the throne. The Emperor returned, and seeing Toturi's treachery, cast him out of the court with all his family and reduced the Akodo line to ronin. The Scorpion were destroyed by imperial decree, and only Shoji's wife Kachiko and her personal attendants were allowed to live – so that they could serve the Emperor. Kachiko was made the new Hantei's wife, and the rest of the Scorpion have been hunted to this day.

Random Encounter Charts

The charts in the Geography section call for die rolls so that you can determine on-the-fly encounters as your PCs travel through these areas. None of these die rolls use open-ended tens.

When a chart calls for a 1-10 result, simply roll one die.

When a chart calls for a 1-100 result, roll two dice of different colors; designate one as the "tens" die and one as the "ones" die. For instance, say that your red die is your tens die, and your blue die is your ones die; a red 5 and a blue 3 would be a "53."

Some charts ask you to "Add two dice." In these cases, simply roll and add together two dice.



Cities and Villages

The Lands of the Crab

CB1 Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi

(Face of the East Castle)

All diplomatic relations with the Crab are conducted here. The Crab navigate through Shinomen from here with the assistance of the Ratlings of the forest. With the recent awakening of the Naga, the Nezumi tribes have been reluctant to enter the dread forest, but the Crab need the forest's lumber production and trade routes to keep their armies supplied. Many Ratling tribes here live in near-slavery to the Crab, forced to enter the Shinomen without Naga permission.

CB2 Watchtower of the East

This watchtower, built years before the Carpenter Wall was erected, once served as the northern guard. When torches were lit at the southern castles of the Crab, the guards at the watchtower would send messengers to all parts of northern Crab lands, carrying the message of an imminent Shadowlands attack. The tower still serves that purpose, guarding from attacks and invasions across the high Twilight Mountains, but its effectiveness has been reduced since the building of the Wall. Since the wall, this tower has been largely abandoned, its purpose fulfilled by the much larger structure. Those guards who serve here are largely criminals, dishonored samurai and those who have fallen into Hida Kisada's disfavor. An assignment here is a great dishonor, as the samurai are stationed in the wilderness of Crab lands rather than where the true battles occur.

CB3 Kamisori sano Yoake Shiro

(Razor of the Dawn Castle)

The northwestern edge of the Kaiu wall is anchored here, a stout rock of a fortress squeezed between two steep hills. Shadowlands

attacks are rarer at the Razor of the Dawn than elsewhere, and troops quartered here serve mainly as reservists. Samurai from other Clans looking to make a name for themselves are often stationed at Razor of the Dawn; the Crab is loath to permit outsiders deeper into its defenses.

The rocky terrain and hidden vales surrounding the castle make it an ideal location for infiltrating the Shadowlands. Spies and scouts are often quartered here, and meetings with tribes of Ratlings take place just outside its walls.

CB4 Kaiu Shiro

(Carpenter Castle)

Kaiu Shiro houses the Kaiu family and is home to the largest smithy in Rokugan. The Kaiu engineers maintain the great wall from here, upgrading their defenses and building new and wondrous siege machines. Plans and schematics adorn the walls of the palaces, and a huge forge dominates the main courtyard. The plains around Kaiu Shiro are covered with ballista and catapults, waiting to be moved to their positions on the wall.

Beneath the castle lies a complex series of passages and catacombs; they run throughout the Kaiu walls, opening in several concealed locations in the Shadowlands. Crab scouts use the passages to enter the corrupted realm, reporting any significant developments to the daimyo on the other side of the wall. The entrances also serve as boltholes for spies trying to get back to the lands of the sun.

CB5 Kuda Mura

Kuda Mura is a quiet village, one of the few in Crab lands that maintains good production of arable land. This village is highly prized by the Hida, who often keep their magistrates nearby in the event of a northern attack. If the village of Kuda Mura is ever destroyed, Crab food production will be halved – and heads will roll.

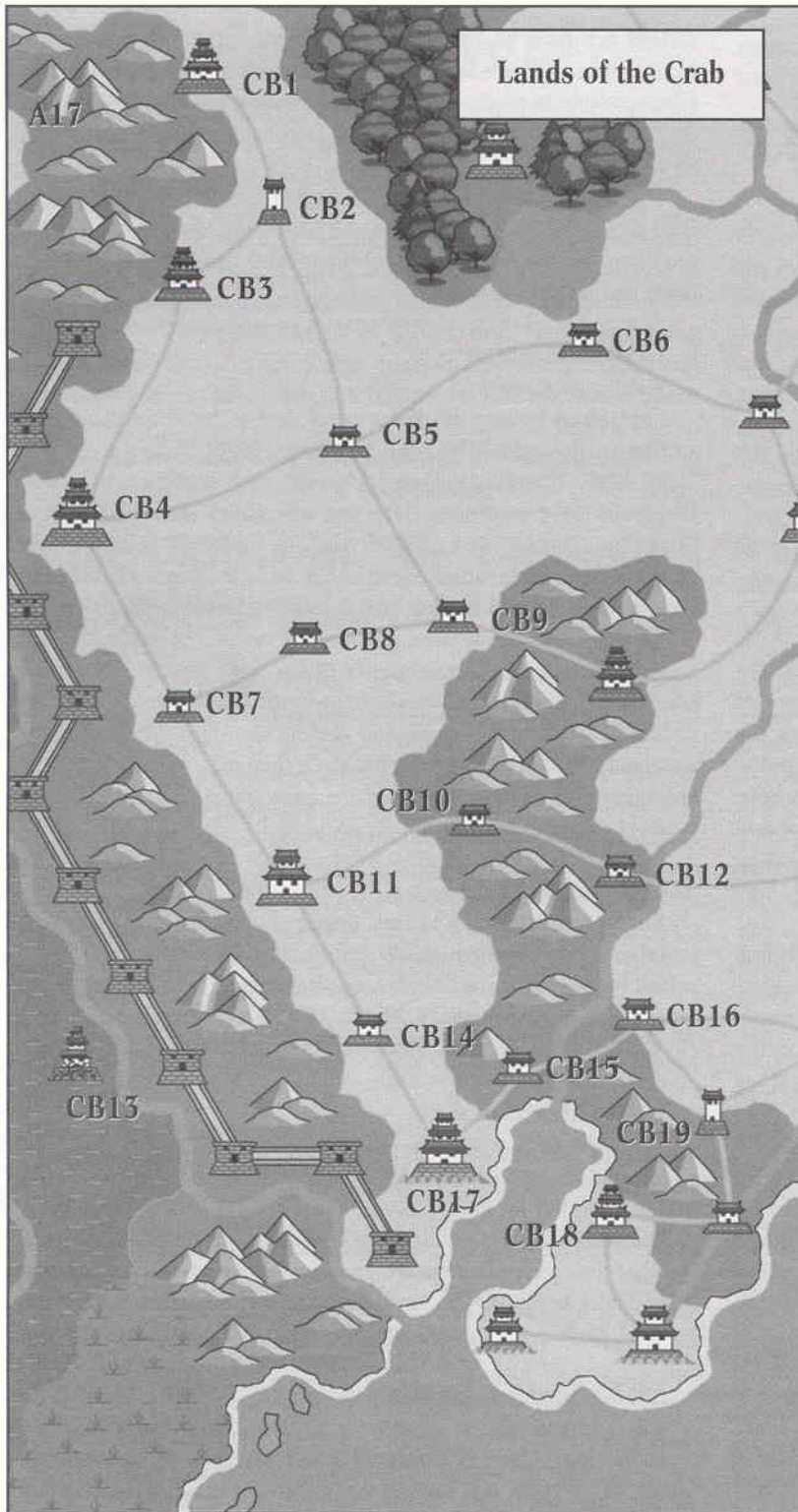
CB6 Maemikake

This town is nearly a city, and much larger than any other Crab village in this area of the Crab lands. Ruled by the Hiruma, it has become a center for that lost family, and is the location where many of the Hiruma began their lives anew after their lands were destroyed by the Shadowlands. The Hiruma governor resists all talk of Maemikake as the 'New Hiruma lands', stating flatly that the Hiruma have no lands, and no mon, until their true homelands are returned.

CB7 Midaki sano Mura

(High Tree Village)

High Tree Village is primarily a mining town. Few women or families live here; it is mostly populated by samurai and heimin



who work the nearby mines. Some say that the spirit of the Twilight Mountains, the Shagoki Dogu, haunts this village by night, inhabiting floating lights that flash throughout the mountains. Few villagers are willing to travel deeper into the mountains, and none walk alone by night – even in the streets of the village, and certainly not in the mines.

CB8 Kakita Bogu

(Breath of Kakita)

This rather insultingly named village is placed on the edge of a salt marsh, and the reek of its terrain keeps most samurai far from the village's humble huts. Those peasants who live within the village make their living working the metals and stone brought north from Midaki sano Mura, and are astute stonemasons and metalworkers. They have few visitors.

CB9 Nagai Aruki

(Long Walk)

This large village is a popular trade center for miners and other craftsmen of the Twilight Mountains and the eastern Crab lands. The majority of the village is made up of worker's quarters and shops, and the rest is settled among the arable farmland, in small pockets of civilization surrounded by bridges over thickly watered rice paddies. The village's name 'Long Walk' comes from the need to walk many miles over these arched bridges, just to find the particular shop or person you were looking for. The town is scattered widely over three square miles.

CB10 Nishiyama Mura

(West Mountain Village)

Nishiyama is the second of two small towns located on the Wall above the Ocean Mountains. Nishiyama rests on the western side of a series of natural caverns and twisting underground paths that lead to Higashiyama, to the east. Although there is a road between the two villages, travel through the passages takes only half the time of traveling on the twisting mountain roads, and is never blocked by the snow that closes down the aboveground road for nearly one-half the year.

CB11 Shiro Kuni

(Castle of the Nation)

This fortress lies at the heart of the Crab defenses against the Shadowlands. While not physically imposing,



it is very large – able to accommodate an entire army of troops – and commands an imposing view of the surrounding countryside. The Crab generals plot their strategies here, while messengers stand ready to relay their orders down the road which spans the length of the Carpenter wall. A small army of bushi is always stationed here, serving as an anchor for the great wall and a deterrent to any Shadowlands creature who perceives the castle as a weak link in the Crab defense.

CB12 Higashiyama Mura

(East Mountain Village)

Higashiyama is a small town, located on the eastern side of a series of natural caverns and twisting underground paths that lead to the other side of the Wall above the Ocean Mountains. These passages are dangerous, and caravans cannot travel them (though some horses can), but are often used by traveling samurai who wish to make haste over the mountains to the east or the west. Every villager knows that the passages are haunted, and worse, inhabited by all manner of beasts and Shadowlands creatures, but that doesn't stop adventuring samurai from using the passages as a short-cut. The Hida come to Higashiyama once a year, to 'officially destroy the Shadowlands infestation in the mountains.' Sometimes, the Hida assault cleans out the passages for as much as three weeks, but the passages always repopulate... somehow.

CB13 Haikyo no Hiruma

(Ruins of Daylight)

The ruins of the ancestral Hiruma homeland lie here, swallowed up by the evil of the Shadowlands. Three hundred years ago, a marauding army of Oni laid the castle waste, destroying its defenses and scattering the Hiruma to the winds. Although the army was eventually stopped at the Battle of the Cresting Wave, the Hiruma lands have never been reclaimed. The shame of that loss haunts the Hiruma to this day, and their samurai are known to enter battle with headlong abandon, hoping that death will remove their dishonor.

The castle now serves as a rough marshaling ground for oni and goblins wishing to attack the Crab lands to the north. It has no permanent inhabitants, and a squatter's rights rule permeates those who spend any time here. Small groups of Crab samurai often come to the castle to "clean house" and young bushi going through their rite of passage will often come here for a quick kill, but no force has been able to hold it for any length of time. The denizens of the Shadowlands seem to consider its possession a point of pride. Its walls have been broken in dozens of places, and little of value is left after three centuries.

Crab Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01–10 Bandits (2–20)

11–24 Shadowlands Creature (*Roll one die*)

1–4 Goblins (1–10)

5 Ogre

6 Lesser Oni

7 Mujina (1–5)

8–10 Undead (Skeletons or Zombies)

25–50 Crab Samurai on official mission (*Add two dice*)

2 Kuni Witch Hunter

3–6 Hiruma

7–10 Kuni

11–15 Hida

16 Kaiu

17–18 Scouting Party

19 Large troop movement (20–50 men)

20 Roll twice, discounting this roll.

51–60 Ronin

61–63 Crane scouting party

64–70 Unicorn or Crane Messenger

71–80 Traveling Merchant Caravan

81–95 Common Animal (*Roll one die*)

1 Bear

2 Badger (1–2)

3 Fox (1–2)

4 Falcon

5–6 Insect Swarm

7–8 Wild Ox Herd (1–10)

9–10 Stag

96–98 Heimin travelers

99 Imperial Messenger or Caravan

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double the amount of creatures found.

CB14 Koten

Some years ago an industrious daimyo decided that the Crab should have an ancestral hall similar to that of the Lion. The village of Koten was his chosen location – but the experiment has not gone well. Unlike other clans, the Crab rarely have any remains of their 'heroes' in order to inter, and often there are no survivors to tell the tales of those brave souls who have died in the Shadowlands against some great an insurmountable threat. With few stories and fewer items to display, the large hall of Koten remains somewhat bare, containing only the tales of the ancient Crab heroes of legend and myth.



CB15 Sunda Mizu Mura

(Clear Water Village)

This is the most significant port in the south. It is one of the oldest settlements in Rokugan, and has kept its old village name even though it has become one of the largest trading centers in the Empire.

CB16 Yasuki Hanko

(Yasuki Defiance)

The village of Yasuki Hanko was liberated some years after the great Crab-Crane war, and was originally held by the Crane. Its heimin simply stopped working, agreeing to Crane demands but not performing any tasks until a Yasuki samurai gave them the order. Frustrated by this peaceful rebellion, the Daidoji warriors killed many of the peasants before the Yasuki trade agreements made arrangements for the village of Hanko to be given to the Yasuki by the Crane. Afterwards, it has become quite prosperous, and is considered one of the finest villages in Yasuki lands.

CB17 Kyuden Hida

(Crab Clan Palace)

At the mouth of the Last Stand river lies Kyuden Hida, the ancestral home of the Hida family and the mightiest fortress in Rokugan. The Crab Clan palace has the largest standing army in Rokugan. The walls are hewn from pure granite and driven into the rock of the land beneath them. The gates are constructed of thick steel, requiring ten men to open. The skull of a huge Oni lord hangs above the ramparts as a warning to any who would challenge the castle's might. A standing army of almost a thousand men is quartered here, ready to defend the Crab from any attack.

The castle is also the home of the Hida Bushi School, where samurai are trained in the harshest techniques. Students train in full armor, and graduates must venture into the Shadowlands and slay one of its denizens before they are given their wakizashi. The Daimyo of the Crab, the Great Bear Hida Kisada, and his children live here, coordinating the defense of the Empire with ruthless precision.

CB18 Yasuki Yashiki

(Black Crane Estates)

The Yasuki Palace was once owned by the Crane Clan, but no longer. The Yasuki family turned on the Crane many hundreds of years ago to serve the Crab Clan.

The palace is quite modest (they don't want to look like they are competing with the "decadent" Crane), and at the same time, is riddled with secret hallways and rooms that visitors are not allowed

to enter. This Crab stronghold is the closest to civilization, and for many samurai and shugenja, it is the closest they wish to get to the Shadowlands.

CB19 Watchtower of the West

Created to guard against the Crane, this watchtower is considered a post of honor for Crab samurai. Those who are given this job are completely trusted by the Hida, and considered able to resist any and all Crane bribes.

The Lands of the Crane

CN1 Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigisaho

(Violence Behind Courtliness City)

This castle, and the land surrounding it, once belonged to the Lion Clan, but recent events have brought it under the Crane's control.

Two years ago, the castle's lord and master was dislodged by an ambitious and skilled Crane general. While many in the Crane Clan thought the action was reprehensible, the daimyo had no choice but to reward the general. The daimyo's acknowledgment of the deed heightened tensions between the Crane and the Lion and was a key milestone along the road to the present Crane-Lion war.

CN2 Shiro sano Kakita

(The Dueling School of the Crane Clan)

The Kakita family are noteworthy both for their fencing school and for their unparalleled diplomatic skills. Their palace is very close to Otsan Uchi and about two miles from Shiro no Yojin, held by the Matsu (L15).

CN3 Kosaten Shiro

(Crossroads Castle)

The Daidoji's first line of defense against the attacking Lion armies is Kosaten Shiro. It is strongly fortified, but not as nearly as strong as they would like. Daidoji trickery and unorthodox tactics have so far been enough to hold off the superior numbers of the Lion armies, but should Kosaten Shiro fall, all of the northern Crane provinces would be threatened.

CN4 Shiro Daidoji

(Son of the Crane Castle)

While they are not as cultured as the Doji or Kakita, the Daidoji are the rank and file soldiers – the "strong arm" – of the Crane Clan. The Crane put little emphasis on military might, relying on the strength of their ambassadors and diplomats, making the smaller



Daidoji family less influential than their cousins.

CN5 Yufuku and Heigen Toshi

(Prosperous Plains City)

The greatest marketplace in Rokugan, Yufuku and Heigen teem with merchants from all the Clans. This is the site of the only open air market in the Empire, protected by the Daidoji from the west and the Doji from the south. Even the Yasuki - hated enemies of the Crane - come here to bargain and haggle with the merchants of the Crane.

CN6 Kyuden Doji

(Crane Clan Palace)

Only Otosan Uchi itself is more luxurious than the home of the Doji family. Built on the gentle shore of the Sea of the Sun Goddess, the grounds abound with rock gardens, dozens of shrines and vast flocks of cranes. Diplomats and nobility from all across Rokugan come to politick, but also to experience the splendor of the magnificent surroundings.

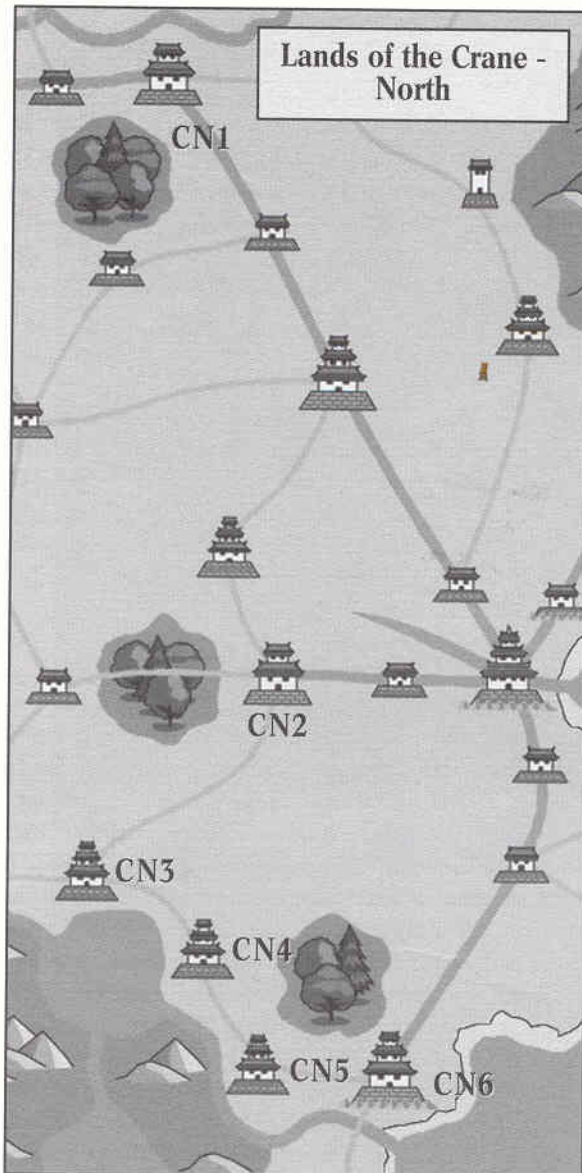
CN7 Musume Mura

(Daughter Village)

This village looks out over the ocean bay toward the island where the first Hantei found his bride. The village is large, and contains a shrine to both the first Hantei and his bride, as well as a single jade tear - one of those shed by the First Emperor when he asked the young Doji maiden to marry him.

CN8 Benten Seido

This shrine to Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love, is very difficult to reach, but offers a spectacular view of the valleys and mountains of the Crane. Legends tell that once an ancient Doji Champion forced his daughter to choose between leaving her lover and losing her life. He brought her here to decide, and she threw herself from the cliffs. The wind was so strong (and, heimin say,



blessed by Benten) that the maiden was lifted from her fall and carried back up to the cliff's edge, where her beloved caught her. In the face of the Fortune's wisdom, the father relented, and the two were married.

CN9 Samui Kaze Toshi

(Cold Wind City)

Named for the cold winds that blow in from the mountains, Samui Kaze is one of the main trading ports of the Crane. Most of the trading is done with Mura Sabishii (see CN13). The Spine of the World Mountains make overland travel to the the village punishingly difficult, so most trading must be done over the waves.

CN10 Aketsu

An important trading post, Aketsu often contains unusual items traded inland by the Mantis. Certain silks, fabrics and stones unlike any in the Empire can be found here - and some whisper that the mysterious Kolat hold a secret haven within this small city.

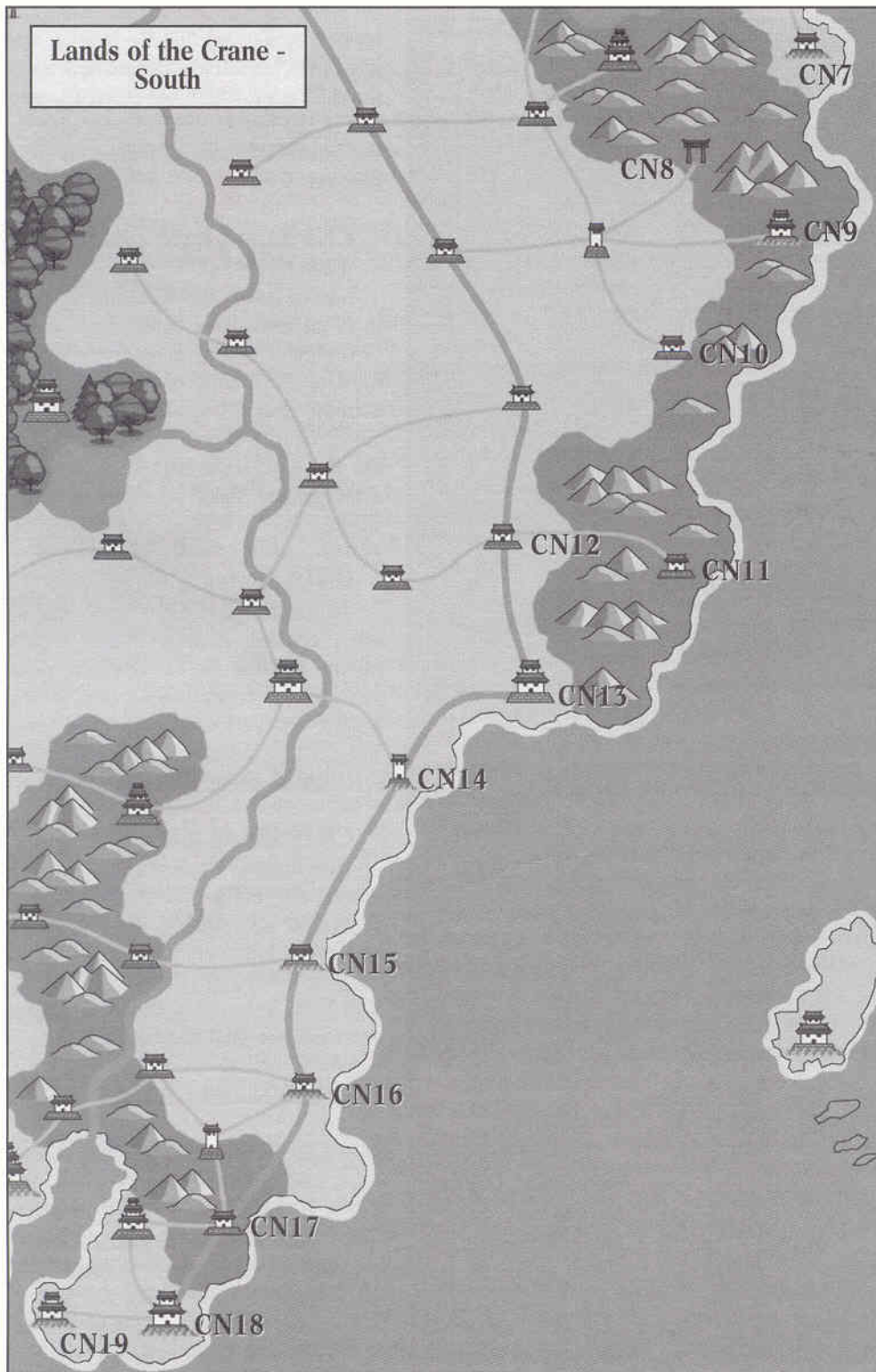
CN11 Umoeru Mura

The village of Umoeru Mura was once a great city, but a Crab invasion only a generation ago reduced the prosperous city to a mass of ruins and rubble. Citizens are trying to rebuild their city back to its former state, but work is slow, and funds are difficult to come by.

CN12 Ookami Toshi

(Wolf City)

This city rests on the edge of a sharp cliff at the edge of the Crane mountains. Ookami Toshi is well-guarded, and contains an extraordinary messenger system. If this area had ever come under attack, the Daidoji runners would have been able to spread the word within days - or sooner. Some say that the heart of Ookami Toshi holds a great mirror, capable of passing messages back and forth to one other mirror hidden somewhere in the Empire, and that its partner may rest in the bowels of Kyuden Doji's halls.



CN13 Mura Sabishii Toshi *(Lonely Shore City)*

A key city in the Crane's trade and supply lines, Mura Sabishii sits on the south side of the Spine of the World mountains, with roads leading to Wall Above the Ocean Village (CN16) and toward Kyuden Kitsune (A23). Most trade comes from Samui Kaze (CN9), but that is strictly nautical trade. Mura Sabishii is a flourishing port town, mainly because of its proximity to Sumai Kaze. If travelers wish to go from south of the Spine of the World mountains to the north, they must travel many hundreds of miles on foot, or they can commission a ship and arrive in Sumai Kaze in less than a week.

CN14 Daidoji Training Grounds

These are some of the most civilized and well-tended training grounds in the Empire, and are the personal estate of Daidoji Uji, daimyo of the Daidoji. The Daidoji guardsmen so noted for their exceptional understanding of the land are trained here, and massive maps cover the lower floors of the watchtower that stands guard over their labors.

CN15 Oni Mura *(Demon Village)*

'Demon Village', as it is called by the natives, is completely deserted. Although the fields around the village are tended, the heimin refuse to live within the rotting huts of the village grounds, for fear that an oni which ravaged the village some ten years ago might still be living within the small town's stone enclosure. Many ramshackle huts have been built in the surrounding forest, and the heimin live there.

CN16 Yama ue no ho ni Umi Mura *(Wall Above the Ocean Village)*



Located just west of the foothills of Rokugan's southernmost mountain range, this small village is noted for its friendly inns and taverns. It is an ideal travel stop between the central and southern Crane estates.

CN17 Jukami Mura

One of the southernmost Crane villages and an important cornerstone in the Crane's trade with the Mantis and the distant Crab. Many mercenaries can be found here - from ronin to Mantis and other minor clans - and those who wish to hire wave-men for some errand can certainly find them in Jukami Mura.

CN18 Shinden Asahina

(Temple of the Morning Sun)

Shinden Asahina is a small cluster of temples located just south of the Yasuki estates. The Asahina shugenja are completely devoted to a peaceful existence. There are no samurai assigned to protect the temples, and no army would dare draw the wrath of the Emperor by attacking these pacifistic shugenja.

CN 19 Aiso ni Ryokosha Mura

(Friendly Traveler Village)

Friendly Traveler is a small, wealthy village on the outskirts of Yasuki territory. It is here that the current daimyo of the Yasuki, Yasuki Taka, first made his fortune by distributing superior sake throughout Rokugan. Friendly Traveler offers a variety of types of sake, and will readily back its claim that its brew is the best in the Empire. The village is quite friendly to tourists, and has become a very a popular stop on the road, even when it's a bit out of the way.

The Lands of the Dragon

D1 Takaikabe Mura

(High Wall Village)

This village overlooks the rough terrain of Exile's Road, the Unicorn passage beyond the Badger lands and into the Northern Wastes. Legends say that Exile's Road ends in the distant Burning Sands, but no traveler in recent memory has ever returned from banishment beyond the road to tell the tale. Those who are banished often have a kinsman move permanently to this village, always watching the pass in order to defend the clan's banishment. Such a sentinel is considered an honored guest (although a permanent one), and is always treated with the utmost respect by the Dragon heimin. After fifteen years of such service, such samurai are invited to join the nearby monastery and spend the rest of their lives in prayer for their dishonored relatives.

Crane Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01-10 Bandits (1-10)

11-15 Shadowlands Creature (*Roll one die*)

1-4 Goblins (1-10)

5 Ogre

6 Troll

7 Mujina

8-10 Undead (Skeletons or Zombies) (2-20)

16-24 Emerald Magistrate on official business

25-40 Crane Samurai on official mission (*Add two dice*)

1-2 Kakita Artisan

1-2 Dancer

3-4 Singer

4-5 Origami

6-7 Actor

8-9 Poet

10 Scorpion Spy, faking an identity as a Kakita Actor

3-6 Kakita

7-10 Daidoji

11-15 Doji

16 Asahina

17-18 Scouting Party (1-5)

19 Large troop movement (20-50 men)

20 Roll twice, discounting this roll.

41-50 Ronin/Mantis (50% chance of either)

51-55 Lion assault group (10-20 samurai)

56-60 Crab scouting party (1-5)

61-65 Crab, Phoenix or Unicorn Messenger

66-80 Traveling Merchant Caravan

81-85 Common Animal (*Roll one die*)

1 Bear

2 Fox (1-2)

3 Falcon

4-5 Ape

6-7 Wild Ox Herd (1-10)

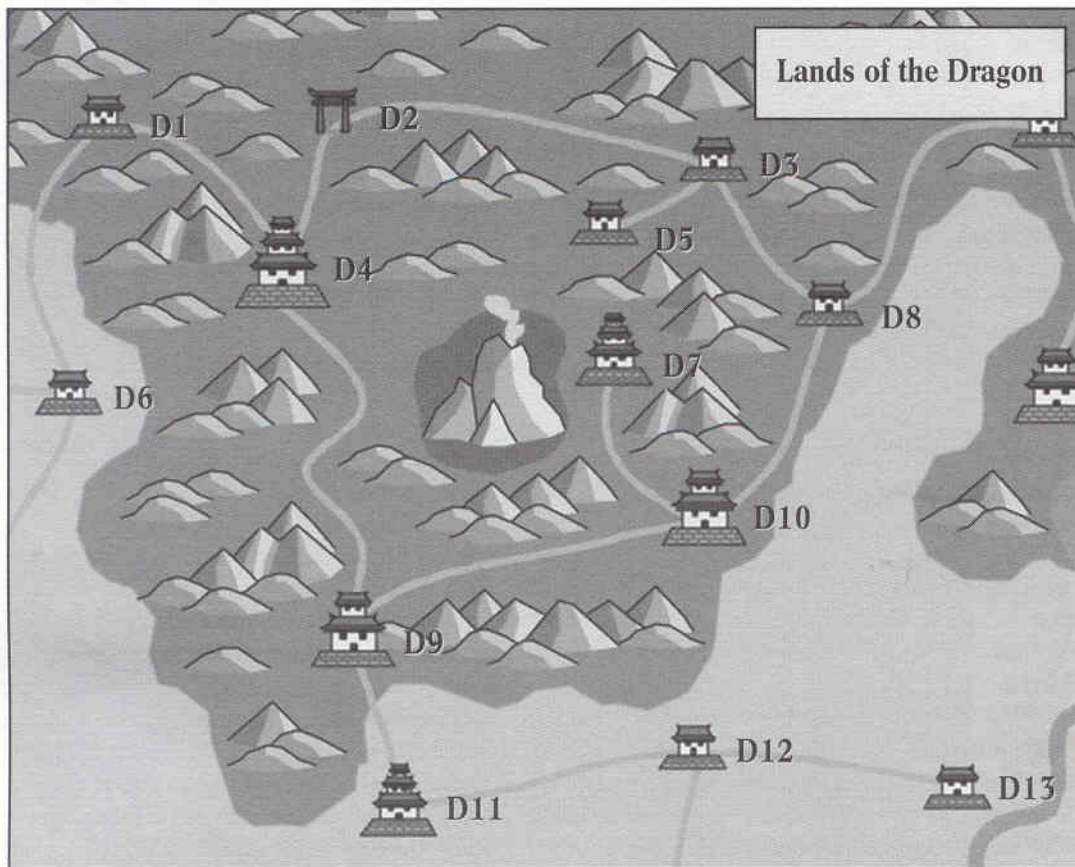
8-9 Stag

10 Tiger

86-95 Heimin travelers

96-99 Imperial Messenger or Caravan

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double the number of people or creatures involved in the encounter.



D4 Kyuden Togashi (High House of Light)

The final fortress along the Dragon Way is the fortress of the Togashi. The Togashi are not so much a family as an order of samurai who have devoted themselves to a strange religion/philosophy. The “tattooed men” of the Togashi sect are popular figures in Rokugan’s literature. These *ise zumi* rarely venture outside their monastic castles, but when they do, their bizarre actions reflect their unexplainable attunement to the Five Elements. This castle is also the home of Togashi Yokuni, head of the *ise zumi* order and the daimyo of the Dragon Clan. The road that leads to this castle is a sharp-angled steep climb. An armored man trying to make the climb would certainly fall.

D5 Maigo no Samurai Mura

(Lost Samurai Village)

This small village deep within the Dragon Mountains is sparsely inhabited, as it was decimated by ogre and bandit attack only a few years ago. Although the Mirumoto samurai came to the rescue, they were delayed by the treacherous mountain passes, and many of the samurai and heimin of the village died.

D2 Fukurokujin Seido

The shrine to Fukurokujin, Fortune of Hard Work and Integrity, is not as resplendent as other shrines throughout the Empire. It is, however, the best made and sturdiest of such shrines, and every visitor is asked to give something of himself for the betterment of the temple - a painting, assistance in constructing a new room for the monks who watch the shrine, or some other boon.

D3 Yushosha Seido Mura (Champion Shrine Village)

This small village near the Phoenix lands is said to be the homeplace of Togashi Yokuni, Champion of the Dragon Clan. The mysterious leader of the *ise zumi* often visits the town and prays at a small shrine outside the city’s gates. The shrine, also hallowed by other Dragon Champions in the past, is said to have the power to bring visions.

D6 Yamasura

This city performs the majority of Dragon trade with the western Empire, making frequent arrangements with the Unicorn and Lion Clans for trade and commerce. It is a widely spaced city, on a tall flat plain among the high mountains of the Dragon. Many Emerald Magistrates, unsure what to do after the Emerald Champion had died in the Scorpion Clan Coup, gathered here. Because of this, the city is relatively free of bandits - though the Emerald Magistrates, uncontrolled by a higher authority, are seen by many of the city authorities as near-ronin.



D7 Shiro Agasha

(Agasha Castle)

The Agasha are the keepers of the Dragon Clan library and their castle is the home of the Dragon Shugenja School. Fortified deep in the mountains, Agasha castle is one of the deepest mysteries in Rokugan. Shugenja from other clans have spent months in the castle, but when they leave, they find they can recall nothing of their stay.

D8 Heibeisu

This prosperous city on the edge of Phoenix lands constitutes a large amount of the Dragon trade with the rest of the Empire. Visitors are welcome in the city of Heibeisu, and Phoenix, in particular, often make the city a frequent site for their travels. It is a lush city, surrounded by water and rolling hills, crested by mountains to the north and east.

D9 Shiro Kitsuki

(Last Step Castle)

Called "Last Step" because of the steep climb that leads away from this castle to Kyuden Togashi (D4), Kitsuki Castle is the home of the most "orthodox" of Dragon Clan families (almost all diplomats of the Dragon Clan are from the Kitsuki family). Some say there is a secret path from the flatlands to Kitsuki castle, but if there is, it is hidden well.

D10 Shiro Mirumoto

(Last Glance Castle)

The home of the Mirumoto family stands high at the entrance of the Great Wall of the North. The road spirals upward into a wide ravine and the castle looks down into the ravine. Those who wish to visit the castle must climb the steep path. Invaders must avoid arrows, pitch and fire from above with no way to retaliate. The lord of the castle died shortly after his first-born son was killed in a duel by the Crab samurai Hida Yakamo. The lord's only remaining child - Mirumoto Hitomi - inherited the Dragon Clan's ancestral sword and the castle, but she has left it behind to seek revenge for her brother's death.

D11 Kyuden Tonbo

(Dragonfly Clan Palace)

The Dragonfly Clan was born from a marriage contract between a samurai from the Phoenix Clan and a shugenja from the Dragon Clan. The Dragonfly Clan's castle is not formidable, but is protected by enchanted walls and the cousins of the Dragonfly: the Dragon and the Phoenix.

The Dragonfly Clan serves as emissaries and go-betweens for the Dragon and the rest of the Empire. If you wish audience with the Dragon, you must first seek audience with the Dragonfly.

D12 Toi Koku

(Distant Paddy Village)

Although the Dragon remain mostly aloof from the remainder of Rokugan, they still must eat, and their mountainous lands do not grow crops well. When merchants come to deliver rice to the Dragon, this is the village where they transact their business.

Dragon Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01-10 Bandits (1-5)

11-13 Shadowlands Creature (*Roll one die*)

1-5 Ogre

6 Troll

7 Mujina

8-10 Undead (Skeletons or Zombies) (2-20)

14-25 Wandering Emerald Magistrate

26-40 Dragon Samurai on official mission (*Add two dice*)

2 Togashi *ise zumi*

3-6 Agasha

7-10 Kitsuki

11-16 Mirumoto

17-19 Scouting Party (1-5)

20 Roll twice, discounting this roll.

41-55 Ronin (*Roll one die*)

1-9 Typical Ronin

10 Ronin claiming allegiance with the
Ronin General, Toturi

56-57 Pilgrim looking for Togashi Mountain

58-65 Crane, Lion, Phoenix or Unicorn Messenger

66-75 Traveling Merchant Caravan

76-85 Common Animal (*Roll one die*)

1 Bear

2 Snake (1-2)

3 Eagle

4-5 Ape

6-7 Wild Ox Herd (1-10)

8-9 Small Game

10 Tiger

86-98 Heimin travelers

99 Imperial Messenger or Caravan

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double
the amount of creatures found.



Lion Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01-20 Bandits (1-10)

21-23 Shadowlands Creature (*Roll one die*)

- 1-3 Ogre
- 4-7 Goblins (2-20)
- 8 Bloodspeaker cultists
- 9-10 Undead (Skeletons or Zombies) (2-20)

24-25 Lion (Matsu) Patrol

26-50 Lion Samurai on official mission (*Add two dice*)

- 2 Kitsu
- 3-6 Ikoma
- 7-10 3 Lion samurai with captured Crane prisoners
- 11-16 Matsu
- 17-19 Scouting Party (1-5)
- 20 Roll twice, discounting this roll.

51-60 Ronin

61-62 Phoenix or Unicorn Messenger

63-70 Traveling Merchant Caravan

71-75 Common Animal (*Roll one die*)

- 1 Boar (1-5)
- 2 Snake (1-2)
- 3 Hawk
- 6-7 Wild Ox Herd (1-10)
- 8-9 Small Game
- 10 Tiger

76-93 Lion Military brigade (100-500 samurai), traveling to war at: (*Roll one die*)

- 1-5 Crane lands
- 5-8 Scorpion Lands
- 9-10 Reinforce Unicorn border

94-98 Heimin travelers

99 Imperial Messenger or Caravan

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double the amount of creatures found.

D13 Nanashi Mura

(Anonymous Village)

On the southern edge of the Dragon territories stands this anomaly of a village. The village is, in fact, inhabited and ruled entirely by ronin, with the sanction of Dragon Champion Togashi Yokuni. The Dragon forbid the ronin village any obvious defenses,

limit the size of their city guard, and watch the village with a careful eye. Thus far there have been no major disorderly incidents. A ronin who comes to Nanashi will be asked no questions about his past, so long as he causes no trouble.

The Lands of the Lion

L1 Toshi no Meiyo Gisei

(City of Honor's Sacrifice)

A young samurai maiden - whose name has been erased from the Lion histories - made the ultimate sacrifice in the home of the headman of this village. She kept a secret lover here, and when her daimyo discovered her secret, she vowed to commit seppuku to show her loyalty to her lord. The daimyo agreed, but at the ceremony, he gave her a wooden sword to perform the act. The samurai-ko took the wooden sword and performed the ceremony, despite the insult. A shrine dedicated to her memory still stands in this village.

L2 Mura sano Eiyu ni Suru

(Village of the Reinstated Hero)

Ikoma Teidei was a young, handsome and promising samurai... before his daimyo was killed by an assassin. Teidei became a ronin and spent seven years seeking out his daimyo's killer. He finally cornered the assassin in this village. A shrine stands today where the ronin killed the assassin and then committed seppuku to join his master.

L3 Shiro sano Ken Hayai

(Castle of the Swift Sword)

This is the school of the Akodo family, teaching its samurai both the pen and sword aspects of bushido. This is where the great and noble history of the Lion Clan is kept. This is also the ancestral home of the Kitsu family. Normally, the Kitsu serve as the historians of the Lion Clan, but Ikoma Kaoku currently serves as the Clan's historian.

L4 Rugashi

This humble village in the central area of Lion lands is one of the most heavily traveled cities in the Lion lands. Travelers wishing to move from the Crane to the Unicorn lands, or from any northern point to central Rokugan, generally come through here for supplies and equipment. This is one of the few towns outside the Dragon lands where ise zumi are not an unusual sight, and it is rumored



that the governor of Rugashi has secret trade agreements with the Dragon and Dragonfly clans.

L5 Oiku

This village serves as a permanent military outpost for the Lion's continuous siege against Toshi Ranbo, the fortress of the Crane. Four separate unsuccessful attacks have been directed from the village; two were led by the former Champion, Akodo Arasou, and two by the current champion, Matsu Tsuko. Lion soldiers dread being assigned to this village, for the repeated failures have given the village a reputation for being cursed. Well aware of the predominant opinions, Tsuko has moved much of her command staff to Ninkatoshi and assigns redundant and unnecessary personnel to Oiku.

L6 Shiranai Toshi

(Darkness City)

This city, founded in the lee of Lookout Mountain (a singular mountain rising from the plains of the Lion lands) is one of the original Ikoma strongholds dating back to the Lion occupation of Unicorn lands during the long period of time in which the Ki-Rin were not in Rokugan. It was not returned to the Otaku when the Unicorn returned; a point of contention that has been debated in the Imperial Court for nearly three hundred years.

L7 Foshi

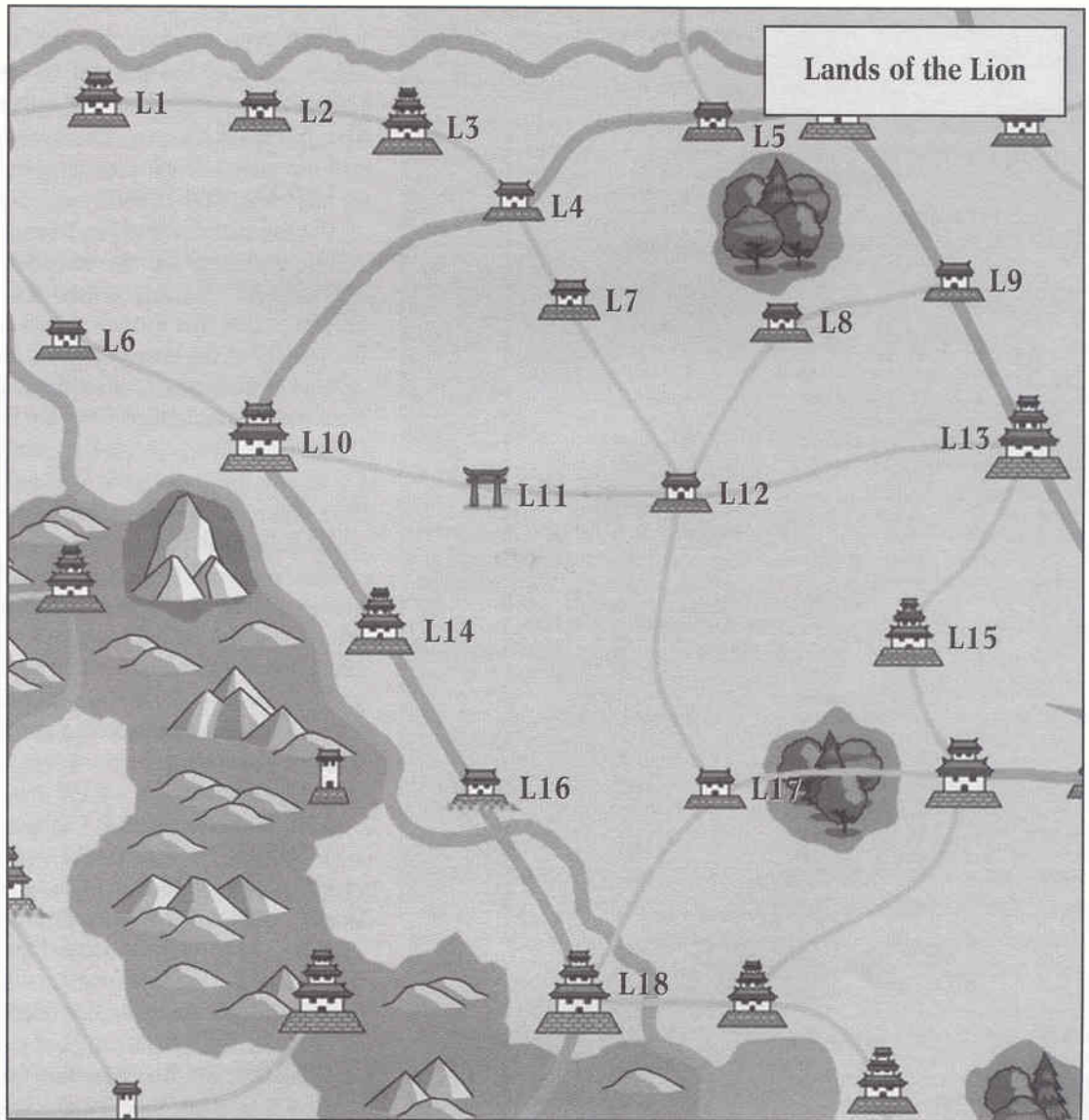
This rather uninteresting city has the distinction of being one of the most productive food resources in the Lion lands. This leads to a great number of troops being stationed here, and a tremendous

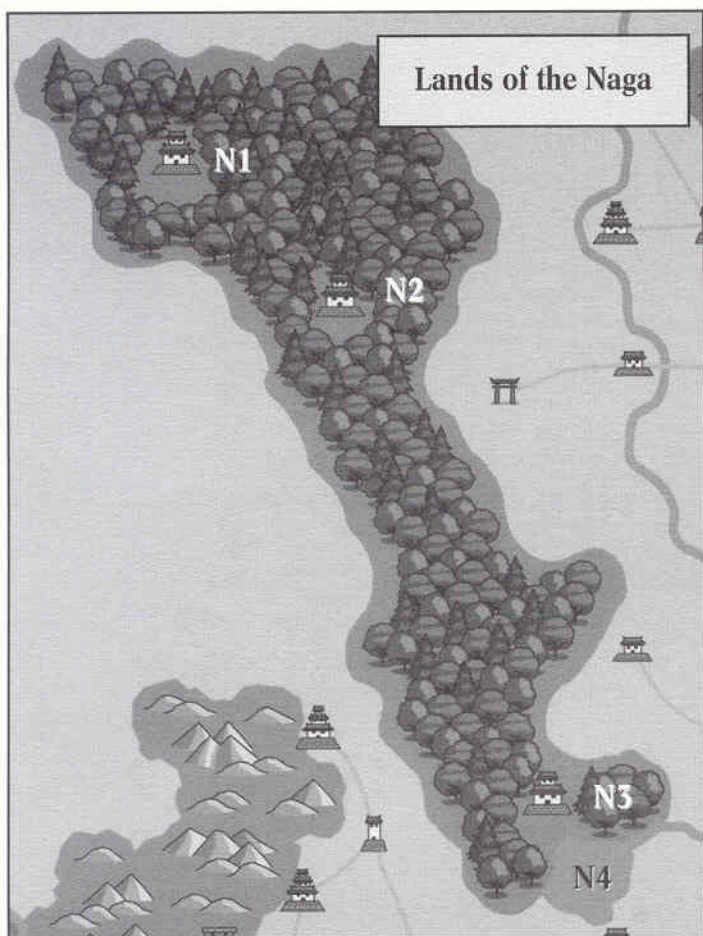
number of silos outside the city hold the crops for military dispensation later in the year.

L8 Renga Murai

(Brick Village)

This village, constructed almost entirely of stone, stands on the edge of the only major Lion forest. The lumber of the forest goes entirely toward military purposes, and the peasants of this village are not allowed to use it for building purposes; thus, the village's structure and name.





her staff strive to insure that only the finest bushi and most skilled officers receive appointment to Ninkatoshi. Outside of the War Colleges, the small village has become a home for the best the Lion Clan has to offer.

L10 Kyuden Ikoma

(Sacred Watch Palace)

The traditional Ikoma homeland is located at the base of the Mountain of Thunders, where the Seikitsu mountains divide the Empire in two. The fortress serves as an informal meeting place for the leaders of the clan to discuss internal issues. Once the farthest outpost of Rokugan civilization, it now serves to defend the Lion from possible incursions from the Dragon or Unicorn (although the Dragon has not expanded its borders since the founding of the Empire).

L11 Bishamon Seido

The Shrine of Bishamon, fortune of Strength, is elaborate and ornate, maintained by no less than five hundred Kitsu shugenja and priests. It is one of the most well-maintained buildings in the Lion lands, and is also the site of the training grounds for the elite Matsu unit, the Lion's Pride. Males who wish to set foot on the Lion's Pride training grounds must accept a challenge to prove their sincerity and strength in battle.

L12 Tonfajutsen

This small city, named after its distinctive fighting style, is said to have been the location of a once-great weaponsmith named Gokuzi. Gokuzi, said to be the founder of modern weapons for the peasantry (and therefore, reviled), created and utilized the first tonfa in this city, forcing the Emperor's own magistrates to cease their harassment of the heimin. Gokuzi was rapidly brought up on charges, testified against, and put to death. A small peasant shrine is said to exist in the woods outside the city, but few heimin are willing to show it to outsiders.

L13 Shiro Akodo

(Loyalty Castle)

This deteriorating castle still goes by the name of Shiro Akodo, even though it houses only half as many people as it did before the Scorpion Clan Coup and its attendant destruction of the Akodo family. Akodo Kage, one of the only samurai in Rokugan who was allowed to keep the Akodo name after the Coup, lives here. When he was granted his dispensation, he begged the Emperor to let the ancestral home of the Akodo keep its name and not suffer the shame of becoming ronin; his plea was granted.

L9 Ninkatoshi

(Permission City)

This village has recently been converted to a military outpost by the Lion for their war against the Crane. Matsu Tsuko can often be found here. The village's conversion from farming village to strategic outpost has been entirely under her direction, and she considers it one of her first great triumphs as Champion of the Lion. Tsuko and





L14 Kenson Gakka

(Humility's Lesson)

This fortress, once known as Shiro no Meiyo - the Castle of Honor - stands as a reminder to the Lion's southward neighbors. Six hundred years ago the Scorpion tried to take Ikoma Castle, but their effort was not successful. Responding to Scorpion aggression, the Matsu attacked the Scorpion's nearest castle, previously called "The Lion's Shadow." When the Matsu overtook the castle, they killed every man, woman and child inside and claimed it for the Lion Clan, renaming it "Humility's Lesson."

L15 Shiro no Yojin

(Castle of Vigilance)

Fifty years ago, this castle belonged to the Crane Clan, but now it belongs to the Matsu family. The Crane abandoned the castle when they saw an advancing Lion army, marching to avenge a slight made by a Crane diplomat. Today, no one is certain what the comment was, but the Matsu family remains in Shiro no Yojin, a convenient location from which to launch an attack against the Kakita family.

L16 Kyakuchu Mura

(Footnote Village)

Footnote Village, a small and uninteresting place only two years ago, has blossomed in the fullness of war. The town was built to watch the Scorpion at Kakusu Tekai Torid-e, the Hidden Watch Keep, but in the aftermath of the Scorpion Clan Coup, it has become a staging ground against the Scorpion lands. Matsu Tsuko, Champion of the Lion, has given the samurai at Kyakuchu two years to capture Kakusu Tekai Torid-e from the 'ronin' who hold it, and to seize all Scorpion-controlled lands surrounding the keep.

L17 Kaeru Toshi

(Captured City)

This city was taken recently in battle with the Crane. Matsu Tsuko renamed it, and has commanded Ikoma and Matsu troops to hold it as a staging ground for imminent assaults on Kakita Palace and the Osari Plains. The city is in a constant state of rebellion, as Crane samurai and heimin fight against their Lion overseers, but the Lion have the upper hand.

L18 Shiro Matsu

(Last Breath Castle)

This is the ancestral Matsu home, where the first Matsu met with the first Akodo. The largest contingent of Lion samurai are here, carefully guarding the supply lines on which the vast Lion armies depend. The armies are made up of all the Lion families: Kitsu, Matsu and Ikoma alike.

Naga Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01-10 Shadowlands Creature *(Roll one die)*

- 1-2 Ogre
- 3-7 Rattling Tribe (1-10)
- 8 Mujina (5-10)
- 9-10 Undead (Skeletons or Zombies) (2-20)

11-25 Naga Greensnake Scouts *(Can speak simple Rokugani)*

26-50 Naga bushi on official mission *(Add two dice)*

- 2 Cobra Jakla
- 3-6 Chameleon Spies, following the PCs
- 7-10 Naga Bushi (3 Asps) with captured Crab prisoners
- 11-16 Asp War Party
- 17 Cobra Jakla doing spell research
- 18-19 Constrictor
- 20 Roll twice, discounting this roll.

50-55 Ronin

56-58 Crab Scouting Party (1-5)

59-60 Dragon/Ronin (Toturi's guard) Scout Party (1-5)

61-85 Common Animal *(Add two dice)*

- 2-4 Ape (1-10)
- 5 Bear (1-2)
- 6-7 Boar (1-5)
- 8 Falcon
- 9-10 Fox
- 11-15 Snake *(Roll one die)*
 - 1-2 Constrictor
 - 3-5 Viper
 - 5-10 Common
- 16-18 Small Game
- 19-20 Stag

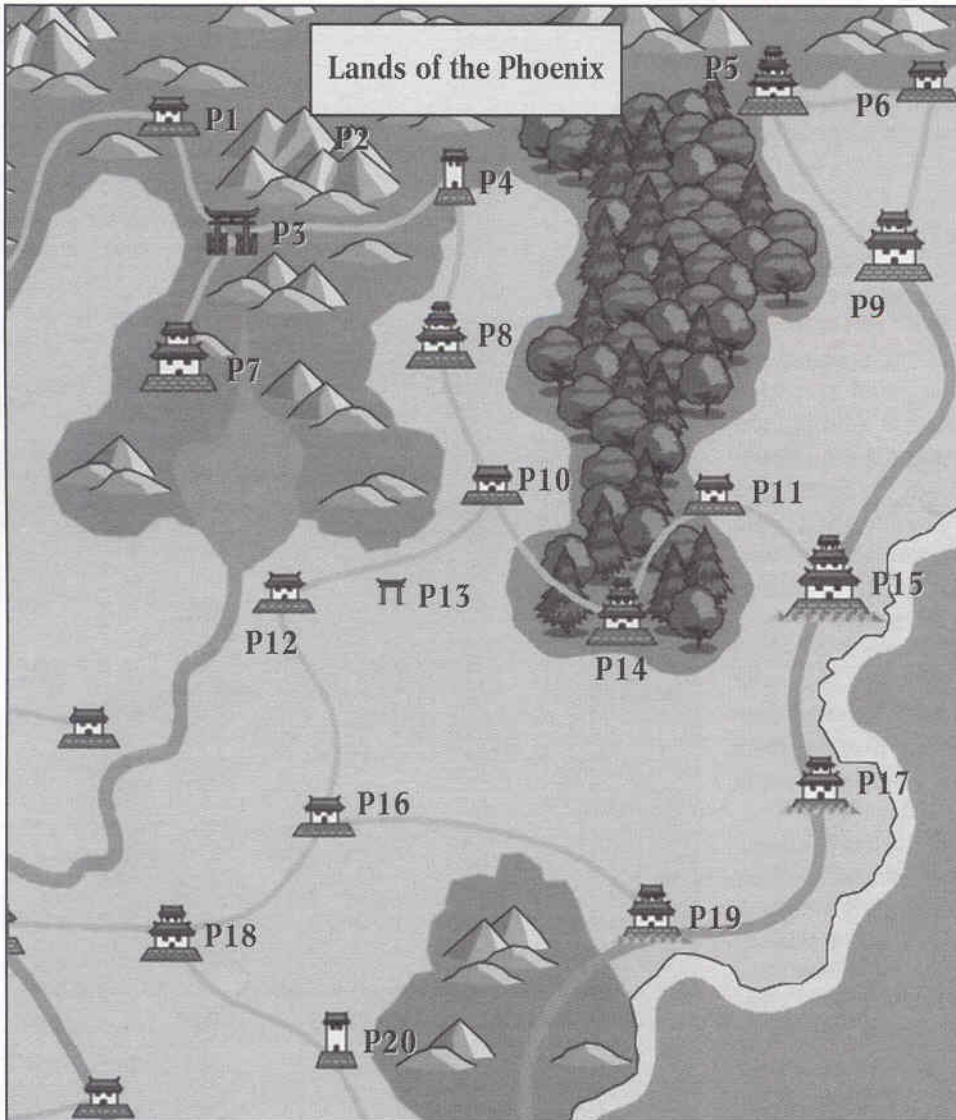
86-98 Naga Traps

- 1-3 Pitfall
- 4-6 Rope Snare
- 7 Spike Growth
- 8-9 Net (Entrapping Snare)
- 10 Dart Thrower (Poisoned)

99 Wood Spirit

- 0-30 Kitsune/Foxwife
- 31-60 Hengeyoki (Animal Spirit)
- 61-90 Minor Kami of Earth
- 91-00 Minor Kami of Air/Fire/Water

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double the amount of creatures found.



seek to understand the strange world around them through communion and meditation, hoping that their path will become clear as the Great Mind unfolds into awareness.

N2 Vyakarana

Vyakarana, called by some the 'City of Magic', lies deep in the mists of the Shinomen, in a valley that is enshrouded on three sides by magnificent waterfalls. There is no wall to the city, and the Cobra who live there say there are no bridges across the three mighty rivers. Even other Naga consider it to be a place filled with ghosts and memories, and some Constrictors whisper that the mists do not come from the waterfalls, but from the Akasha's nearness.

The city is covered in webs of magic that even the Cobra cannot unwrap, hidden by their arts amid a warm, jungle environment. Few have been there, and those who have say that the city of Vyakarana still sleeps. Certainly, the oldest of the Cobra have not yet awakened, leaving their eggbeds cold and their fires low. Those who have, including the great Shashakar, protect the sleepers with their spells - and their lives.

N3 Siksa

The wall surrounding the city of the Asps tells a tale of fire and courage; it is located within the lower portions of the

Lands of the Naga

N1 Iyotisha

Iyotisha (the name for the Naga reverence of astrology) is the city of astronomers, once home to the Constrictors and their massive children. The city of Iyotisha did not survive the thousand years of sleep well, but unlike Nirukti, it remained hidden deep within the western valleys of the Shinomen. Its walls, while broken, still whisper the lessons of the Akasha, and the temple of the Vedic priests remains whole. Here the few remaining Constrictors struggle to reawaken the Akasha, so that their purpose can be known. They

Naga forests, near the lake known as Sumda Mizu Mura. It still stands, in golden splendor, though its walls are encased in moss and the mighty plain has turned into a valley within the forest's depths. The Shahadet makes his home here, governing the land of the Asp with firmness and ruthless justice.

Within Siska's walls lies the source of the River of the Sky, and the place where the great general of the Bloodland Wars was at last captured by the spell of the Cobra Jakla and the betrayal of the Shahadet. Once per year, the Shahadet and his personal legion travel beneath Siska, to bathe in the waters at the source of the Holy River. There, they commune with the warriors of the past and face their fears on a vision quest.



N4 Nirukti

These strange ruins were declared blasphemous during the time of the 11th Hantei, and were nearly completely destroyed. The Greensnakes who slept here died with their city, unaware of what was happening. The Naga mourn the loss of their cousins, but are more concerned with what has happened to the city since. A strange corruption seems to be taking over the Nirukti ruins, preying upon both Naga and humans who dare explore the gloomy burial grounds.

Lands of the Phoenix

P1 Yabanjin Mura

(Barbarian Village)

This relatively difficult-to-find village specializes in trade with the foreign barbarians of the north, the Yabanjin tribes. The materials gathered from these tribes are primitive, but often useful to the Phoenix for their spell research. The Phoenix rarely mention this small village, as its existence is a technical breach of Imperial Law against trading with gaijin. The Yabanjin tribes - who look Rokugani and speak a primitive dialect of the Rokugani language - are very much like the early Unicorn, and the Phoenix use this as an excuse for their continued trade.

P2 The Hidden Temple (no map entry)

Unknown to the majority of Rokugan, a great pyramid stands in the heart of the Phoenix mountains. This structure is a home to the nefarious Kolat. From here, the Ten Masters plot the future of the Empire, and plan the slow but certain destruction of their enemies. The Temple is home to the Oni's Eye - perhaps the most powerful nemuranai in existence. The Eye gives the Kolat extraordinary communication and espionage abilities, and is in fact the source of much of their deadly influence. One or more of the Ten Masters of the Kolat are always in residence here.

P3 Seido Jurojin

The shrine to Jurojin, Fortune of Longevity, is cared for by Asako priests and monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. A popular shrine, its distance from the heart of the Empire makes pilgrimages rare, and visitors are welcomed as unusual diversions from daily life. A small village has sprung up on the outskirts of the shrine, filled with those who wish to pray to the Fortune for the secrets of eternal life.

P4 Kitamihari

(Northern Watch)

This watchtower was erected by Isawa during the Age of the Fallen Kami. It was originally designed to guard the passes toward

Isawa's City, but that city was destroyed hundreds of years ago, and the tower's purpose now is largely memorial. Nevertheless, the Isawa maintain it, stationing troops there and keeping constant 'watch' over the surrounding hillsides and mountain passes. Some say that the Isawa desire to know when the Yabanjin tribes are massing for war, and that the troops stationed here are to keep guard against the barbarians. Others state that the Isawa are hiding something in their northern mountains; none can say for sure.

Phoenix Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01-05 Shadowlands Creature (*Roll one die*)

1-2	Ogre
3-7	Goblins (2-20)
8	Mujina (5-10)
9-10	Undead (Skeletons or Zombies) (2-20)

14-25 Imperial diplomats or Seppun shugenja

25-50 Phoenix samurai on official mission (*Add two dice*)

2	Yabanjin barbarian
3-5	Asako scholars
6-10	Shiba samurai
11-17	Isawa shugenja
18-19	Phoenix yojimbo, escorting a shugenja of another clan
20	Roll twice, discounting this roll.

50-60 Ronin

61-65 Lion Scouting Party (1-10)

66-85 Common Animal (*Add two dice*)

2-4	Ape (1-10)
5-7	Bear (1-2)
8	Falcon
9-10	Fox
11-15	Small Game
15-19	Stag
20	Tiger

86-98 Lost Ruins (*Haunted 50% of the time*)

99 Wood Spirit (*Roll two dice*)

0-30	Kitsune/Foxwife
31-60	Hengeyoki (Animal Spirit)
61-90	Minor Kami of Water
91-00	Minor Kami of Air/Fire/Earth

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double the amount of creatures found.



P5 Shiro sano Chujitsu and Shinpu

(Castle of the Faithful Bride)

The Castle of the Faithful Bride was built by Matsu Hitomi's lover after her tragic death. The first stone was laid on the first anniversary of her death, and it was completed after 27 years - her age when she died. The samurai lord who loved her was never married, and his line ended with his death.

P6 Doro Owari Mura

(Road's End Village)

An entirely unremarkable and inhospitable village. Many avoid it.

P7 Reihaido sano Ki-rin

(Shrine of the Ki-rin)

The mysterious creature known as the Ki-Rin has been linked to both the kami Shinjo and the Elemental Dragons. Even the Phoenix are uncertain of its origins, but it has been sighted in this area many times in the past. Always, its arrival is an omen of great things to come. The last time it was sighted was two hundred years ago, shortly before the Unicorn returned home to Rokugan. The shrine here is one of the largest in Phoenix lands, richly decorated and lovingly tended by the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

P8 Aojiroi Oku Shiro

(Pale Oak Castle)

Located on the Aojiroi Oku Heigen (Pale Oak Plain), this magnificent castle is the site of many of the Imperial Winter Courts, and has often hosted Imperial marriages, treaty signings, and other official events. Disregarding tradition, on his deathbed the seventeenth Hantei demanded that he be buried - not cremated - in an empty field near where the woman he loved was born. From his grave, a tall pale oak grew. A castle has been erected about the oak to protect it. Many believe that bark from the tree has healing abilities.

P9 Kyuden Isawa

(Phoenix Clan Palace)

The castle that houses the Isawa family is located on the shoreline. It is surrounded by sand, making it difficult for an army to move against it. The walls have been enchanted with runes to protect it from both magical and physical attack. The Isawa library, housed here, is the greatest repository of knowledge in all of Rokugan, containing the researches of a thousand years of Phoenix shugenja.

P10 Michita Yasumi

(Hopeful Rest City)

This small city in the center of Phoenix lands is a bustling trade center, filled with commerce from the Dragon, Crane, and northern

Phoenix lands. Students who wish to study at the Schools of Wizardry often come to this city in order to find a Phoenix patron to sponsor their entry into these prestigious and exclusive libraries.

P11 Shinsei and Sumai Mura

(Holy Home Village)

This village was once a pilgrimage destination, back when the followers of Shinsei were not yet an organized order. Several manor houses and the shrine were constructed by Shiba Esade, a Master of Earth. Pilgrims would bring a stone from many miles away which would then be added by the master to a building. The stones fit together perfectly and have lasted many hundreds of years.

P12 Ukabu Mura

(Floating Village)

This village has been contested by the Dragon on numerous occasions, but has always remained in Phoenix hands. It rests on the edge of the Drowned Merchant river which then winds into the Lion and Unicorn lands. It is renowned for its geisha houses, where geisha are trained to continue their careers in the Imperial city of Otosan Uchi.

P13 Reihaido Uikku

(Uikku Shrine)

The area here considered sacred includes not only the shrine but also the large expanse of plain that surrounds it (known as Yogensha Heigen or Prophet Plain). The shrine was erected here in honor of the Phoenix shugenja, Uikku, whose interpretations and prophecies on the Tao of Shinsei created the system of enlightenment. His words, recorded by the Phoenix, gave humanity their first roads to understanding the enigmatic wisdom of Shinsei.

P14 Shiro Asako

(Morning Glory Castle)

Also called "Castle of the White Phoenix." It stands at the top of an outcrop of black rock, and its white walls are so high that the first rays of sunlight make it a shining beacon to the rest of the land.

P15 Shiro Shiba

(Shiba Castle)

Located in the far northern reaches of Rokugan, Shiro Shiba is a maze of courtyards, donjons and walls put together in a seemingly haphazard fashion, with the main donjon rising from its center. There are those who say the entire castle is an elaborate puzzle. Crab engineers say it is the result of simple bad planning.



P16 Nikesake

This small city, located on the edge of the Crane lands near Toshi Ranbo, has cemented the Phoenix/Crane alliance for over three hundred years. The Phoenix have been instrumental in defending Toshi Ranbo from constant Lion assault, providing supplies and reinforcements when the Kakita to the south had been cut off by Matsu troops. Because of this, a joint shrine stands outside the city walls, where each of the two clans honor each other. It is said that so long as these two shrines stand, there will always be peace between the Phoenix and the Crane.

P17 Morikage Toshi

(Forest Shadow City)

When a bride from the Dragon Clan was scorned by her Shiba husband, her mother put a curse on Mori Kage. Today, it looks as if the limbs of the forest have reached out to claim the castle. It is completely deserted, save for the ghostly court that walks the castle's halls.

P18 Mamoru Kyotei Toshi

(Honored Treaty City)

Seven hundred years ago, a great war broke out between the Phoenix and Lion. The war raged many years, ending only when both sides sued for peace. The City of the Honored Treaty is the final repository for the peace treaty between the Lion and Phoenix that ended the bitter struggle.

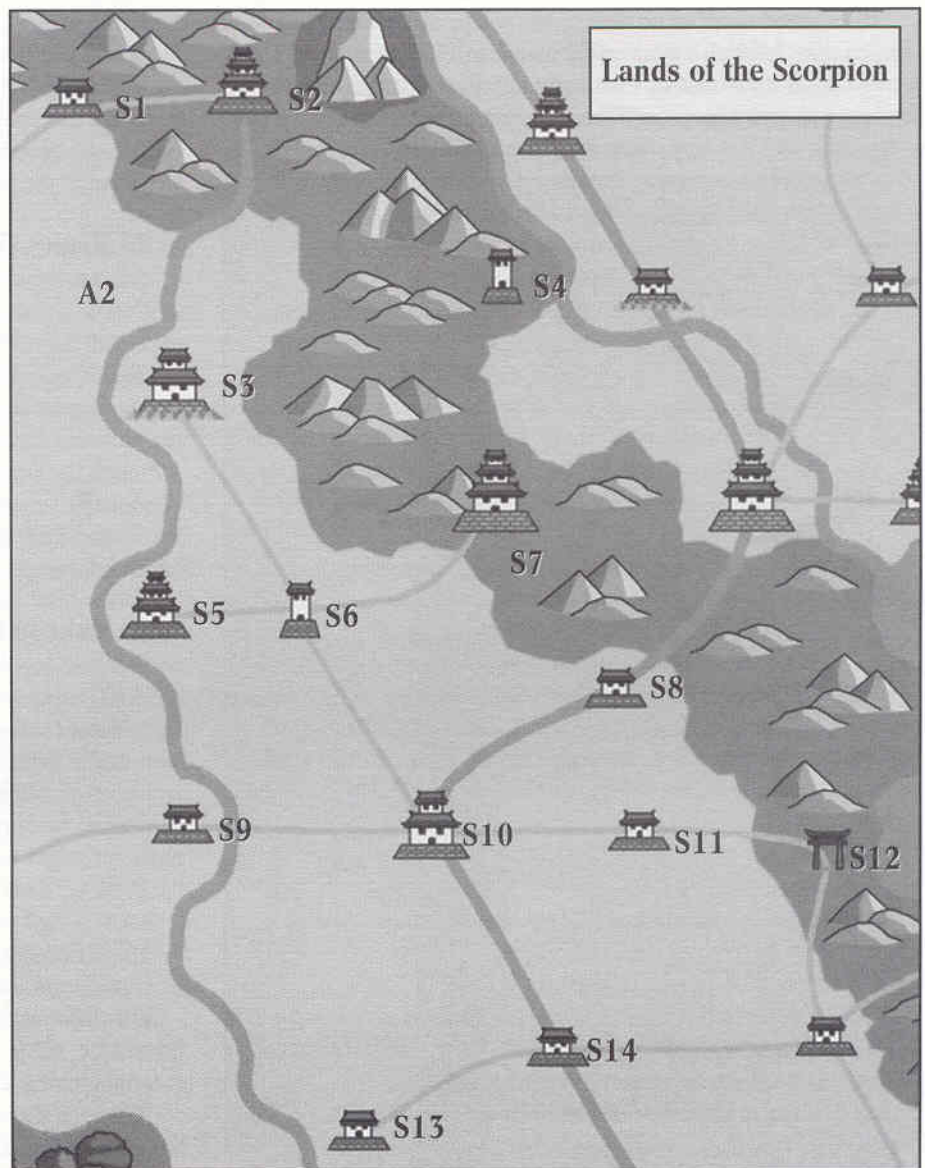
P19 Toshi no Omoidoso

(City of Remembrance)

Matsu Hitomi, an ancient heroine of the Lion Clan, spent her last full day of life within this city. It is not known exactly what she said or did, for after she died the heimin would not divulge her secrets. The enraged Lion daimyo ordered fully three-fourths of the population to be executed for their insolence; he at last relented when not even under the threat of death would the heimin cooperate. Some think that the heimin of Toshi no Omoidoso still remember Matsu Hitomi's secrets. In fact, the city has prospered with people moving here hoping to be privy to her last words and actions, but apparently only those directly related to the villagers who survived ever know the truth.

P20 Zumiki-mihari

This watchtower 'guards' the Imperial (Otomo family) lands, keeping the boundary between the Isawa and the Otomo sharply defined. The Isawa have never been allies with the Otomo, and although the tower's purpose is largely ceremonial, the Isawa have refused to remove it or tear it down. They claim that it is a historical relic, and should be maintained well because it is an integral part of Rokugani history; the truth is that they enjoy watching the Otomo troop movements and knowing when their ambassadors and diplomats travel the land.





Lands of the Scorpion

Remember that during the Clan Wars, these lands are not publicly controlled by the Scorpion, who were declared anathema when the Scorpion Clan Coup failed. Various clans have begun encroaching on the borders; the Crane and Crab have seized some of the southern cities and palaces, and the remaining Imperial Magistrates guard and govern the rest (under the quiet rule of Empress Kachiko, of course).

S1 Pokau

Throughout much of its history, the sleepy little village of Pokau was a quiet farming town, barely aware of the Seven Great Clans except when the Scorpion Clan collected those light taxes that they bothered to levy. Then, about three hundred years ago, it had a rude

awakening: the Unicorn returned. The quiet village has become a city, the swiftest and most efficient means for travelers from the southern provinces to reach Shiro Iuchi or the Unicorn palaces to the north. While the passes through the mountains here are not as wide or traversable as those at Beiden Pass, the Pokau passes are suitable for small caravans or groups of samurai afoot or on horseback.

S2 Shiro no Soshi

(Castle of Organization)

The castle of the Soshi family overlooks the lands of the Lion. It is here that the shugenja family of the Scorpion would practice their dark rituals of deception. Those who do not know the secret path to the castle can wander the treacherous, twisting mountain passes for days without finding Shiro no Soshi. Although the stronghold was seriously damaged in the punitive expedition after the Coup and is presumed abandoned, the Lion have been too preoccupied with their war against the Crane to reduce and occupy it.

S3 Ryoko Owari Toshi

(Journey's End City)

If you are looking for gambling dens, geisha houses, opium parlors or any other illicit activity, Ryoko Owari is the place to go. Of course, all of this activity occurs behind the city's "legitimate" face, and great deal of legal trade goes on here as well. But behind the closed doors and open faces lurk indulgences of all varieties. Although the Unicorn members of the city's ruling council took over administrative functions after the Coup, the daily life of the city barely changed; the new overlords have been unsuccessful in their hesitant attempts to crack down on the corruption in the city.

S4 Kakusu Keikai Torid-e

(Hidden Watch Keep)

High in the mountains, the Hidden Watch Keep overlooks Beiden Pass. The Scorpion always manned the high tower with shugenja, who would send signals back to their clan informing the Bayushi family of all traffic through the Pass. Although at present the keep is manned by Imperial guards in the service of the Emperor, a keen observer might notice that the faces of these 'Imperial Guards' are the same as those of the Scorpion guards of a few years earlier.

S5 Shiro no Shosuro

(Castle of Pretending)

The Shosuro family of the Scorpion Clan were famous for their herbalistic skills and alchemical experiments. Far beneath the entertainment halls, the Shosuro distilled brews both fair and foul.

When the Emerald Legions appeared at Shiro no Shosuro shortly after the Coup to demand its surrender, the gates stood open and

Scorpion Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01-15 Shadowlands Creature (*Roll one die*)

1-2	Ogre
3	Troll
4-7	Goblins (2-20)
8	Lesser Oni
9-10	Undead (Skeletons or Zombies) (2-20)

16-25 Imperial magistrates and guards, searching for Scorpion rebels to destroy.

26-50 Scorpion samurai hiding beneath another clan's mon (*roll one die on both charts*)

1-2	Yogo	1-2	Crane
3-4	Shosuro	3-4	Crab
4-6	Soshi	5-6	Lion
7-10	Bayushi	7-10	Unicorn

51-70 Ronin

71-85 Lion, Crane or Crab Scouting Party (1-10)

86-90 Common Animal (*Add two dice*)

2-6	Badger
7-10	Fox
11-15	Small Game
15-19	Stag
20	Tiger

91-99 Scorpion army encampment, hidden, containing 10-100 samurai.

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double the amount of creatures found.



only the castle's servants dwelled within. Many of the Shosuro had committed seppuku; the others had simply vanished. The Imperial Guards left a token garrison, which the "vanished" Shosuro have been quietly subverting ever since.

S6 Nihai Tower

This great watchtower stands on the only road to Yogo Shiro, and guards a treacherous bit of swamp and cliff walls. From this vantage point, high on the edge of the Spine of the World mountains, a guard can see watchfires in both the Yogo noble palace and in nearby Shiro no Shosuro. Messages were often been passed from the two families using such methods - though the code was altered frequently, and was never known to have been broken. At present the watchfires are banked, as there is no need to signal between these two strongholds.

S7 Yogo Shiro

(Castle of Learning)

What was once home to the great shugenja school of the Scorpion Clan is isolated from the rest of the Empire. It is located in the foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains. Before the Clan Wars, its head teacher, Yogo Junzo, secretly guarded the first of the Twelve Black Scrolls. However, after Shoji's death, both Junzo and the scroll vanished - and have not been heard from again.

S8 Beiden

The small city south of Beiden Pass has perhaps seen more of war than any other single site in Rokugan. When the Scorpion and the Lion fight, the city of Beiden sees the battle, hears the stories, and heals the wounded. When the Lion or Crab fight the Crane refugees come here in search of new homes and lands farther north or south. When the Unicorn returned to Rokugan, they marched through Beiden on their way to Otsan Uchi - and so do the beasts of the Shadowlands, when they gain strength enough to enter the Empire. The result has been an extremely fortified city, few plains for farming, and an attitude of strength and perseverance.

S9 Ginasutra

This small village 'guards the road' toward the Shrine of Osano Wo, though it would be more appropriate to say that it stands in order to lighten a traveler's burdens as he journeys toward the holy site. Supplies can be purchased here, as well as incense, cookies and other gifts for the Fortunes, and everything is reasonably priced.

S10 Kyuden Bayushi

(Scorpion Clan Palace)

The Bayushi family castle was located just south of Beiden Pass, the cross-roads of the Empire. It was once one of the three most extravagant family palaces in the Empire, in a league with the Doji palace and the Mantis Clan palace.

That changed after the Coup. The Bayushi led the Scorpion Clan into treason, rebelling against the Hantei, and their stronghold paid the price after the rebellion was broken. Few Scorpion samurai remained within the shelter of its walls when the Emperor's Emerald Legions arrived; they did not live to see the next day's dawn. Kyuden Bayushi was razed to the ground.

Only *to* the ground, however; before they died defending it, the remaining Bayushi sealed all entrances to the labyrinth under the castle, and concealed their existence. When the castle was destroyed, all evidence of subterranean tunnels was wiped out. The labyrinth is now accessible only through what were once escape tunnels, and its presence has gone undetected.

Traitor's Grove, south of the castle, still stands as it ever has. Not even the Imperial Legions dared disturb it.

S11 Kagoki

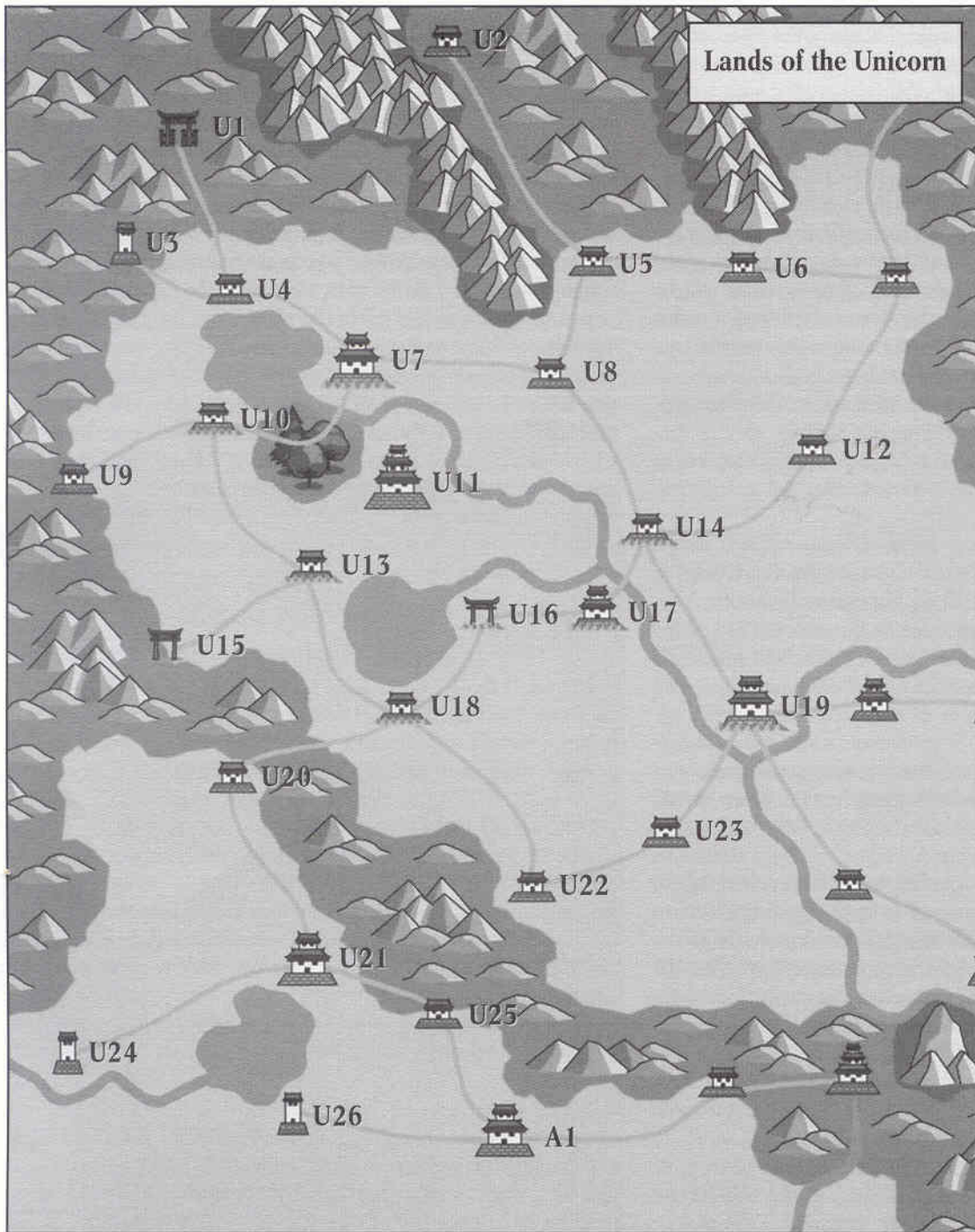
This fertile plains village stands in the center of Bayushi lands, and provides more food and resources than any other settlement in the former Scorpion lands. It is said that the only honest Scorpion heimin live in Kagoki, though this saying is often mocked by the Crab and Crane who trade there.

S12 Hotei Seido

The shrine to Hotei, the Fortune of Contentment, is small but luxurious. All manner of arts are practiced by the monks who keep the temple, and those samurai who have artistic talent often choose to retire here in order to spend their retirement in peace and harmony, their hands busy and their minds active. The Scorpion largely ignored the shrine, preferring to turn their attention elsewhere; this may have been why the shrine was spared in the purging of the Scorpion lands that occurred after the Clan Wars.

S13 Shutai

A rather uninteresting farm village, manned by ronin and filled with bandits. It is well known that Shutai is one of the largest bandit gathering places in the Empire, but its location and distance from the Imperial Lands and the wealthy lands of Phoenix and Crane clans keep the Magistrates generally uninterested in the proceedings here.



This village has the unusual tendency to receive the first frosts of the year below Beiden Pass. Its moderately high altitude (the land here plateaus high above sea level, despite the lack of nearby mountains) keeps the weather cool all year round, and its villagers harvest lumber from the forested regions to the south and east - though never in the Shinomen proper. Even heimin know better than that.

Lands of the Unicorn

U1 Exile's Road

This shrine guards the entrance to the natural mountain pass that leads to the lands far north of Rokugan's northern mountain range. It is called "Sorrow's Path" by the Unicorn who returned from the barbarian lands, and "Exile's Road" by those who stayed in the Empire. Occasionally, a samurai's burden of dishonor will be so great that the Emperor sentences him to permanent banishment through Exile's Road.

U2 Kibukito (Far North Village)

This city rests on the edge of Exile's Road, and maintains

trade with the reclusive Badger Clan of the northern mountains. It also contains a shrine for the souls of those who have been banished, and an active monastery dedicated to the study of Shinsei's Tao.

S14 Shimomura
(Frost Village)



U3 Exile's Road Watchtower

This watchtower exists for the purpose of maintaining guard over Exile's Road, so that no person sent into the pass can easily return.

U4 Egami Mura

Owned by the Shinjo, this village specializes in breeding tough ponies and horses for the Shinjo to ride. Very rarely are visitors allowed to see the barns or training areas, as none but members of the Unicorn Clan may ride these horses.

U5 & U6 Bikami and Akami

Twin villages in the Unicorn lands, these small farming communities work the fields that give the Unicorn their massive production, feeding their armies, horses, and nobles each year from the harvest of only two locations. These fields are not rich, but are wide, and contain a great number of heimin. The population density in these two villages is immense; if any Unicorn daimyo wished to press ashigaru soldiers into service, this is certainly where he would come to do so.

U7 Shiro Shinjo

(Far Traveler Castle)

It is here the Shinjo family of the Unicorn Clan make their home. Shinjo palace is not large, but is designed strangely, with high towers and bulbous caps on their buildings. Unicorn architecture draws heavily on elements which the clan encountered during their travels outside the Empire, and nowhere is this unusual style more evident than in the fortress of the Shinjo.

U8 Yashigi

This small village offers supplies and a place to rest along the journey through the Unicorn Lands toward Shinjo Palace. Beyond that, it is simple, clean, and suffers from frequent earthquakes.

U9 Bugaisha

(Outsider Keep)

This is where the Unicorn send their dishonored samurai in order to remove them from the courts and activities of the Empire at large. It is considered a great dishonor to be sent here; a samurai thus exiled from his clan may as well shave his head and retire. There is no exit from Bugaisha.

U10 Oshindoka Toshi

This city was founded by a Unicorn who loved a Crane. It was his hope that if he could build a city for her, she would see his worth and come to join him in marriage. While he was building the city, however, the Lion attacked the Kakita lands, sacking her village and

destroying her family. He spent seventeen years hunting down her murderers, leaving his city in ruins until he returned. The murderers are buried where they fell, but an image of the Kakita maiden graces the high arched gates of the city's main wall.

U11 Shiro Otaku Shojo

(Battle Maiden Castle)

The home of the Otaku family has an ideal location, affording freedom of movement for defending troops while at the same time inhibiting the movement of advancing armies. It has none of the splendor or grandeur of, for instance, the Crane castles, but it is one of the most well-fortified.

Unicorn Lands Random Encounter Table

Roll two dice.

01-15 Shadowlands Creature (*Roll one die*)

1-2	Ogre
3	Troll
4-7	Goblins (2-20)
8	Lesser Oni
9-10	Undead (Skeletons or Zombies) (2-20)

16-25 Imperial magistrates taking census of the Unicorn lands.

25-50 Unicorn Samurai on official business (*Add two dice*)

2-7	Iuchi
8-10	Ide
10-15	Shinjo
16-17	Otaku
18-19	Unicorn samurai on a pilgrimage
20	Roll twice, discounting this roll.

51-60 Ronin

61-75 Unicorn Hunting Party (1-10)

76-80 Monks traveling through Rokugan, visiting all the shrines.

81-99 Common Animal (*Add two dice*)

2-6	Badger
7-10	Fox
11-15	Small Game
15-19	Stag
20	Tiger

00 Reroll, discounting this number, and double the amount of creatures found.



U12 Kurayami-ha Mura (Dark Edge Village)

This village is small, but contains the greatest tournament fields in the Empire. It is considered a great honor for two samurai to duel on these fields; the Unicorn keep them tended with help from the Dragon Clan. The Emperor is said to have held the first duel for the Emerald Championship on these fields - although that tournament has since moved to Otosan Uchi proper, these fields are still used on many formal Imperial occasions.

U13 Shiroy Kishi Mura

(White Shore Village)

Just to the west of White Shore Lake is a small village that shares the lake's name.

U14 Mura nisa Kawa Nemui

(Village by the Sleeping River)

The small village that rests on the shores of the Sleeping River has a small traveler's inn for those walking or riding to the cities of the Unicorn families.

U15 Otaku Seido

This shrine, dedicated to the first Otaku, is a necessary pilgrimage for any young Unicorn maiden on the edge of becoming a Battle Maiden. Young girls of the Otaku house are not allowed to accept their gempukku name until they have spent one night in this shrine, communing with their ancestors and seeking their guidance.

U16 Daikoku Seido

This shrine, dedicated to the Fortune of Wealth, is opulent and covered in rich gold and jewels. The Unicorn insist on decorating it to their tastes - which tends to keep common pilgrims away - but it is nevertheless considered to be one of the most sacred places in Rokugan.

U17 Toshi no aida ni Kawa

(City between the Rivers)

This castle guards the two river ways that flow from the Unicorn lands. Only once has an invasion force tried to move against the Unicorn by moving up-river. It was such a dismal failure that it has never been attempted again.

U18 Mizu Mura

(Laketown)

Shiroy Kishi Mizu-umi is called "White Shore Lake" because of the white sands on its shores, and the village near its southern border is simply called Mizu Mura for its dedication to the lake. An inland fishing village, the heimin make their living from the lake's waters.

U19 Toshi sano Kanemochi Kaeru

(City of the Rich Frog)

It is said that a traveling merchant was passing by when he encountered another merchant catching flies. The first merchant asked, "Why are you bothering to catch flies?" The second merchant replied, "These flies are far more valuable than any gold could ever be." The first merchant laughed at such a thought, and before he knew it, the second merchant had changed him into a frog. The second merchant asked him, "How valuable is your gold now?" Once the first merchant changed back into human form, blessed with his newfound wisdom he gave all of his gold to the second merchant, shaved his head and became a monk. The second merchant, who was a frog all along, founded a small village on the site of the encounter, and it soon became a rich and prosperous city.

U20 Duzaki Toshi

This small city on the far side of the Unicorn lands houses the private estates of the Otaku and Shinjo daimyos. Often used for treaties and solitary training, the guards who serve these lords call these lands home.

U21 Shiro Ide

(Great Day Castle)

An excellent school but a poor fortress, the Ide palace is regarded for its unorthodox magical teachings. The Ide family specializes in spatial magic.

U22 Shiro Iuchi

(Gatherer of Winds Castle)

Called the "Gatherer of Winds" castle because of the violent gusts that cut across the plains and mountains, Shiro Iuchi is the home of the Iuchi family. Protected by a mountain pass, any army that wishes to attack Unicorn lands from the south must first pass the well-protected Shiro Iuchi.

U22 Hisatu-Kesu

Built into the foothills, Hisatu-Kesu is a sprawling village that spans many miles in every direction. Although the land is not as fertile as others in the Unicorn lands, the village is sited over great underground springs and vents. The village owes a great deal of its value to the steam beds that attract many visitors every season. Secluded and spacious, Hisatu-Kesu is among Rokugan's best-kept secrets.

U23 Okuyaki

Built along a less-traveled road and surrounded by rice fields in every direction, the central village of Okuyaki is more of a collection



of random buildings than a planned settlement. Technically, there are eight buildings scattered across a 1/2 mile area, but from time to time, merchants will come through with carts or wares on their backs and trade with the locals. Not visited often, the farmers that travel from the outlying farms are easily taken by slick-talking salesmen. From time to time, the Unicorn station a samurai here to watch over the disjointed populace. Samurai view it as a punishment to be assigned such a task.

U24 Watchtower

Facing out over the River of the Unexpected Hero, samurai stationed in this watchtower can see for miles on clear days. Fearing onslaughts from the Shadowlands, many more Unicorn samurai are stationed here than at other such fortifications. Heavily armed and armored, they drill and train constantly. For two miles in every direction from the watchtower, the ground is scarred and trampled by the excessive combat maneuvers of the Unicorn regiment stationed here, fondly nicknamed "The Unexpected Legion."

U25 Turo-Kojiri

Just a few days ride from Shiro Ide, the village of Turo-Kojiri is important to the well-being of the Ide family. It extracts ore from the mountains it nestles against, and the fertile valley just below the village provides the Unicorn with over 2,000 koku of rice a year. Although once contested by a greedy Iuchi daimyo over 100 years ago, as his own personal lands, the Ide have had little trouble in managing this fertile and resource-rich landmark. Recently, many ronin with a touch of prosperity have made their way to Turo-Kojiri, enjoying the remote and quiet surroundings.

U26 Shinomen Tower

This watchtower overlooks the lands of the Naga, and the city of Iyotisha. This was one of the first locations to treat the Naga's awakening seriously, and it maintains watch over the cities of the Naga - as much as is possible through the thick cover of the Empire's largest forest.

The Unaligned and Minor Clan Lands

A1 Kyuden Miya

(Castle of the Miya)

The Emperor's heralds and diplomats - the Miya family - dwell further from the Emperor than any other Imperial Family. Their palace is nestled among the Spine of the World Mountains, just north of the Plain of Thunder. Kyuden Miya is famous for its

extensive records on the heraldry and personal mons of clans both Great and Minor. Once a year, the Miya fund the Emperor's Blessing, a caravan of builders, artisans, and shugenja who travel to areas of Rokugan in need of assistance, repairing landmarks, building schools, and otherwise doing good deeds.

A2 Shiro Usagi

(Hare Clan Stronghold)

The Scorpion army leveled the home of the once-proud Hare Clan for some unknown offense shortly before the Scorpion Clan Coup. In a tragic but unrelated twist, the Emperor dissolved the Hare Clan a few months afterward due to accusations of maho practice. Efforts to rebuild the castle have been forbidden, and the clan's former leaders are either dead or missing. In their time, the Hare were clever bushi and skilled hunters of *maho-tsukai*. A few members of the Hare still live in the area, plying their trade as ronin.

A3 The Castle of the Emerald Champion

For a thousand years, the lands just north of the Imperial Capital have belonged to the Emerald Champion. No army has ever dared threaten its borders, as all daimyo are painfully aware that such an action is an invitation for the other Clans to raise their own armies against the invader.

The castle sits on a high hill surrounded by a wide, empty plain. Any army marching on the sight would be seen days in advance of their arrival. A chrysanthemum - the mon of the Emerald Champion - is proudly displayed at the front gate of the castle.

A4 Kiken and Roka Toshi/Ryu Bannin Toshi

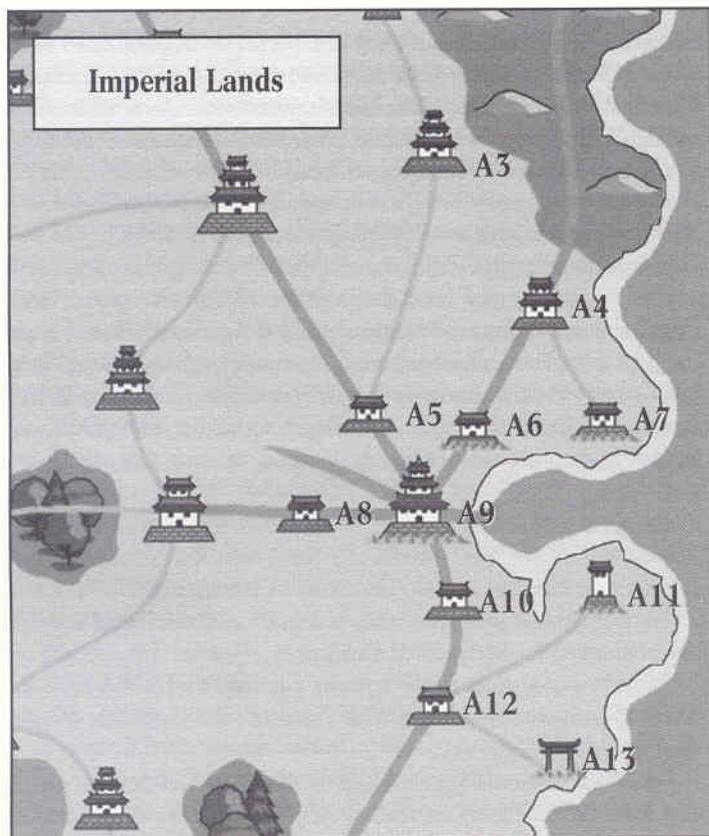
(Traacherous Pass City/Dragon's Guard City)

A narrow pass through the mountains gave this city its name. It sits in a valley on the sea shore surrounded by high mountains. A famous storyteller once said a small child gave a dragon a rice ball at the site of the city, and the dragon promised the child that her family and all of her descendants would know peace for a thousand years. Since that time, the descendants of that little girl have become some of the most prominent fishermen in Rokugan.

A5, A6, A8, A10

(Hub Villages)

Otosan Uchi is the heart of the Empire, home of the Emperor and seat of the government. However, invitations are not given lightly. The Hub Villages on the outskirts of Otosan Uchi serve as a base of operations for lesser ambassadors, merchants, and Imperial hangers-on. The Hub Villages are home to the Empire's bureaucracy and taxes are counted here, making the villages extremely wealthy. The Hubs house countless individuals hoping to live in Otosan Uchi



itself. Competition to get the attention of those with clout in the Imperial City can be quite fierce.

A5 Mura Kita Chushin

(North Hub Village)

This village is closest to the lands of the Tortoise. It is thus a great center of trade as merchants scramble for a chance to purchase the exotic wares of the Tortoise Sailors before they disappear into the Imperial City.

A6 Mura Higashi Chushin

(East Hub Village)

This village is a home away from home for mercenaries. Samurai looking for work can expect fair treatment if they have enough koku. The most notable and influential establishment is the House of Green Koi, owned by retired ronin duelist Miya Yuritogen. Yuritogen was once an Imperial Herald, and still has many connections throughout the Empire. For a small fee, he will act as an agent for a group of samurai who prove themselves honorable.

A7 Yoake Fusheru

(Dawn Tower)

This ancient tower guards one-half of the Emperor's Bay, keeping a steady watch against invasions of gaijin from the sea. Doubling as a lighthouse, it is manned by Seppun and Tortoise Clan samurai.

A8 Mura Nishi Chushin

(West Hub Village)

This Hub Village contains more Imperial storehouses than any other Hub, immense warehouses containing rice collected as taxes. In recent times, the village has become home to Doji Akae and countless other moneylenders. While many consider Akae's usury to be dishonorable, he makes certain that a large share of his profits go towards the maintenance of the Imperial Gardens. The Emperor supports Akae's presence in the village for now.

A9 Otosan Uchi

(Rokugani Capital)

Otosan Uchi is the capital of Rokugan, and the greatest testament to the power of the Hantei. The walls guarding the city are so wide that horses can ride along the ramparts. The guards are chosen from Rokugan's finest samurai. The entire capital exists solely to support the Emperor and his court. Diplomats from all of the Great Clans (and many of the minor ones) reside in the Emperor's palace, plotting, bickering and seeking the favor of the Son of Heaven. Policy for the entire Empire is determined here, and those without an invitation may not pass through the gates.

When the city and palace were built, Crab engineers and Phoenix shugenja worked together to make the palace impossible to infiltrate. Some shugenja say that the walls are enchanted with a powerful spell that renders its streets and passageways an impenetrable maze; only those with Hantei blood may find their way around.

Kyuden Seppun

(Castle of the Seppun)

This great palace stands between the Imperial City and the northern mountains of the Crane, as ancient and beautiful as Otosan Uchi itself. Kyuden Seppun is the second home of the Emperor, the birthplace of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and the ancestral home of the Emperor's fanatically loyal Miharu guardsmen. In many regards, Kyuden Seppun is one of the most sacred and holy places in the Empire, and has always been considered sacrosanct during wars between the clans.



A10 Mura Minami Chushin

(South Hub Village)

This village was once the home of the famed Doji Nio, son of Doji and Kakita. Upon Nio's death, his estates were left "to Rokugan's authors of beauty." Since that time, his large estates have become a communal home for storytellers, poets, painters, and other artists trying to make a name in Otosan Uchi. The estates are beautiful, but there is little privacy and much cutthroat competition among the artists here. Generally, even a poor home in Otosan Uchi is considered a grander accomplishment than a pallet in the lush gardens of Kyuden Nio.

A11 Nichibotsu Fuseru

(Sunset Tower)

This ancient tower guards half of the Emperor's Bay, keeping a steady watch against invasions of gaijin from the sea. Doubling as a lighthouse, it is manned by Seppun and Tortoise Clan samurai.

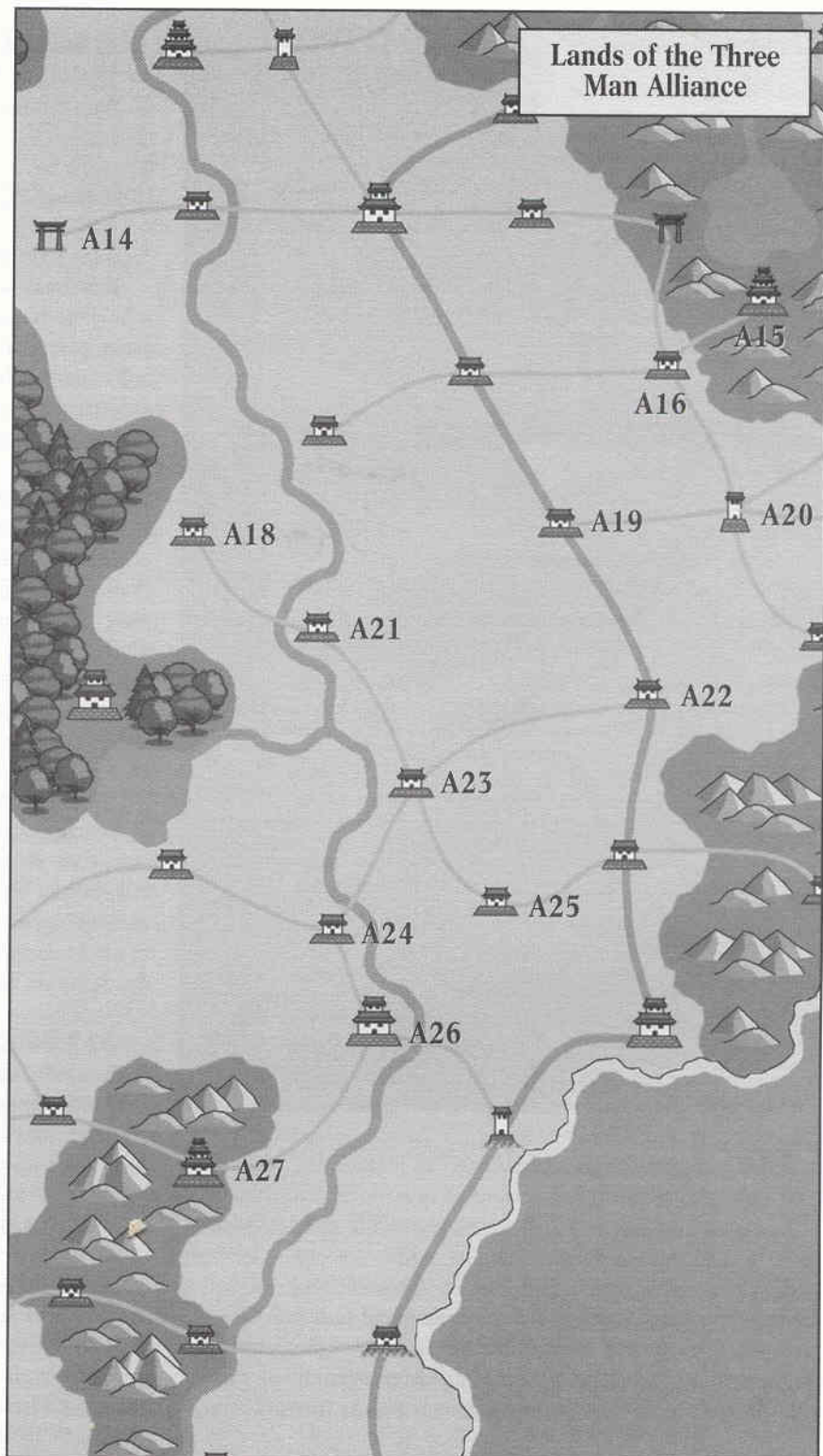
A12 Mizen Mura

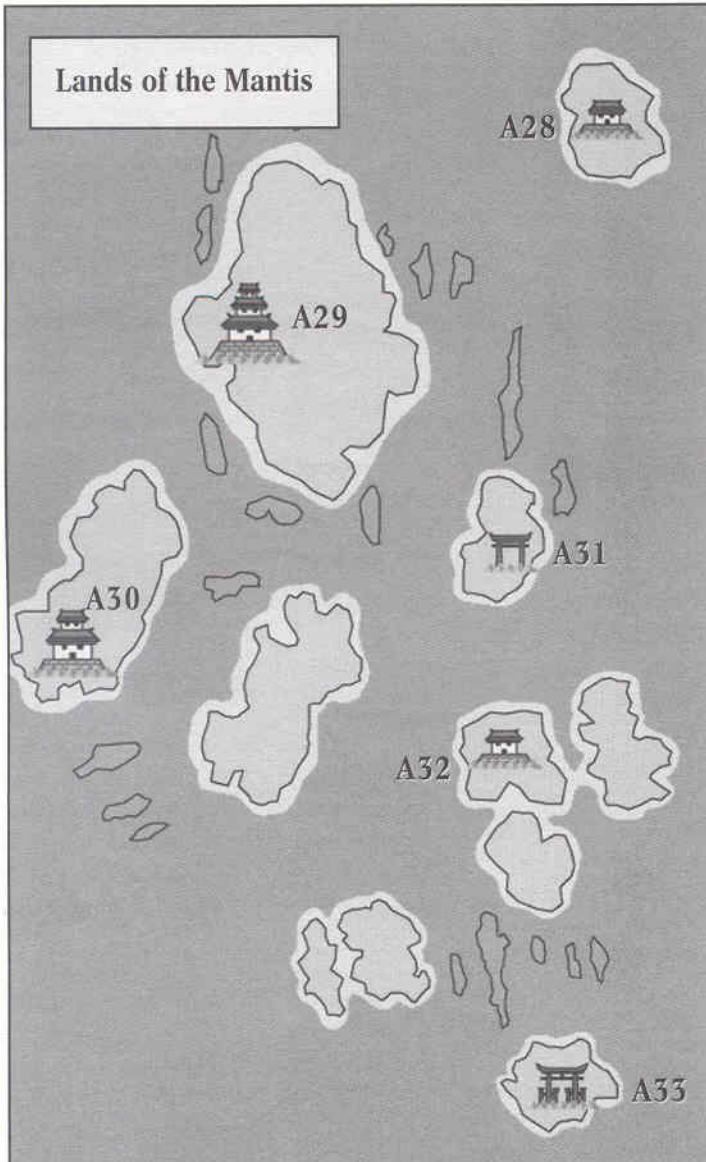
The small town marks the edge of Imperial lands and the beginning of the Crane provinces. It is manned by Seppun guards, nearly all of whom are related to the Crane in one way or another.

A13 Reihaido Shinsei

(Crow Shrine)

The one animal most associated with Shinsei is the crow. When he and his Seven Thunders needed a scout, the crow - then a bird with a white chest and beautiful colorful wings - volunteered. By the end of the journey, the crow survived, but he was blackened by the powerful forces that passed between Shinsei's Thunders and Fu Leng. It is now regarded as a bird of omen, a watchful and helpful animal that warns when troubles are ahead. Only those with a pure heart and true devotion can find one of Shinsei's shrines, but it is said that those who do learn the deepest secrets of his teachings from the Kenku spirits of the air.





A14 Shinden Osano-Wo

(Temple of Osano-Wo)

The Fortune of Fire and Thunder is Osano-Wo, and his greatest temple is here. The monks who keep the temple are known for their rituals of scarring and secret magic. Constant thunderstorms encourage the local vegetation to become green and lush, but the land itself is rocky and difficult to traverse. Moss grows over the rocks, and the area is humid, even in the driest seasons.

A15 Kyuden Ashinagabachi

(Wasp Clan Palace)

The samurai of the Wasp Clan are the finest archers in Rokugan, and its castle defenses count on its samurai's prowess. The road to the castle cuts through a step mountain pass, allowing Wasp samurai to cut down any advancing armies with impunity.

A16 Koeru Mura

This small village provides rice and grain for the Minor Clans, selling its talents to the highest bidder each year. Every year, the ronin governor of Koeru meets with the surrounding Minor Clans, and sells the past year's harvest to the highest bidder. This is the only means by which this small, independent ronin town survives from year to year.

A17 Shiro Heichi

(Boar Clan Stronghold)

The ruined castle in these forbidding mountains was home to the Boar Clan until their mysterious disappearance five centuries ago. Now, the mountains are haunted by a restless spirit called the Shakoki Dogu, a terrifying entity that feasts on madness. The Crab and Falcon have made countless efforts to placate or even identify the spirit. All have failed.

A18 Zakyo Toshi

(Pleasure City)

Five hundred years ago, this city's name might have suited it; now it is simply a decorative name given to one of the busiest commercial cities in the south of Rokugan. Zakyo is a haven for lechery and vice, kept clean only through the constant interference of the Imperial troops stationed here to keep watch on the border of the Scorpion and Minor Clan lands.

A19 Dangai

A small monastery in the center of the unaligned lands, this haven of enlightenment takes advantage of the arid land by constructing rock gardens and libraries, depending on travelers to bring food for the monks who make their homes here.

A20 Daidoji Yukan-se

(Valiant Daidoji Tower)

At this tower, an ancient battle between the Scorpion and the Daidoji resulted in a Crane victory. Since that day, the tower has held its name, even through the Crane samurai who once inhabited it have been lost to lechery and vice. Their family dishonored, these ronin still claim tentative allegiance with the Crane, and are constantly trying to return to their former clan with offers of fealty.



Thus far, the family secret (whatever it may have been that caused them to be cast out in the first place) has kept them from succeeding.

A21 Kudo

A small farming village in the lands that once belonged to the Hare. Several of the Minor Clans (notably, the Wasp, Fox and Sparrow) are contesting for its current ownership.

A22 Shaiga

A quiet Wasp Clan village, manned only by heimin (all of whom have been taught to wield weapons such as the tonfa, though they keep such knowledge secret). This village accounts for the majority of Wasp food production, and is well guarded by the vigilant heimin. Few samurai bother to come here, but if they did, they might also realize the village's other secret: a vein of gold that exists nearby and is mined only lightly by the Wasp in order to keep its existence secret – and tax-free.

A23 Meidochi

A small farming village in the lands that once belonged to the Hare. Like Kudo (A18), the nearby Minor Clans are all attempting to lay claim to it now that the Hare are gone.

A24 Kaia Osho Mura

(Humble Priest Village)

A quiet Fox Clan village on the edge of the Kitsune forest. This village accounts for the majority of Fox food production, and is well guarded by the vigilant shugenja of that peaceful clan. Often, members of the Unicorn clan can be found here, seeking rest from their travels in the lands of their distant cousins, the Fox.

A25 Kitsune Mori Mura

This village within the forest of the Fox is filled with strange architecture – houses grown from trees, and sliding screens made of forest leaves rather than rice paper. The Fox Clan makes use of all the forest's bounty, harvesting its acorns, berries and nuts as well as the food grown in Fox villages elsewhere. There is a large shrine to Inari here, the patron Fortune of Rice and friend to the spirit *kitsune* that inhabit the wild forest groves around the Fox Clan Palace.

A26 Kyuden Kitsune

(Fox Clan Palace)

When Lady Shinjo left Rokugan, some of her followers remained behind. Some of these remnants became the Fox Clan. While they do not have the same affinity for cavalry as their Unicorn cousins,

their skills in hunting, herbalism and woodsmanship are unparalleled in Rokugan.

A27 Kyuden Suzume

(Sparrow Clan Palace)

The Sparrow Clan is one of the older Minor Clans, formed several hundred years ago when a number of Crane Clan members interpreted Shinsei's philosophy as calling for a renunciation of wealth. Accordingly, they set themselves apart from their money-conscious Crane brethren and declared themselves the Sparrow Clan, taking a humbler bird as their inspiration. The Sparrow Clan "palace" is quite spartan and functional, providing a fortified position that the Sparrow and their heimin can defend in time of war.

A28 Koutetsukan

(Iron Turtle City)

This humble city is the single largest producer of boats and ships within the Empire, creating ships for the Mantis, Crane, Phoenix and Crab fleets as well as for the Seppun. Those samurai who wish to venture into the open ocean would be advised to find a seasoned navigator here, as well, because no one knows the seas as well as the Mantis; no one knows boats like the heimin and samurai of Koutetsukan.

A29 Kyuden Gotei

(Mantis Clan Palace)

Perhaps the least traditional palace in Rokugan, the home of the Mantis Clan is also one of the most splendid. Unconcerned with simple gardens and expressions of Shinsei's teachings, the Mantis palace looks like a treasure trove. Objects of gold, silver and other precious stones and metals adorn the walls, sharply contrasting with the simple, plain homes of the Seven Clans. It is also here that the mighty fleet of the Mantis Clan guard the Mantis islands.

A30 Toshi no Inazuma

(City of Lightning)

At least once a year, the tall towers of this city are struck by lightning. The temple of Osano-Wo – one of the most extravagant and beautiful temples in Rokugan, and the tallest building in the city – is usually the target.

A31 Kaimetsu-uo Seido

This shrine to Kaimetsu-uo was raised only a few years ago, upon the ascension of the Mantis Clan daimyo, Yoritomo. He created it to honor his ancestor, and ask his blessing on the Mantis in the next years. Whether his act of supplication has worked or not, the Mantis



have been blessed with good harvests, good trade, and few storms since the creation of this shrine.

A32 Tokigogachu

This small Mantis village is famous for only two things: fish and festivals. During most of the year, when the boats aren't sailing and there are no holidays to celebrate, it is an ordinary fishing town, quiet and bland. However, when there is a festival, the city comes to life, throwing fireworks, celebrations, parades and magnificent parties worthy of the Emperor himself. In fact, both Hantei XXXVII and Hantei XXXVIII are said to have visited the New Year's Day celebration in Tokigogachu on a number of occasions, although traveling in disguise lest the Emperor be found in so poor and humble a city.

A33 Maigosera Seido

(Shrine of Lost Sailors)

A massive bonfire is always lit in the great tower that rises over this shrine, in the hopes that the souls lost at sea will see the light and be able to return home to Rokugan and find peace. The tower looks out over the Mantis Bay of Dark Water and over the wide ocean to the south. Some claim a city of horrible creatures lies at the bottom of the bay, and most of the local sailors throw rice over the side when they cross, so as to avert doom and curses on their heads from the creatures below.

Shiro Ichiro (no map entry)

(Badger Clan Stronghold)

The remote home of the Badger Clan (north of U2 on the map) is Rokugan's first line of defense against invasion from the north. The castles are well built, sturdy, and designed to withstand long-term siege, drawing heavily from Crab architectural techniques. It is said that no one has invaded Rokugan through the Badger's territory. This is quite true, though the Badger Clan secretly communicate peacefully with visiting barbarians, trade with them, and send them on their way back north. The rest of Rokugan is unaware of the Badger's dalliance. For their own part, the Badger believe their activities are harmless.

Regions of the Empire

The following location descriptions refer to the locations labeled on the color map at the front of this book.

A Kanashimi no Komichi

(Sorrow's Path)

This natural mountain pass leads to the lands far north of Rokugan's northern mountain range. It is called "Sorrow's Path" by the Unicorn who returned from the barbarian lands.

B Yakeru yoni Atsui

(Burning Sands)

The Unicorn tell of a people who live in the grassy steppes just beyond the mountains, and beyond them lies a vast desert they call the "Burning Lands."

C Kyodai and Kabe sano Kita

(Great Wall of the North)

These mountains isolate Rokugan from the north. The Unicorn say that there are steppes and a vast desert to the north where barbarians ride on great steeds, killing and pillaging without mercy.

D Hinanbashi sano Mitsu Shimai

(Refuge of the Three Sisters)

High in the mountains above the Dragon keeps, Rokugan's only shrine to the Moon God sits on at the end of a treacherous path called "The Climb of the Moon." Those who are diligent and discover the hidden path find the shrine occupied by three sisters who have tended the shrine for as long as mortal memory has recorded. Speculation has made the sisters out to be ghosts, but none can say for certain. The three sisters speak in riddles, answering any question put to them. Legends say that any question put to them is answered truthfully, but ruin befalls any who ask.



E Heigan Ryo Kokoro

(Dragon Heart Plain)

This high, barren plain overlooks the Dragon fortresses to the southwest and the Shrine of the Ki-Rin to the southeast. Only broken stones and shattered foundations remain to mark the home of the Snake Clan, who were utterly destroyed by the Phoenix Clan three and a half centuries ago. Occasionally, foolhardy shugenja dig about in the ruins hoping to find some remnants of the Snake's dark magics. The lucky return home disappointed. The unlucky do not return at all.

F Tani Giza

(Jagged Valley)

This area of the mountains is largely made up of loose shale, large chunks of which break off of the mountains and slide away into the valleys below. The Phoenix sometimes train samurai in this area, to teach them alertness.

G Mori Isawa

(Phoenix Woodlands)

There was a reason the Phoenix settled in this area of Rokugan. The wood of the Isawa forest has a particular quality that is particularly beneficial for their shugenja's scrolls.

H Nani-aku Heitai Heigen

(700 Soldier Plain)

It was here that seven hundred soldiers were victorious against an army of seven thousand (at least, that is what the history books say).

I Mizu-umi Ryo

(Dragon Lake)

The locals call the lake in the northwest "Dragon Lake" because of the shrine to the Guardian of Water that is on the south side of the lake. Some say the Dragon of Water can be drawn to the shrine by those who are worthy.

Nagashi Naga Toshi

(Sunken Naga City)

At the bottom of a great lake in the north, there is said to be a city that remains perfectly preserved. Statues suggest it may have once been a city of the Naga, but none but those who visit (with magic, of course) can say for certain.

J River of the Lost Valley

(Kenku Home River)

Though it is far from any settlements, many bushi risk the journey to this remote river. Its source is rumored to be the home of

the wise and often mischievous kenku. Many legendary Rokugani swordsmen are said to have been trained by these swordmasters.

K Heigen Kori

(Ice Plain)

Surrounded on three sides by mountains, Heigen Kori is always a plain of snow and ice in the winter and a barren waste in the spring and summer. It is a desolate place, devoid of any life save the sparse grasses that grow each spring only to be covered with snow when the winter comes.

L Kyodai and Josho Suru

(The Great Climb)

These are the foothills that lead to the mountain palaces of the Dragon Clan. They are tight, twisting and confusing and easy to get lost in, eventually reaching impossible heights. There is a single pass that climbs the mountains, and that is guarded by the Mirumoto family.

M Kyodai and Taiyo

(The Great Fall)

Due to heavy volcanic activity, there are many rock slides in this area, making it quite dangerous. The Dragon Clan train new samurai in this area – it keeps them on their toes.

N Nemui Kaminari Yama

(Sleeping Thunder Mountain)

The volcano just southeast of the Shrine of the Ki-Rin rumbles from time to time, but has yet to fully erupt.

O Kanawa Taki

(Iron Rings Cascade)

One thousand years ago, Shinsei stopped at this waterfall and quenched his thirst at the waters. Since that day, the waters have been considered holy and blacksmiths from across Rokugan come to this waterfall to use the pure waters for quenching their steel.

P Heigen Yuki

(Snow Plain)

This far north in Rokugan, there is a great deal of snow that drifts down from the mountains into the plains. "Snow Plain" (as it was called by the Unicorn) leads away to lands far to the west, details of which are only known to Unicorn scholars.



Q Shiroi Kishi Mizu-umi

(White Shore Lake)

"White Shore Lake" gains its name from the white sands on its shores. It is rumored that ningyo dwell at the lake's bottom. Popular belief holds that to eat ningyo flesh will grant immortality, but those that hunt the peaceful mermaids risk the wrath of their protectors – the Naga.

R Kawa Nemui

(Sleeping River)

The river that runs down from the Lake of the Sunken City is called the Sleeping River. It is named for the sleeping city from which its waters run. The local peasantry insist that if sand from the bottom of this river is placed in a sake bottle, any who drink from the bottle will fall into a magical slumber.

S Shiroi Kishi Heigen

(White Shore Plain)

A great battle was fought here 150 years ago. A force of Scorpion attacked the recently returned Unicorn, but the Unicorn (and a contingent of Lion) fought them off. According to the Unicorn, the Scorpion thought them to be weak, uneducated barbarians, and were swiftly shown the error of their thinking. The Scorpions, when asked about it, would concede the point and change the subject.

T Hae Moete Kawa

(Firefly River)

Firefly River is important for the Unicorn Clan's commerce with the rest of the Empire. The Unicorn are the least agrarian of the Clans, but it is along this river that all of their farms can be found.





U Oboreshinu Boekisho Kawa

(Drowned Merchant River)

Three hundred years ago, a prominent merchant was attacked by bandits near this river. They tortured him and his family, eventually drowning them in the river. Local peasants say that their ghosts wander the bank, looking to bring justice to the bandits who drowned them.

V Tanima sano Futatsu Taisho

(Valley of the Two Generals)

It was here that two of the Empire's greatest commanders - Matsu Kijoruko and Daidoji Wasutsubo - fought the Seven Day Battle. In the end, the commanders faced each other on the battlefield, surrounded by the bloody corpses of hundreds of hours of constant combat. Although Kijoruko was the victor, her wounds from the duel overcame her moments later. The battlefield remains a holy site with a shrine dedicated to both generals located where they fell.

W Seikitsu sano Yama no Oi

(Spine of the World Mountains)

This is the mountain range that splits Rokugan in two. The Seikitsu mountains contain the tallest peaks in Rokugan (including the legendary Mountain of the Seven Thunders), and the few trails through it are narrow and fraught with peril. The only pass large enough to move an army through is Beiden Pass, and many of Rokugan's greatest battles have been fought to determine who controls it.

X Kawa Mitsu Kishi

(Three Sides River)

Perhaps the most contested body of water in Rokugan is the Three Sides River. Historically, it has provided the heart of trade and commerce for three clans (the Scorpion, the Lion and the Crane) in the heart of the Empire.

Y Kiken Roka

(Treacherous Pass)

A story tells of a merchant who lost his life in this pass hundreds of years ago, and his ghost still haunts the mountainsides. At night, haunting winds whip through the gorges, making it sound as if the mountains themselves weep. It is a long and dangerous pass, but it is also the shortest route from the Phoenix lands to the lands of the Emerald Champion and the Emperor.

Z Yama no Kuyami

(Mountains of Regret)

This range is called Regret because of the many lives lost in the only pass through the mountains. In the red light of the sunset, the snow on the tips turn red, making it look as if the mountains bleed with the setting of the sun.

Sightings of ogres and goblins in this area lead some shugenja to suspect an ancient breeding ground somewhere in the caves, but if it exists, the Phoenix have yet to find it.

AA Kawa sano Fui no Dansei wo Sasu

(River of the Unexpected Hero)

It was here one hundred and seventy-seven years ago that the Unicorn battled an army of Shadowlands creatures that had moved north far from their homeland. The creatures tried to despoil the Chrysanthemum Petal Lake, but the courage of a farmer proved to be the crucial factor in the battle. He saved the Unicorn army and the river at which the battle was fought has been named in his honor.

BB Mizu-umi Kiku Hanabira

(Chrysanthemum Petal Lake)

Hundreds of chrysanthemums line the shores of this lake. Legend holds that the original chrysanthemums were planted by the hand of Hantei XVII to mourn the loss of his son. Indeed, the Emperor often comes to visits shores to celebrate the annual Chrysanthemum Festival.

CC Plum Blossom Pass

It is said that in this pass, the kami Togashi first reached enlightenment, eating a plum to break his fast. Oddly, no plum trees grow here. In fact, the harsh climate seems to forbid the possibility of such a tree ever having grown here.

DD Yama sano Kaminari

(Mountain of the Seven Thunders)

The tallest mountain in Rokugan is named after the Seven Thunders who went with Shinsei to face the dark lord Fu Leng. There is a shrine at the highest peak dedicated to their memory, maintained by the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

EE Heigen no Otaku

(Plains of Battle)

This is the heart of Lion country, guarded intensely by Lion samurai. However, the Lion have no protection from the Emerald Champion's taxes. For five hundred years a Crane has worn the Emerald Armor and has taken full advantage of his ability to tax the Lion. Through taxation, the Crane have profited from Lion labor.



FF Heigen no Hayai Mondai

(Plain of Fast Troubles)

The plains surrounding Otosan Uchi are known as the "Plain of Fast Troubles" because of its reputation. It is illegal to move armed men through this area. Those who do soon find the whole of the Empire moving against them.

GG Rokugan Yogasha Heigen

(Emerald Champion Plain)

These rich plains surround a large, well-fortified castle. Both castle and lands are granted to whomever succeeds at the Test of the Emerald Champion. As there is currently no Emerald Champion, they are now occupied solely by the peasants who tend the land.

HH Hanto no Yoake

(Peninsula of Dawn)

Pinched between North Hub Village and the Bay of the Golden Sun, this peninsula is home to the tiny Tortoise Clan. The Emperor commands the Tortoise personally, but they are technically a Minor Clan and not an Imperial Family. This small distinction allows the Emperor to separate himself from the dishonorable tasks the Tortoise are forced to execute in his name. The Tortoise frequently find themselves at the beck and call of the Otomo family, who value the Tortoise's loyalty even if they consider them expendable.

II Naga Doro Heigen

(Naga Road Plain)

For many years, scholars have studied and picked over the ancient Naga ruins in this area. Now that the Naga have awakened, such studies have become risky, as the Naga seem equally willing to either communicate peacefully or attack furiously to avenge their defiled lands.

JJ Heigen no Kaminari

(Plain of Thunder)

The plain of thunder is dedicated to the Fortune of Thunder, Osano-Wo. It is here that the Test of the Emerald Champion is held, in honor of the Fortune who is the patron of all bushi.

KK Heigen sano Doji

(Doji family lands)

The plush lands of the Doji family are dotted with rice farms and merchant caravans, presenting an inviting target for bandits. With the war against the Lion, the Crane have been forced to begin hiring mercenaries to protect their interests here.

LL Wan sano Kin Taiyo

(Bay of the Golden Sun)

The port harbor of the Imperial City and center of naval commerce is the Bay of the Golden Sun. Fishing boats and pleasure craft intermingle in the deep, calm waters as peasants and nobility alike take in the beauty around them. Every evening, the setting sun filters through the ramparts of Otosan Uchi, lighting the bay with a brilliant yellow shine. The Imperial Guard patrol in boats through the bay to discourage smugglers and other riff-raff.

MM Tani Hitokage

(Valley of the Spirit)

With the mysterious Shinomen to the east and the haunted Twilight Mountains to the south, the Falcon Clan have found it an absolute necessity to understand the workings of the spirit realms. The Valley of the Spirit is the home of the Yotogi, daimyo of the Falcon. The Yotogi and those who serve him are the most knowledgeable and experienced ghost hunters in Rokugan.

NN Shinomen Mori

(Hidden Forest)

The Shinomen Forest is the most expansive and mysterious forest in Rokugan. A story tells that it is enchanted and that all manner of giant creatures (including the dreaded kumo) can be found here. The outer edges have been explored, but there are hundreds of miles within the forest that no man has ever seen.

OO Kawa no Kin

(River of Gold)

Once a major trade route of the Scorpion, no clan claims the River of Gold now. Some have attempted to send cargo ships along its waters, but such shipping has been besieged by cunning pirates who disappear before the Imperial Legions can catch them.

PP Roka Beiden

(Beiden Pass)

Beiden Pass is often referred to as the crossroads of the Empire. It is the only pass in the Spine of the World Mountains that is wide enough to move an army through. The Lion, Scorpion and Crane constantly feud over control of the pass. Hundreds of battles have been fought over the right to administer the pass, giving the lake just south of the pass its reputation for being haunted.

QQ Mizu-umi no Fuko

(Lake of Sorrows)

Stories say that this lake is haunted by the souls who died at Beiden Pass and were not properly buried. Small shrines dot the



shore line in homage to those who fell whose names are not remembered.

RR Osari Plains

(The Plains of the Crane Clan)

The plains here are lush and rich, but local peasants warn against wandering about after sunset. Hungry ghosts are said to roam free during the night, looking to feed on the blood of the living and drag the wicked screaming to the spirit-realm of Gakido.

SS Kawa sano Okami Jikan

(River of the Hour of the Wolf)

Named for a battle between the Scorpion and the Lion in which ten thousand samurai died during the Hour of the Wolf, shortly after sunset. The battle took place at Beiden Pass in torchlight, and the dawn was so horrifying that "Hour of the Wolf" was deemed ill-omened. That hour is now referred to as the "Hour of the Dog."

TT Last Stand Plain

(Hiruma ancestral lands)

It was on this plain that the Hiruma were defeated three centuries ago by the forces of the Maw, losing their ancestral home. The Hiruma swear that one day they will face the Shadowlands on these plains again, and this time they shall not fail.

UU Aka Mizu-umi

(Red Lake)

The lake that the River of the Hour of the Wolf feeds into is known as the Red Lake. After the battle of the Hour of the Wolf, the blood ran into the river and down into the lake many miles south. For months afterward, the lake remained as red and as thick as blood. On the anniversary of the battle, in the dark hour of the wolf, the lake's waters turn red and blood washes up on its shores.

VV Kawa sano Zatu Shudoshi

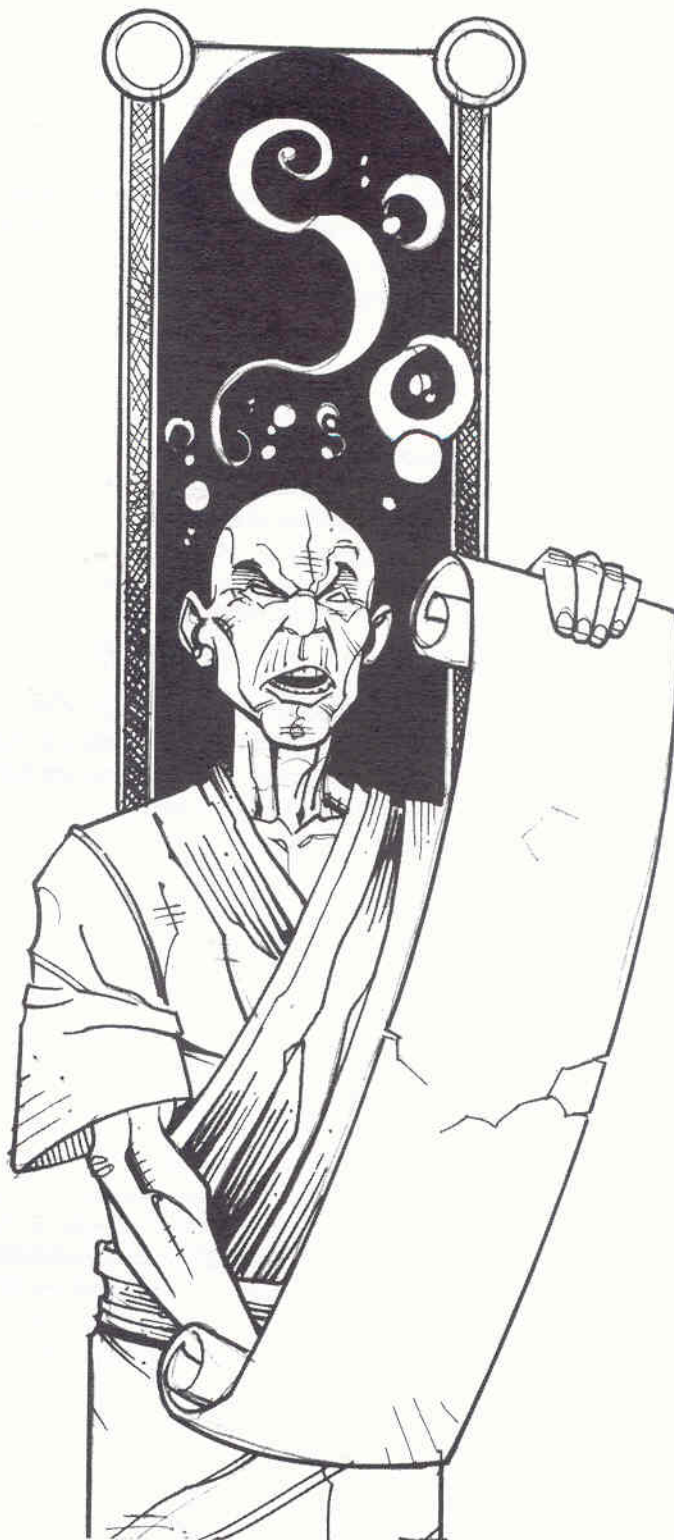
(River of the Blind Monk)

This river gains its name from an old monk who lives in a small shrine by the riverbed. He will ferry any who can answer a riddle. He has lived in his little shrine for at least two hundred years now, and passengers who ask his age get a knowing smile from the monk and a bath from the river.

WW Michi ni Mayotta Musume Irie

(Lost Daughter Inlet)

This is the famous island where the first Hantei found his bride. The most famous telling of this tale was as a play by the famous Lion playwright, Akodo Taberu. Acknowledged as his masterpiece,





the play manages to tell the tale in such a way that makes villains of the Crane characters without portraying them as villainous.

XX Nanatsu hi Otaku Heigen

(Seven Day Battle Plain)

Three hundred years ago, the ronin who called himself "Usagi" assisted the Emerald Champion to defeat Iuchiban and his Order of Blood Speakers. Usagi was granted a small castle and the lands that surrounded it. The battle with Iuchiban lasted for seven days, thus the name of the plain.

YY Ronin Chiiki

(Ronin Plains)

All of these lands are owned by the Three Man Alliance (the Wasp, Sparrow, and Fox Minor Clans: see A14, A23, and A24). The Ronin Plains were once heavily guarded because they bordered the Scorpion lands; now they are heavily guarded to discourage the spilling-over of the Lion and Crane hostilities into Minor Clan territory.

ZZ Takia Kusa Heigan

(Tall Grass Plain)

These so-called plains were once an area of rich farmland, but were abandoned ten years ago when the fields suddenly became infertile. Recently, a great forest of bamboo has sprung up from the previously barren land, baffling farmers and shugenja alike.

AAA Tani Senshio

(Valley of the Centipede)

This secluded valley occupies a small stretch of land between the Treacherous Pass and the sea. It is home to the Centipede Clan, a small matriarchal clan of shugenja who exclusively worship Amaterasu. Their power in fire magic is incredible, but their clan is a small one. Only their remote location and the protection of the Phoenix keeps them out of the larger political games of the Great Clans. The Centipede claim that their lands "stand closest to the sun." Pilgrims seeking the blessing of Amaterasu often come here so that their prayers might be heard.

BBB Umi Amaterasu

(Sea of the Sun Goddess)

The sea where the Sun Goddess rises every morning is usually quiet and calm. Buoys line the coast to help sailors guide their ships from harbor to harbor and to keep them from sailing too far out to sea.

CCC Heigen yori ue ni Warui

(Plains above Evil)

This broad expanse of wilderness remains untouched after nearly a thousand years. Even the wide-ranging Unicorn haven't settled here, and Shadowlands creatures seem to fear the area. Many strange ruins jut up from the plains, built by inhuman hands an incalculable time ago. Rumors abound about the true nature of the ruins, but the most credible attribute them to the mysterious Naga who vanished from Rokugan before the dawn of man. It is considered extremely bad luck to even approach the crumbling buildings; most Rokugani refuse to go near them.

DDD Yugure Yama

(Twilight Mountains)

Smaller than the mighty Seikitsu mountains, the Yugure range covers the southern half of the ancestral Crab lands. Tough and rocky, the mountains are littered with elaborate Crab defenses against the Shadowlands. There are many passes through the Yugure, but most are either garrisoned or booby-trapped. Wise samurai traveling the mountains first announce their presence to the Crab, and then arrive by the Kaiu pass, one of the few places travelers can move about unmolested.

The northern half of the range supports a large number of tea plantations, and the bulk of the Empire's tea supply comes from Crab lands.

EEE Mittsu Otoko Rengo Heigen

(Three Man Alliance Plain)

Four years ago, Scorpion General Bayushi Tomaru led an army of Scorpions through this plain and was defeated by an alliance of Wasp, Fox, and Sparrow samurai, setting a startling precedent of power and interdependence among the Minor Clans.

FFF Haka no Iuchiban

(Tomb of Iuchiban)

(Order of the Blood Speakers)

Five hundred years ago, Iuchiban and his Order of Blood Speakers were put down by the Seven Clans. Iuchiban's body was placed in a tomb and his Blood Speakers put to death. Not all the Blood Speakers were captured, however, and so those who entombed Iuchiban set traps all through his tomb to keep his servants from restoring the evil sorcerer to life.

GGG Heiwa and Kaze Heigen

(Quiet Wind Plain)

Soft winds from the Shinomen Forest blow across the Quiet Wind plain, and sometimes, haunting music can be heard.



HHH Mizu-umi no Sakura Yuki

(Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow)

Cherry blossoms line the lake, and when they fall in the autumn, they cover the waters, making the lake look as if it is covered in snow. Many monks and devout samurai come to this lake during the Cherry Blossom Festival. Each of the devout sit under a tree and meditate until the blossoms fall from the tree. Tradition says that he who sits longest (his blossoms fall last) is the one who is most pure.

III Shiroy Kin Kawa

(White Gold River)

The small river that spills into the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow is called "white gold" because of the white rocks that line the riverbed and the golden leaves that fall into its waters in the fall. During many festivals, monks and devout samurai can be found on the shores fasting and meditating.

JJJ Shukufuku Suru Jimen Heigen

(Blessed Ground Plain)

This plain received its name when it was chosen by Shinsei and the Thunders as a place to rest during their journey to the Shadowlands. A monastery and shrine now stand here to mark their historic journey.

KKK Kin Taiyo Heigen

(Golden Sun Plain)

This rich, fertile stretch of land has been declared sacrosanct by the Emperor. No farming or cultivation of the land is allowed, and no one dwells here but a few Sparrow bushi whose duty it is to see that the Emperor's holdings remain undisturbed.

LLL Kaiu Kabe

(Carpenter Wall)

It is called the Kaiu Miracle, perhaps the strongest structure built by man. It stands almost one hundred feet high, reinforced by buttresses and garrisoned by the fiercest warriors the Crab Clan can produce. Situated on the northern side of the Last Stand River, it is the Empire's greatest defense against the horrors of Fu Leng.

The wall was built over three hundred years ago, through a combination of Shugenja magic and Kaiu engineering. A huge Shadowlands army had launched an attack against Rokugan; all looked lost until a young Kuni magician cast a spell upon the river. The waters surged and crested, preventing any from crossing it. For sixty days, she held the spell in place, while the forces of the Crab built the wall. Many died during its construction, and more than a few shugenja sacrificed every ounce of energy to speed up construction, but the waters held. By the time the magician finally

died from the exhaustion, the Crab were ready, and the wall was enough to repel the invaders. Since then, it has been strengthened and built upon, and entire armies have spent themselves trying to breach its walls. It is a testament to the power and resolve of the Crab Clan, and the Hida family has sworn that it will never surrender it to the Shadowlands. Thus far, no force has been enough to topple it.

MMM Kawa sano Saigo no Kamae

(River of the Last Stand)

For generations, the Crab Clan had lost ground against the steady advance of the Shadowlands. It was at this river that Hida Banuken made his final stand against a great army of unspeakable creatures. For months, a single shugenja created and maintained a raging torrent to keep the Shadowlands at bay while Banuken and an army of Crab engineers raised the Great Kaiu Wall. When the shugenja's will broke, Banuken's wall and army were ready. At the beginning of the battle, he swore he would not take a single step back, and since that day, the Shadowlands have been contained south of the River of the Last Stand.

NNN Lookout Mountain

A geological anomaly, this singular mountain stands directly in the midst of the plains of the Lion. The Kitsu revere the powerful mikokami within the mountain, and maintain a temple here. On a clear day, almost the entire territory of the Lion Clan is visible from this mountain.

OOO The Black Finger River and The River of the Dark Moon

Just to the north of the Crab holdings, the River of the Last Stand forks into two. The eastern fork winds its way through the mountains, splitting again before finally entering the Shadowlands. Its waters become dark and stagnant, twisted by the corrupting magic around it. The two forks have been named The Black Finger and The Dark Moon by the few Rokugani who have seen them. Unwholesome plants grow along their sides, and unspeakable things come down to drink from their impure banks. Beneath their stagnant surfaces, frightening monstrosities have spawned; not even the oni know for certain what dwells within them. No being who has fallen into the rivers – man, beast, or oni – has ever emerged again.

The Black Finger is the furthest into the Shadowlands any Rokugani has ever traveled. Beyond that lies the unknown horrors of Fu Leng's realm.



PPP Kabi ue no ho ni sa Umi

(Wall above the Ocean)

The lowest of Rokugan's mountain regions, this area defines the border between the Crab and Crane Clans, which makes it a heavily disputed piece of territory.

QQQ Bells of the Dead

Almost two hundred years ago, twelve shugenja died on this spot while battling a powerful evil spirit. In memory of the shugenja, a shrine was constructed in the lonely mountains. It is said that so long as the bells ring regularly, the ghosts of the shugenja will protect the mountains.

RRR Kaiu Roka

(Carpenter Pass)

The Kaiu Pass is the largest passageway through the Twilight Mountains, and the easiest means of moving troops through it. Soldiers coming to man the Kaiu walls always travel through this pass, as well as countless individual samurai hoping to test their mettle against the forces of Fu Leng. The road through the pass is wide and well-maintained; the Crab understand the need for open supply routes. Many merchants, peddlers, and hucksters frequent the road, plying their wares to any who pass by. Anyone who wishes to sell anything here must pay a tithe to the Yasuki, and indeed most of the traders along the pass belong to the family. The Crab tolerate their presence for this reason and this reason alone.

SSS Haikyo sano Kappa

(Ruins of the Kappa)

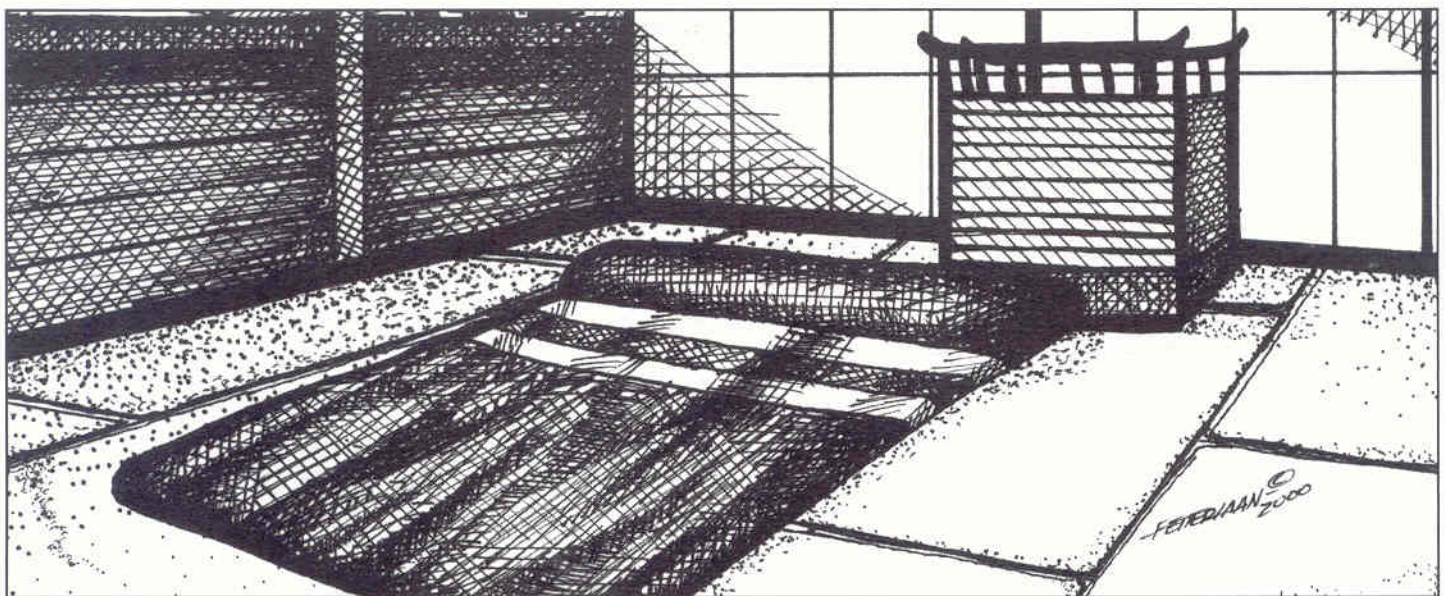
Once a strong fortress of the Crab Clan, the Kappa palace fell long ago to the Shadowlands. Now, it houses a great goblin city, shabbily rebuilt to ape the style of the original. Dozens of tribes gather here to meet, haggle, debate, and fight in a hideous mockery of human society. The goblins claim that a great king rules all goblinkind from here, but the highest authority anyone has ever seen are the squabbling tribal warlords.

The occasional Kuni magician can be found here, negotiating with the individual goblins for their own sinister purposes. In return for free passage to and from the palace, the Kuni have masked the city's presence from the other Crab families; should the Hida ever learn of it, they would destroy it without a second thought.

TTT Kuni Arenu

(Kuni Wastes)

Once conquered by the Shadowlands, the Kuni wastes have been retaken by the Crab over centuries of of brutal warfare. It is a flat plain of cracked mud and blowing dust, where no living thing will grow. The odd Shadowlands creature wanders about, looking for lone travelers to prey upon. The only humans who live here are the mysterious shugenja of the Kuni family, who practice their fell arts in seclusion. They live alone in ramshackle huts which dot the landscape, and rarely seek the company of outsiders. Rumors about the terrible experiments they conduct on the Oni they manage to capture, and the unnatural screams sometimes heard echoing across the wastes lend credence to such speculation.





UUU Jinshin Sakana Wan

(Earthquake Fish Bay)

The bay that separates the Crane and Crab provinces has a portentous history. It's warmer than it should be, due to volcanic activity occurring beneath the waves. When an earthquake occurs, its water becomes so hot that it kills many of the fish in the lake, causing a great mess of dead fish to wash ashore. This has only happened three times in Rokugan's one thousand year history, but each time it has happened, it has been an omen to an event of disastrous portent.

WWW Kano Suru Ana no Fu Leng

(Festering Pit of Fu Leng)

When Fu Leng was cut from his father's hand and fell from the heavens, he landed here. The resulting crater stretched deep into the underworld, releasing all manner of foul creatures into the world. The Pit is the center of the Shadowlands, focusing Fu Leng's power and hatred into solid form. Evil emanates from it in palpable waves, and the darkest spirits congregate around its surface. Crab scouts say that it stretches all the way to Fu Leng's resting place, and that he uses it as a window to spy on the world of men. No human has ever seen the Festering Pit without going mad, but the largest and most fearsome oni often travel here to worship their dread master.

XXX Okiwasureru Haka no Fu Leng

(Forgotten Tomb of Fu Leng)

After his defeat at the hands of Shinsei, Fu Leng was banished beneath the earth. Soon thereafter, the Forgotten Tomb appeared, the representation of Fu Leng's power on earth. All of the creatures which he gave life to – the goblins, the ogres, the oni granted physical form – emerged from the tomb, spreading across the length and breadth of the Shadowlands. A squat structure of ancient stone, it is decorated with hideous symbols and terrifying statues depicting the foretold return of the Dark God. Unlike the Festering Pit, no creature is found near the tomb; its halls belong to Fu Leng and Fu Leng alone.

YYY Shio Senkyo no Riku

(Tidal Landbridge)

The Landbridge is a small strip of turf on the entrance to Warm Springs Bay. At low tide, it is nearly a half-mile across, allowing large groups of men to pass from one side to the other. At high tide, it is swallowed beneath the waves. Ships wishing to pass through the strait must wait for the tide to rise, and both the Crab and the Crane regulate the traffic that passes through it. Both Clans have squabbled over ownership of the bridge, but the rolling waves have the ultimate authority over its possession.

ZZZ Bunya sano Asahina

(Fields of the Morning Sun)

A great temple to Jurojin has been constructed on the beaches here. All are welcome to come and meditate. Often, prospective doctors and shugenja journey to the temple to learn the healing arts from the resident monks.

YYY Candas

The city of the Chameleons lies deep beneath the ocean waves, though Naga magic fills the city with breathable air. Sometimes, when the sea is still, Candas can be seen through the surface of the water. Mischievous young Nagas sometimes play tricks on Crab and Mantis sailors passing through the area, turning their ships on false courses or sneaking aboard and tampering with navigational equipment.

AAAA Ruined Keep of Fu Leng

This haunted castle's origins are a mystery. It seems to move about the Shadowlands at will, and has a malevolent intelligence. Once a traveler becomes trapped inside, only solving the Keep's endless riddles and tests of bravery allows a possibility of escape.

BBBB Shima no Koshinryo and Shima no Kinu

(Island of Spice and Island of Silk)

The islands of Silk and Spice are, obviously, named for the two chief exports of the Mantis Clan. They are heavily guarded by the fleet of the Mantis, the largest standing fleet in Rokugan.

CCCC Wan no Asaguroi Mizu

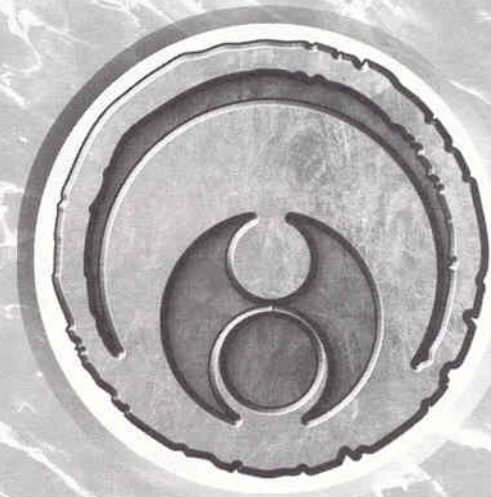
(Bay of Dark Water)

Only those who put no stock in superstition cross the Bay of Dark Water. The standard sailor superstition is that a city of horrible creatures lies at the bottom of the bay, and that those who do not throw rice over the side when they cross bring doom and curses on their heads from the creatures below.

Kalpa (no map entry)

The greatest of the Naga cities has not survived the great sleep of its people. Somewhere to the far north Kalpa, the city of rebirth, lies buried beneath the rubble of earthquakes and the passage of time. Even now, with the Naga awakened from the Great Sleep, no word has come from the Naga of this city, and the race considers them dead. Many of their souls have joined the Akasha, speaking disjointedly of earthquakes, fire, and war, but no lesson has been brought forth by the Constrictors to explain the loss of Kalpa's lore.

Chapter Two: Within



There are no Miya heroes.

—Miya Family motto

"It is good to see you again, little cousin," Satoshi announced, his deep voice resounding through the halls of Kyuden Miya. "I trust the journey here was not too difficult, Yumi-chan?" Satoshi's words held a hint of smugness as he looked down at the young girl kneeling before him.

Miya Yumi glanced up from where she knelt, meeting her cousin's eyes for a single instant. Her pretty face was weary and smeared with dust, but she smiled sweetly, concealing her hatred well. "No trouble at all, Satoshi-sama," she replied. "Even Scorpion bandits know better than to interfere with an Imperial Herald."

"Indeed?" Satoshi replied, folding his arms behind his back and nodding solemnly. "I had no end of trouble with them. Luckily the Matsu taught me well and I have little to fear from bandits. I suppose during your time with the Ikoma you must have learned the better part of valor?" He let the subtle insult hang in the air and turned away, slowly pacing toward a window at the far end of the chamber. He calmly looked out over the rolling hills he now ruled.

He did not acknowledge Yumi enough to give her any permission to rise, though he knew she was exhausted after the long journey from Kyuden Hida to Kyuden Miya.

Yumi remained kneeling for several minutes, until she had to hold her knees to keep them from shaking. She quietly fumed with anger, and wished for the days when her uncle still ruled the Miya family.

"What of your journey to the Hida provinces?" Satoshi asked finally, still focused on the hills. "Is it true that Kisada's army moves eastward, away from the Carpenter Wall?"

"This is true, my lord," Yumi said, trying to keep the pain and exhaustion from her voice. She would not give Satoshi the satisfaction. "As of yet, they have not invaded another clan's territory save Scorpion. As you know, the Scorpion are powerless now, so this is technically a threat to no one."

Satoshi looked somewhat disturbed by the comment. "Did you ask Hida Kisada for an explanation?"

"The Scorpion are a dead clan, Satoshi-sama, exiled by the Emperor. The Crab serve the Emperor yet. They have every right to take the land if they desire it, so I did not see the need to impose upon Kisada-sama's privacy. He is a busy man."

"Hmm," Satoshi mused, stroking his chin with one hand. "Tell me, Yumi. Does Kisada intend to occupy Shoji's former lands, or has he set his sights on something grander?"

"I would not know, my lord," she replied. "I am only a herald." She wobbled a bit where she knelt and nearly fell over, but quickly regained her balance. Satoshi smiled.

A cough sounded from the doorway and Satoshi glanced past her. Yumi glanced back to see an elderly man in rough brown robes standing in the doorway. Yumi did not recognize him for a moment due to his poor clothing and the angry scowl that twisted his face.

It was her uncle, Yoto, the retired lord of the Miya.

"Father," Satoshi chuckled, raising one eyebrow. "I did not expect to see you up and about this early in the day. Surely a pious monk such as yourself should be chanting the sutras at this hour?"



Yoto glanced down at Yumi, then at Satoshi. "My son," Yoto said, his calm voice layered with ice, "Do my eyes deceive me or did you abandon your manners at Otsan Uchi as well as your duty to the Empire? Yumi-chan is tired; let her rest and give her report in the morning."

Satoshi blinked, momentarily surprised by the sting of the old man's words. He just as quickly recovered his composure, chuckling as if the barb meant nothing. "My apologies," he said in a toneless, nasal voice. He did not look at his cousin. "Yumi, be gone. Rest. Perhaps I shall have the servants bring you some tea, or something suitable." The young girl stood, wobbling slightly as circulation returned to her legs. She bowed to Satoshi as briefly as decorum would allow. She did not bow to Yoto as deeply, but held the bow longer. As she limped out of the room, she smiled at Yoto so that Satoshi would not see.

Miya Satoshi slowly moved across the room, arms folded behind his back, and stood before his aged father. The young daimyo laughed lightly. "Pardon my formality with Yumi-chan, father. It was a small test. Unlike you, I believe a daimyo of the Imperial Family should be shown proper respect." He smiled, showing perfect white teeth.

"Is that so?" Yoto asked, scratching the side of his head. "That must be a recent development, for you showed me little respect when you forced me to retire."

Satoshi chuckled and placed his hands on Yoto's shoulders. "Forced you? You *abandoned* your position when you ran off to look for the Black Lion!"

Yoto said nothing, but kept his gaze focused on his son. It was a lie, of course. Satoshi had taken rulership of the family long before that. It seemed that even Satoshi believed his own lies, now.

"And you claim I show you no respect?" Satoshi asked mildly. "I ask you this. Is not the fact that I allow you to live ample sign of my respect?" Satoshi let the threat linger in the air as he walked away.

Yoto closed his eyes for a moment. A look of terrible sadness crossed his face. "What has become of you, Satoshi?" he said to Satoshi's back, his voice thick. "What did I do to place such anger in your heart?"

Satoshi peered back over one shoulder, looking down at the old man for a long time. "Don't you know?" Satoshi asked. "You did nothing, father."

Yoto's brow furrowed in confusion. "Then why—"

"Aren't you listening to me?" Satoshi shouted suddenly, whirling about. "You did *nothing*, father!" He held one fist clenched in the old man's face.

"Satoshi," Yoto replied, stunned by the vehemence of the young man's reply. "Satoshi, I..."

Satoshi quickly walked away again, marching toward the window. "In the old days, you would ride across the breadth of Rokugan to drag a Crab from the gutter," Satoshi hissed, hands balling into fists. "But could you spare a moment to raise your own son? Fortunes, no. Only the great Miya Yoto could bring peace to Rokugan. Only the great Miya Yoto could carry the Emperor's Blessing. Only the great Miya Yoto could do what was best for the little, helpless, worthless, stinking people of the Empire! An unwashed ronin stood higher in your esteem than I. You purchased katana for ronin who met your fancy, and what did you ever do for *me*?"

"Satoshi, listen to me," Yoto pleaded, remaining where he stood as his son paced angrily across the room once more.

"No," Satoshi replied with a curt wave of his hand, still looking out the window. "I have as much use for your advice as you had for me. Why should I care what you have to say?"

"Because I am your father, Satoshi," Yoto said, his voice so suddenly commanding that Satoshi stopped and turned to face him.

"Are you?" Satoshi laughed, a wide smile splitting his face. "As I recall, you gave me to the Lion Clan barely a week after my *gempukku*. An offering to sow peace between the Matsu and the Ikoma. It quickly became clear that I was worth little more to you than as a bargaining chip in one of your negotiations." He glared at the old man, expecting denial, argument, any sort of refusal.

Yoto said nothing for several moments. "I was wrong," Yoto finally whispered, his voice cracked and dry. "I am sorry, Satoshi."

Satoshi's eyes narrowed in anger.

Yoto folded his arms in his robes and moved closer to his son, meeting Satoshi's furious gaze without fear. Tears welled in the old man's eyes.

"When your mother..." Yoto whispered, his voice trembling. "When Koiso died... I was shattered. I had spent so much time away from Kyuden Miya, carrying the Emperor's Blessing, bringing peace between the clans, wandering the Empire, that I had not realized how important she was. When she died, I think I died as well."

"If only you had," Satoshi snapped.

"You do not understand, Satoshi," Yoto said, though the remark cut him. "Every time I thought of her, it reminded me of what a mockery my life had been. Service to the Hantei and duty to the people meant nothing compared to her love. Consumed by my grief, I could no longer function. I could no longer fill the position I had sworn to uphold. Every time I looked at you I remembered her and died again. When the chance came to place a Miya among the Lion to calm the fires of the Matsu, I sent you away."

"You punished me for your weakness," Satoshi snarled.

"Yes," Yoto answered. "It was the only way I could continue to serve the Emperor as I had sworn to do. The only way I could push



my grief for your mother from my mind was to push away everything that mattered to me at all."

"How terrible for you," Satoshi said bitterly. "You lost a wife. I lost a mother and a father, the latter to his own cowardice. How do you think it felt to be surrounded by strangers when I wanted nothing but to weep for my mother? I did not have the luxury of 'pushing my grief from my mind!' Do you know how the Lion regard a man so weak that he cannot keep from weeping?" Now Satoshi's eyes had begun to redden as well, and his voice was choked from anger and despair, long bottled away.

Yoto looked away, unable to meet his son's gaze. "I was weak, and I am sorry, Satoshi. I do not deserve your forgiveness, and I will not ask for it. All that I ask is that you place your hatred where it deserves to be."

"What do you mean?" Satoshi asked, straightening and regarding his father skeptically. Any sign of emotion was gone now, except his usual cold, seething anger.

"Kill me," Yoto said. "Punish me if you will, but stop destroying the Miya."

"I have not destroyed the Miya," Satoshi retorted, his tone offended. "What are you talking about?"

"I mean that you have destroyed everything our family stands for," Yoto said sadly. "We are diplomats, builders, peacemakers. You have turned your back on all of that."

"I have turned my back on nothing," Satoshi interrupted. "I have merely opened my eyes to what the Empire has become. In time of war, it is the duty of the Emperor's Herald to be the first into the breach. The time for peace is over."

"And what of the Emperor's Blessing?" Yoto asked, his voice becoming slowly more angry.

"The Blessing?" Satoshi replied. "I would not abandon the Blessing! It is our proudest tradition! I donate to the Emperor's Blessing more than any other member of our family. More than you ever did."

"Yet the monks in the monastery tell me that you have used the Blessing to create weapons of war. You use funds intended to bring peace and well-being to arm peasants. Would you even forge the Miya into soldiers?"

"The monks gossip as much as the Otomo," Satoshi sneered. "You have been grossly misinformed, father. Miya peasants have no taste for war. You have trained them too well."

"It is not my training," Yoto replied. "It is our tradition, and it is only common sense."

"Bah," Satoshi scoffed. "I am daimyo now. The use of the Blessing is open to my discretion. No one stood ready to save the Hantei from Bayushi Shoju. Do you think the Lion or the Crane will follow such a weakling Emperor once they have finished their war? Do you

think Hida Kisada will truly be content with the lands of the Scorpion? How much longer can the Hantei dynasty last? And when it falls, what will happen to our family? Who will save the Miya if we cannot save ourselves?"

"You have perverted the spirit of the Miya," Yoto said, shaking his head slightly as he looked away from his son. "The Miya do not serve the Empire because it is convenient, or because it suits our purposes. We serve the Empire because it *is* our purpose. The Empire needs us. You have turned your back on tradition, and soiled all the good that we have done."

"And you have turned your back upon reality, father," Satoshi finished. "Our family is weak. We have always been weak. I have no interest in upholding such a tradition, and neither do many others. Now is our chance to become strong!"

Yoto turned to face his son a final time. His face was calm and his eyes were cold as flint. "The fact that you equate war with strength proves that you are no Miya, Satoshi. I may have failed you as a father, but you have failed the entire Empire. *I would not have you as a son.*"

Miya Yoto turned and walked away.

"I did not give you leave!" Satoshi snapped hysterically, storming after the old man. "I am your daimyo! I did not give you permission to leave my presence!" A pair of guards in the hallway glanced back, surprised at the outburst. When they saw the source, they quickly found something else to do.

"You are not my daimyo," Yoto said, ignoring his son's ravings as he continued down the hall. "I am a simple monk now, remember? And even were I still a samurai, I would gladly become ronin before I took orders from you."

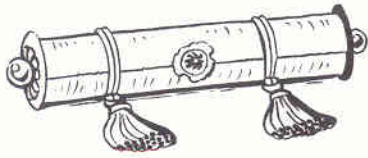
"Like that fool Koan?" Satoshi called out. The young daimyo halted at the doorway and screamed at Yoto's back as the old man slowly receded down the hall. "Koan is already an outlaw, Yoto. I promise you he'll be dealt with just as he deserves."

Yoto stopped for a moment. He considered saying something, but thought the better of it. He continued walking.

"Or perhaps you mean your friend, the coward Toturi?" Satoshi pressed with a mocking laugh. "Toturi's rabble will be dealt with as well, fath— *old man*. My Lion friends have promised me that. The Dragon will not be able to protect him for much longer."

Satoshi spun on his heel and returned to his chambers, slamming the rice paper screen shut behind him. How dare his father speak to him that way? Miya Yoto was daimyo no longer. He had proven himself a fool once already by losing his position.

Miya Yoto would prove himself the fool a final time if he challenged Satoshi's power again. He and Yumi both. Satoshi knew the two of them were plotting together against him. It was pathetic how obvious they were. Satoshi was ready for them.



Yoto settled onto the pallet, the bones in his back throbbing gently as he eased himself onto the floor. He became tired easily these days, far too easily. Perhaps the madcap adventures of his youth had used up all of his strength. Perhaps the strain of watching his son become an abomination had weakened his soul. Yoto had not failed to notice the spies that discreetly followed him from Kyuden Miya, insuring that the old daimyo returned to the monastery where he belonged and did not cause trouble. Yoto knew that some of the monks were on Satoshi's payroll as well, and guarded his words among others. This was no monastery. This was a prison.

Yoto wondered what might have happened if, on his journey back from Kyuden Miya, he had turned east instead, toward the camps of Toturi. Yoto did not wonder to what depths of evil Satoshi would sink to stop him. He did not want to know.

If only Satoshi was more like his cousin, Yumi. Miya Yumi was a clever girl with a fervent love for peace. Unfortunately, while Yumi had been away building a peace treaty between the Crane and the Lion, Satoshi had been finding allies to ensure his rise to power. Now the poor girl was as helpless as he, and the fragile peace she had constructed was already a distant memory. In fact, she was even worse off than Yoto, as she was still under Satoshi's command. Satoshi disliked Yumi greatly, and took great pleasure from giving her no end of difficult missions. It was a wonder she had come back from Kyuden Hida alive, what with the rumors he heard flying of the Crabs and their dealing with the Shadowlands...

Yoto decided to go to sleep, then. He reached for the single candle that lit the room.

A sudden muffled thud sounded from the window, interrupting his train of thought. Yoto opened his eyes. His dormitory was on the third floor. Could it have been a bird? It sounded like something large.

An assassin? Had Yoto finally pushed Satoshi too far?

Yoto quickly seized a clay pot, testing its weight in one hand. The old man moved to the window and slid open the wooden screen, looking left and right.

"Uncle," a pained voice sounded from below. "Uncle, please help me..."

Yoto glanced down. His eyes widened when he saw a figure garbed fully in black hanging from the window by their fingertips. "Ninja!" he hissed, raising the pot high.

"Uncle!" the figure called out, still trying to keep its voice low. Yoto blinked.

It suddenly dawned upon him that a ninja probably would not have called him "Uncle."

Nor would a ninja have asked for his help.

He threw the pot aside and thrust out one hand just as the figure lost its grip, and he seized one arm. The clay vase shattered somewhere on the earth far below. Yoto ignored the sudden commotion and seized one side of the window with his free hand to gain leverage. Pushing against the wall with one foot, he pulled the intruder inside with extraordinary ease. The two toppled on the floor in a heap.

Either Miya Yoto was stronger than he thought or this was a very slim man...

The intruder sat up and threw aside its mask to reveal short-cropped black hair and an impish, contagious grin. Yoto quickly realized that this was no man at all. She quickly rolled to her feet and closed the window with a flick of her wrist so no one below would see them.

"Yumi!" he hissed, absolutely baffled to see her. "What are you doing here? Why are you dressed like that?"

She shrugged and grinned again as she helped her uncle to his feet. "It wasn't my idea, father," she whispered. "It was Koan's."

"Koan?" Yoto's jaw dropped open at the mention of his old ronin friend. "That old scoundrel? He's here?"

"He's outside. He used his magic to lift me to the window. He said it would be easier, since I'm so light. He's waiting outside with Sanzo, the ronin you told me about in your letters."

"Sanzo?" Yoto replied, astonished. Yoto had met the ronin, briefly, many years ago. "What are they doing here? What are any of you doing here? Koan's an outlaw and Satoshi has no love for ronin. He would kill all three of you if he found out you were working together."

"That doesn't matter anymore," Yumi said with a small shake of her head. "Rokugan needs you, uncle. More than ever. I never went to Crab lands; I know Satoshi only sent me there to get rid of me. Koan and I have been planning this for months. Sanzo and Koan were already on their way here to rescue you when I stumbled on them. We want to bring you to Toturi."

Yoto was stunned. He was shocked that Koan and Sanzo would risk their lives sneaking back into the lands of the one man in Rokugan who hated ronin more than any other. He was even more shocked that Yumi would risk being cast out of the family to defy Satoshi and rescue her uncle. What stunned him more than anything else, however, were the next words out of his mouth.

"Leave without me," Yoto replied. "I can't go."



Yumi looked puzzled. "What?" she asked, cocking her head slightly. "You're not that old, uncle. I'll carry you if I have to." She turned for the window, taking him by the hand.

"No, that's not it," Yoto chuckled sadly. He clutched her hand in both of his and smiled sadly.

"But this is what you planned!" Yumi said desperately. "Koan told me that before Satoshi captured you, you planned to go to Toturi, to help him unite the clans and bring peace to Rokugan! Don't tell me you're giving up now! This can work!"

"No," Yoto said. "Actually, it can't." Yoto sat down heavily on his pallet and looked at the floor. Yumi sat down beside him, her face torn with confusion and concern. "Satoshi has been waiting for me to try something like this, don't you see? He has been waiting for an excuse to turn the Matsu loose on Toturi, to destroy everything the Black Lion is building out there in the mountains."

"So?" Yumi shrugged. "The Lion can't touch Toturi in Dragon lands. Togashi Yokuni wouldn't let Tsuko's army past the borders."

"No," Yoto looked up and met the young girl's eyes.

Yumi frowned, then nodded slowly in understanding. "But if you escaped to join him," she said, "Satoshi could interpret it as a direct challenge to the leadership of an Imperial Family. It would become an Imperial matter."

Yoto nodded. "The Imperial Legions would destroy Toturi as surely as they destroyed the Scorpion, and the Dragon could do nothing to stop them."

"What do we do?" Yumi asked, burying her face in her hands. "We can't leave you here, uncle. He'll hurt you, I know it."

"You must," Yoto replied. "As long as I am alive, as long as I am here, Satoshi gloats. While he is gloating, he isn't thinking, and the damage he can do is limited. Leave me here, Yumi. It is where I belong. I can take care of myself."

Yumi nodded again. "*Hai*, Yoto-sama," she replied obediently.

"Will you return to him?" Yoto asked, looking to the west. "To Satoshi?"

"No," Yumi replied, straightening. "He knows that I have always favored your philosophy over his own, and I don't think I could hide what I know from him for much longer."

Yoto peered at his niece curiously.

"You may have heard tales of the Winter Court at Kyuden Kakita," Yumi replied. "How the Emperor called Satoshi to his presence to discuss his leadership of the family?"

"Indeed," Yoto said. "I thought the tale odd, considering the Emperor's health of late."

"You should," Yumi replied. "I followed him that night. He didn't talk to the Emperor at all."

"He didn't?" Yoto asked.

"No," Yumi paused. "He spoke to the Empress."

Yoto gasped. "Bayushi Kachiko? What did they say?"

"I couldn't hear much," Yumi replied. "I was afraid the Empress' bodyguard would see me. However, I heard them mention something about the Emperor's Blessing."

"The Blessing?" Yoto replied. "Why would the Empress want to manipulate the Emperor's Blessing? With a single word in the court, she could turn it to any use she wished?"

"Maybe what she wanted couldn't be mentioned in the courts," Yumi replied. "The funds of the Blessing are untraceable. You could outfit an entire army with the money the Blessing gathers."

Miya Yoto's heart froze in his chest. "But Satoshi denied using the Blessing to provide weapons for the Miya," he said. "After everything else, I still believe Satoshi. He is a terrible liar. He will try to couch his deceptions in truth at every turn."

"You're right, uncle," Yumi nodded. "Satoshi isn't outfitting the army. I think he plans to provide weapons..."

"For the fallen Scorpion," Yoto breathed, finishing his niece's thought.

She nodded, her mouth tightening into a thin line. Her soft eyes were suddenly fierce and angry. "Satoshi's a traitor, uncle. He's plotting with the Empress against the Empire itself. We have to stop him, but I can't do it by myself. Can't you see? We need you."

Yoto looked up at his niece, his eyes full of confidence. "No," he replied. "No, you can do this yourself. Satoshi won't suspect what you're up to until it's too late. If I leave now and don't show up in Toturi's camp, he'll suspect something is amiss. Alone, you have a chance at unraveling his plan."

"But no one will listen to me," Yumi said.

"No," Yoto said firmly. He stood and met the young herald's eyes squarely. "You're a fine diplomat. All you need are the proper allies. Now think. If you want to stop Satoshi, where do you turn? There's always a way to find peace, Yumi. You just have to find it."

"I've got it!" Yumi snapped suddenly, grinning. She looked embarrassed as she composed herself once more, glancing at the door to see if anyone heard.

"What?" Yoto whispered quickly. "What is it? Where will you go?"

"Don't worry, uncle," she said, kissing the old man on the forehead as she rose and moved to the window. "If I don't tell you, then Satoshi can't question you, right? Stay well, I'll be praying for you."

"And I for you, Yumi-chan," Yoto said, smiling fondly at his niece.

She nodded, bowed a final time, and opened the window. A moment later, she felt the air thicken around her as Koan's spell took hold. She drifted to the ground. The spell wavered when she was six feet up, and she tumbled to the ground with a yelp. A dark shadow appeared suddenly and seized her by one arm. Yumi gasped, but



quickly recognized the man's tattooed face. It was Sanzo, helping her to steady herself as she landed.

Sanzo peered upward at Miya Yoto, looking down from above. Yoto's eyes fixed on his niece, then turned to Sanzo. A silent question passed between the strange ronin and the old diplomat. Sanzo looked at the girl, then back at her uncle, and nodded with grim confidence. Yoto smiled slightly and closed the window, confident now that Yumi would be safe.

"I'm all right," Yumi whispered, dusting off her clothes with both hands. Sanzo nodded smartly and backed away with one hand on his katana, eyes scouring the shadows for any sign of a threat. "Koan?" Yumi called out softly. "Koan, where are you?"

A weathered little man with a sour face crawled out of the bushes. His *jingasa* tumbled on the ground, and he swore under his breath as he chased after it. Sanzo glanced at him briefly and sneered. "Right here, Yumi-sama," Koan replied, standing. "You almost hit me with that pot."

"I already told you— don't call me 'sama,'" she replied.

"I refer to you as 'my lord' for my own protection," the old shugenja smiled, placing the helmet on his head. A faded nightingale mon gleamed in the moonlight. "If I get caught, I'll say you forced me to help you."

"Of course," Yumi said dryly. She snatched her yari from where she had deposited it in the bushes and glanced around. No one seemed to be nearby.

"Where's Yoto?" Koan asked, suddenly realizing the old man wasn't present.

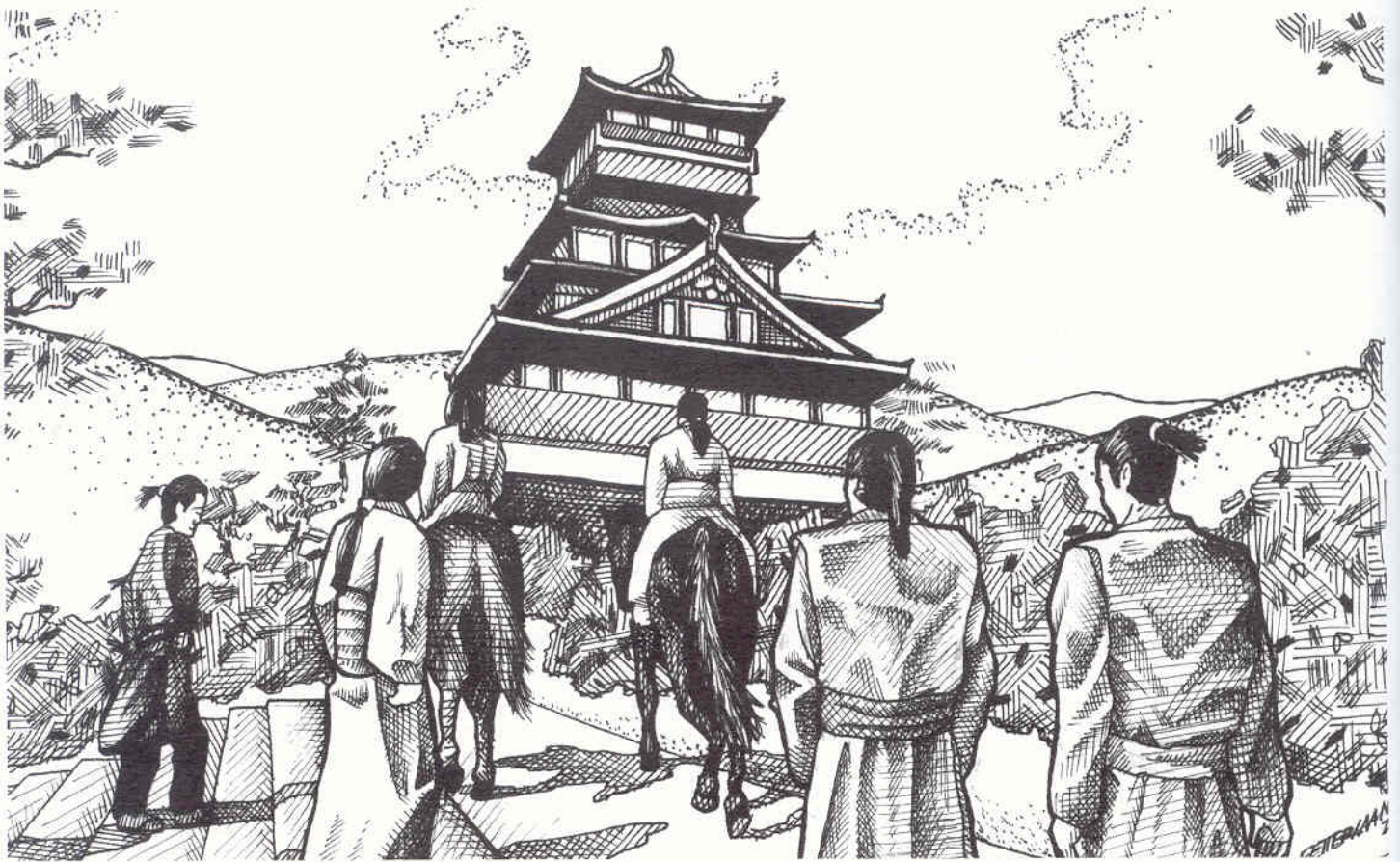
"He stayed behind," Yumi said. "Long story."

"Old fool," Koan mumbled. "I knew he'd do something stupid like that. I just knew it."

"Miya Yoto helps people," Sanzo said, his voice harsh. "He helped me once. He wouldn't remain behind without good reason."

"I know, I know," Koan whined. "That doesn't make him any less a fool, does it?"

"Shh, both of you!" Yumi hissed. She heard footsteps approaching. "Come on," she gestured at the two men and broke into a run, careful not to make too much noise. Koan ambled along after her.





Sanzo ran with one hand on his sword, making no sound. In a matter of moments, the trio had disappeared into the thick curtain of forest.

Once they were a safe distance from the monastery, Yumi paused to duck into the bushes. She quickly stripped away the black mask, tunic, and leggings that Koan had provided. She returned wearing a short tan kimono and dark brown hakama. It made her look rather tomboyish, but Yumi had always preferred to dress practically. Sanzo was waiting nearby with their horses. Koan was sitting on a rock reading a scroll. The trio mounted and galloped back toward the road.

"Where to?" Koan asked. "Back to Satoshi or off to find Toturi?"

"Neither," Yumi replied.

Koan blinked. "You planning to take on your cousin and the Empress all by yourself?"

"Not exactly," Yumi said. "My uncle always said taught me that friends make the best bridges."

Sanzo smiled slightly at the words.

Koan considered that for a moment. "Living so close to the Dragon seems to have rubbed off," Koan observed. "Do you think that for my benefit you could phrase that in a way that makes sense?"

"Odd request from someone whose name means 'riddle,'" Sanzo remarked.

"Leave my name out of this," Koan grumbled. "I'm helping you out of the goodness of my heart, Yumi-sama. Anyone who knows me will tell you that's not going to carry you too far. Now tell me where we're going."

"Friends make the best bridges," Yumi repeated. "That's why Yoto left friends behind him wherever he went, just in case he needed help later. We're going to find one of those bridges now, and we're going to use it."

"Yumi..." Koan said again, his voice growing more frustrated.

"We're going to Kyuden Ashinagabachi!" Yumi shouted with a laugh.

"The Wasp Clan?" Sanzo said sharply. "But they're right in the heart of Scorpion territory!"

"That's right," Yumi nodded. "My uncle has friends among the Three Man Alliance. The Three Man Alliance has recently formed an alliance with the Mantis. If Toturi won't help us, then perhaps Lord Yoritomo will."

"You think that Yoritomo will help us?" Koan asked, not looking too confident. "They say he's a difficult man."

"I suppose we'll find out, won't we?" Yumi said with an impish grin as she galloped off ahead of Koan. Sanzo charged off beside her without hesitation.

Koan prayed to every Fortune he could name and followed.

The Empire

The Emerald Empire of Rokugan is a complex and stratified land, with many ranks within the samurai class. Not all samurai are daimyo of their province; likewise, not all members of the samurai class wield katana and fight ogres. The following information is designed to give you a guide to the land of the Empire.

Below you will find detailed information on some of the more 'common' Rokugani wisdoms, such as a traveler might learn about a new land. From the peasantry to the samurai, the land of the Emerald Empire is complex and intricate, and allows for hundreds of unique roleplaying opportunities.

The Bonge

At the bottom of the political scale are the masses of commoners, *hinin* and *heimin*, known as the *bonge*. This class includes not only the peasants and merchant class, but also the social 'untouchables' known collectively as *eta*. These poor unfortunates have the lowest social ranking besides *gaijin*.

Because of the lack of segregation within the social strata, non-*eta* commoners are therefore eager to distinguish themselves any way possible, hoping to one day be allowed to join the ranks of the *buke* (samurai), or marry into the lesser, 'vassal' families of the *kuge* (noble samurai families). Members of the *bonge* class are unable to approach the Emperor or the great houses of the *kuge* under any circumstances, although if they rise to become members of the *buke* class they are allowed to speak on military matters.

Geisha are not officially included in the *bonge*, but are considered a separate class. Because of their position, they are allowed to speak to members of the samurai class on many occasions, and are expected to comport themselves as if they were samurai, although they hold none of the rank, social prestige or political power of the *kuge* or vassal families.



Villages

Most farming villages are linked by small paths and dirt roads, and it generally takes the better part of a day to travel from one village to the next. These pathways are level with the ground around them (unlike the Emperor's raised roads), and are far too narrow to guide a cart over. Most carts must take the larger roads, and even then require a permit (thus, there are very few carts in Rokugan, as their use is so limited). Rural villages off the beaten path are lucky to see a monthly merchant or traveler. Even the nobles of these lands are only likely to see a *yoriki* or *gokenin* visit during tax time. Most are hamlets far removed from the main culture of Rokugan, and have found their own way of life over the generations, which is far different from that of the larger towns upon the main roads.

These "backwater" places are like another world to city samurai. Villages too far from civilization commonly become targets for dishonorable ronin, bandits, and monsters looking for easy prey. Many adventures can focus around this kind of place.

When a samurai makes his way to a new village, the villagers can see him from quite a distance. A samurai approaching a rural village is a rare sight, and peasants are always leery of their visits. If the samurai is far enough away, the peasant fetches the headman, or *chonin*, of the village. Should the *chonin* desire to properly greet the samurai, he arrives with four *doshin* (peasants with *jitte* in their belt), and asks if he has eaten. Samurai are expected to interact with the headman for most matters, and during the initial encounter the headman gently probes to determine whether or not the samurai means any harm to the village.

The headman invites the samurai in, informs him of the village's name (if he asks), and escorts him to an inn. If there is no inn, then the samurai is led to the headman's home. He is given food, sake, and bedding. If he requires anything else, he needs but ask. It is considered rude to deny the samurai anything, whether he is from the same clan as the headman or not. Even ronin receive food and comfort; after all, as long as there is a samurai at the village, there is no fear that bandits will come around. Any time a samurai is fed and given a place to sleep by a village, the headman is certain to include the costs in the village's taxes, and will be repaid for his hospitality by the village's *daimyo* at the end of the year.

If taken to the village inn, road house, tea house, or geisha house, the samurai is introduced to the owner. There is no cost for a samurai to eat, drink, stay the night, or visit a geisha, but honorable samurai leave something behind in honor of the service. Disruptive samurai are dealt with by the village's *doshin*. Commonly, the offending samurai is knocked unconscious and tied up until the *yoriki* or magistrate can arrive. However, in some cases, peasants have been forced to kill a drunk samurai; the repercussions for such an act are always grim.



Gardens

Gardens in Rokugan are carefully cultivated, often requiring hours of intensive labor over many seasons. They are designed as small incarnations of the world, and display nature on a small scale. Moss, bamboo groves, maple trees and small streams are incorporated into the features of a garden, as well as flowering shrubs, wisteria and cherry trees. Groupings of rocks are a basic element of Rokugani gardens, representing mountains and often found at the center of the landscape. Arching bridges and carved stone lanterns provide touches of civilization within the boundaries of nature. Dripping fountains of water through bamboo pipes pour into pieces of bamboo called *shishidoshi*, which move up and down as they fill and empty, striking against rocks with a rhythmic, soothing noise. Such intricate touches are the mark of a master gardener. Strolling gardens are often built around teahouses and in the view of tremendous mountains or other natural features. Such gardens increase the beauty of the simple tea ceremony, and provide a certain solitude which is rare in the heavily populated cities of Rokugan.

Samurai often refer to townspeople as *chomin* in an unknown locale. When peasants hear this word, they know to bring the headman. Peasants speak to samurai only when spoken to, and never give them information they did not ask for. Samurai always speak first, and peasants know to bow and avoid eye contact at all times.

Heimin and Doshin

These are peasant warriors in the service of a samurai charged with protecting the Emperor's villages. They do not merit inclusion in the samurai caste, having been born into the peasantry, but share the warrior-caste's duty to bushido and protection of the Empire.



Budoka

A budoka is commoner, a peasant who has taken up a weapon and chosen to learn the code of bushido, with or without the teachings of a samurai. He may have been an ashigaru warrior who never wanted to see a farm again after a war. Perhaps he was born with ambition beyond his station and is now a hidden warrior taking on a "better" role. Despite the budoka's effort to violate the Celestial Order, many bushi treat them with respect for their desire to be greater than they actually are. Budoka are rare however, and few make their way to the lands of the Seven Great Clans.

Budoka do not use samurai weapons, and are normally skilled in unarmed combat. A budoka looking for work may attach himself to a ronin, without expecting or demanding the pay and respect that comes with being a member of the samurai caste. The longer a budoka follows her way of life, the closer he clings to the life of a bushi; with the right teaching, he can even learn to master the code of bushido.

Ashigaru (Footsoldier)

The massive armies of the Empire rely upon ashigaru as their foundation, for while an army might win a battle due to one man, it is the collective efforts of the rank and file that carry it through the long weeks or months before. Ashigaru are drawn from the best of the "common man" (heimin), and are in this way like conscripted soldiers. Anywhere that an army marches, you may find ashigaru.

Peasant Retainer

When an army is understrength and there are no able bodies to recruit, most military commanders exercise their right to draw from the villages of their territories for reinforcements. Peasant retainers (levies) are the bottom of the military food chain, commonly men ill- or non-skilled in combat, who have been given peasant weapons and perhaps the odd polearm. They can be found anywhere armies are, though they are more common in beleaguered areas.

How One Becomes Ronin

There are many ways to become ronin, but one that deserves special consideration at the moment is the loss of one's family name. The recent coup in Otsan Uchi has led to the abolishment of the Akodo family of the Lion, as well as the entire Scorpion Clan. Many samurai chose to avoid their fate by declaring themselves ronin. Consequently, travelers through Rokugan can expect to see a great many more ronin than have previously been evident.

The loss of one's family name is a devastating blow to any virtuous samurai, one which can destroy all but the most righteous ronin's honor and sense of self-worth. Many such individuals find

themselves reduced to banditry within the span of a few short years. Consequently, this horrible disgrace is reserved for the most heinous of offenses.

Generally speaking, a samurai is stripped of his family name when he has committed some horrible disgrace or failure of duty. This is a much finer line than one might imagine. A samurai who fails in his duty and is truly repentant would most likely be permitted to commit seppuku. An unrepentant samurai, however, might be shamed with public execution. In order to lose family and clan, a samurai must have disgraced or failed his clan in some spectacular fashion, and genuinely repent his mistake. A harsh or vengeful daimyo, seeing the samurai's anguish over his transgression, may force him to live with the shame of his failure. It is without question the most excruciating fate that can befall an honorable samurai.

Some ronin do not suffer disgrace, but are simply born into the station. A child born of a samurai and a geisha, for instance, is technically samurai, but recognized by no family or clan. Many choose to ignore their samurai heritage and live uneventful lives as merchants or craftsmen. Others set out to claim their rightful heritage – a task difficult at best. Those rare few whom a clan accepts are so honored only after years, if not generations, of service to an unyielding daimyo.

Measuring Time

There are numerous methods of measuring time in Rokugan, as might be expected from such a vast empire with so many competing influences. The Phoenix have their own scholarly method, of course, measuring dates from the founding date of the lost city of Gisei Toshi; the Imperial Court has a third method, which is hopelessly muddled in tradition. The Crab have a completely different approach based on their centuries of experience fighting the Shadowlands. And the Dragon – well, let's just leave well enough alone, shall we?

However, since your players will be dealing a lot with the peasant class out here on the borders, we'll tell you how the heimin prefer to measure time.

There is no formal organization of weeks into months in the eyes of the peasantry; knowing the seasons is good enough for them, and these are not so much ritually calculated as sensed. They plant when they think the time is right to plant, they harvest when they think the time is right to harvest.

Since the peasants have a different method of measuring time, their holidays fall on different days from the samurai's holidays. They work during Imperial Holidays, which is fine by the samurai, because it squeezes another day's work out of them. Peasants long ago chose to work on such holidays because they learned that



samurai get testy when the samurai's holiday and the peasants' holiday don't match up. All of this is simply the fate of the peasant.

relatives. In an *ie*, the father traditionally had absolute authority over individual members of the family. He was responsible for the family's economic well-being, conduct of family members, performance of ceremonies honoring deceased ancestors, and other matters affecting the family.

The eldest son became the family head when the father retired from household responsibilities or died. If there was no son, a daughter would be married to a man who was adopted into the family to become its leader. This practice was also followed if a son was not responsible enough to become head of the family or if the family did not want to lose a daughter.

Daughters usually "married out" into the families of their husbands and had to submit to their rules, enforced by authoritarian mothers-in-law. Sons other than the eldest son were adopted into other families or started their own branch families. Sons were frequently given names representing their birth order. The eldest son and his wife traditionally lived with his parents to care for them and inherit the family property or business. Obedience to and respect for parents is a basic principle of the society, reinforced by the Rokugani concepts of duty and obligation to one's parents.

Rokugani children call their grandmother *obasan*, and their grandfathers *ojis*. Male and female grandchildren are referred to as *mag* (child lineage).

Marriage

In Rokugan, marriage has become a union of two families rather than of two individuals. Each family keeps a household register (*koseki*) listing all of its members. In historical times, a wife was erased from her family's register and added to that of her husband.

Wives are called *okusan* (more formally, *okusama*), or "Mrs. Interior." Family roles have always been strictly divided. The wife traditionally stays at home, takes care of the family finances and money matters, and raises the children, with whom she develops an extremely close relationship. Wives handle family finances and give their husbands allowances, make major decisions about purchases, investments and education of children. Women who are divorced traditionally return to their own families and are known as *demodori*, or "returnees."

Drums

There are two basic types of drums in Rokugan. There is the hourglass-shaped *tsuzumi*, played with the hand, and the larger, barrel-shaped *taiko*, played with sticks (*bach*). The *tsuzumi* is made from lacquered wood with bark skins stretched over each end and sewn to iron rings laced to the wood with cords. The term *tsuzumi*



Hours of the Day

The Rokugani day is divided into twelve hours. Each has a common name, used in general conversation and by the peasants, and a formal name, used in religious ceremonies and by the upper classes.

Hour	Common	Formal
6-8 A.M.	Hare	Sun
8-10 A.M.	Dragon	Moon
10 A.M.-Noon	Serpent	Hantei
12-2 P.M.	Horse	Akodo
2-4 P.M.	Goat	Doji
4-6 P.M.	Monkey	Shiba
6-8 P.M.	Rooster	Bayushi
8-10 P.M.	Dog	Shinjo
10 P.M.-Midnight	Boar	Hida
12-2 A.M.	Rat	Togashi
2-4 A.M.	Ox	Fu Leng
4-6 A.M.	Tiger	Tenth Kami

Family

The traditional Rokugani family is an extended patriarchal group known as an *ie* (stem family), usually translated as "household," which often includes branch families under the authority of the main family, as well as distant relations and persons unrelated. It is often referred to as a "fictive" kinship relationship, since family members may be adopted and bloodlines do not determine relationships.

The *ie* developed from the ancient system of family groups known as *uji*, similar to clans, which were economic units including people who worked for a household as well as close and distant



specifically refers to the hourglass-shaped hand drums used in kabuki and noh theater.

The largest tsuzumi is known as an *otsuzumi* and is about a foot long. When playing, the drum is held in the left hand and rested on the left thigh. The drum heads are struck with the right hand, producing a sharp dry sound. Drummers wear finger guards made of papier-mache, which heighten the sharpness of the sound.

The smaller tsuzumi (*kotsuzumi*) is up to three-quarters this size and has loosely laced drumheads. A little more difficult to play than the *otsuzumi*, it is held on the right shoulder with the left hand. The drummer strikes the drumhead with the right hand and squeezes the laces with the left, thus altering the tone produced.

Taiko are large barrel-shaped drums. In traditional court music a huge laced-head drum known as *dadaiko* is played. A *tsuridaiko* is a drum where the head is nailed directly to the body of the drum. The Rokugani also play a laced-head drum called *ninidaiko*. It is carried during processions on a large pole.

Taiko are often played during the Bon Festival. While the taiko is played, people dance in large circles. This style of dance is typically considered folk dance and few samurai engage in the activity. During the rice-planting festival a smaller taiko is hung around the drummer's neck, and the drummer accompanies dancers to the field where the seeds are planted.

Another important drum is the *hirazuri-daiko*. It is used in kabuki and noh theatre and is used to create various sounds effects to enhance the play, although in noh theatre their use has dwindled. The *hirazuri-daiko* is a thin, barrel-shaped drum, suspended on a stand. It is accompanied by the flute (*fue*) and the sounds mixed together give a sense of foreboding to the scenes. It is especially appropriate for ghosts appearing on the stage.

The taiko helps peasants to symbolize their own community. During festivals expert drummers visit and put on shows for the more remote villages, and often, the boundaries of a village are determined by the headman as the farthest point to which the taiko can be heard. Beyond that range is no business of the village and is left to the samurai.

Gagaku

Gagaku, or "elegant music," is the traditional music performed for the imperial court. Gagaku is played by an orchestra of bronze bells, flutes, and drums. Dancers accompany the music in a form of courtly dance known as *bugaku*. Samurai courtiers are expected to know the dance, and during times when the court is in session with music, courtiers move about with fans, imitating the motions of the ancestors. Bugaku and gagaku are very slow, solemn, and majestic.

Depending on the type of gagaku being played, different instruments are used. A double-reed pipe that resembles an oboe, called the *hichiriki*, is played for all three types. Togaku ensembles use a *sho* – a mouth organ with 17 small bamboo pipes. The *sho* can play many notes at once. A hanging drum (*taiko*), a small bronze gong (*shoko*) and a small hourglass-shaped drum (*tsuzumi*), in addition to two stringed instruments, the *biwa* and the *koto*, are the core of togaku and komagaku. Ritual music is performed mainly by singers, who also rhythmically strike a pair of wooden clappers (*shakubyoshi*). All types of gagaku music are very complex, with many different scales and modes. Gagaku is performed at a much slower tempo than the folk music of Rokugan.



Bunraku

Puppet theater, of which there are several kinds in Rokugan, is known as *bunraku*. Puppet shows are performed by itinerant entertainers, and some puppeteers have become quite important and influential. *Bunraku* puppets are about one-half life size. Each puppet is handled by three puppeteers dressed in black, who keep their bodies concealed by a screen. The chief puppeteer, or *omozukai*, manipulates the puppet's head, eyes, mouth, right arm, and right hand. One assistant manipulates the puppet's left arm and hand, and the other controls the legs and feet. If *bunraku* is performed properly, the audience only concentrates on the puppets and forgets about the puppeteers.

The puppets are dressed in costumes of prominent samurai in Rokugan (past and present). Different wigs are put on the heads to show the age, sex, and personality of the puppet. A narrator sits on a dais to the right of the puppet stage, often accompanied by a musician playing the *shamisen*. Although the narrator usually chants the dialogue for all the puppets, large scenes require several chanters.



Fans

"Time does not die. Only the spirit of young men waiting for it."
– Yogo Gorijotsu

Fans are traditionally used by both men and women in Rokugan, and are worn in the belt or carried folded or unfolded. The prosperous often carry fans, and all of the regal families of Rokugan cool themselves with fans of classic and contemporary designs. Rokugani fans are usually made of bamboo and paper, but nicer wood such as mahogany or pine is sometimes used.

There are a number of forms of etiquette associated with fans. When a fan is presented as a gift, it is never wrapped. The fan is the given in a specific manner, indicating how the giver wishes the gift to be used. If the fan is given handle first (pointed away from the giver), then it is expected that the fan will be used in court or on the battlefield, depending on the type of fan. If the fan is handed to the samurai sideways (hand in center), the samurai is expected to display it on herself, hanging from her belt, from a piece of silk. A samurai who receives a fan from someone fan edge first (handle pointed toward the giver) is expected to unfold the fan and place it on a small stand in a place of honor. Gift fans are always of the highest quality and painted with majestic scenes, or beautiful portraits of important people.

If someone dies while carrying a fan, whoever finds the body may keep the fan as if the deceased had given it to him. He is expected to place the fan in a place of honor as if the fan had been handed to him fan-side first. This is a symbol that as long as the fan remains in a place of honor, he will have a long life. It is an obscure custom, though, and many Rokugani do not observe it.

There are three types of fans in Rokugan and each has a distinct purpose. The *ogi* is the typical folding fan that most Rokugani carry; most nobles carry an *uchiwa* instead. The *ogi* is made of many (3 to 25) bamboo ribs and the paper between each rib is folded only once.

Decoration on the *ogi*'s face tells a three-part story through elegant painting and calligraphy. Skilled fan makers have great artists adorn their fans with stunning images, and many have made a name for themselves in the larger cities.

The *uchiwa* is an archaic flat fan made from thick paper and bamboo (which makes up the long handle). It folds out into a half-circle, and the paper is most often decorated with a simple, brightly colored design. Military officers use a flat fan to signify their rank and to issue orders to their troops; these fans have an iron handle and a heavier paper is decorated with the family or Clan mon. The *tessen* is similarly constructed, but most are straight and can be used defensively, while the standard military fan has a butterfly shape. On the battle field a samurai might carry a *jinsen*, a fan made of peacock or pheasant feathers, but these have grown rare and most generals require their samurai to carry a *tessen* or a military fan.

In Rokugan, fans serve as a sign of respect during ceremonies. Fans also act as decorations and, as mentioned above, are given as gifts during auspicious occasions (e.g. *gempukku*). Small fans are used during the tea ceremony, although only in the closed position. Priests and monks also use fans while chanting during the reading of religious scriptures.



Cloth

The Rokugani use a variety of materials for everyday uses. Burlap, cotton, *fukusa*, *kasuri*, and silk are common materials for just about anything. Most sacks are made of burlap, and almost all peasants have clothes made of cotton. *Fukusa* is a thin silk used for wrapping gift, although plain rice paper is used too. *Kasuri* is another cloth worn by peasants and is primarily worn in the summer. Peasants also wear *dobuku* (a short coat made from a heavy cotton) on formal occasions. Silk is the most predominant material in Rokugan and one in twenty villages has a silk works, milling silk constantly for the noble class.

Games

From *go* to *shogi*, it's likely that your characters are going to end up playing a game of chance to determine some outcome with an NPC. Such games are commonplace, and often become spectator sports. The Lion bushi who is good at tactics will certainly have some idea how to play *go*, and the average Phoenix spellcaster certainly has some skill with the delicate maneuvers of *shogi*. Though you may purchase an actual copy of these games (and we highly recommend it!), here are the simple rules structures and concepts that your PCs would know.



Go

Go is a game of strategy. Most Rokugani are familiar with the rules of go and play often. Go is played on a nearly-square board that is delineated with a grid of 19 horizontal and 19 vertical lines, creating 361 intersections. Go is a two-player game, and typically the game pieces are black and white polished stones. The players take turns placing stones on the intersections in order to surround as much territory as possible. The winner is the player whose stones control the highest number of contiguous intersections. Go is a simple game to play – it has only a few basic rules – yet it requires great skill to master its subtleties. Go masters consider it an art and a way of life, not a game.

Teawari is a handicapping system that gives the higher-ranked player the white stones. Since a black stone is played first, the weaker player gets the first move. The handicapped player is sometimes permitted to put a set number of stones into play before the game starts, depending on the relative skills of the opponents. Once a stone is placed on the board it is never moved, but if it is surrounded by the opponent's stones it is captured, and removed from the board. The game is over when all the stones have been played. In Rokugan, no matter how futile it may be, all games of go are played to the end.

Go is considered a valuable tool for teaching tactics and strategy despite its abstract nature. *Otosan Uchi* hosts annual competitions for promising young players in four different classes based on age (age 7, 9, 11, and 13). The greatest player of go in Rokugan is rumored to be Master Suana of the Brotherhood of Shinsei; however, Toturi is known to be a great player as well.

Shogi

Shogi is the Rokugani equivalent of chess. The game consists of nineteen pieces in ten different sizes on each side of a board that is marked into a grid of 81 squares (9 x 9). The pieces are usually made

of wood (although other materials are common) and elongated into a five-sided shape much like a small obelisk with a point. Each side of the obelisk-shape has a kanji character painted on it; one side is the piece's normal value, and the other side its promoted value. Unlike in go, the pieces in shogi go in the squares between the intersections.

The main piece on each side is known as the king; it moves only one square in one direction, like the king in chess. Other pieces include a rook, a bishop, two gold generals, two silver generals, two knights, two lancers, and nine pawns on each side; each has its own distinct rule for movement and may capture just like in chess.

Rooks can be moved forward or sideways as far as the player wishes. Bishops are moved diagonally, just like chess. A gold general moves one square in any direction, with the exception of diagonally backward, and silver generals move one square forward or diagonally. Knights may move only to the two squares on either side of the square two spaces in front of them, but it may jump over other pieces. The lancer moves to any square forward but cannot go backward. Pawns move – and capture – forward one square at a time. As in chess, the goal of shogi is to checkmate the opponent's king.

A piece that moves into the three rows of squares on the opponent's side may be "promoted" to the next highest rank. A

promoted piece flips over to reveal its "promoted" side.

Captured pieces are not gone for good, but may be brought back into play by the player who captured them. Captured pieces may return on any open square, with a couple of exceptions. To keep the ownership of pieces clear, all the pieces are the same color, but a player's pieces always keep the pointed end of the obelisk toward his opponent.

Shogi was brought to Rokugan from the Burning Sands by the Unicorn. It has been adopted into the Rokugani culture and is now a common game among peasants and samurai alike. Samurai claim



I Beat Him Just Enough...

Death is an extreme way to instruct PCs on how to stay out of trouble. One may not wish to kill a useful samurai, but it may be necessary sometimes to beat them enough to remind them of their place. A few peasant doshin armed with bo and sai can make quick work of a loud, drunken samurai. No doubt a patrolling Magistrate moving through the Emerald Empire is sure to stop in that village any minute.

Use what you have at your disposal to teach the PCs a lesson. Long-term lessons (like death, or guard posts) are rarely fun. PCs quickly plot revenge against such an enemy. But, by making the lesson quick, painful, and embarrassing the PC may think twice before doing such a thing again. Cause-and-effect punishments are far different from sadistic, mindless punishments; give thought to their proper use in game play.



that peasants are not playing the same game, as a number of versions are played by members of the nobility, and therefore the peasants must also have their own variants. The “official” rules are known by most, however and the standardized rules of shogi are kept by Imperial scribes.

Akodo Soko drew up the standardized rules of shogi some 150 years ago. She also developed the ranking system for tournament play before her death. She was given the title of *meijin* by an official panel of shogi judges, and there after all shogi masters became known as *soko-meijin* to honor the first great champion. A new shogi master is crowned when the soko-meijin turns 40. A tournament is held in the Lion lands, and invitations are extended to all of the Clans. At the close of the tournament a master is named and fealty is offered to the new soko-meijin if he is not already an Lion. The present soko-meijin is a Dragon samurai named Kitsuki Yasiri, now 38 years old. Although he refused to swear fealty to the Lion, he still carries the title soko-meijin.



Bonuses

Often great role-playing can outweigh the power of the dice. A player in the middle of a soliloquy has little time to check his stats, and can move an audience with his words. The power of the dialogue is enough to stop the game and the GM and players forget that stats even exist. Although such a dramatic respite is not as common as we might like, it can happen that a GM allows the talent of a dramatic player to overshadow the game. Remember to give a bonus of experience points to these players; avoid giving out dice bonuses or automatic success, lest your games be unbalanced in favor of the eloquent player with a poorly-statted character.

Rokugan is a Quiet Place

Making a ruckus in Rokugan is not smart. There are ways that a samurai is expected to behave, and those who continue to be loud and brash in the presence of a daimyo or high-ranking samurai are sure to earn a whack from the end of a saya. Samurai who believe that being loud and obnoxious is cool will soon find themselves taking on roles befitting their station.

A Matsu who talks too much will find herself at the front of a large army. The Crab who barks in public is sure to be placed on the wall where a great warrior belongs. No one should waste his talents sitting in a sake house when there is a war to be fought! The battle maiden who can't stop bragging, or the over-proud Crane, will end up guarding their lords' prize peacocks and horses – noble stations for such noble samurai. No doubt their children will enjoy inheriting such a position.

The L5R RPG has a thousand ways to deal with loud-mouth characters and get them to quiet down for a change. Rokugani do not accept individualistic, brash behavior. It is insulting, embarrassing, and contrary to all of the notions of being a samurai. So the next time a PC smashes a cup of sake in a peasant's face, make sure that a few samurai are there to witness it. Being boisterous is as stupid as it gets. “If the lord ever gets word of your doings, he is sure to remove your head.” Even in the Crab lands, everyone knows when Kisada or Yakamo are home. Or O-Ushi...

Night

“Spirits come out at night. The day is for the living and the night is left for something else...”

– Eko, a peasant of the North Hub Village

Samurai generally do not go out at night. In cities, towns, and bigger villages it is considered acceptable to be out at night, and many yoriki and doshin are stationed at the gates at night in regions that are considered unsafe. But, in more remote areas of Rokugan, many of the citizens retreat to their homes when darkness falls and do not emerge until the dawn.

Sunlight must be taken advantage of, and a samurai standing guard at night is sure to stay in a well lit area. Scorpion and others that are familiar with this tendency usually have the darkness to themselves.

The TN to do anything (Perception, fighting, etc.) in a poorly lit area should be increased by 10, and a very dark area increases the difficulty by 25. Utter darkness makes action impossible and therefore only a great master could hit someone under such conditions. Increase the TN to do anything (that usually require



vision) in complete darkness by 50. Stealth is impossible in complete darkness, as the samurai cannot know where he is putting his feet.

Seppuku

The act of seppuku should be motivated by sincerity, not the desire for more character points. Applying rules and measures to the process degrades an honorable act. GMs who desire drama over mechanics should never allow the following rules to interfere with game play. This is the ultimate act of a samurai, and it can feel like quibbling to reduce the act to mere dice rolls. GMs using this system should intersperse the action with interactive role-playing and drama. The act alone should be the reward, not the desire for more kharma points. (See the Kharma Rule on page 158.)

Some GMs and players may want to play out the drama of the seppuku. Although the *Player's Guide* details the act of seppuku and the importance of an honorable suicide, remember that no seppuku is honorable without the authority of one's lord. GMs who wish to play out the day of the seppuku may follow these rules:

1. The samurai spends the day in a temple dedicated to a family kami or an appropriate Fortune. First they must meditate. The samurai should cleanse himself to prepare for the ceremony. Roll Meditation/Void at a TN of 20. GMs may wish to increase this TN in situations where the dishonorable act being atoned for is particularly offensive.

2. Next, the samurai writes poems and letters to loved ones. Especially crafty GMs may ask the player to write these themselves. Those interested in applying mechanics to it may ask for the following rolls: Poetry/Awareness, Bard or Storytelling/Awareness and Calligraphy/Awareness. Each roll should be made at a TN of 15. A very honorable family may expect finer letters from the samurai in which case the TN should be increased to 25 or 30.

3. At sunset, the samurai is blessed by a priest of the clan and dressed in ritual white. The GM should secretly roll for the blessing. Higher-Glory samurai are blessed by higher-Glory shugenja. Roll a number of dice equal to the samurai's Glory and record it for later use.

4. Next, the samurai reads a prepared speech to the onlookers. This speech is an affirmation of the samurai's life. A great samurai will write a dignified speech, while an arrogant one will find pleasure in demeaning and denouncing the audience with their superiority. In either case, the skill of the samurai in oration is more important than what they are saying. Bard/Awareness is rolled and compared to a TN determined by the GM. The higher the rank of

the onlookers, the harder it will be to sway them with the speech. A TN of 30 is average, and a particularly stoic crowd should have a TN of 45 or more. The Emperor's Court would have a 70 or higher!

5. Finally, the three cuts.

A 'second' stands over the samurai while he makes three cuts in his belly – (from the samurai's perspective) left to right, up, and then right to left. If at any time the samurai wavers, the 'second' is expected to step in and end the seppuku with dignity. Being the 'second' is a great honor, and only a samurai of importance to the individual committing seppuku should stand as 'second'.

For each cut, the samurai rolls a Willpower check against TN 20, 25, and 30. If at anytime they fail a roll, the 'second' rolls his Reflexes against a TN of 15. If the second is successful, he successfully removes the head from the body, and frees the samurai's family from dishonor. If the second fails the roll, there is a sharp cry before the head is removed from the shoulders.

Extremely stringent GMs may wish to penalize PCs for failure. This should be even more heinous in situations where there is an audience, especially if your enemy is there to watch. However, this is not recommended.

What does it all mean?

In game terms, GMs can apply the above rules any way they want. One way to do it is to offer the PC more Kharma points (See Kharma and Dharma, page 159). These points are used to increase the stats of the next character they create. Simply add them to the initial Character Point total that the player begins with. For example in a standard L5R campaign, the PCs start with 30 CPs. In this instance, if all of the rolls were successful they would begin with an additional nine points for a total of 39. In addition, for each full 15 points rolled by the priest blessing the samurai, he receives an additional Kharma point. 'Seconds' who must step in to aid the samurai committing seppuku also earn an extra box of honor and glory. GMs may wish to have the lord of the participating family bestow a gift upon the 'second' a few days later.

In story terms, it means that a deliberate painstaking ritual has been followed to the finest detail. It means that the single greatest signature on the life of a great samurai has been added to the history of Rokugan. It means that the honor of a family has not been stained by a single impulsive act. And it means that your PCs are capturing the heart of Rokugan with their reverence to the code of bushido.

Note: This system is completely optional. GMs that choose to use these rules must take into account that they have reduced the heart of seppuku to a series of die rolls. This is not the intention of this



treatment. Rather, it is an attempt to illustrate the Rokugan is not a simple, convenient game environment, but a living, breathing world, and players who choose to involve themselves in the splendor of such a world must also pay heed to its rituals. Rules have been drawn up on every topic in Rokugan, from the tea ceremony to asking for favors. It is not recommended that GMs use this system to replace good role-playing.



More on Seppuku

In L5R, the daimyo of Rokugan determine the fate of their samurai. No samurai may commit seppuku without the permission of his lord. GMs and players should carefully consider the situation before deciding that a character should commit seppuku.

Discuss the seppuku out of character. The player and GM should agree that the samurai's seppuku is necessary and acceptable. There are other options, such as banishing the character from the Clan, or giving him heinous disadvantages to compensate for his stubbornness. Perhaps he could be sentenced to serve some time in a horrible duty such as guarding the Kaiu Wall, or sent on an impossible quest.

If the player would rather see the seppuku of the character, and the GM (as daimyo) says no, there are more options to consider. The first is simply to retire the character. The life of the samurai is forfeit and he will bring shame on the family for years to come. Another is to continue with the character, and strive to cleanse his name.

GMs and players should have clearly defined reasons why they want or don't want the seppuku of the character (in and out of the game), and there is nothing wrong with a daimyo who considers an act so horrible that he commands the samurai to carry the shame. Such cause and effect can make for great story-telling, and inspire far greater deeds.

Training and Apprentices

Matsu Miyako flew from the saddle, hitting the ground hard. She spat out a mouthful of dust and pushed herself up on one knee. One arm was numb and she trembled with pain, but she ignored her weakness. Ten feet away, the horse turned to face her, nickering softly and kicking the air with one foreleg.

It almost seemed as if the animal was laughing at her.

"It is laughing at you," Morishigi remarked, not looking up from the pillowbook he held open in his lap.

"You're supposed to be teaching me to ride, brother," she sneered at the older samurai.

Matsu Morishigi peered up at her, a subtle smile playing across his blunt features. "I am helping you enough already," he remarked. He returned to reading.

Miyako wiped the trickle of blood from her chin and stood. She turned to face the horse. It watched her with one eye as it chewed the lush grass. She took a few careful steps, then quickly reached for its reins. It was gone in a flash, leaving Miyako in a cloud of dust.

"I swear this horse is accursed!" Miyako snapped. "It won't sit still!"

"Imagine that," Morishigi replied, returning to his reading.

The horse trotted back over near Miyako, nickering to itself as it watched her. It seemed to be daring her to try again. "Did you choose the worst horse in the stable on purpose?" Miyako grumbled.

"Yes," Morishigi said with a smile.

Miyako whirled to face her brother, angry now. "I'd like to see you ride it, then!" she spat defiantly.

"What good will that serve?" he asked, shrugging. "I know how to fall down already. I wouldn't be caught dead on that horse."

Miyako frowned. "Why did you choose it? Did you wish to see me humiliated?" The young girl's face burned with frustration and embarrassment.

Morishigi closed his book slowly and tucked it into his obi. He rose and moved to stand beside Miyako, his strange crystal-grey eyes



fixed on the horizon. "Sister," he began, smiling wryly, "what did you learn today?"

Her brow furrowed with confusion. "Nothing," she said hugging her arms to her chest.

"Nothing?" he asked, looking at her from the corner of his eye.

She shrugged. "As you said, I learned to fall down."

Morishigi nodded. "Each tool a samurai carries becomes weaker each time it is tested. Your armor, your bow, even the katana will one day fail you. This is true for every tool save one, and that is your spirit, Miyako. All samurai must eventually fall in order to learn, but the wise do so at a time and place of their own choosing. Learn from your weakness and become strong. That is why we are here today."

"To learn to fall?" she replied, smiling slightly as she slowly began to comprehend.

"Exactly," Morishigi said. "Today, you learned to fall. Tomorrow, you learn to never fall again."

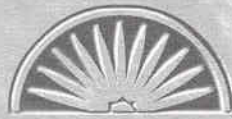
As part of the training in most Rokugani professions, a period of apprenticeship is standard practice. Shortly before the young person reaches his teenage years, his parents bring him to visit the *kabunakama* (merchant guild) of the appropriate craft, seeking out a *shokunin*, or artisan. The first formal visit between master and apprentice is referred to as the *memie*. If the teacher finds the potential student worthy, he pays a *tetsuke* ("advance money") to the parents, and drafts a *shomon*, or formal agreement. The child then becomes a *totei*, an assistant to the *shokunin*.

For ten years the *totei* remains indentured to the *shokunin*, living in the master's home. The *totei* receives no pay for assisting the *shokunin* and is also expected to function as a servant, performing chores around the house in his spare time. Many *shokunin* take advantage of this arrangement, working children like slaves and teaching them little of their craft. Those *totei* who attempt to escape this formalized slavery face *kagyo-gamo*, a law forbidding runaway apprentices from practicing their chosen professions.

Apprentices who serve out their indenture dutifully can expect to train for a period of up to ten years. After this time, the *totei* receives a set of tools from the *shokunin* and is free to strike out on his own and attempt to go into business. If he is skilled and fortunate, the new craftsman might even become a member of the *kabunakama* himself.

Samurai training is quite different from the training that craftsmen get. There is no period of indenture. Fortunate youths may train with their parents, carrying their weapons, readying their armor, and caring for their steeds. A lesson or two in swordsmanship (using wooden *boken*, not *katana*), archery, horsemanship, and perhaps a few words of advice on how to properly wear armor are





customary, but the true art of a samurai is denied until gempukku. After a youth becomes a samurai, the nature of his training depends whether the clan is at war.

If a young samurai undergoes gempukku during wartime there is no formal training. The youths are simply shipped to the front lines to wear down the enemy. These new soldiers are always sent to attack first. Not only does this weed out the weak, it gives new recruits a taste of battle and gives the veterans an opportunity to rest, gauging the mettle of the enemy. These recruits either learn the ropes and become warriors, or they die.

Rookie warriors lucky enough to survive the first few weeks are assigned to an advanced unit farther back in the ranks. This sort of unit is composed of inexperienced bushi, but its sergeants have at least a year or more of experience. The veterans teach the new soldiers the intricacy of combat, and try to keep as many of them alive as possible. They also train the new recruits in the rudimentary techniques of their clan. It is important to note that shugenjā or courtiers are never thrown into their profession unprepared. The very concept is either too dangerous (for shugenja) or ridiculous (for courtiers).

Outside of wartime, samurai train at a dojo. The sensei of these great schools are very selective, and only the finest or most influential samurai expect to be accepted. Though every dojo teaches a variety of techniques, there is always one area where each school excels. For example, the Kakita dojo specializes in the art of iaijutsu, while the Hida dojo specializes in no-holds-barred combat and survival.

Admission to those outside of the clan is uncommon, but circumstances can contribute to such an occurrence. For example, a daimyo who kidnaps a child of another clan as a gesture of defiance or revenge may send the child to his family dojo as a further, bitter insult. This is a bizarre occurrence, however, and almost always a matter of scandal. The sensei of the dojos do not appreciate having ancient traditions disrupted.

A much more common reason for cross-clan training is the training of hostages. Hostages are not a result of kidnapping. Kidnapping is theft of another person; illegal, pure and simple. A hostage is taken with agreement or notification of the hostage's

family. This is done for many reasons, most often to insure good behavior in an enemy. During violent periods in Rokugani history, the Hantei Emperors have invoked *Hitojichi* (Hostage) Laws, requiring the daimyo of each family to spend at least a month of every year in Otsan Uchi. After the daimyo returns home, his family remains in the city for another month as hostages of the Emperor. In this manner, the Emperor could greatly reduce the chances of an organized attack by holding the loved ones of important figures. With the current state of the Empire, it would be no great surprise were these laws to be invoked once more.

Hostages are used as frequently for peace as for war. To cement an alliance, clans often exchange hostages. These hostages are typically the second sons of the allying daimyos, symbolizing the dedication to peace, while practical enough to protect the primary heirs. These hostages live with their captors for a specified amount of time, usually a year. Occasionally, if one family wishes to assert superiority over the other, they require their hostage to swear permanent fealty.

Whether in war or peace, hostages are usually treated as honored guests – a true samurai would not endanger his clan's interests by attempting escape. Most of these hostages are hostages in name only. Many of them become quite welcome among their captors. Often, these hostages train at their captors' dojo, resulting in the occasional samurai adept in the techniques of a rival clan.

It should be noted that those who are given the opportunity to attend a formal dojo take it as a matter of great pride. A samurai defends the honor of his school as vehemently as he would that of his family or clan. Thus, even a bushi who has trained at the school of a bitter rival (as in the case of Matsu Seijuro or Doji Kuwanan) would never consider sharing the secrets of his school with outsiders. Such an action is an offense to the bushi's dojo and sensei. The only exception to this is in wartime, where a samurai must learn the ways of war as quickly as possible. In this situation, it is permissible for two students to share

techniques, but only if they are both students of the same dojo.

Obviously, as a dojo becomes more established and builds its reputation, a greater number of samurai come to study there. Over a period of many centuries, continued practice and experimentation





gradually improves the quality of a dojo's curriculum and broadens the range of skills that it can offer. In turn, the clan which funds such a dojo will note any improvements and invest in more training and supplies. For this reason, older dojos, such as those of ancient families, tend to be more successful than younger dojos, such as those of Minor Clans and young families. The legendary dojos of the Mirumoto, Akodo, Shiba, and Hida are classic examples, as they have all taught students for nearly a millennium and receive enormous amounts of support. These schools offer a great variety of powerful techniques and maintain a staff of famous sensei, offering training that lesser schools cannot hope to match.

Diplomacy

"Victory is achieved by appearing to be applying orthodoxy when you have something very different in mind."

— *Isawa Tsuke, Master of Fire*

Although court is marked primarily by large gatherings of all guests, most important negotiations occur in secrecy. Significant and binding agreements are made during meetings within private chambers, walks in secluded gardens, or meals taken alone with important ambassadors. Very few guests at a Winter Court are ever privy to any true diplomatic sessions. Any samurai who inadvertently stumbles across one of these closed sessions will earn the public enmity of the participants. Seasoned courtiers who find themselves approached for serious negotiations in public view should be very skeptical regarding the intentions of the other party. Often this is a means of ensnaring the naive or inexperienced in some less-than-honorable political scheme.

Those few samurai who speak on behalf of their clan at court must be aware of the appropriate manner in which to do so. Even in most dire of circumstances, forthrightness is by no means a virtue. Desires and intentions should be hinted at or veiled with delicate language. Direct and open language is a sign of weakness, inviting manipulation and betrayal. Rather than ask, "Will you join our

attack on the Lion Clan?" the proposal would be more appropriately phrased, "Our clan must defend our honor by avenging the grievous insult done us by the Lion Clan. We know that you, too, have been treated dishonorably by the Lion. If our victory is quick and without great cost to our people, we would insist that they return to your clan the land they took from your ancestors." A coarser phrasing of the question suggests that the speaker is too direct and uncouth to make an efficient ally.

The Chambers of Court

Rokugani courts vary considerably from place to place. The mood is defined not only by the clan who holds the court in question, but also by the facility itself. The Crane's opulent wealth and extravagance sets a completely different environment from the rugged austerity of a court in the Crab lands. Likewise, the spartan, stoic style of the Lion could not be more different from the strange architecture and *gaijin* trappings of a Unicorn Court.

Cunning courtiers assess their surroundings immediately upon arriving at a new location. A courtier in the Lion court knows to carefully adhere to tradition, while a diplomat attending the Unicorn court will recognize the opportunity to express new ideas in such an open environment. These sorts of cues allow courtiers to know exactly what their boundaries are, and give them an idea of what will happen to those who exceed them.

Traditionally, more wealthy and luxurious courts (such as those of the Otomo, the Crane, the Scorpion, and the Unicorn) are considered more liberal by the majority of courtiers. These courts more readily accept (and even expect) overt scheming and political machinations. The Lion, Crab and Mantis clans generally hold more conservative and thus less popular courts (although the wealth of the Mantis Clan does lend itself to an attractive court). The trappings of these courts are much more mundane and reflect the more traditional tenets of bushido. Plots and schemes are looked upon with disdain, and the games that characterize the winters here are based more on the warrior arts. Poetry contests and the like are rare indeed.

Although most courts resemble one of these two stereotypes in most respects, a few fall somewhere in between. The Phoenix Clan are particularly renowned for their neutral tendencies; they do not focus on the luxurious surroundings of the more wealthy clans, but neither are they obsessed with the military arts as are the more conservative clans. Many of the minor clans hold similar Winter Courts during the season, though none save the Fox and the Mantis has ever been host to the Winter Court of the Hantei.

Regardless of location, all courts share certain similarities. While the host palace is open to all guests (with a few exceptions), there is



Approximate Glory Ratings

Samurai

The Emperor	10
The Imperial Family	9.5
The Seppun/Otomo/Miya	9.2
Emerald Champion	9
Chancellor	9
Imperial Advisor	9
Clan Daimyo	8
Family Daimyo	7
Provincial Governor	6-7
Hatamoto	6
City Governor	5
Karo	4.7
Emerald Magistrate	4.5
Clan Magistrate	4
Clan Artisan	3+
Diplomat	2+
Gokenin	2+
Witch Hunter	0.5+
Noble Merchant	0.5+
Bounty Hunter	0.1+
Ronin	0.1+

Heimin ("Half-People")

Monk	2*
Doshin	1
Budoka	1
Ashigaru Soldier	0.7
Hyakusho	0.6
Shokunin	0.5
Akindo	0.5
Peasant Retainer	0

Hinin ("Non-People")

Entertainers	-1
Charlatans	-3
Criminals	-5
Eta	-8 to -10†

* Monks are unconcerned with Glory and their station is therefore of no relevance to them.

† Those eta that handle dead animals are higher than those that handle dead humans.

invariably a central chamber in which large events are held. The decoration of these chambers varies considerably from clan to clan, but the basic architecture usually follows the same rough parameters.

A balcony looks down into a large two-floor chamber. The host sits on a dais located at the far end of the chamber, with his chief advisors on either side. Tapestries and calligraphic paintings adorn the walls of the lower level, usually depicting a great victory or proud moment in the history of the clan. An ornate stairwell leads to the balcony from the first floor, crafted from mahogany or other sturdy material. Smaller rooms for private conversations or meals lead off from the main chamber. Privacy screens permit a certain degree of anonymity to the rooms' occupants.

Gardens are another constant in any court, wherein guests can meditate, hold private conversations, play games of go, or simply take a moonlit stroll with a romantic interest. Every clan has its gardens, although the Crane and Phoenix gardens are particularly renowned.

Winding paths lead through this garden of delicate trees, beautiful flowers and incredibly well maintained hedges. The bouquet of chrysanthemums, iris, and countless other blossoms pleasantly assaults your senses. Soft murmurs can be heard from others walking through the gardens, but the lush vegetation and clever spacing of paths prevents you from seeing them or hearing their words. Plots of intricately shaped sand and rock dot the landscape, and there is an occasional go board nestled into an alcove among the trees.

Of course, there would be no court without meals. While most are available wherever guests choose to take them, there are occasionally large banquets within the dining hall of the palace. In the more lavish courts, these banquets could feed a village of farmers for days on end.

The dining hall stretches out, lengthy tables of polished wood laden with delicious foods. The scents of seasoned rice and seafood delicacies permeate the room, awakening the appetite. Servants quietly place dishes and pour tea and sake. Manicured bonsai trees adorn the long tables, establishing a sense of serenity throughout the hall.

Other common occurrences at a political gathering such as a Winter Court include the formation and execution of numerous small plans, carefully planned webs of deception and lies which form the backbone of Rokugan's political intrigue. Many of these plans are not public, and their participants have no desire to make them so. Anyone who 'discovers' that they exist may have significant political leverage – or a new enemy.



Natural Disasters

"Distant thunder rings of present danger."

– Naka Kuro

Nothing in Rokugan happens without a purpose. Chance, randomness and whim play no place in the people's view of the cosmos. In a world this harsh, this deadly, the mind needs to find order and meaning. When something has no obvious human cause, that leaves only one logical explanation: the gods. The Fortunes do not often interact directly with men; instead, they make their presence and feelings felt through the natural world. Omens come in eclipses, the behavior of birds, the falling of stars. Gratitude and benevolence come as rain in a drought, a cooling wind on a summer's day, a shining sun to light the way to victory in battle. Displeasure – well, displeasure is impossible to miss. It comes in the guise of disaster.

The Fortunes do not inflict disaster randomly or without cause, nor do they bother explaining the cause to mere mortals. They leave it to the shugenja to discern their meaning. Sometimes the cause has nothing to do with the poor people who suffer the disaster, but rather stems from some conflict or rivalry within the heavens. Other times the Fortunes react to some impious act on humanity's part: this act can be anything from a lord's abuse of his power to a peasant desecrating a sacred site. Here again, they do not explicitly state their anger's cause, but the shugenja are often the first to point a finger. If they don't, someone invariably will. The people demand a justification for the pain and suffering a disaster brings.

Like all existence, the disasters in Rokugan find their origins within the five basic elements that define the entire world. Each element corresponds to a different kind of disaster and also reflects a different kind of displeasure amongst the Fortunes. Thus in general people can infer some hint of the Fortunes' true feelings by the disaster they choose to inflict upon the world at any given time. As a general rule of thumb, the more severe a disaster, the more

displeasure the Fortunes are demonstrating. Many an opportunistic samurai, shugenja and even peasant has taken the opportunity opened by some natural calamity to accuse his rivals of angering the kami. Men have lost their thrones, their homes and even their lives to such accusations.

Dealing with Disaster

Causes aside, disasters mean very tangible, very urgent upheaval. They must be dealt with, usually immediately. They have the disturbing habit of turning the world upside down in a brief span of time. Earthquakes, typhoons and floods do not respect tradition, caste, or noble birth, and daimyo and eta alike feel the effects. In disaster's wake many of Rokugan's cultural restrictions fall apart. Samurai find their homes reduced to just as much rubble as a peasant's. Farmers find themselves searching for survivors among the dead shoulder to shoulder with shugenja and warriors.

How an individual lord comports himself in the face of such devastation reveals a great deal about both his personality and his priorities. Does he bend his back and help rebuild or does he maintain his air of aloofness in the face of proof that tragedy strikes at every level? Does he lift buckets to fight the fire, stacking logs to fight the flood and stones to rebuild fallen walls, or does he lord it over all from a charred throne under the open sky? Often times the most important thing a lord or samurai can do is provide leadership, demonstrating calm and directing the little efforts men can do in the face of a Fortune's wrath.

In the wake of such unmitigated catastrophe a samurai's life becomes even more challenging than the peasant's. While like them he has lost his home, maybe his family, he must concern himself with greater matters than simply rebuilding. Not only does he worry about where his next meal will come from and whether his children have shelter, he must also plan for the threat from beyond. Can his enemies strike while his lands are weak? He must rally what forces he has available in case soldiers come to his borders like vultures, eager to feast on the sickly domain. Likewise he must be careful from whom he accepts help. While help is sometimes a vital necessity, taking it often incurs a debt no samurai wants to pay. Is it better to suffer from want than take an enemy's charity? Every lord must answer this question for himself.

Elements of Disaster

Each of the five elements has its own special disasters for Rokugan. In addition to the physical effects, there are psychological consequences associated with each. Some, like typhoons, are somewhat predictable, happening in certain seasons and not in



others. Others, like earthquakes, are utterly unpredictable and all the more terrifying thereby. When disaster strikes the people turn first to their shugenja, especially those with knowledge of the appropriate element. Their knowledge seldom helps in the face of overwhelming force, but they provide what succor, guidance, and blame that they can.

In Rokugan, the anger of the kami is the *cause* of natural disasters. As a result of this, shugenja have a keen awareness for predicting disasters. A shugenja with at least a 4 in the disaster's Ring (3 with Affinity, 5 with Deficiency) may be entitled to a roll to detect the disaster's presence. The shugenja rolls a number of dice equal to his Ring and keeps a number of dice equal to his Rank vs a TN set by the GM. (Generally, the larger the disaster, the easier this TN will be.) If this roll is successful, then the GM may give the shugenja any amount of warning that he deems appropriate.

Holding Your Breath

Many disasters threaten characters with asphyxiation, suffocation, or drowning. A character who has time to get a breath of fresh air can hold his breath for a number of minutes equal to his Earth. A character simply forced to hold his breath can only hold for half this amount of time (don't round up or down; half minutes are okay). A character who cannot get more fresh air into his lungs after this amount of time will die, unless otherwise noted.

Earth

Disasters of the earth rank as the most dangerous of all. The earth itself sits quietly, a source of reserved strength and a solid base for all life. It is also the source of life and thus the progenitor of all men. When the earth stirs from its normally placid state it means the Fortunes have become truly angry, so angry that they turn the world on its head, shaking its foundations. Landslides in hilly and mountainous regions are considered Earth disasters, even though they usually accompany a hard rain. Although potentially deadly, they pale in comparison to the worst earth catastrophe: the earthquake. Traditional wisdom states that Earth disasters stem from some grave offense against the Fortunes, usually hubris of some sort by someone who believes himself more important or more powerful or more holy than he truly is.

Landslides

The sudden shifting of earth on mountain slopes can level a village, or even a castle. In winter this can mean an avalanche of snow while in more temperate times and places it can take the form of rocks and mud. Like all earth disasters, they strike quickly and without warning and are over before any preventive action can be

taken. Communities in the mountains and hills live with the fear of a landslide ever in the back of their minds. They usually make a special point to appease their local Fortunes and spirits, especially those associated with the earth.

In the aftermath of a landslide, all that is left to do is pick up the pieces and clear the debris. Entire communities disappear beneath the onrush of earth, and any survivors live on with their spirits broken. The local lord, should he survive the event, sometimes gives up and rebuilds a new town elsewhere, relocating the survivors. In less serious cases, cleaning up is merely a matter of putting in the hard labor necessary to clear the stones, dirt, and mud and then rebuild the homes. As with most disasters, people usually prefer to rebuild and repair temples first in order to prevent any further divine displeasure.

Earthquakes

All of Rokugan experiences earth tremors at one time or another. Most cities feel only a minor shaking of the earth for a few moments. The people take these mild quakes as warnings, a sign that the Fortunes have become disturbed. Whether or not it has anything to do with them remains to be seen. It is a time when samurai and other leaders take pause as well. They know that, should a larger quake come, the blame could well fall on them. Prudent lords take some time to make public displays of piety and thus forestall any future accusations that they might have angered the Fortunes.

When a large quake hits, splitting the ground, shaking buildings to splinters and tossing people and animals about like grains of rice, the whole community suffers. The very landscape changes as chasms abruptly open where houses once stood. The death toll can be mind boggling, especially if it occurs at night when people are asleep in their homes - homes that become collapsing deathtraps. There is no escaping an earthquake, nowhere to run that is safe. People tend to fly into a panic, losing all common sense, something that only adds to chaos.

Finally the tremors cease. The earth sits once again at rest. The feeling of helplessness begins to fade, quickly replaced by despair and sorrow. The world that the people have known all their lives suddenly seems alien, a cracked and battered landscape from a nightmare. Here again, as with landslides, the samurai and his people can do little more than pick up the pieces, bury the dead and try to rebuild. It can take years to recover from an earthquake, especially if the lord does nothing to improve his people's spirits.

Thinking themselves punished for some grave sin of pride, they become excessively docile, their drive drained from them. Some lords become harsh with their peasants, whipping them back into shape through hard work. Others coddle them, providing feasts and



religious ceremonies to ease their hearts and minds. Either can be effective unless the people decide the lord himself is to blame. On more than one occasion a samurai has found a knife in his throat while he sleeps, the victim of a pious assassin who blames him for the community's troubles.

One of the ironies of the Empire is that the greatest city in the land, Otosan Uchi, suffers from minor earthquakes as often as once a year. Although most of the heimin and nobles that live in the Imperial City justify this as the burden of drawing the constant attention of the Celestial Heavens, it occasionally causes courtiers to question whether the Sun and Moon are pleased with their favored son. Typically, earthquakes in Otosan Uchi are minor, though frequent, and the explanation favored by the heimin is that they are caused by the Sun visiting the Hantei Emperor in his palace, causing the earth to tremble from her footsteps.

In this way, minor earthquakes are often seen as a beneficial occurrence within the Imperial City, as the Sun visits her child and advises him on the course of the Empire's future. Perhaps, as well, it should be noted that the last such earthquake occurred over four years ago. It has been whispered that either Amaterasu does not have need to visit her favored son, or that she is displeased with his decisions, and thus remains distant.

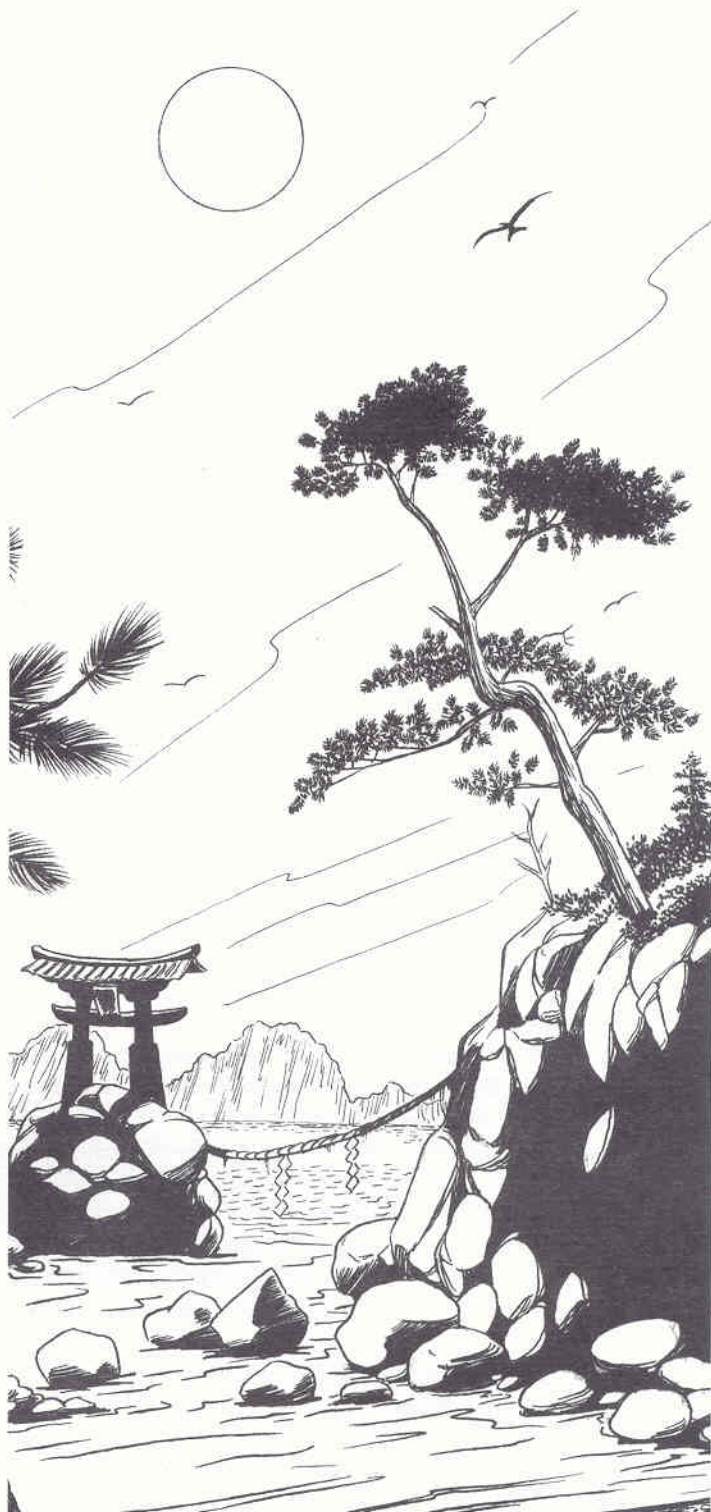
Earthquake Rules

The lucky ones will be caught in the open during an earthquake, where nothing can fall on their heads. Depending upon the size of the earthquake, even the strongest structures may collapse. Some Crab and Tortoise architects know methods by which structures can be made resistant to earthquakes, but no building is ever entirely immune. The GM is the final arbiter in whether a building falls to the power of the quake.

Characters within a collapsing building should take no less than 5k5 Wounds and be buried. The GM then rolls one die (not re-rolling 10s). If this roll is less than the character's Earth, then the character is trapped in a pocket of debris with enough air to survive for several hours and can begin trying to dig himself out. Otherwise, the character is helpless. Buried characters asphyxiate (not suffocate) within ten minutes as they are forced to inhale their own carbon dioxide. Buried characters take a number of Wounds equal to 10 minus their Earth every ten minutes as they are slowly crushed.

Water

Water plays a vital role in every living thing's life. For the Rokugani peasants it waters their crops, sustains them personally, and provides fish and a means of transport. It can also bring death and destruction. Water is an element of action, constantly on the





move. Sometimes those movements bring benefits, like rain for the crops or a river to travel on. But the strength of water can cut through mountains. There are two principal disasters associated with water: the tsunami along the coast, and the flood which can strike anywhere near lakes or streams.

Water is an element of strength and clarity, so water-based disasters denote a failure in one of these areas. Perhaps the people have a failing in their strength or a leader doesn't stand up to his foes as he should. Another possibility is that the people have lost their sense of vision, strayed from their proper course in society. For example, a lord who orders his people to abandon their farms and take up some inappropriate task could easily expect floods with the next harvest. Likewise a people who refused to answer their lord's call to arms in the face of invasion might see their village wiped from the earth by a tsunami.

Floods

Floods occur with much more frequency than the destructive waves known as *tsunami*. Moreover, they seldom happen instantly, but rather grow over time. Flash floods do occur in Rokugan, especially in areas that have recently undergone a period of drought and lie close to the mountains where melting snow can bring walls of water crashing down dry creek beds. These are the exception, however, rather than the rule. Most floods come from an entirely different source: rain, ceaseless rain pouring down for days or weeks at a time.

Unlike many disasters, it is easy to see a flood coming. The more it rains, the more the rivers and lakes swell. That also means that the people have time to organize some kind of resistance to the flood. Dikes, dams and canals dot Rokugan's landscape, trying their best to control water's flow. When the heavy rains do come, wise lords direct their peasants to make the necessary preparations by shoring up dams and building levees against the rising water. Many samurai, especially those whose holdings are threatened, come into the fields and direct the efforts personally.

The water cannot be put aside forever. It can eventually wear down anything that stands in its way, particularly things built by the hand of man. When a daimyo fights the flood, he is betting that time is on his side, that the rain will end before the waters break through and over his dams. Sometimes he wins; the rain stops and the waters subside. Then the hours of backbreaking labor spent erecting mud and wood levies are worth it. Sometimes, though, the Fortunes scoff at these feeble attempts. The dam breaks, the waters come rushing in and disaster strikes.

Floods can and do wash away entire towns on occasion. When ten feet of water pours into the village square, few houses remain dry and many come apart completely. Fortunately, humans can often

avoid death in such situations except for those too close to a dam when it breaks. The biggest casualties come to the livestock and the crops. Even a gentle flood can wipe out fields that took months to plant and mature. This leads to hardship, not only for the peasants but for all of society. Without rice, Rokugan grinds to a halt. The only benefit to a flood is that sometimes it leaves the soil more fertile than before it came. Of course, other times it washes all the fertile topsoil away, depositing it in some other farmer's field downstream. As in all matters, it is the will of the divine that determines such things.

Tsunami

The perfect incarnation of rising anger, the tsunami begins its brief existence far out to sea as just one of many waves. Slowly it builds in strength and stature, drawing ever nearer the coast. It can swamp a ship in a moment, but its truest and most deadly form comes when it reaches its opposite number: the seemingly immutable earth. The horror of a tsunami comes first from its inevitability. Coastal residents see the tide suddenly go dramatically out, then watch the tsunami bearing down on them from afar, hundreds of feet high and totally unstoppable. Like a living wall, it crashes down upon their world.

A single wave can level a fishing village in an instant. Even stout stone buildings crumble under the water's weight. In a moment the disaster is over, although typically these waves come with terrible storms, making it difficult to react right away. When the weather finally clears, if anyone has survived, it is time to rebuild or relocate. Possessions lie shattered on the beach or washed out to sea. In the face of such total, nearly instant devastation, the people nearly always seek someone to blame. Tsunami are rare enough that the common man's logic dictates that they must happen for specific reasons.

Tsunami Rules

Tsunami are the result of an underwater earthquake. As a result, shugenja with a strong link to Earth can sense a coming tsunami as if it were an Earth disaster. Characters who are exposed when a tsunami strikes will take no less than 5k5 Wounds from the force of the blow and instantly be pulled out to sea.

A character who is struck by a tsunami must make an Stamina roll vs TN 20 or *instantly* drown. Survivors bearing any sort of cumbersome metal items (like armor or a katana) must discard these or be dragged down. Armor can be cut free in three rounds with a tanto, or can be roughly shrugged off in one minute. A character begins to drown unless he can reach the surface via a Stamina + Athletics roll vs a TN of the GM's choosing, taking current, temperature, and other circumstances into account.



Fire

As a people who live in homes made largely of wood and paper, the Rokugani have a profound respect for and fear of fire. Like so many other sources of disaster, fire can be both friend and foe. It cooks food and heats homes, but it also kills men and destroys buildings. More dangerous yet, a simple flame can grow into a raging fire, the benign force becoming a rampaging beast in moments. Most destructive fires start as man-made flames that somehow get out of control. A mishandled campfire can set an entire forest aflame, and an overturned lantern can burn a city down. In these instances, the hand of the divine might or might not play a role. Not so for fire's cousin lightning. It comes with the storm but creates fire and is utterly unpredictable. A single strike can spark a flame that turns a peaceful glen into an inferno.

Fire as an element corresponds to active energy and thought. Thus fire-based disasters happen when mankind angers the kami through acts of muddled thought or slothfulness. Farmers slow in harvesting their crops can find them charred to ash by a Fortune's displeasure. Samurai who dither rather than act or who constantly change their ways might find their homes felled by lightning blasts or a careless servant's improper tending of the cook fire. A ruler whose thoughts show no focus, who fails to act, is no ruler at all, and the kami will punish him accordingly; so the common folk believe.

House Fires

Less predictable than forest fires and more dangerous, house fires present a constant threat to all settled Rokugani, particularly in cities. Wood houses and paper walls make the perfect feeding ground for flames. Everyone in Rokugan practices basic fire safety, never leaving an open flame unattended in a home. Still, accidents happen, as does arson. When a house catches fire every man and woman must step up to fight it, for the conflagration can spread all too quickly.

Here, as in fighting forest fires, water does little good unless the citizens can catch the fire while it's young. Instead they must quickly tear down the homes that lie in the fire's path. Rapid destruction of private homes for the sake of the greater good entails tough decisions and heartache. Although larger cities have designated fire brigades, for the most part fire fighting is an ad hoc affair, directed by the samurai on the scene. Sometimes personal feelings do enter the equation, with those in charge taking the opportunity to destroy a rival or enemy's house and spare a friend's. Of course the common folk are more likely to believe a lord has done something to anger the kami if he comports himself with less than total fairness during the firefighting.

Forest Fires

Forests burn from time to time. It is the way of things. Indeed, it is part of the Fortunes' plan for renewing the forests and making room for new growth. Still, such fires can cause great discomfort, even death if there are villages or cities nearby. A forest fire can consume entire communities that lie too close to the tree line. Even if the homes are spared, crops and pastureland might not be so lucky. Fortunately, a vigilant community can see a forest fire coming from a long way off.

Usually the first to bring word of a fire – unless all can smell it on the wind – are those who spend their days in the forest. As animals flee the approaching inferno and columns of smoke rise, the foresters rush back to the villages and cities to give warning. Most communities in regions vulnerable to forest fire have established methods for dealing with them. The local samurai or lord organizes the people and leads them into action (or orders his trusted servants to do so).

It is impossible for mere men to quench a fire with water. Instead they must starve the fire by cutting down trees to create firebreaks, and using controlled fires to burn out underbrush so the greater inferno has nowhere to spread. This is hard, dangerous work. The entire community must man the saws and control the flame. In villages lucky enough to have a talented shugenja in residence, magic can sometimes make a difference, but few have the luxury to rely on supernatural aid. Ultimately it is determination, muscle and the Fortunes that determine the village's fate.

Forest Fire Rules

At their worst, fire can spread through dry brush faster than a man can run. Trees can explode from the buildup of heat. A person unlucky enough to be trapped in a forest fire can swiftly find himself surrounded. Even magic is of little help, as the crowns of the trees can form a burning dome to prevent passage by flight. Sometimes, creating a backfire to destroy the fire's fuel can render a small area safe, but even this is not certain as smoke inhalation is still a danger.

A fire inflicts Wounds depending upon its size, from 1k1 for a campfire to 10k10 for a raging inferno. Any character trapped in flames takes these Wounds every round. The GM can also judge that an area is filled with noxious smoke during a fire, forcing the character to hold his breath or asphyxiate in a number of Rounds equal to his Earth. A breath taken in a noxious environment will only provide air for half the standard time, and each such breath bestows a cumulative +5 TN to all actions.



Air

The air belongs to the kami. Invisible, unstoppable, and vital to survival, air represents the most divine medium in existence. It can take the form of a cooling breeze or gather up water and rain it down on crops. The wind in moderation is a blessing; the wind in its full fury is a disaster. Although storms combine elements – water in the form of rain, fire in the form of lightning, and air in the form of wind, as phenomena the Rokugani associate storms with the air. The rumbling of thunder and the ceaseless winds so obviously represent the kami that none can doubt the storm's true ruling element. Disasters of the air come in two common forms: storms and taifuns. The storm is a local event that can cause significant but brief damage. The *taifun*, or great wind, can devastate entire coastlines with its powerful winds and driving rain.

The element Air corresponds to forces not present and to intuition. As the realm of the Fortunes it is as unfathomable as it is invisible. We see its effects but not the thing itself. Of all the elements, disasters of the air are perceived as having least to do with mortal affairs. Storms are the byproducts of conflicts and competitions amongst the divine. While mortals might suffer the consequences, they seldom have anything to do with the cause. Thus blame seldom attaches to mortals when the air brings disaster unless there is some obvious reason to believe that a lord or shugenja has somehow directly interfered in the Fortunes' affairs.

Storms

A storm brings with it many things and can come in many different guises. All of them can cause death and devastation and no mortal can stop any of them. Like so many natural disasters, humanity's only recourse lies in battening down the hatches and letting the tempest take its course. The most common storm brings only rain and wind, each of which presents its own problems. Rains cause floods, ruin delicate crops and damage buildings over time. Wind is a greater problem. It can blow down trees, tear off roofs, and send small objects flying with deadly force.

Cold-weather storms tend to be even more problematic. Although rare, a hailstorm can tear a village to pieces, with chunks of ice as large as a man's fist crashing down from the heavens. Hail in particular is seen as a sign that all is not well amongst the kami. Snow is much more common but can prove equally inconvenient. A blizzard can not only dump several feet of snow but bring chills that kill, especially the very young and very old. After a snowfall the community usually comes together to clear the village or city streets and repair damage to homes.

The worst storm of them all is the tornado, thankfully rare but certainly the most deadly incarnation of wind known in Rokugan.

Folk wisdom sees the tornado as the very hand of a Fortune reaching down to earth and drawing some of our world up into the celestial realm. The devastation that accompanies this is ancillary to the Fortune's hidden purpose, but that doesn't make it any less deadly. The tornado descends with unbridled fury, tearing apart homes, castles, fields and people. There is no stopping it, nothing to be done but pray.

Taifun

It comes from the water, growing in strength far beyond shore where no ship can go. It spans hundreds of miles, bringing with it the most terrible sustained winds man ever sees. It brings rain, it spawns tornadoes, it levels entire towns in a day. The Great Wind blows when the Fortunes will it, an expression of the gravest divine doings. In general such storms come in the summer and fall and bring with them nothing but sorrow. The high winds knock down even the most ancient trees, strip roofs from peasant and noble homes alike and flood river and seaside settlements. Aside perhaps for a great earthquake (which is much more rare) no disaster compares in scope or deadliness to the taifun.

And yet, at its center lies an island of calm. The eye of the storm is considered a very sacred, holy place. Here the shugenja say that a pious man can communicate directly with the heavens, even ascend to the celestial realm itself if he knows the way. Of course, the eye moves quickly and the storm soon returns, so one needs to move fast in order to take advantage of this moment of divine accessibility. Many have died seeking such communion, but those who have succeeded claim that the moment changed their lives forever.

Taifun Rules

Taifun generate incredible winds. A character stuck in the path of one of these torrential gusts must make an opposed Earth roll against a number of effect dice chosen by the GM to simulate the power of the storm (never less than 5k5). If the character succeeds, he has momentarily fought off the wind's fury and can seek cover before making another opposed roll the next round. If the character fails, he is tossed into the air or pelted with debris. Roll damage dice equal to the storm's effect dice, keeping one. If the character is lucky, he'll hit the ground next round. If he isn't, he'll continue to be tossed around until the storm is done with him.

In addition, roll a die (re-rolling tens) for each character at the beginning of a storm, adding one if the character is wearing metal armor, adding one if they seek no cover. Any character who rolls greater than 10 is struck by lightning during the storm. Characters struck by natural lightning take 10k10 Wounds!



Void

The natural disasters of void do not fall into the same category as the calamities associated with other elements. The void represents an absence within the world. In terms of disaster, this means catastrophes of deficiency, the removal of something vital to life and happiness. The two most common and harmful void-based disasters are drought and disease. Although different in their variations and effects, the Rokugani see them as being closely linked. Both bring slow agonizing death, neither has any easy solution, and both have a very definite origin amongst the kami.

The disasters of void come from the most grievous offense imaginable: impiety. When the fortunes beset mortals with drought and disease it is their way of retaliating for some impious undertaking, usually by a shugenja or daimyo. Whenever a particularly bad void catastrophe strikes, the rulers immediately start searching for someone on whom they can pin the blame. If they don't find a likely candidate, the people will inevitably blame them. Temple hold ceaseless vigils and prayer cycles hoping to uncover the cause and to placate the angry deities. The people themselves suffer and smolder, casting about for someone, anyone to take out their sorrow and anger upon.

Drought

Water brings life, a simple enough equation. Lack of water brings death to everyone, lord and eta alike. When the wrathful Fortunes refuse water to mortals, they bring a long, slow and painful punishment upon man. The drought comes in the guise of pleasant days and sunny afternoons; but the sun perseveres and clouds are nowhere to be found. Days stretch into weeks and then months, and plants refuse to grow. Grasses brown and crumble, animals grow thinner and thinner and soon the people do as well. Eventually the rich soil turns to dry dust, whipped into blinding clouds by fierce,

dry winds. The children and elderly suffer first, then the healthy adults. No rice grows, and no fish populate the rivers and lakes which have dried to trickles and muddy ponds. Then death comes, not to be washed away until the rains return.

As landed, wealthy individuals, nobles suffer less from droughts, but are by no means immune. There is no way to counteract a drought. Even the most powerful water magic does little in the face of a prolonged dry spell. The only possible relief comes if a lord is willing to spend money to help himself and his people. Droughts seldom affect all of Rokugan at once. Wealthy lords can import food and even water from other regions if necessary. Although costly, this ensures future good will of both the Fortunes and the people.

Drought Rules

Though not as dramatic as other disasters, drought presents two deadly threats – starvation and dehydration. A character who goes without food for more than forty-eight hours suffers a +10 starvation penalty to all TNs. A character who goes without food for one week is starving and loses one Earth, reducing his maximum Wounds and all other related attributes proportionately. A character who goes without





any form of water for more than twenty-four hours is dehydrated and also loses one rank of Earth in the same manner.

These penalties are cumulative, and re-occur every week (for starvation) or twenty-four hours (for dehydration). The character's maximum Wounds change with his Earth. It is quite possible that a starving or dehydrated character could suddenly die as he is overwhelmed by injuries. A character whose Earth is reduced to zero dies.

A character who is merely getting one half the normal required amount of food and water still loses Earth, but the process takes twice as long and he may attempt to make an Earth roll vs a TN of 25 to resist the effect each time.

A starving or dehydrated character who finds food or water will slowly recover. The +10 starvation TN penalty is negated as soon as the character gets a decent meal. Lost Earth recovers at a rate of one per week for starvation or one per day with dehydration, so long as the character is getting his full nutritional requirements.

Disease

Nothing strikes more fear into a man's soul than disease. Plagues come without warning, a pox for the most egregious sins. They strike high and low, killing in painful, debilitating and humiliating fashion. Rokugan knows its share of diseases, but one of the most deadly in recent decades is a flu-like illness that comes in the winter. It causes weakness, stomach upset and even death in some cases. Other, more deadly diseases are known as well, including forms of plague and leprosy that have intermittently ravaged communities.

Rokugan's residents, especially the upper classes, have a well-established fear of disease and personal pollution of any kind. They avoid anything and anyone associated with uncleanness. When a virulent disease strikes, samurai typically hide themselves away in their castles, refusing to have any contact with the sick. Many go so far as to banish the sick from their holdings entirely, or even kill them outright so as to prevent the disease's spread. Entire eta villages have been wiped out for fear that they might prove a breeding ground for illness.

Within the peasant ranks, attitudes towards the sick are only a little more charitable. Families tend to their own ill, but villages shun a family with more than one ill member. Neighbors suspect the family of impiety and don't want to become associated with the family for fear of angering a vengeful kami and falling ill themselves. When they see a lord become sick with disease (as opposed to the illnesses attendant with old age) many see this as a sign that the lord has lost his divine mandate. Although they seldom revolt, their support and sympathies start to turn towards other likely heirs to the throne.

The Wasting Disease

The torch sputtered pathetically in Asahina Baiki's hand. The recent rains had choked the air with humidity and soaked everything. Baiki was drenched; he had slept outside. Just because he had never done so before. Why not? It was a new experience. It wasn't as if he was worried he would come down with something.

The shugenja stopped suddenly as a coughing fit overwhelmed him. His body spasmed violently. When the fit finally passed he was on his knees in the mud, barely holding his torch free of a puddle in one hand. He caught a glimpse of his own face in the puddle. Once, he had been handsome. Once, but no longer.

Baiki remembered the unfortunate night when he had paused to rest in the village. He remembered the next morning, when he awoke with boils crawling across his skin and fever crawling through his brain. Pushing away the memory, he rose and moved on.

Bodies lay strewn in the streets. Some yet lived, and turned as the shugenja approached. When he had first arrived, their eyes had been full of hope, hope that his magic could save them. Now there was nothing left in the village but death.

Oddly, a glimmer of hope had finally arrived. The rains would end the drought. Most of the rats would leave in search of easier food. Without starvation to contend with, the people would no longer be so vulnerable. Soon, the plague would no longer be a problem. Unfortunately, that would not be soon enough. The villagers were highly contagious, and so was Baiki. The signs had been placed on the roads; no one else would come here. There was only one thing left to do.

Asahina Baiki walked up the steps of the headman's house. With a heave, he overturned the great oil jar. He waited a few moments for the liquid to spread, then threw the torch inside. The house went up quickly despite the pervasive dampness. The village was a cramped, tiny place. Soon, the fire would spread to the other homes as well.

Soon, there would be no village.



With a tear in his eye, Asahina Baiki turned and walked through the doors of the flaming house. It was nearly a relief when his silken robes began to burn.

History

The danger of plague has been a recurring problem throughout the history of Rokugan, but never has it been quite so dangerous as in recent months. A virulent strain of plague, dubbed the Wasting Disease by those who first documented it, has struck a crippling blow to the Emerald Empire.

The earliest documented cases of the Wasting Disease hail from Crane and Phoenix territories. The earliest outbreak of the disease was in the village of Kirei Mura, roughly a half day's travel from Shiro Shiba. When the first symptoms of the disease broke out, runners were dispatched to a nearby temple to bring back monks skilled in healing and herbalism. Five days later a group of monks arrived to find everyone in the village dead. Shocked and horrified, the monks returned home. A week later, everyone in the monastery was dead as well, with the exception of one young nun and one of the original village runners, both of whom were strangely immune.

The next outbreak seemed to be entirely unrelated, and occurred barely a week later. Shiro Banken was a relatively new Crane fortress. Constructed by the Daidoji family near the ruins of Shiro Yogo, Banken was the first step in the Crane's plan to slowly expand into the Scorpion's abandoned territories. One morning the soldiers in Shiro Banken discovered a dead bird floating in the well. Thinking little of it, they cast it aside. A week later, the Wasting Disease had killed everyone in the fortress except for a young samurai named Karasu. Though he sickened, he recovered with no lasting effects.

After these two outbreaks, the disease spread like wildfire. A severe drought complicated matters, as poor nutrition lowered the population's resistance. Rats and other vermin began to infest villages in search of food, and only served to worsen the situation by becoming carriers for the disease. Within months, the Wasting Disease was killing Rokugani by the hundreds. The disease baffles Phoenix researchers, as it defies all attempts at treatment or

containment. In most cases, a disease so deadly can be easily controlled simply by containing the infected. Not so with the Wasting Disease. Every time it seems to be eliminated, it crops up again somewhere entirely new. The Phoenix have not discounted the possibility that the disease's origin may be magical, though their studies thus far have turned up nothing.

The most shocking outbreak was undoubtedly when the disease swept through Otsan Uchi. Many prominent courtiers and statesmen died horrible deaths. Even the Emperor was stricken by the disease. Luckily, the Hantei did not die, though he was greatly weakened. Only the dutiful ministrations of the Empress

Kachiko, who is apparently immune, have prolonged his life since the outbreak. The Imperial City is still recovering from the loss of many of its finest dignitaries.

The Wasting Disease is currently dealt with in a rather merciless fashion. Areas that are known to be infected are placed under quarantine, with red "X" symbols painted on every home and approaching roads so that no one enters the area. Dead bodies are burned, usually along with their homes in order to ensure that the disease does not spread. Sometimes, villages are burned while the infected still live.



Symptoms

The following is hardly common knowledge in Rokugan, but is very important for Game Masters who wish to use the Wasting Disease.

First of all, a word of caution.

Contracting the Wasting Disease is almost invariably fatal. Introducing it into your game could wipe out the entire party in a grisly and decidedly unheroic manner. It is highly recommended that player characters be among the select few who are mysteriously immune to the disease, or who contract it and survive.

The disease spreads via transmission of fluids. The most common method of infection is via rat bites; rodents (including nezumi) are entirely immune to the disease, but can carry it for several days. Another common mode of infection is via ingestion or inhalation of fluid from the lungs or sores of a victim.

Once an individual has been exposed, the Wasting Disease immediately begins to incubate. It spreads to the body's lymph



nodes (in the neck, armpits, and groin area) causing them to swell within hours. The victim begins to feel exhausted and listless, and may complain of a headache or nausea. Within a day, the victim is struck with debilitating fever and sometimes raving delirium. Within two days, oozing sores cover the body. The skin becomes a pale, fishbelly white. Within three days, the victim's saliva becomes bright red with blood and flows freely. After four days, breathing becomes labored and the victim's sores begin to bleed. Usually, the victim's lungs collapse at this point, but some sufferers linger on for days. There seems to be no cure for the disease, though some survive, given proper care and rest. A rare few individuals seem to be entirely immune.

Rules

One percent of those infected are immune, and never suffer any ill effects or carry the disease (though there's always the possibility of infected fluids contaminating their clothing, armor, etc., and thus spreading the disease). All Naga and all Shadowlands creatures are immune. Nezumi carry the disease for 1-10 days, infecting others but suffering no effects themselves. To determine immunity randomly, roll percentile dice and determine everyone with a "01" result to be immune to the disease.

Every day a character is infected with the disease, lower all of his Rings by 1. Once a Ring reaches zero, the character is debilitated by fever and exhaustion and can no longer move. Once all of a character's Rings reach zero, he dies. To fight off the disease, a character must do nothing but rest. Only total bed rest and proper nutrition allow a chance for survival. The character must make a Willpower roll vs a TN of 30 at the beginning of each day. If the character succeeds, he may select a single Ring to be unaffected by the disease that day (usually Earth).

If the character succeeds on three of these rolls, he has permanently fought off the Wasting Disease. For each week he rests afterward, his Rings recover by 1 each until they return to their former levels. The Quick Healer advantage reduces this time by one-half. Survivors of the Wasting Disease bear the physical scars of their ordeal, not to mention the psychological terror of surviving the plague, for the rest of their lives. If you wish, you may give survivors of the Wasting Disease the Bad Health or Phobia: Plague disadvantages.

Great Destiny may be used to survive the Wasting Disease, but the character must be slain by it (all Rings reduced to zero) before beginning to recover.

Armor and Weapons

Armor

Just as a sword should be an extension of the samurai's will and intent, his armor should be a second skin. Artisans put as much skill into creating a fine set of armor as any smith puts into beating and refining a katana to perfection. In the hands of a master armorer it becomes not only a second skin, but a better skin: flexible, tough, resilient and beautiful. Engraved, embossed, and painted with intricate designs and family symbology, the complete suit allows the samurai to present his best, most breathtaking face to the world. Every samurai with the means keeps a personal craftsman in his retinue whose sole job is to care for the multi-layered armor.

Samurai armor is very flexible, designed not to impede movement. A typical suit consists of hard leather and small iron plates woven together in overlapping horizontal tiers. Tightly woven silk cords tie the pieces together. Each piece of leather receives added strength and beauty through the application of a coat of lacquer: the sap of the lacquer tree, a toxic substance that workers collect via a painstaking process of tree tapping. They then refine the brown, gummy sap until it thickens and purifies and dye it, usually black or red. The artisan carefully primes each piece of armor, polishing it and cleaning it, before he applies the lacquer. Each piece receives between twenty and ninety coats, applied one at a time with each coat drying before he applies the next. The lacquer can be inlaid with decorations, ranging from gold and silver dust sprinkled into the wet lacquer to ornate inlays and designs.

Once the lacquered pieces are finished, the artisan assembles the entire suit, tailored to fit the samurai who will wear it. The upper portion consists of a large, solid armor chest plate that protects the front and which has additional tiers of plates in the front and back. Additional tiers protect the lower torso and sides. A protective skirt made from large vertical sections of lacquered iron tiers hangs from



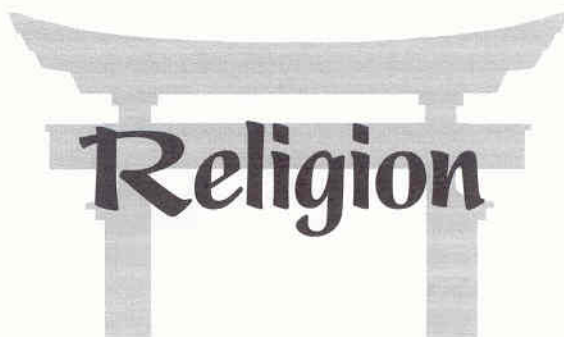
the armor's upper section. Additional tiers and plates protect the samurai's arms. The literal crowning piece of the armor is the helmet, again made from lacquered iron plates. The helm often incorporates decoration both grand and fearsome, including facemasks designed to give the wearer an imposing or terrifying visage in battle.

Most samurai take great pride in their armor, and wealthy nobles have multiple sets for different occasions. As with everything else, quality and cost reflect directly upon the wearer's social status within the complex noble hierarchy. Although it is seldom appropriate to wear armor at court functions, occasionally the need arises during a Winter Court for a samurai to don his full regalia. In such instances the kind of armor and its decorations can send subtle or not-too-subtle messages to the rest of the court. A samurai who dresses in battle-scarred, utilitarian armor sees war or conflict on the horizon, while one in more decorative protective wear sends a message of peace and prosperity.

Sword Making

No artisan in Rokugan lives with more honor than the sword maker. For society as a whole and the samurai in particular, the sword occupies such a central, fundamental place that the forging process has become a legendary, religious undertaking. No single act of creation is more difficult, incorporating strength, finesse, an eye for detail, and most importantly a strong spirit. Everyone firmly acknowledges that a quality sword cannot come from the hand of man alone, that the spirit and celestial worlds must play an integral part in a blade's creation.

Before beginning the forging process, a sword maker fasts for several days. He then comes to the anvil dressed in white, the color of priests. He honors his gods each day and each night of the forging process. Creating a fine blade takes much, much more than hammering a piece of steel into the shape of a sword. The sword maker must carefully weigh two vital considerations. For a blade to have a sharp edge it must be made from hard steel. The only problem is, hard steel becomes brittle, easily breakable in battle. Soft steel proves much more resilient, but does not hold an edge. The sword makers overcome this dilemma by mixing the two kinds of steel, hammering, folding and refolding soft and hard steel together. The result is a blade with a hard steel outer edge but a soft steel core, making it difficult to break but capable of keeping a razor edge for prolonged periods.



The Worship of the Fortunes

One of the oldest religions in Rokugan, and the ancient religion of Gisei Toshi, is the 'Way of the Gods,' Kami-no-michi. Rokugani believe the world is filled with supernatural beings with the power to affect their lives. These are the Thousand Fortunes – Lady Sun and Lord Moon, Ebisu, Bishamon, Inari and a myriad of nature spirits. Every rock, river and grove has its own deity. The Fortunes foster villages, bring rain, protect fishermen on their journeys, and much more. Angry, they cause calamity and hardship – bad luck, torrential storms and illness. Properly appeased, they bring good fortune, health and calm weather. At important times – birth, harvest, calamity – the Rokugani call upon the Fortunes to bless their lives.

The Nature of the Kami

The pantheon of Kami-no-michi is complex and convoluted. Rokugani believe in a lot of gods, from Amaterasu and the Seven Fortunes to individual nature spirits. The Thousand Fortunes are called mikokami in Rokugani, a word which means 'little god', and represents the divine aspect of the lesser Fortunes. The worship of the Fortunes considers the Sun (Amaterasu) and the Moon (Onnotangu) to be the highest echelon of existence, but concentrates all worship and reverence on the Seven who came afterwards, and on their successors.

When talking about the Thousand Fortunes, Rokugani identify two types. The first, called the Seven Fortunes, are mighty gods who transcend the world, like Daikoku and Benten. Mikokami are lesser nature spirits inhabiting every living thing, and take more interest in the lives of humans.



There are many different kinds of mikokami. Some are the personification of a power of nature, such as growth, wind and earthquakes. Others are deified souls of the dead, most notably the children of Sun and Moon, but also previous emperors, heroes and great sages. Still more kami embody qualities such as love, hard work and wisdom. Lastly, individual natural objects such as rivers, trees, mountains, animals and rivers have their own kami. Rokugani further classify them by the things they do – kami who create, kami who set things right, and kami who bring misfortune. Often, the same kami displays different aspects. Kuroshin, a mikokami of agriculture, creates bountiful harvests by making rain, but brings misfortune by withholding it.

While mikokami are not as powerful as the Seven Fortunes, Rokugani still venerate them. It is a great feat to attract the attention of the likes of Inari; summoning an earth kami is much easier. Kami have been known to intercede with the Celestial Court on behalf of mortals. While Inari might not directly answer a petition for a rain storm, a kami might carry the petition to her on the shugenja's behalf. It is easy to offend kami, who demand the respect due them, and who can lay a curse as easily a sorcerer curses an offending peasant. Depending on the kami's might, and pique, this could range from afflicting the offender with simple bad luck to causing a drought.

Every region, town and village has its own festivals celebrating something important only to the local area. Along the coast, for example, villagers honor Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, asking her to send plentiful fish hauls; farmers in the interior have little need to honor a 'fisherman's god'. In the north, in the lands of the Phoenix Clan, everyone celebrates the Isawa Festival. Held on the shortest day of the year, everyone turns out to encourage the sun to climb higher in the sky. Individual villages have their own festivals and

holy days, to honor those kami who are kindly disposed to them (or to placate those prone to anger). In Sunda Mizu Mura, for example, villagers turn out to venerate Willow-Healing kami, the tree spirit who ended a plague by intervening with the Fortune Ekibyogami.

The format of these festivals are usually the same. First there is the ritual purification, not only for the shugenja, but for any places the kami is expected to travel. Villagers light giant torches and carry them along the route the kami will take around their mura. Meanwhile, shugenja might bathe in freezing cold water or walk across hot coals. The shugenja then invite the kami to visit them, the participants bowing respectfully at the proper time. This *norito*, or prayer, states the purpose for the invitation. In a format unchanged in centuries, the shugenja explains why they impose upon the kami – to celebrate a festival or make a special petition.

The kami is believed to enter the *shintai*, or god body, usually a statue in the form of the kami. Before the festival, shugenja oversee the construction of portable shrines into which the shintai is placed, which are then paraded through the village. Once the kami arrives, it is welcomed and performances put on for its entertainment. These dances are the origins of noh, kabuki and puppetry. Kami supposedly enjoy it when mortals drink and frolic. Afterwards, it shares a communal feast in which food and wine is

consumed equally by all. Sharing a meal with a kami is a great honor.

With the banquet concluded, the shugenja makes his petition known. Usually, this is an entreaty for a good harvest or bountiful fishing, or a request for good weather or protection from evil. At the conclusion of the festival, the villagers send the kami on its way. Festivals are largely ceremonial; shugenja rarely summon a kami to appear, though they have been known to appear nonetheless.



The Seven Virtues of Bushido

Gi - Honesty - A samurai is honest in all things.

Yu - Courage - A samurai fears nothing. Not death, not the unknown, nothing.

Jin - Compassion - A samurai goes out of his way to help others in need.

Rei - Courtesy - A samurai is always respectful in his dealing with others.

Meyo - Honor - The only true judge of a samurai is, in the end, himself.

Makoto - Sincerity - Word and action are the same. If a samurai say she will do something, it will be done.

Chugo - Duty - A samurai does not balk at responsibility. A samurai never fails to protect his lord.



Ancestor Worship

Lady Koichi stood in her garden, a vision of delicacy beneath her parasol. The garden was her favorite spot, even in winter when it was buried beneath snow. She could most often be found here, especially when troubled. It was to this place that she summoned Asahina Tanaro.

As the shugenja strode around the pond and over the little bridge to her tea house, he could see that something weighed heavily on her mind. The rumors had been true, he thought.

She sat, eyes contemplating a bee buzzing among her flowers. It pained Tanaro that her face should be bothered by worry. He bowed and asked, "How can your humble servant assist you, Lady Koichi?"

She looked up at him. "My husband. He has been gone for two weeks, when he said he'd be back in one." Tanaro had thought that was her trouble. The two had only recently been married, and unlike many marriages, theirs had been a love match. Unfortunately, urgent business – bandits in the south – called her husband away.

"The road between Kosaten Shiro and Shiro Daidoji can be treacherous, my lady. Perhaps Lord Daidoji was delayed by a storm," he said. He was careful not to use the word 'waylaid.'

"There has been no word of bad weather. A messenger arrived from Kosaten Shiro this morning. And weather would not have delayed Gosuta an extra week."

"Bandits can be tricky, difficult to root out like weeds," he tried again. She cut him off before he could continue.

"Ask my ancestors, Tanaro. They will know what happened to my husband." She nodded to herself. "Yes, ask our ancestors to watch over Gosuta and bring him home safely."

"As you wish, my lady," Isawa Tanaro said, bowing, as he headed for the family shrine.

Mythology

Central to ancestor worship are the concepts of karma and rebirth. Throughout life, a person earns karma based on his actions. Good actions merit good karma, while bad actions attract negative karma. A person's karma not only affects his or her current incarnation, but has an even greater effect on the cycle of reincarnation.

For Rokugani, the world consists of six realms, which make up the Wheel of Existence: the realms of humans, gods, demigods, animals, ghosts and demons. A person may be reborn into any one of these realms, depending on his or her karma. A person who has lived a selfish, venal life might be reborn into the world of animals, there to live out a lifetime as a horse or a slug. Living a pure life, a person might be reborn into the world of humans again, this time at a higher level (bushi instead of heimin, for example), or as a kami.

The idea of rebirth is central to the path of bushido. Because a person receives numerous lives, samurai often place little value on their current incarnation. This allows them to charge heedlessly into battle; a samurai need not fear death, for he receives another life. By obeying the precepts of bushido, he need not worry about his reincarnation; a popular belief among Rokugani says "samurai are fated to pay for their actions in this life by returning as samurai in the next."

The Gods of the Underworld

When the soul departs this world, it travels to a portion of Jigoku known as Yomi to await its next rebirth. Before it can be reborn, it must be punished for any impure actions. By working off negative karma in this way, the soul can be reborn in a pure state; the karma slate is wiped clean. There, Emma-o metes out all manner of tortures, such as beating the sinner's soul with iron rods, making it eat molten lead, or impaling it repeatedly on sword trees. Oni administer punishments, which can last for thousands of years.

Fukurokujin is also considered a Fortune of Mercy, who travels to Jigoku to relieve the suffering of souls there. He protects them from the darkness and works for their reincarnation. Rokugani pray to him to help their ancestors work off their bad karma, or provide a brief respite from the tortures. He pleads cases before the Fortunes, arguing to get them a better incarnation on the Wheel of Existence.

The Religion

Ancestor worship is not an 'organized religion.' There is no centralized power structure, no text, no dogma. It's a folk religion, concerned with man's relationship with the spirits of those who have gone before.

Generally, people worship their own ancestors. Every home has a shrine to the family's honored dead. Here, family members make offerings of food, incense and prayers for their ancestor's salvation and to speed their time in Jigoku. People also venerate the souls of legendary heroes, such as Matsu Kijoruko or Uikku, hoping these powerful spirits will look favorably upon them in some endeavor. Though prayers are not offered directly to Emma-o, people pray to Jizo to liberate their ancestors from suffering.

The people of Rokugan have an uneasy relationship with the spirit world. On the one hand, they fear ghosts and the Underworld. Like a tiger in the woods, a ghost is dangerous, though not necessarily evil. On the other hand, Rokugani honor the spirits of their dead. There are two distinct styles of ancestor worship in Rokugan – that of the bushi and that of the heimin. Each reflects a different approach to ghosts and spirits.



The Samurai Caste

By nature, members of the samurai caste seek an enduring relationship with their ancestors. They believe that family members who have performed extraordinary deeds, died honorably, or were wronged in life continue to live on. They think of these spirits as 'family kami,' who have completed their tasks in Yomi and are free to watch over their progeny. Good fortune comes from helpful ancestors, while bad fortune is obviously the result of an angry spirit. By making the proper offerings, bushi hope to head off potential calamity and speed their ancestors on their way to their next incarnation. Every family worships the founder of their clan (the great Kami) as well as those attributed with legendary feats. For example, the Daidoji family shrine honors the original Doji as well as the first Daidoji and Daidoji Masashigi, the hero of the Battle of the Landbridge. Although being haunted is widely considered a curse, many samurai deem a *shiryo's* attention an auspicious occurrence, a sign of favor from the honored dead.

Shugenja, usually the Kitsu, typically serve as spirit mediums for the bushi. A nobleman might ask a shugenja to pray for an ancestor's salvation on the family's behalf. When indecisive or in trouble, they call upon shugenja to commune with their ancestors,

and gain advice or favor. A bushi suffering from bad dreams often consults a shugenja to interpret these messages from the spirit world. Believing omens to be signs from a watchful ancestor, bushi ask shugenja to interpret these, too. If bad fortune strikes, shugenja attempt to divine the source and assuage whatever angry ancestor is at the root.

To an honorable samurai, one's ancestors mean everything. The next life dictates much of how samurai behave in this one. Tradition and honor bind a samurai to not think of himself, but of his family, his Clan, and his lineage for centuries to come. A samurai does not live in the now. Even a dishonorable samurai knows that in the next life, he will be doomed a thousand times for his sins in this one. Because the ancestors play such an important role in the lives of the people, Rokugani take the worship of the kami very seriously.

There are shrines built to every ancestor you can imagine and a particularly pious family can be expected to have small shrines dedicated to every important grandparent. Religion and worship are very important to the Rokugani and GMs should encourage their players to make Shintao and Theology more important aspects of the characters' lives. Prayer, meditation, celebration, etc., are all an important mix of the Rokugani beliefs.

Communicating With the Ancestors

Depending on how you GM, the ancestors can be reflected in your games in a number of ways, each taking on a different vein and represented visually by a different medium. There can be as much or as little contact with the ancestors as you would like. The more obvious they are, the more superstitious your Rokugani will be. Fewer contacts makes the samurai less respectful of the ancestors' presence.

The Peasants

Because mankind is born out of the mixture of Lady Sun's tears and Lord Moon's blood, even farmers have an immortal soul. Among the peasants, Yomi is a place not for hallowed heroes, but 'between lives,' where the soul awaits rebirth. Peasants attribute misfortune to the presence of malicious spirits, the spirits of those who have escaped the Underworld. The world is filled with *goryo* (vengeful ghosts) and *gaki* (hungry ghosts). While the bushi want to commune with an ancestor's spirit, the heimin want as little to do with the spirit world as possible, viewing all spirits as harmful. Ancestor worship among the heimin is a preventive measure, a way to avert bad fortune. So long as one's ancestors are happy, they'll remain where they belong. Every peasant family honors its oldest known ancestor as well as their immediate relations and any spirits who appear to demand inclusion.





Among the peasants, shugenja typically find employment as exorcists, protecting them from marauding ghosts. Peasants don't commune directly with the spirit world, and don't seek input from their ancestors as much as the bushi. When disaster strikes, however, they seek out a shugenja to find the source of the trouble and appease the restless spirit. A shugenja can make a decent living by providing talismans against goryo. Funerals are another source of income. In addition to these jobs, shugenja are sometimes hired to care for the restless dead, those without descendants to care for them.

Amulets and Talismans

It is typical for Rokugani, particularly peasants, to be obsessed with amulets. The Rokugani often hang amulets in their doorways or around their necks. Many shapes of small objects are considered good-luck charms to those that believe in such things. Amulets are more common during festivals, but Rokugani can find them in most any market place. A variety of charms are sold as sacred souvenirs. Cloth, wood, and paper are the most popular of materials. Small bags on cords, inscribed with the kanji of a specific Fortune, are the most popular type of amulets. Other than the kami, popular inscriptions on amulets include *josai shofuku*, which means "away with misfortune," welcome to good luck, *gakugyo seikyo* (success in examinations), or *ryoko anzen* (safe journey).

Gofu are rectangular pieces of paper (or sometimes wood). Like the bags, the kanji of a kami's name is written on the gofu. Gofu bring positive benefits to those who wear them or place them on their doorway. Good health, fortune, or protection from accidents are among the things that Rokugani fuss over. It is not uncommon for a villager who is plagued with visions or a noisy neighbor to wake each morning and put a new gofu on her doorway, or walk all the way to a shrine to place it there. Gofu are a type of protective talisman known as *omamori* or *ofuda*.

The Kami of the great clans are considered a great source of protection and fortune as well, and each is used to shield the peasants of those lands from bandits and disaster. Small animal figures are also quite common in Rokugan and are thought to bring protection. The *inuhariko* is a wooden dog charm that protects children, the *wara-uma* is a straw horse that brings about a bountiful harvest, and *akabeko* is an ox made from paper that keeps misfortune away. Red is popularly believed to protect against diseases.

Large talismans such as small bows, arrows, and wooden plaques (*ema*) are purchased during the New Year Celebration and are known to bring great fortune. Archery competitions are held by peasants and samurai at the New Year to predict the autumn harvest.

Kumade are decorated bamboo rakes that bring good fortune as well, and are associated with the New Year.

Ema bring fortune through the pictures of animals that are painted upon the small wooden plaques or tablets. Horses are a supplication to the kami and a black horse is a request for rain, while a white horse is for good weather. The Rokugani use *ema* to pray for all sorts of wishes to be granted, such as a good life, healthy children, recovery from illness, or even success in battle. Children have been known to use dolls to make wishes come true in much the same way that an adult uses *ema*.

A practice known as *mayoke* is forbidden by the Emperor, but many peasants continue to do it anyway, hiding their craft from samurai eyes. Children that require protection from evil spirits (those who are plagued by illness) are asked to create strings of sea shells and mushrooms which are hung from gates; these are *mayoke*. Embroidering colorful symbols on the back of a child's clothing is also known to help, although many peasants believe the thread must be dyed with colors that can only come from animals (the blue of a certain shell-fish gland or the yellow of a chicken yoke).

Village communities throughout Rokugan often have their own special protective amulets in honor of some auspicious occasion and there is no end to what a superstitious Rokugani will do to appease the spirits. It is common to hire a painter to put fish and dragons over a doorway to provide fortune to those that pass through it.

The Ancestor's Shrine

No matter the caste, every family maintains a shrine to their ancestors. This shrine is always unobtrusive and austere, consisting of a few funeral tablets, an incense burner, a bowl of rice and perhaps a bottle of sake. Funeral tablets are wooden, a few inches tall, and bear the name of an ancestor. Old, prestigious families have many funeral tablets on their shrines. Some bushi and wealthy merchants commission artists to paint a portrait of the deceased, which they hang over the altar as a visual memento of the person, though this is rare. A small statuette of Shinsei might also be kept here. Shrines are typically kept someplace easily accessible, though private, usually in a corner of the main room. Some bushi keep their family shrine in a cabinet, which can be closed for privacy and easily transported from place to place.



Sensing and Countering Magic

Sensing Magic

It is possible for shugenja to sense the use of magic at great distances. When a shugenja casts a spell the kami exercise their power, sometimes coming from miles around to do his bidding.

Weak spells, such as Mastery Level 1 spells, cause no disturbance any further than a few feet, while powerful spells can be detected at great distances.

To determine if it is possible for a shugenja to detect a given spell, first see if he is close enough to the location where the spell is taking effect. In most cases this is the immediate vicinity of the caster, but occasionally a shugenja casts a spell in such a way that its effects manifest some distance away. Since the detecting shugenja is noticing the disturbance caused by the kami themselves, the detection radius is measured from the location at which the spell takes effect.

Spell Mastery Level Possible Detection Radius

Spell Mastery Level	Possible Detection Radius
1	5'
2	25'
3	100'
4	500'
5	1 mile
6	5 miles

Once you have determined that the character is close enough to the caster to sense the spell, have the character make a Contested roll against the caster, with each rolling Spellcraft/Awareness. If the character succeeds, he has sensed the spell. He knows the general location of the spell and has an idea as to its power (Mastery Level).

If a character successfully senses a spell, he may make a further Spellcraft/Awareness roll with a TN equal to five times the spell's Mastery Level in order to determine which ring the spell is associated with (Earth, Fire, Air, Water or *maho*).

Countering Magic

It is possible for those skilled in the use of magic to counter the magic of others. In order to counter a spell, a shugenja must be aware of the target spell (by sensing it, as described above, or through more mundane means, such as watching the spell being cast). The shugenja attempting to counter the spell must use an action to attempt to stop the incoming (or existing) spell. He rolls dice equal to the Ring used to cast the spell, and keeps dice equal to his School Rank. If his roll exceeds the roll the caster made to cast the spell, the spell is canceled and has no further effect. The casting shugenja must still mark off one of his spell slots for that element.

Example: Two notable shugenja are having a spirited discussion, and are already in a round-by-round combat situation. Isawa Tsure has an initiative of 15 for this round, and Kuni Mokuna has an initiative of 20. Since Tsure has the lower initiative he must declare his action first. He declares that he will cast Heart of the Inferno, a Mastery Level 3 Fire spell, at Mokuna. The Kuni, not wishing to be on the receiving end of 6k6 Wounds, declares that he will attempt to counter the spell. The Target Number for Tsure to cast his spell is 15 (Mastery Level 3 x 5) and he comes up with a total of 21, more than enough to succeed. Because Mokuna declared that he would try to counter Tsure's spell, he may now roll dice equal to his Fire Ring (since Heart of the Inferno is a Fire spell), keeping dice equal to his School Rank. He must exceed Tsure's roll of 21, so his TN for this roll is a 22; if he rolls 22 or higher, he successfully counters the Heart of the Inferno. In either case, Tsure marks off one of his spell slots for Fire spells.





Spell Research

Assigning Mastery Levels

A spell's Mastery Level not only governs whether or not the shugenja has the knowledge to research the spell, but also how difficult the research roll becomes. Here are some hints on assigning it.

All Mastery Levels are between 1 and 6. Small effects are a 1: these tend to provide a one-shot effect. These are also almost always subtle: *By the Light of Lord Moon*, *Reversal of Fortunes*. Spells which return something to its normal state often have a Mastery Level of 1 or 2: *Fires From the Forge*, *Hands of Jurojin*. The Elemental Weapon spells (*Bo of Water*, *Katana of Fire*, and so on) also have a Mastery Level of 1.

Mastery Levels of 3 and 4 indicate much more complex spells. They are rarely subtle: representative members include *The Fist of Osano-Wo*, *Heart of the Inferno*, *Tomb of Jade*, *Benevolent Protection of Shinsei*, *Dominate the Mind*, and *Wall of Water*.

Mastery Levels of 5 and 6 are the huge, earthshaking effects of lore. These effects tend to be profound, often permanent, spread over a wide area, and loud. The various *Rise* spells, invoking the unfettered kami, are in this category, as are *Earthquake* and *Whirlwind*. Only the most advanced shugenja are capable of creating a new spell of such power.

Once the Mastery Level of a spell has been determined, you must assign it a Duration, Area of Effect, and Range. These are generally implied in the spell's write-up. Spells which have an instant effect and then evaporate, or which make a permanent change, have Durations of "Instantaneous" and "Permanent" respectively. Spells which have an effect for a little while and then evaporate are a little trickier; it's easiest to hook the duration to the Mastery Level. Mastery Level 1 spells rarely last more than a minute. Mastery Level

2 spells don't often last beyond 5 minutes. It's unusual, but not unheard-of, for a spell below Mastery Level 3 to be permanent.

A spell's Area of Effect also expands as the Mastery Level goes up. Mastery Level 1 and 2 spells usually don't affect areas; they often target a person, or an item, or the shugenja himself. For spells which do have an area effect, a safe rule is to assign the spell 10' of radius per Mastery Level, so that a Mastery Level 3 spell would have a 30' radius.

A spell's Range also increases along with its Mastery Level. A shugenja who has created a Mastery Level 1 or 2 spell may have to touch the target of the spell; at the outside, if he can't hit it with a rock, he probably can't reach it with the spell. Once the Mastery Level reaches 3 or 4, the Range generally increases to Line of Sight.





Advanced Schools

The *Legend of the Five Rings Player's Guide* features schools and Rank Techniques that take a character through Rank 5. Sometimes, you might feel like upping the ante a bit and try playing with extraordinarily powerful characters. Here are some strictly optional rules to let you do just that.

Each of the following Advanced Schools features a certain method of training practiced by a Great Clan that goes beyond the normal training of a bushi or shugenja school. Each of these schools features techniques that are quite powerful, and attendance is purely by invitation only.

By using these schools, you can continue your campaign far beyond the normal limits of Rank 5 characters. If a character meets the requirements of an Advanced School, and is invited to attend said school, he can immediately begin training as soon as he gains enough Insight to learn a new technique or, in the case of a shugenja, increase in Rank. Instead of gaining a new technique or spells from his original school, the character instead gains the first Rank Technique from his new school. All previous Rank Techniques are permanently frozen at their previous levels.

When figuring out the School Rank of a character who has gone to an Advanced School, simply add his School Ranks in each school. For instance, a student who had attended the Hida Bushi School through Rank 4 and then gone to the Crab Avenger School for two more Ranks would be a Rank 6 Bushi (and somewhat intimidating).

Before learning a new Rank technique at his current school, he must gain enough Insight to reach a new School Rank. The capacity to learn a new Rank Technique is gained for every 25 points of Insight as follows:

Rank 2	151 Insight
Rank 3	176 Insight
Rank 4	201 Insight
Rank 5	226 Insight
Rank 6	251 Insight
Rank 7	276 Insight
Rank 8	301 Insight

The GM should keep in mind that Advanced Schools are very selective about those with whom they share their secrets. A character that meets the steep requirements of an Advanced School may not be considered for training unless he has gained a sufficient reputation. The GM always has the final word regarding whether a character will be allowed Advanced Training, but it is recommended that you do not allow any character with a School Rank of 2 or less to learn these techniques.

Yes, it is entirely possible for a character to be invited to a school that is not within his clan. These schools showcase talent and ability more than political leverage, though most of the alumni do tend to be from the appropriate clan. Simply put, a student of an Advanced School is expected to be loyal to his school and sensei just as he is loyal to his clan. Often, this can produce a conflict of interests that a samurai would rather avoid. For this reason, some samurai deny invitations to Advanced Schools outside of their own clan to avoid potentially sticky questions of misplaced duty.

A final word: As Advanced Schools are optional, the important NPCs featured in L5R supplements do not have these Advanced Techniques. If you plan on introducing these techniques into your Rokugan, remember to give them to appropriate NPC's as well.

Crab Avenger School

The Avengers are the Crab's elite heavy infantry, warriors skilled in combating the beasts of the Shadowlands. These legendary warriors are as tough and indefatigable as the Carpenter Wall itself, able to absorb incredible amounts of damage and continue the fight.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Earth 4, Water 3

Skills: Defense 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, any two Weapon Skills at 4

Advantages: Strength of the Earth, Crab Hands

Other: Candidates for this school must enter the Shadowlands alone and return with the head of an ogre, oni, or other Shadowlands beast no smaller than a man. The character must be a bushi.



Rank 1: Wrath of the Crab

Any creature that bears the Taint of the Shadowlands may not re-roll 10s on damage rolls against the Avenger. The Avenger rolls and keeps an extra die of damage against all such opponents.

Rank 2: Be the Wall

The Avenger carries the spirit and power of the Carpenter Wall at all times. He may add his Earth x 3 to his TN to be hit. In an Iaijutsu duel or when immobilized, he does not gain this bonus.

Rank 3: Hida's Technique

At this Rank, the Avenger gains a nearly supernatural level of toughness, allowing him to withstand tremendous amounts of damage unharmed. The Avenger gains an Carapace Rating (see page 139) equal to his Earth.

Crane Kenshinzen

The Crane are known for producing skilled duelists, but the fabled Kenshinzen are the best of the best. Their speed, skill, and dedication to the tenets of bushido are second to none.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Fire 4, Void 4

Skills: Etiquette 4, Iaijutsu 5, Lore (Bushido) 4, Meditation 4

Advantages: Balance, Quick

Other: To be a member of the Kenshinzen, you must defeat a member of the Kenshinzen in a legal duel. The duel need not necessarily be to the death, but the candidate must win fairly. The character must be a bushi.

Rank 1: Drawing the Void

In an Iaijutsu duel, the Kenshinzen may focus an additional number of times equal to his School Rank, rounding up. This is cumulative with effects such as the Balance advantage.

Rank 2: A Single Moment

The Kenshinzen who reaches this rank has mastered the speed of the strike so that he may strike between the spaces of a heartbeat. He gains an additional attack each round.

Rank 3: Kakita's Technique

The Kenshinzen's skill and speed are now such that he can forego all of his normal attacks in a combat round to instead deliver a single attack to every enemy within five feet of his position in a single round. One attack roll is made for this special maneuver, and applied to the TN of each opponent. Thus, it is possible to strike

some opponents while missing others. Raises may be made on this attack.

Dragon Spirit-Binders

While the Phoenix Clan have certainly produced the largest number of shugenja in Rokugan, the Dragon Clan's own magical accomplishments are not to be ignored. While they do not possess the broad magical mastery of the Phoenix, some shugenja taught by the Dragon are able to perform extraordinary feats with the simplest magic. These Dragons are the Spirit-Binders.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Four Rings at 3

Skills: Lore (Shugenja) 4, Meditation 5, Shintao 4, Spellcraft 4

Advantages: At least three memorized (innate) spells

Other: The character must be a shugenja.

Rank Techniques: One with the Kami

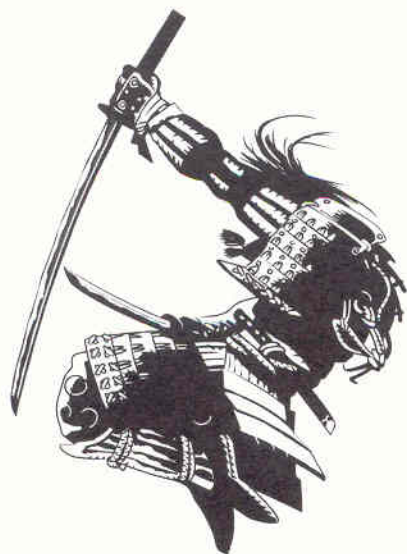
At this Rank and each rank afterward, the Spirit-Binder's effective School Rank continues to increase in regards to casting spells. However, the shugenja may no longer cast any spells besides those he has memorized. (He may find and memorize new spells normally.) At this rank, the Spirit-Binder selects one memorized spell to become a Focus, binding a part of the kami into his own soul. Henceforth, the Spirit-Binder gains a free Raise when casting his Focus, and rolls and keeps an extra die when casting it.

At each Rank hereafter, the Dragon may choose one new Focus. This Focus gains the advantages listed above. All Foci the Spirit-Binder already possesses gain another free Raise and another die rolled and kept during casting.

For example, a Rank 1 Spirit-Binder chooses Biting Steel as his Focus. At Rank 1, he gains an additional die and a free Raise. At Rank 2, he chooses Fires From Within as his second Focus. Fires From Within gains a free Raise and one additional die, while Biting Steel now has two free Raises and two additional dice.

The Lion's Pride

The samurai-ko of the Matsu Lion's Pride are an elite and highly selective group of bushi, devastating in single combat. While it is nearly unheard-of for anyone but a Matsu to join, it is not entirely impossible. The Lion's Pride require unswerving dedication and loyalty. As the name suggests, membership is a matter of pride as much as skill.



Requirements

Rings/Traits: Agility 5, Strength 4, Stamina 3

Skills: Battle 4, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Bushido) 4, 4 Weapon Skills at Rank 1

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Higher Purpose (any, so long as the Higher Purpose is honorable). The Lion's Pride requires its members to be highly passionate about something. It doesn't really matter what that something is.

Other: In most cases, the character must be a member of the Matsu family, or be willing to swear fealty to the Matsu. A female bushi who otherwise proves herself to the Lion's Pride may be a rare exception. The character must be a bushi, and must be female. Characters with less than 3 Honor will not be considered.

Rank 1: The Fury of Matsu

The samurai-ko gains a bonus to her Attack and Damage rolls equal to the lowest Honor Rank in her party or squad. She may spend a Void Point on behalf of another character, instead of or in addition to any Void they are spending themselves.

Rank 2: The Crossways Cut

The samurai-ko can now strike with such amazing speed that she gains an additional attack each round.

Rank 3: Matsu's Technique

When the samurai-ko makes a Full Attack, she may forego any other bonuses she would normally gain from the Full Attack (e.g. the -10 on her opponent's TN to be hit) in order to double her damage roll's total.

Phoenix Elemental Guard

Though the Phoenix are legendary for their pacifism, they use shugenja in warfare more than any other clan. The most feared of the Phoenix combat units are the Elemental Legions, shugenja skilled in combat as well as extremely powerful in the ways of the elements. The Elemental Legions consist of the Avalanche Guard, the Firestorm Legion, the Hurricane Initiates, and the Tsunami Legion. Rumors persist of the possibility of a group of powerful Ishiken called the Void Guard, but as of yet these are unproven.

A character may only ever be a member of one of the Elemental Legions.

Requirements

Rings/Traits:

Avalanche Guard (Earth Legion): Earth 4, Void 4

Firestorm Legion (Fire Legion): Fire 4, Void 4

Hurricane Initiates (Air Legion): Air 4, Void 4

Tsunami Legion (Water Legion): Water 4, Void 4

Skills: Meditation 4, Shintao 4, Spellcraft 5, one Weapon Skill at 4

Advantages: Elemental Attunement in Legion's element, at least one memorized (innate) spell in Legion's element

Other: The character must have a Glory of at least 3 and prove his worthiness to the Elemental Masters. The character must be a shugenja.

Rank Techniques: Secrets of the Elements

Shugenja who join the Elemental Legions forsake all other magics but that of their own element, never again casting any spells from elements outside of their particular element of focus. At the first Rank, the Legionnaire may pick one spell that he has memorized from his Legion's Element with a Mastery Level no greater than 2. Once per day, the Legionnaire may cast this spell with a single action. This requires no dice rolling – it is automatic and does not count against the number of spells the Legionnaire may cast that day.

The magic of the Elemental Legions depends heavily upon the caster's own place in the Elements, and can easily be thrown out of balance by dependence upon the elements of other creatures or various other outside factors. As a result, shugenja may choose any memorized spell within the appropriate Mastery Level, with the following exceptions: no spell with a casting time measured in increments greater than actions, and no spell which requires any sort of opposed roll or variable TN for the purposes of casting.

At Rank 2, the Legionnaire may pick another spell that he may cast in this fashion. This spell must also be from the corresponding



element of his Legion and may not have a Mastery Level greater than 4.

At Rank 3, the Legionnaire may pick a third spell. This spell must be of the corresponding element and may be of any Mastery Level.

Scorpion Supai

The Scorpion Supai are the shadowy terrors of Rokugan's courts. They are both expert spies and skilled courtiers, skilled at dredging up the darkest secrets of their enemies and using them to supreme advantage. This school is very careful at keeping its existence and membership well hidden. The Empire's inability to discern who is a Supai and who is not accounts for a good portion of the school's deadliness.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Awareness 5, Intelligence 4, Perception 3

Skills: Sincerity 5, Courtier 4, Etiquette 4, Stealth 4

Advantages: *Either* Benten's Blessing or Bland (if you're going to be noticed, do it well), Crafty

Other: Characters who join the Supai may be either bushi or courtiers. However, they must have some sort of Dark Secret, and must reveal said secret to the masters of the Supai school. The Scorpions never give their gifts without demanding something in return...

Rank 1: The Depths of Dishonor

Already the Supai has learned to use his frequently dishonorable behavior to his advantage. While making an opposed social roll against an individual with a higher Honor Rank, the Supai rolls a number of additional dice equal to the difference between his Honor Rank and his opponent's.

Rank 2: Pull the String

If the Supai has at least one point of Blackmail on an individual, he may spend a Void Point and suggest a course of action to that person. So long as the action is not life-threatening, and will not bring greater dishonor than the revelation of the Blackmail, that individual must do as the Supai says or lose a number of Honor boxes equal to the Supai's School Rank.

Rank 3: Bayushi's Technique

The Supai has learned well how to wrap lies in the truth. If the Supai spends a Void Point while speaking, his lies cannot be detected by any means, including magic or School Techniques. This does not mean that the Supai will automatically be believed, but others will always think that he seems to believe what he is saying.

A word to the wise: using this technique to disguise obvious lies like "The sky is orange" will just make the Supai appear to be an idiot who truly believes things that are clearly not so.

Unicorn Magistrates

Justice and honesty are two extremely important traits among the Unicorn, and their magistrates have always been among the most dedicated in Rokugan. What with the Empire's recent downward spiral into chaos, many magistrates of the Unicorn have ridden forth into the Empire to return the land to order.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Fire 4, Water 3

Skills: Hunting 4, Investigation 4, Law 5, Any Weapon Skill at 4

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Irreproachable, Precise Memory

Other: The character must be a magistrate, and must have at least 2 Honor. Unlike most Advanced Schools, the Unicorn Magistrates will gladly train nearly anyone who meets the school's qualifications and has a strong sense of justice. The character must be a bushi.

Rank 1: Justice Amends

The Magistrate of this rank recognizes that his own needs are unimportant; sacrifices must be made for the sake of justice. He loses no Honor for any actions that are not directly illegal so long as they lead to the apprehension of a criminal. In addition, the Magistrate adds his Honor Rank to his TN to be Hit.

Rank 2: Fist of the Emperor

At this Rank, the magistrate gains a number of Free Raises equal to his School Rank on all Law and Investigation rolls. Further, if the magistrate directly questions a subject for at least ten minutes, he may make an opposed Willpower roll; if he succeeds, he learns something illegal that the subject has done. If the subject has not done anything wrong, nothing is learned – this technique does not invent facts. Also, relevancy to the matter at hand is not guaranteed. A Magistrate on the trail of a murderer may question a suspect and instead learn that he is an arsonist.

Rank 3: Shinjo's Technique

The strength of the Magistrate's purpose is now absolute. He gains an additional attack each round.



The Minor Clans

Yoritomo's Alliance

For a thousand years, the Great Clans of Rokugan have fought amongst themselves; they have torn the Empire apart. Now a leader has emerged from among the 'lesser houses'.

His name is Yoritomo.

Yoritomo, of the Clan of the Mantis, is one of the best-known warriors in the land. His style is brash, arrogant, and makes use of peasant weapons rather than the honored weapons of the samurai. He is reviled for his low birth and scorned for his aggressive nature, but he is feared for his incredible strength and agility. He is a samurai of legend.

For the past several months, Yoritomo has stood before the doors of each of the Minor Clans in turn, shouting his message. "The Great Clans have forsaken you," he cries, holding his banner aloft. "We go to remind them that they cannot use us as pawns, or as tools. Apart, we are nothing, streams in the wilderness. Together, we are the ocean's wave they cannot overcome!"

The Fox rallied swiftly to his side, weary of the Crane wars that blackened their lands. With the Kitsune came the loyalty and allegiance of other clans, joining Yoritomo in his quest to demand that the great houses of Rokugan stop their bickering and recognize the damage they have done to the Empire.

But some who join Yoritomo's banner see more. They see a brave general, capable of demanding loyalty and organizing a mighty army. They see a new Emperor in the Mantis daimyo, and the rumors of an assault on Otsan Uchi cannot be far wrong. Certainly, Yoritomo and his Alliance have greater goals than the cessation of war: they demand to be recognized for their part in the Empire, and if they must take their wages in blood, it will be for their own voice, not at the demand of the Great Clans.

This much, they all agree upon.

The Present

Yoritomo is a man who can never be content with gold and jewels, nor with personal honor. He craves one thing - the advancement of his house. The Mantis would become a Great Clan by the time the wars were ended, or they would see the empire bathed in flames.

Among his men, the great Mantis general argues about the best way to fulfill his dream. More battles would be useless; enough strife rocks the empire without adding to the chaos. Yoritomo argues that the Great Clans have ignored their duty to the empire, and fallen into pointless battles and arguments. Through their negligence, the creatures of the Shadowlands have been allowed inside the borders of Rokugan, and the Emerald Empire may soon fall. But to begin the process of restoring order to the empire, the Yoritomo Alliance must become a recognized power, with enough military and political clout to ensure that order is restored to Rokugan.

The world will change, vows Yoritomo, or he will see it crushed beneath the force of his steel.

The Tortoise

Clan Tortoise could more accurately be called a "tribe," or small community within Rokugan. Settled exclusively upon the northern White Stag Peninsula and coasts north of Otsan Uchi, they are perhaps the smallest of any clan within the Empire. No more than a thousand Tortoise have graced the idyllic shores of Rokugan at any point in history, and few marriages are arranged with their diplomats, courtiers, and merchants. Yet they persevere, generation after generation, thriving as a culture all their own.

The origins of the Tortoise are the subject of much debate among the rest of the Empire. The one certainty is that the clan was formed in the century following the Battle of the White Stag, when the gaijin assaulted the Empire from positions off-shore, and for a time occupied the very land held by the Tortoise today.

The Tortoise are predominantly landbound, but their vast array of ships trade with the northern provinces (including those of the Phoenix, whose only mountain pass to the capital is cut off three months a year due to violent weather).

They are also responsible for keeping a small number of records for the houses of the Imperial Line, thought mainly to be historical accounts and anecdotal information from peripheral sources (i.e. histories of important events, as seen from a variety of perspectives). These records are only accessible by librarians of the Tortoise themselves, and select members of the Seppun and Otomo families.



The Wasp

Rokugan was introduced to the Wasp only twenty years ago, but already their presence has altered the face of the Emerald Empire. The Wasp have become famous for two reasons. The first was their relentless tenacity and incredible ability to hunt down any fugitive from the Emperor's law. The second was their motivation to chase after and capture Rokugan's most notorious outlaws: money.

Wasp magistrates - like their daimyo, Tsuruchi - are a strange paradox. On one hand, they have made it very plain that their services are for sale to the highest bidder. However, Wasps also have an unflinching loyalty to those who hire them. But their first and primary fealty is always to their daimyo.

Wasps have no shame in accepting bounty for the criminals they capture. After all, most of the Empire sees them as scum. They know better. Their minds aren't clouded by the foolish impracticalities of bushido. The Wasp learned a great deal about money from the Crane, and they've put it to good use. Money does indeed make Rokugan go 'round, but it also repairs walls, builds fortifications and hires ronin to protect the strategically significant Kyuden Ashinagabachi from those who would seize it.

Found all across Rokugan, performing various duties for pay, the Wasp are a ubiquitous force. However, whenever their lord Tsuruchi needs them, they return to Ashinagabachi as swiftly as a Unicorn's steed.

The Sparrow

Even though the Sparrow, as a Clan, have rejected Yoritomo's call to arms, some of their number have rallied to the Mantis banner. Only those Sparrow dissatisfied with the ascetic traditions of this small clan, however, have left to join the Son of Storms. The Suzume family is unimpressed by the promises Yoritomo makes to those who will supply mercenary units, since it has from its very inception rejected the lures of wealth and glory.

Most Sparrow follow Suzume's philosophy of honorable poverty rigorously, but it isn't as if they have much choice. A life of poverty and hardship is all one can expect from life in the Suzume Hills. The inhospitable terrain has forged the men and women of the Sparrow

into a patient, determined lot. The samurai regularly labor side by side in the fields with the peasants, and a strong work ethic and feeling of brotherhood has emerged within the clan. The community within the Suzume Hills is much like a small town. Everyone seems to know everyone else and there are no secrets.

The Sparrow are a peaceful people, but a practical one. Though few would dare live upon the lands they claim, they have never sought to leave or expand their territory. They are content with what they have and believe others should behave likewise. Past experiences with bandits have taught the Sparrow to be cautious with strangers, and anyone visiting violence upon an inhabitant of the hills can expect swift and merciless retribution.

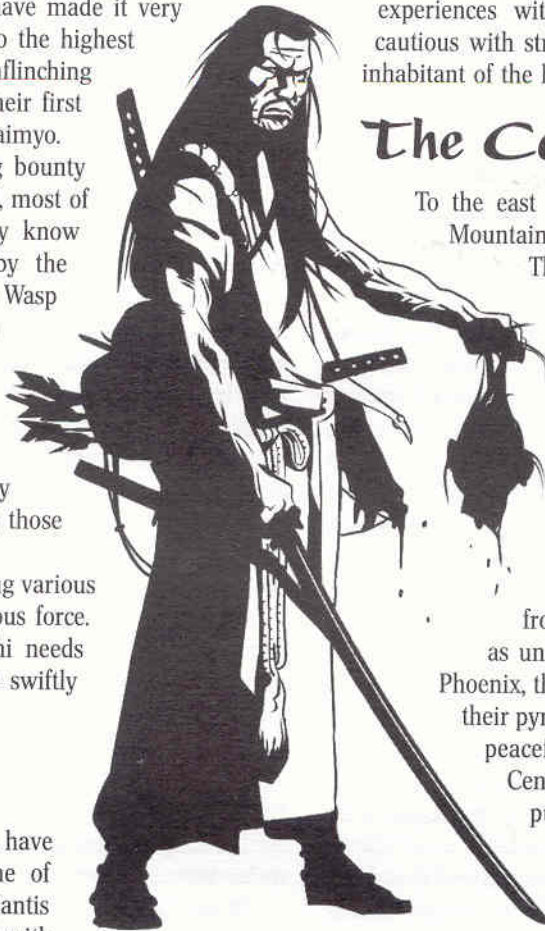
The Centipede

To the east of Tiken no Roka (Traacherous Pass) in the Mountains of Regret lies a small valley open to the sea.

The tall cliffs prevent all but the most hardy sailors from approaching, and a narrow spur off the pass is the only overland route. A small family of shugenja lives within the valley, along with the peasants under their care. They call themselves the Centipede, and for seven hundred years they have been content to keep to themselves.

Their magic and their philosophy resembles the sun, focusing on the elements of Fire and Air almost exclusively. All of it comes from Amaterasu's consciousness - her thoughts as understood by the Centipede shugenja. Like the Phoenix, the Centipede follow a pacifistic lifestyle. For all their pyrotechnic power, they avoid bloodshed and seek peaceful solutions to their problems. The few Centipede samurai leading their tiny army receive purification rituals before their gempukku ceremony, permitting them to spill blood in the course of their duties. It is with great reluctance that the Centipede concede that violence is sometimes necessary.

However, they always leave the door open to negotiation should their opponents wish it. All they truly care about is sovereignty within their small province, which is easily defended by magic and the imposing geography. Armed conflict with the remainder of Rokugan is thus exceedingly rare, dictated only by invasion of their lands, or a threat to the entire Empire. Otherwise the Centipede can maintain their peaceful lifestyle more or less unhindered.





GM Clan Material

The second edition of the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG* advances the story to the very beginning of the Clan War, two years after the Scorpion Clan Coup. The following information is timeline-specific: it is designed to give GMs a handle on playing their campaign in the wake of the Coup.

If you are not running the L5R 'modern' timeline, you may ignore some or all of the following information, or modify it to your purposes. No matter what is happening in the campaign you are running, we're fairly certain the Seven Clans still don't get along. Feel free to modify or alter the clan descriptions and events to suit your taste: after all, Rokugan is your Empire.

RPG campaigns continuing after the Scorpion Coup should present increased tension between the clans. As Hantei the 39th steps up to command his Empire, the political scene grows tense.

An inexperienced Emperor sits on the Emerald Throne. The land itself is restless. A plague has begun to creep through Rokugan, killing scores of peasants, samurai, and nobles alike. The most tragic deaths are at Otsan Uchi, where nearly all members of the Imperial Family have died from the disease. The Emperor himself lies in his bed, fighting off the sickness that even his own healers are unable to prevent. The only one who seems unaffected by the plague is his wife, Bayushi Kachiko.

Realizing that the Hantei family may be doomed, and that a new Emperor would be needed, the Six Clans begin to struggle among themselves to prove their dominance.

One day, one of them will seize the throne.

The Crab

Some believed that the death of Hantei XXXVIII would quell Hida Kisada's burning ambition – that a new young Emperor could assuage his fears that the imperial line had grown weak. Nothing could be further from the truth. Kisada watched the new Hantei

leave two of his most dangerous enemies – Akodo Toturi and Bayushi Kachiko – alive, rather than kill them and strengthen his reign. Worse, he married Kachiko, giving her ample opportunity to avenge her fallen Clan. He saw the way he looked at her in the throne room, saw the lust and naivete in his schoolboy's eyes, and knew the power she had over him. The Lady Scorpion has compromised the throne and could destroy the Empire if she wished. Kisada cannot allow that to happen.

He began preparations almost as soon as the new Hantei took the throne. He dispatched his advisor, Kuni Yori, to search for allies among the Shadowlands – bargaining with their unholy enemies. Not only did Yori secure a peace agreement, but he brought back powerful Oni and other creatures willing to serve under the Crab banner. With the forces of Fu Leng placated, Kisada could then turn his mighty war machine north and seize the Emerald Throne for himself. His son Yakamo began slowly withdrawing troops from the Kaiu Wall, no longer fearing the creatures on the other side. Now, the Wall stands abandoned, and the Crab armies await orders to march north – to the Emperor's allies in the Crane, to the empty lands of the Scorpion, to the vital Beiden Pass in the heart of the Seikitsu mountains. With luck, they can sweep the squabbling clans aside and claim the throne for their Champion. Kisada could then turn on his Shadowlands allies with the combined might of six clans behind him. The weak Hantei line would be eliminated, Fu Leng would be destroyed, and the Hida family could begin a new line of Emperors under the Great Bear.

Not every Crab is happy with this turn of events. The young Hida Sukune watches his father with unease, and many other bushi whisper that an alliance with the Shadowlands is madness. But Sukune is too loyal to disagree openly and the rest have enough faith in Kisada to leave their questions unanswered... at least for the time being.

The Crane

The Emperor has done the unthinkable: he has taken a Bayushi as his bride.

Of course, such mistakes can be rectified.

One death, and the Emperor will need a new wife.

The Daidoji and the Kakita presently have more troubling matters on their hands: namely, the Crab armies who seem prepared to invade the Kakita lands, near the family's ancestral home to the south of Beiden Pass. Although the ancient stronghold is nowhere near as resplendent as the northern Shiro sano Kakita, it holds a great deal of significance to the Crane and to their family. To see it assaulted, even destroyed, would be unthinkable.



The Daidoji continue their war against the Lion, readying troops to the south in case Kisada takes advantage of their distraction. They prepare their armies and their tricks, scouting the land for any minor changes caused by the turn of the seasons. The Asahina, secure in their libraries, decry any such maneuvers and refuse to participate – even for the defense of the clan. No command from the Doji Champion, Hoturi, has raised a single Asahina hand in battle, and the Lord of the Crane fears that to press the issue would mean seeing blood across the Asahina lands – not that of the Crab, but of protesting seppuku.

But the battle with Matsu Tsuko's Lion Clan does not go well for the Crane. In the court, Kakita Yoshi and his negotiators desperately use their hoarded favors to bring allies from the Phoenix and Unicorn, hoping that the threat of a war that will encompass the Empire will be enough to keep the Crab at bay.

The Dragon

Of all the clans of the Empire, it is perhaps the Dragon who understand most about the dangers facing the Hantei line and the Emerald Throne. All Dragon ambassadors were recalled immediately after the Scorpion Coup for the space of one year, supposedly 'to pray at Shinsei's shrine for the peace of the murdered Hantei's soul'.

When they returned to the other clans, the Dragon were much sobered. Mirumoto, Agasha and Kitsuki alike all seemed to turn their attention toward building alliances among the ronin of the land, creating a safe boundary south of the Dragonfly lands, and keeping the peace throughout the Empire. They have taken a great interest in the affairs of the Lion-Crane war, insisting that the two clans negotiate for peace wherever possible. Their efforts have prevented full-scale war for nearly two years, but even their expert intervention has worn thin under Tsuko's rising anger and frustration. The Crane lobby for time, grateful for the assistance of the Dragon, but their own covert attacks on the Lion only continue to exacerbate the situation. Already three Lion generals have died from duels over 'insults' at court, and the Matsu family grows less tolerant of courtly politics by the hour.

Meanwhile, in the mountains of the Togashi, a storm brews. Tattooed men of all description roam the Empire, searching for Toturi the Black, ronin general. The Champion of the Dragon, Togashi Yokuni, has demanded that Toturi be brought to the mountains of the Dragon.

He has no intention of explaining his purpose, and the tattooed men who serve him are equally inscrutable. When they find Toturi, no doubt they will find a way to make him comply.

The Lion

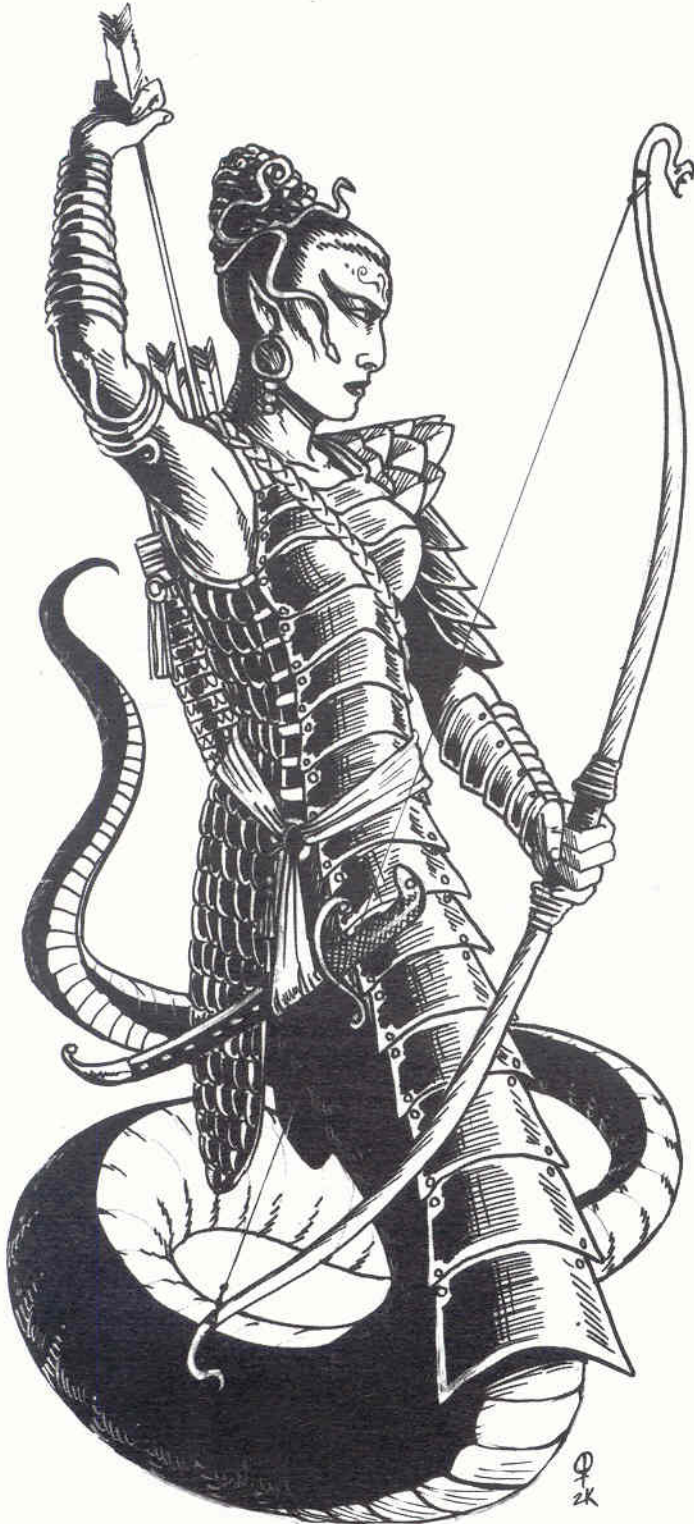
With Toturi gone, the Lion fell under the influence of their new champion, Matsu Tsuko. Brash and proud, Tsuko has stressed a dual philosophy of absolute strength in the Clan and absolute loyalty to the Emperor. She has stepped up the war with the Crane, hoping to recapture the lost Toshi Ranbo, and pledged her best troops to the defense of Otosan Uchi. Her success on the battlefield has impressed the Hantei, who has given her leave to act as she sees fit. Most moderating voices within the clan were killed, or left with Toturi, so few speak out against Tsuko's policies. The Lion have become rigid and unbending – dedicated to an absolute honor that allows neither weakness or mistake. Tsuko expects her clan to embody all that is noble and right in the Empire, but a sword can break if oversharpened and even the strongest oak must bend before the hurricane. Quiet voices in the Imperial Court suggest that the Lady of Lions is pushing her clan too far.

There are still a few voices of calm within the clan. The last Akodo, Kage, speaks of reconciliation and does his best to guide the new Champion along a less extremist path. Tsuko refuses to listen to him, but others respect his wisdom and listen to his words. Among them is Toturi's old protégé, Ikoma Tsanuri; with her master gone, she has turned to Kage for advice, and the old man has used her as a bridge to the implacable Matsu family. Whether their words will be enough to divert Tsuko from her present course, only time will tell.

The Phoenix

With the possible exception of the Dragon, the Phoenix are the only clan that realizes the true danger threatening Rokugan. The Elemental Masters speak of ancient prophecies and a dark lord ascendant. Yet they do not know how to stop the rising tide and cannot convince the other clans to heed their warnings.

In the years since the Coup, the Phoenix have continued as they always have, seeking peace among the great clans and working to resolve differences within the Empire. But their efforts took on a greater urgency as the Lion-Crane war continued unabated and a strange wasting disease swept through the land. There was an air of desperation in their diplomacy, as if the clans' continued squabbling threatened more than just the peace. When not mediating disputes, they retreated into their lands, becoming even more isolationist than before. The Isawa shugenja cloistered themselves for weeks at a time, refusing to disclose the nature of their meetings. The Master of Earth continued to make dangerous excursions into the Shadowlands, searching for any knowledge that might help his clan against the nebulous danger they faced. The Master of Void, Isawa



Ujina, disappeared completely and no one would confirm what had become of him. When pressed about these goings-on, they responded only with stony silence, and with admonitions to set petty disagreements aside “before it’s too late.”

With the Isawa retreating into isolation and desperate diplomacy, it has fallen to the Shiba family to keep up appearances. Led by Shiba Ujimitsu, with the help of “Little Turtle” Shiba Tsukune, the Phoenix bushi have stepped up their involvement in outside affairs. Units of Shiba bushi can now be found in all areas of the Empire, helping settle disputes and lending their strength to righteous causes. A few Asako and Isawa shugenja have joined them, using their powers for the common good rather than remaining in seclusion. What they hope to accomplish is uncertain, but their presence has brought some small amount of comfort to the troubled Empire.

The Unicorn

Rokugan’s perennial outsiders were not overly affected by the Scorpion Clan Coup, and have remained essentially unchanged in the years since. Their swift reaction to the Coup and instrumental role in thwarting it earned them a newfound respect, which they used to consolidate their holdings and raise their standing among the other clans. They are the only clan not currently embroiled in a crisis of some sort, and the only one with the strength and flexibility to handle anything that the future might hold. In a darkening Empire, they are one of the few remaining points of light.

As a result, they have found themselves in a curious position: defenders of the Emperor’s justice. With the Lion and the Crane embroiled in war and Otosan Uchi infected by the plague, the Unicorn are the only ones capable of upholding the law. They have embraced this role reluctantly to be sure; few acknowledge it and fewer still wish to serve such a purpose. But fate seems adamant about their purpose. Refugees have begun appearing in the Unicorn lands (the only ones untouched by war so far), and with no enemies in the other clans, the Otaku Battle Maidens have turned upon thieves and bandits to practice their martial skills. They have found themselves revered by the heimin and other lower classes, who see the Unicorn as their only saviors. A few clan members have pressed for closer ties with the other clans – cementing an alliance with the Lion, or perhaps the Crab – which would reap substantial benefits without threatening their newfound strength. But until Ide Tadaji can produce something, they must content themselves with the quiet purpose destiny has provided them.



The Mantis and the Minor Clans

The Mantis were months ahead of the rest of the Empire when it came to news of the Crab Clan's new allies. Mantis scouts, cast ashore in the Shadowlands on one of their scouting trips along the coast south of the Empire, witnessed Kuni Yori, the daimyo of the Kuni, making an alliance with the Oni of the deepest south.

The Mantis, of course, couldn't accuse the Crab (the Crab have higher glory, and they could easily crush the Mantis), so Yoritomo began to build up his own armies in preparation for the Crab – no matter what they do.

The Mantis are building walls, constructing boats, and angling for alliances with the more powerful Minor Clans. Still, all is being kept very quiet, in case the Crab or the other Great Clans notice the increase in Mantis military strength and raise questions.

The Naga

Deep in the forests of the Shinomen, the slow rise of the Naga continues. Awakening from their fugue, the Naga arm themselves against the enemy they know to exist: the Foul, both shadow and undead. They scent its passage in the land – from the thick vapors of the south to the hidden secrets in northern lands, they sense the rise of a great power, uncontrolled by the Bright Eye and the Pale.

The Constrictor priests have fully awakened, and they bear a single message from Atman's great Eye: destroy this evil, before the land is made to suffer.

The only difficulty which the Naga have in fulfilling the Atman's akashic commands rests among the gibbering apes that live across the wide plateaus outside the Shinomen forest. Their attempts to speak with the *huu-mans* have been met with violence and aggressiveness, and even the peaceful Greensnakes grow weary of careful politics. The Cobra ready their greatest spells, turning their cities into havens and desperately seeking methods to encourage eggs to grow.

Soon, the time will come when the Asp armies fully awaken, and the Naga roll across the fields beneath the group mind of the Akasha, twisting the humans beneath their tails.

If the *huu-mans* will not listen to the Akasha's warnings of their own accord, then their minds will be opened by force and by war.

The Scorpion

If you are following the official timeline, by now the Scorpion Clan Coup has struck Rokugan, the Great Houses of the Empire

have allied against the treacherous Bayushi, and all eyes are turned to watch an ailing boy-Emperor on the Emerald Throne. The Bayushi lands are burned, the Yogo flee their homes, and the Shosuro fade into shadow, muttering of secrets and revenge.

So where are the Scorpion now?

Known as the Clan of Secrets, the Scorpion have always wielded a dark and sinister power. It was Shosuro who returned alone from the Shadowlands after the first battle against Fu Leng, and the Scorpion Clan which safeguarded the Black Scrolls that imprisoned the Dark Lord. It was the Scorpion Clan who founded the legendary ninja. And while the Lion and Crane have always been the right and left hands of the Emperor, a Scorpion has always been behind him, silent and waiting in the shadows.

Their ability to discover anyone's darkest secret seems almost supernatural, and many times the daimyos of the other clans have wished to see the Scorpion fall.

Perhaps they have all finally received their wish.

After the Coup

Their clan broken, the survivors scattered to the winds, the Scorpion Clan hid from the forces of the Empire and waited for a chance at vengeance. Their mistress, Lady Kachiko, remained at the Imperial Palace, a heartbeat away from the hated Hantei. Through secret communiqués and hidden messages, she contacted her clanmates and began preparing for revenge. The Scorpion stockpiled weapons in different locations and reestablished a secret stronghold in the ruins of Bayushi Palace. When the plague began to spread across the land, Kachiko moved to isolate the Imperial family, poisoning the young Hantei and passing his illness off as a case of the disease which had blanketed Otosan Uchi. Slowly, the Scorpion have emerged from their exile, stirring the simmering tensions between the clans in hopes of sparking a full-blown war.

Today most Scorpion still keep a low profile, hiding their names and pretending to be ronin or members of other clans. They are dedicated to avenging their broken clan and will do whatever their mistress commands in order to fulfill her treacherous schemes. Loyalty no longer exists for the Scorpion, for there is no one left to be loyal to. All that matters is bringing the Empire which destroyed them to its knees.

After the Scorpion Clan Coup, most Scorpions were forced into hiding, silently serving their lady Kachiko. The Scorpion no longer seek to rule the Empire, but to slay the Emperor – to gain vengeance on those who destroyed their clan. The Crane are the instrument of the Emperor's vengeance – not to exterminate the Scorpion, but rather to make them ronin, their names lost, their heritage forgotten.



Normal Creatures

This section shortly details the ecology, habitat, and stats for Rokugan's natural creatures.

Note: Common animals do not have Void.

Ape

Earth: 2
Stamina: 3
Water: 2
Strength: 3
Fire: 2
Air: 1
Reflexes: 3
Rolls When Attacking: 4k2
Rolls for Damage: 4k2
TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds Per Level: 8: +5, 12: +10, 16: +15, 20: +20, 32: Dead

Apes (commonly, gorillas) are the largest primates in Rokugan, with males standing six feet tall, having an arm spread of eight feet and weighing 400 or more pounds. Females are usually about half that size. Apes forage during the day in densely vegetated hillsides, and live in troops of 10 to 20 with one dominant male. If two troops meet, each male may hoot and beat his chest, a sign that they wish to avoid a fight. If the confrontation persists, each may charge and roar, but attacks are seldom. Females usually produce one offspring every four years.

Badger

Earth: 2
Water: 2
Fire: 1
Agility: 2

Air: 1
Reflexes: 2
Rolls When Attacking: 3k2
Rolls for Damage: 3k2
TN to be Hit: 10
Wounds Per Level: 16*: +5, 32: Dead

* This modifier represents a badger that has become hurt and panicked, madly turning on its attackers.

Common badgers are forest animals, preferring to live their lives hunting grubs and roots beneath ancient trees. They are omnivorous, and eat small mice and other rodents. When angered, the badger tends to threaten its opponent until it can escape.

Bear (Higuma)

Earth: 4
Water: 2
Strength: 6
Fire: 1
Agility: 3
Air: 2
Rolls When Attacking: 4k3
Rolls For Damage: 6k2
Bite 4k3
TN to be Hit: 20
Wounds Per Level: 35: +1 die*; 60: Dead
Carapace†: 4

Skills: A black bear has Mountaineering at 3. Both types of bear have Hunting at 3 for the purposes of tracking a scent.

* Roll, but do not keep, an extra die. This modifier represents a severely wounded bear that has become frenzied, mauling its assailant.

†See page 139 for Carapace rules.

Bears are omnivorous, and most subsist on fish, small game, fruits, and nuts. All bears are very territorial and will defend their homes violently, pursuing trespassers a hundred yards or more in order to drive them off. Besides females with one or two cubs, all bears are solitary by nature.

Most bears are lazy and rarely resort to violence, though some have been known to acquire a taste for human flesh. Those that do attack groups of men in hopes of an easy meal. Just remember that bears cannot run downhill.

When attacking, bears rear up and strike with both paws. A bear has the strength to knock a samurai 12 feet or more. A bear may only attack one opponent each round, but if both paws successfully strike, the defender is instead held fast and crushed in a hug. A hug delivers 3k2 Wounds each round until the samurai wins a contested



Strength roll, the bear is killed, the samurai dies, or the bear releases the hug.

Black bears are more common. They are found anywhere in the wilderness and have been known to climb trees after trespassers. The brown bear is the Rokugani cave bear, and is found in more remote portions of the land. They do not climb trees; they knock them down.

The most common bear stands under 6 feet in height and weighs around 500 lbs. Larger specimens are known to exist, the Traits of which are higher.

Boar (Heichi)

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Strength: 3

Fire: 1

Agility: 2

Air: 1

Reflexes: 2

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2

Rolls For Damage: 3k3

Charging 5k3

TN to be Hit: 10 / 5

Wounds Per Level: 18: +5;

36: Dead

Boars, or wild pigs as they are sometimes known, are highly aggressive and omnivorous. Fiercely territorial, boars are easily capable of disemboweling even the most heavily armored bushi with tusks over 7 inches in length. The mouth of a boar is lined with widely-spaced, sharp teeth perfect for rending and tearing meat from bones.

Boars travel in herds of 1-3 adults, and usually twice that number in young, which are non-combative. Boars attack with their tusks, attempting to overrun and impale their targets.



When they charge, they roll two additional Damage dice, but the TN to hit them is 5.

Constrictor Snakes

Earth: 1-4 *

Water: 1-4 *

Fire: 1-3 *

Air: 1-2 *

Rolls When Attacking: 2k2 (5k3 in water)

Rolls For Damage: 1k1

Constriction 3k2[†]

TN to be Hit: 5 (20 in water)

Wounds Per Level: 20-40 *: Dead

Skills: Hunting 2-4 (+1 in water)

* Constrictor stats vary by size.

Shorter snakes (10') have the lowest stats. Larger ones (30') have the medium-level stats. 50' constrictors have all the stats at their listed maximum.

[†] Each loop adds an additional die to the Strength of the hold (and Damage), to a maximum of 6k2.

Constrictors, the largest snakes in Rokugan, live in jungles and forests where their massive bulk can fall from a tree onto their unaware opponent. They are very rare, found mostly in Crab and Shadowlands regions. Their coils are strong enough to crush a man's arm easily, and their poison (if any) is designed to cause paralyzation. A full-grown constrictor snake is capable of eating an entire dog, or a small child, without difficulty.

Sometimes a constrictor attacks with a bite to establish a hold. On succeeding rounds, coils loop about the prey to restrict movement and slowly squeeze the air out of the captive's lungs. Each round following a successful bite, the snake may attempt to circle an additional coil about the target. The largest constrictors can loop a target with up to 3 coils at a time.



Dog (Inu)

Earth: 2

Water: 1

Perception: 3

Fire: 1

Agility: 3

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 3k3

Rolls For Damage: 1k1

Bite 3k1

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds Per Level: 10: +10*; 30: Dead

Skills: Hunting 3

* Wounded dogs will attempt to flee a fight.

Dogs are commonly found in villages and small cities throughout the Emerald Empire as pets, guardians, and in some cases, strays. All are carnivorous by nature but easy to domesticate when taken young. Once domesticated, they are loyal to their masters.

The war dog is bred for battle, and gifted with greater size and ferocity. Few dogs are bred for this purpose, but those that are can pull three times their weight, and attack with the strength of a single fighting man.

Eagle

Earth: 2

Water: 3

Fire: 2

Agility: 3

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 5k3

Rolls for Damage: 5k2

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds Per Level: 12: +5, 24*: +10, 36: Dead

* At this point, the eagle can no longer fly, and its TN to be Hit drops to 5.

Eagles are the largest raptors in Rokugan, measuring as long as seven feet from wingtip to wingtip. Their coloration is brown and gold, with occasional patches of white or black. Eagles mate for life, and a paired couple may have as many as three young in one nest.



Falcon (Toritaka)

Earth: 1
 Water: 1
 Fire: 1
 Agility: 4
 Air: 1
 Reflexes: 5
Rolls When Attacking: 5k4
Rolls For Damage: 5k2*
TN to be Hit: 25
Wounds Per Level: 5[†]: +5; 10: Dead

* Samurai successfully attacked by a falcon lose an eye if the damage exceeds 6 Wounds. Samurai who lose an eye must roll a Willpower check against the Wounds inflicted to see if they can act in the following round. This roll is made each round until they succeed.

† At this point, the falcon can no longer fly.

Hawk

Earth: 2
 Water: 1
 Fire: 1
 Agility: 3
 Air: 1
 Reflexes: 4
Rolls When Attacking: 4k3
Rolls for Damage: 4k1*
TN to be Hit: 20
Wounds Per Level: 10[†]: +5, 20: Dead

* Samurai successfully attacked by a hawk lose an eye if the damage exceeds 10 Wounds. Samurai who lose an eye must roll a Willpower check against the Wounds inflicted to see if they can act in the following round. This roll is made each round until the samurai succeeds.

† At this point, the hawk can no longer fly, and its TN to be Hit drops to 5.

Trained falcons, hawks, and kestrels are used for both recreational hunting and warfare. Although willful and unpredictable, these birds of prey can be trained to strike at a foe's eyes.

For the protection of the bird and the handler, these birds must be hooded at all times until needed. Birds of prey are inherently fearful of enclosed spaces and are exclusively diurnal.

Fox (Kitsune)

Earth: 1
 Water: 1
 Perception: 3
 Fire: 1
 Air: 1
 Reflexes: 5
Rolls When Attacking: N/A
Rolls for Damage: N/A
TN to be Hit: 25
Wounds Per Level: 6: +5, 12: +10, 18: Dead

Foxes always flee when attacked, and receive +15 to all rolls to evade trackers.

The common red-tailed fox is a frequent sight in Rokugan's hills and forests. Living on a steady diet of rodents and other small creatures, foxes frequent the Kitsune lands in particular, hiding amid the lush forests of Kitsune Mori and living among the magical Kitsune spirits of that place. Foxes are swift creatures - faster than horses - and use their speed and cunning to keep themselves safe. It is illegal to kill a fox within Kitsune Mori, and considered extremely bad luck to kill one elsewhere.

Insect Swarm

Earth: N/A
 Water: N/A
 Fire: N/A
 Air: N/A
Rolls When Attacking: N/A
Rolls for Damage: Special*
TN to be Hit: N/A[†]
Wounds Per Level: 15: Dead

* Insect swarms do not inflict damage, they merely cause irritation and distract anyone in their area, adding +5 to all TNs.

† Insect swarms only take damage from area effect spells and similar methods of attack. Smoking torches can also be used to drive a swarm away.

Many common insects such as mosquitoes, flies, and stinging gnats can be found throughout Rokugan, and are considered general pests. Nevertheless, in the hot, sticky summers of the Crane coast, such insects can become almost a plague, driving nobility and peasantry alike indoors, away from the stinging bites of such creatures. In recent years, outbreaks of insects have become associated with the spread of plague and sickness, and samurai who is attacked by such creatures may wish to seek medical attention in order to prevent the spread of such diseases.



Osprey

Earth: 2
Water: 2
Fire: 1
 Agility: 3
Air: 2
 Reflexes: 4
Rolls When Attacking: 4k3
Rolls for Damage: 4k2
TN to be Hit: 20
Wounds Per Level: 15*: +5, 30: Dead

* At this point, the osprey can no longer fly, and its TN to be Hit drops to 5.

Ox / Yak

Earth: 2
 Stamina: 6
Water: 2
 Strength: 6
Fire: 1
 Agility: 2
Air: 2
Rolls When Attacking: 3k2
Rolls for Damage: Gore 6k3
TN to be Hit: 10
Wounds Per Level: 20*: -5, 40: +5, 60: Dead

* This modifier represents a yak that has become hurt and panicked, charging madly at its attackers.

The ox inhabits hilly forests and rugged terrain, and is the largest bovine in rokugan. Occasionally called 'gaur', the ox is known for its sturdy ruggedness and tenacity. A bull ox can weigh as much as 1800 pounds. By nature, it is a shy and timid animal, but because of its massive size it can effectively defend itself against most predators. Like most cattle, the ox has an acute sense of smell, while its senses of eyesight and hearing are relatively poor.

Small Game

Earth: 1
Water: 1
 Perception: 2
Fire: 1
Air: 1
 Reflexes: 5
Rolls When Attacking: N/A

Rolls for Damage: N/A

TN to be Hit: 25

Wounds Per Level: 5: +5, 10: +10, 15: Dead

Small game always flee when attacked.

'Small game' includes creatures such as raccoons, gazelle, goats, tapir, small deer or other forest creatures. These are common in the forests and plains of the Emerald Empire, and can be used for the pleasant diversion of hunting - though a samurai would certainly never eat the meat of his kills.

Stag

Earth: 2
 Stamina: 3
Water: 2
Fire: 1
 Agility: 3
Air: 1
 Reflexes: 5
Rolls When Attacking: 2k2
Rolls for Damage: Gore 4k2
TN to be Hit: 25
Wounds Per Level: 10: +5, 20: Dead

Stags and other deer are widely distributed throughout Rokugan's eastern forests and high mountain areas. Mature males generally stay apart from the main herd except during 'rut', when the animals come together in order to mate. These creatures can be found anywhere from the sea coast up to an altitude of 8,000 feet. They feed on grass, especially greener grass near water, and various wild fruits. Herds usually consist of fewer than six animals, most of which are females and young. Adult males establish territories during the mating season, where they are joined by female herds for short periods. Gestation is about seven months. The stag generally attacks with antlers and hooves, and a large rack of antlers may weigh as much as 40 pounds.

Tiger

Earth: 4
Water: 5
Fire: 2
 Agility: 4
Air: 2
 Reflexes: 4
Rolls When Attacking: 5k4
Rolls for Damage: 6k2
 Bite 5k3



TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds Per Level: 32*: +5, 64: Dead

*A wounded tiger will attempt to flee.

The Rokugani tiger, a symbol of shame and dishonor, is one of the most dangerous creatures in the wilds. It inhabits a wide variety of habitats, from rain forests, savannah, grass plains to coastal swamps. The tiger's wide stripes provide it camouflage, and both the males and females generally live alone. They guard their territory fiercely, only allowing another tiger access during the mating season. Tigers can litter up to three times a year, with two to four cubs per litter.

Vipers (Hebi)

Earth: 1

Water: 1

Perception: 3 (smell)

Fire: 1

Agility: 5

Air: 1

Reflexes: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2

Rolls For Damage: 2k2

Venom 8k8

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds Per Level: 7: +5; 17: Dead

Skills: Hunting 3

Reptiles of all kinds are found throughout the Emerald Empire. Vipers are venomous, and make up the greatest percentage of the lethal snake population in Rokugan. No statistics are provided for the many varieties of non-venomous snake that exist in Rokugan.

Serpents are normally placid, inoffensive animals more willing to flee than to fight to the death, although some species are notoriously aggressive.

There are hundreds of varieties of poisonous snakes in Rokugan, and they are much more likely to attack humans than the elusive constrictor. Venoms range in strength, and some have been known to kill before a man knows he's been bitten. GMs should assign a DR to the venom of an encountered snake, ranging from 2 to 8.

Wolf (Ookami)

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 2

Agility: 3

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 4k3

Rolls For Damage: 5k2

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds Per Level: 10: +10; 20: +15; 30: Dead

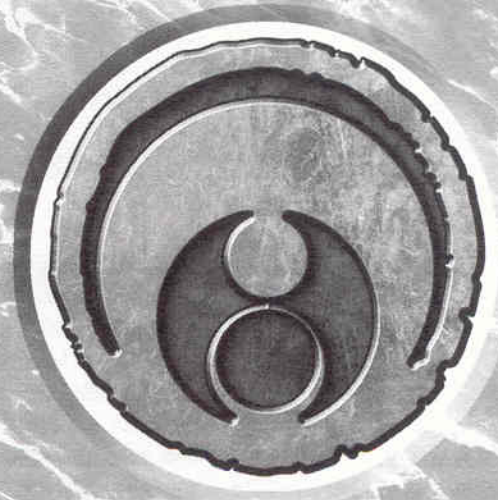
Wolves are common to the forested hills and lonely mountain peaks of Rokugan's wilderness. They roam in packs of 1-10 adults, with one to ten cubs and young. They subsist on deer, hare, and other game.

Wolves are territorial, but are shy of humans and afraid of fire. Only rarely, when hungry and desperate, do wolves attack humans for food. In the cold months, wolves subsist on mice and smaller creatures that burrow out of the snow.

The most common tactic wolves employ against larger prey is harrying. A pack of wolves surround and pursue their prey, nipping at its heels until it succumbs to fatigue. Death comes quickly, as the rest of the pack falls upon the downed prey.



Chapter Three: Without



"A Restless Dawn"

Hida Kisada, Champion of the Crab Clan, stood by the window looking out over the Twilight Mountains, over the grey wastes that were the Shadowlands. They seemed almost peaceful, a low mist hovering around the mountains' edge, shielding the twisted land from the growing dawn. Beneath the fog, undead roamed and oni clawed their way to freedom over the snow-laden cliffs. But with the shroud of mist, it seemed almost peaceful; content to hide beneath the surface of the clouds until the dawn came. Or, perhaps, seeking peace and shelter from the sun's bright rays.

Kisada grunted scornfully. They should be afraid.

These were the lands of the Crab.

To the north, the ronin at Beiden Pass held their ground against him. The Crane, weak and defeated, still fought a losing battle - but a battle that cost the Crab dearly in time and energy. Rations were low and the men were disheartened, confused by the creatures that fought in their midst. If the Crane lines did not collapse soon, the Crab could starve. Winter was coming, and the Hida legions must struggle to survive.

"My lord?" Yakamo's voice, his eldest son. In the shadow of the doorway, the Hida heir knelt, touching his knuckles to the floor in obeisance. "Father, may I speak?"

Kisada reached for the tremendous *ono* axe that he kept in his room, holding the sharpening stone in one hand. "Enter."

"It is as you feared. Three legions have little to no rations, and the balance of men have only their personal stores. To the north, they have seized some of the Scorpion lands, but our army in the south is starving." Yakamo kept his brown head lowered, not looking up at the mammoth giant that was his father.

Drawing the stone across the blade of the terrible axe, Kisada pondered. "Your thoughts?"

"The Crane, my Lord. The Asahina. We must attack them, take their stores, and feed our men."

"Our battle is to the north, not the south, Yakamo-san."

"It is time to change that, great one."

Kisada's stone sang as it slid across the steel blade. The champion did not look up from his work, honing the perfect arch of the axe to a glistening line. "The Asahina are peaceful. Our war is with the Daidoji, the Doji. Not their librarians."

Yakamo looked down at the floor, unmoving. "Our men starve." He said it flatly, the words leaving his tongue with distaste.

"And so you feel we have no choice?"

"The Crane are fools, to have left their provinces open. They are filled with supplies and villages, ready to be seized. If we do not, we waste a chance to save the lives of our men. We have already failed them once - let us not..." The black look in his father's eyes stopped him before he could continue. Stumbling over his words, he finished, "The Crane have insulted us. They have joined with the Unicorn and that ronin at Beiden Pass. It is only right that their weakness become our strength."

"So. You think the Crane are weak?"

Yakamo stared into his father's eyes, listening to the ring of the sharpening stone. "Yes, father. I do."



The sharpening stone paused, hovering in silence. Then, Kisada began to laugh. His laughter was rich, but bitter, filled with age and mocking sarcasm. "Have I taught you nothing at all?"

Staring down once more, Yakamo felt his face redden.

"Go, boy. Take three thousand men against three hundred Asahina, and see if they are weak."

"I will. And more, I will take the contingent of Shadowlands creatures that you have set aside. The oni will destroy their land, feed on their peasants and hinin, and we will seize their supply stores. Kamu will assault the walls, and a troop of Ugulu should be enough to rout the shugenja from their temples. With the Daidoji occupied at Kyuden Kakita, goblins and Hida should be enough to do the rest."

Kisada's laughter died at his son's fierce protest, the smile fading from his face. "You seem to have become more familiar with these creatures since the days when my son protested my decision to use them against the Hantei."

"Perhaps I am learning from my father, after all."

The Champion of the Crab turned as grey as his mountains, rising from his seat and stalking toward his son with fierce strides. The shining ono in his hand, he stopped only a foot from his kneeling son. "Look at me," he said.

When Yakamo looked up, Kisada raised his hand and slammed a gauntleted fist into his son's jaw.

"You should not always do as I have done, boy," Kisada said as Yakamo lifted himself from the floor. "Some things are better left... unlearned." Yakamo glared up at his father, his eyes shifting between the gleaming axe and his father's stone features. "Go. Take whatever you need. Do with the Asahina as you wish, and when you are finished, bring their supplies to feed our men. The Hida must not starve."

"Hai, Kisada-sama," Yakamo said numbly. He lifted himself to his feet and offered Hida Kisada a low bow. "Your will shall be done, as always, Father."

"After all..." the Champion of the Crab murmured, sitting down once more to sharpen his already-perfect axe. "Winter is coming, and the war has hardly begun."



The Shadowlands

The story of Fu Leng has been told countless times, changing slightly with each retelling. Elders tell chilling stories to wide-eyed children of the monsters of the Dark Lord's Realm who will punish them if they misbehave. Sensei ignite the fire of battle in their students with descriptions of the evil foes that lurk there. There are poems and songs, woodcuts and paintings that portray dead, desolate landscapes and grotesque figures with stylized forms and traditional techniques.

These popular tales and depictions spring mostly from hearsay and legend. They are distorted, exaggerated, misinterpreted, inaccurate and twisted by the conventions of society and popular concept.

The realities of the Shadowlands are not for the faint of heart, nor weak of spirit. It may be best that the delicate nobles and superstitious peasants remain ignorant of the disturbing truth. Perhaps they should be left to their brightly-patterned pictures and carefully sculpted words, lest harsh reality crack their minds beyond repair.

But Fu Leng is a force that cannot be ignored, nor hidden behind pretty lies. Such an adversary must be exposed, studied, understood; only through knowledge and familiarity can the children of the Kami ever hope to drive him from their world.

— From the Legend of the Five Rings Player's Guide

The Taint

In Rokugan, there is perhaps no fate more terrible than contracting the Shadowlands Taint. The corrupting power of He Who Must Not Be Named inevitably twists the body, mind, and soul of the infected, and even death is not a certain cure. In a constant effort to keep the Emerald Empire free of corruption, many clans have official organizations which keep a constant vigil for those who have contracted the Taint.



The 'sixth element', symbolic of the presence of Fu Leng, is the element of corruption, and its power is great. Once a shugenja has been exposed to it – through the Shadowlands Taint or other means – he begins to manifest signs of corruption. The effects of *maho* are not as obvious or visible as the Taint of the Shadowlands, but it is no less dangerous. In their thousand years of history, the Phoenix have developed ways to identify and destroy *maho* magic and its users, for they believe that such spellcasters can never be truly turned away from the lure of the dark power. While the Kuni Witch Hunters are the masters of dealing with escaped Taint, it is the Phoenix who have gathered the greatest amount of information on *maho*. Asako or Isawa shugenja often spend years training with the Kuni, learning their methods of identifying the Taint. Then, with their own resources, these Phoenix turn that knowledge to finding *maho* within the Empire, and stamping it out with a ruthless efficiency.

Although the Rokugani believe that all things are made up of the Five Elements, there is in truth a sixth Element, created by the presence of Fu Leng. It is the Element of corruption, and its power is so great that it has dampened the presence of the other Five Elements in the Shadowlands. Fires do not burn in that place, the air is foul, the water is black and rotten and the earth is spoiled.

Many Crab shugenja, including almost the entire Kuni family line, have devoted their lives to studying the Sixth Element, but they have learned only a little. They do know that, like a disease, Corruption is contagious, carried in the blood of creatures and humans. Prolonged proximity to Corruption can cause contamination. Many Crab samurai gain what the Kuni shugenja call "the taint."

Once he has been infected, a samurai's appearance and behavior change. His skin turns pale and translucent and his hair turns greasy and thick. When confronted with violence or threats of violence, the samurai typically responds with swift, unthinking brutality. Over time, his condition worsens. Skin flakes and peels away, eyes sink deep in his skull and his breath turns putrid. His behavior becomes even more erratic, until finally, he is nothing more than a rotting, diseased, slime-drooling madman.

The two most notable groups which combat the Tainted are the *tsukai-sagasu*, or witch hunters, of the Crab Clan, and the dreaded inquisitors of the Asako – a special variety of Emerald Magistrate shugenja trained to root out the Dark One's touch. These two groups often cooperate; the *tsukai-sagasu* hunt down and capture those who bear the Taint and the inquisitors determine what course of action to take. The Imperial laws regarding the Taint are extremely strict, and considered immutable. The official degrees of Taint and their punishments are listed below.

Tainted Characters

The first time a character becomes infected with the Shadowlands Taint, he gains 1–5 Shadowlands Points (roll a die and divide by 2). There are advantages and disadvantages for being infected with the Shadowlands Taint. A character may add his Shadowlands Rank to any Strength, Agility, Stamina or Reflexes rolls, but this trick adds another Shadowlands Point to his total. Each Rank of Shadowlands Taint is made up of 10 Shadowlands Points; a character does not accumulate a full Rank until he has gained all 10 Points in that Rank.

Characters must subtract a number of dice equal to their Shadowlands Taint from any social interaction rolls.

If the Shadowlands Element ever becomes higher than a character's lowest Ring, he is overcome by the Taint and becomes a slave of Fu Leng. In short, the character becomes an NPC under the direction of the Game Master.

First Degree – Passive Infection

Mild Taint, no mental symptoms, little danger of contagion: No punishment, but monthly scheduled interview by a *tsukai-sagasu* to see if infection has become worse. The subject may not marry without informing the prospective spouse and family of the condition. Any violation of these protocols is immediately considered a "dangerous mental symptom." (See Third Degree Taint.)

Second Degree – Active Infection

Moderate Taint, possible mental systems, some danger of contagion: Subject is offered choice of seppuku, or relocation to a secluded location inhabited solely by Tainted individuals under supervision of three *tsukai-sagasu*. The Damned of the Crab are a good example of this degree. This level of punishment is rare.

Third Degree – Deadly Infection

Extreme Taint, dangerous mental symptoms, physical symptoms that leave potentially dangerous residues, large danger of contagion: Immediate execution. Subject is seen as unstable and potentially dangerous, so seppuku is not a viable option. Decapitation and incineration must follow. Note that the inquisitors consider intentional concealment of any degree of Shadowlands Taint from other individuals a "dangerous mental symptom."

Fourth Degree – Embrace of the Dark

This includes possession by oni or other demonic entities, use of one's Taint for supernatural strength or speed, the practice of *maho*, or just the worship of He Who Shall Not Be Named (even if the subject is not actually Tainted). The punishment is death,



decapitation, and incineration if the subject is a willing accomplice. If a possessed individual is an innocent, then a reasonable effort must be made to free that individual.

Harboring the Taint

Those who knowingly conceal the Taint of another, for whatever reason, are guilty of harboring the Shadowlands Taint. The inquisitor may determine fitting punishment. Depending upon the severity of the crime this can range from a fine to execution.

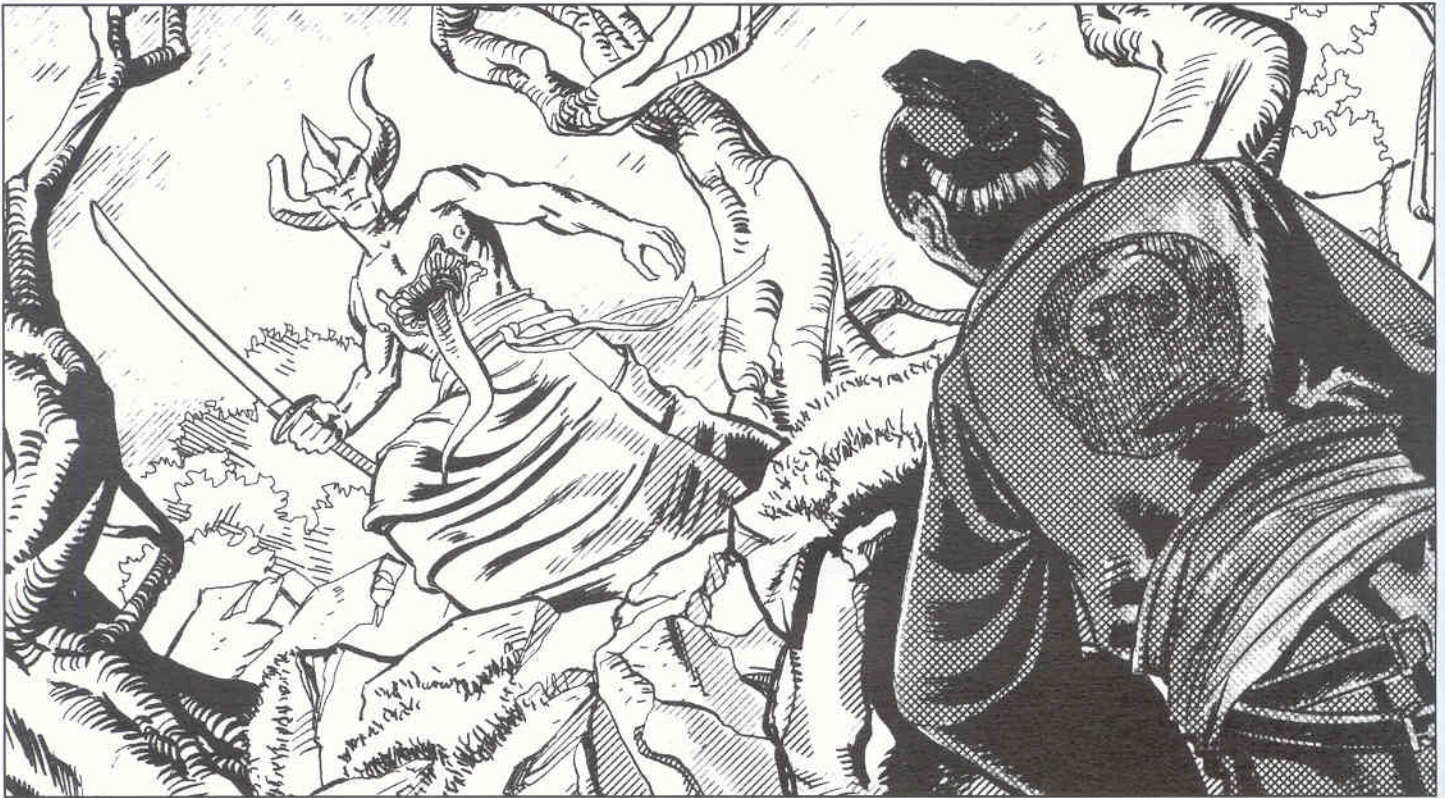
Many object to these laws, which seem to bestow unlimited power upon unscrupulous or bloodthirsty inquisitors. In an effort to keep the unthinkable from happening, the Phoenix Elemental Masters and the Emperor himself are placed beyond the jurisdiction of inquisitors. Once a year, all inquisitors must report their annual findings and performance to the Council of Masters. If they have acted rashly or unjustly at any time their charter is permanently revoked.

Occasionally, the intervention of duly authorized investigators is not an option. Matters become complex when a political figure contracts the Taint, since a courtier's natural reaction is to conceal it. Courtiers spend their entire lives accumulating favors and contacts

that cannot be easily handed off to a successor; for an important courtier to be carted off to a monastery could place the entire clan in jeopardy! Naturally, such an occurrence would also cause a great scandal if the secret were to get out.

If a courtier were found to be Tainted, even the most dedicated and sycophantic of allies would quickly turn away from him. In typical Rokugani fashion, most samurai and servants would completely ignore the individual, hoping that the problem will resolve itself on its own. Samurai avoid associating with or even touching a Tainted person the same way they would avoid touching a corpse. The Tainted person is a corpse in the eyes of most samurai, albeit a corpse whose body and mind haven't figured it out yet. Even challenges will be rare, as the fear of becoming infected by Tainted blood is very real. The two exceptions to this rule are Crabs and the Seppun Miharū (Guardsmen). Crab bushi will eagerly challenge and slay a Tainted person, and Imperial Guardsmen must legally kill any tainted person in Emperor's presence unless the Emperor personally commands them to stay their hands.

All of assumes that the individual's Taint is publicly known. Trained *tsukai-sagasu* and inquisitors are rare in most courts. They tend to cast a grim pall over the courtiers' bright world, and are usually too busy for courtly games anyway. So long as a Tainted





courtier does not have any obvious symptoms, or is adept at hiding them, he can remain undetected for years.

The most popular method for concealing the Taint is Jade Petal Tea. This rare tea suppresses symptoms and prevents the infection from worsening. However, for many the results are far more attractive than the alternative.

Jade Petal Tea is very rare, as the jade lotus only grows in a single monastery in the heart of Crab Lands. Thus, the Tainted individual requires utmost discretion in obtaining and transporting the tea. Inquisitors know that the tea only has one use, and tsukai-sagasu keep a close eye on all who purchase it. If the inquisitors track down a purchaser and his symptoms are very mild (first degree Taint), he may be let off with a warning. However, if anyone at any time asks that person whether they are Tainted, they must answer truthfully or pray to the Fortunes that the inquisitors do not hear about it.

Home-grown jade lotus blossoms are not an option. At best, the flowers wither and die. At worst, the brew is foul tasting and mildly poisonous. The Kuni and Asako have instructed the monks of the Jade Lotus to keep their secrets close, and never share their techniques of growing and harvesting the flowers. For those who cannot obtain Jade Petal Tea, discretion is the only option. Concealing the Taint can be a difficult and dangerous road, however, embarked upon only by the truly desperate.

As the Taint twists the body, hiding its effects becomes ever more difficult. Rotten or scabrous skin, missing or extra body parts, or even labored breathing can quickly bring a political career to a grisly end. Less extreme symptoms can conceivably be concealed. Powerful perfumes can cover the smell of rotting flesh. Thick robes or gloves can hide deformities. Even mutations of the face can sometimes be concealed with makeup. Though this is an odd solution, pure white or clan-color makeup is not unheard of in the court, and in fact is sometimes a fashionable affectation. Masks are an option, but can pique quite a bit of curiosity; in the post-coup political environment, any courtier wearing a mask may appear to be a Scorpion collaborator. Shugenja have the option of illusion spells to temporarily cloak their handicaps, but these can often be unreliable; kami do not appreciate being used to conceal the Dark One's power.

As opposed to the merely physical, mental symptoms are much more difficult to conceal. The eyes and ears of ones' enemies are always open to any irregularities in behavior, and a skillful courtier can pick up even the most intricate nuances of a rival's actions. Paranoia, hallucinations, inappropriate outbursts, or other oddities may not be recognized as a sign of the Taint, but they will display weakness, leading to a short and unimpressive career for a courtier. This can be deadly if an enemy courtier actually discovers the Taint.

Magic in the Shadowlands

Magic is a necessity when facing many of the foul creatures of the Shadowlands – physical strength alone is rarely effective against oni able to wield the perverted magic of Fu Leng's Realm. A group venturing into the Shadowlands without a skilled shugenja among them is foolhardy indeed. Unfortunately, even the most knowledgeable and experienced shugenja are not exempt from the disrupting power of the Fallen God. Magic is unpredictable and unreliable in the Shadowlands, and those attempting to command it must exercise extreme caution.

Any spell cast in the Shadowlands has its TN increased by 10, reflecting the corrupted spirituality of Fu Leng's realm. Those casting *maho* spells, however, may ignore this penalty – after all, they're paying an altogether different price.

Elemental Magic in the Shadowlands has an additional penalty, however. Because the elements are warped in the Shadowlands, a shugenja casting an elemental spell exposes himself to the Shadowlands Taint. If the shugenja fails to cast the spell, he gains a Shadowlands Point for every 5 points his roll fell short of the TN.

Example: A shugenja is casting a spell with a 20 TN. He rolls a 10, so his spell fails. In addition to failing to cast the spell, he gains 2 Shadowlands Points because his roll was 10 under his Target Number.

Preventions against the Taint

Jade is by far the most effective method of preventing the Taint that has been discovered, and remains a vital part of keeping the corruption at bay.

This mineral, known in legend as the Tears of Amaterasu, possesses remarkable qualities that are indispensable to anyone venturing into the Shadowlands.

Natural jade is composed of a mystical combination of elements, balanced in such a way as to achieve divine purity. Some shugenja, especially those who study at the Agasha school, have developed methods of transmuting one substance into another. These techniques have produced stone that resembles jade in almost all aspects. However, this "artificial" jade does not possess the same divine purity as the stones mined from the earth, and does not have any effect in the Shadowlands.

True jade has the ability to absorb the evil influence of the corrupted Lands, shielding the bearer from its terrible effects. As it is exposed to the Taint, the jade slowly darkens and shrinks, growing soft and warm to the touch. Once it has reached this state, it is "full",



and will not absorb any further Taint. It is always wise to carry an ample supply of jade when traveling in the Shadowlands. Wise samurai inspect their jade carefully before trusting their health and lives to it.

Getting Rid of the Shadowlands Taint

There is only one way of getting rid of the Shadowlands Taint. Those who have at least a passing knowledge of the ways of maho can perform a ritual which reduces, but never completely eliminates, the Taint. See "Maho and the Shadowlands Taint" on page 125 for more information.

Although they don't discuss it, the Crab keep several shugenja at the Kaiu Wall who have just enough knowledge to perform this ritual, to keep the troops who serve there as free from the Taint as is possible. The Crab value results, and if some of their soldiers must learn about forbidden magic so as to keep the bulk of their troops sane and mostly uncorrupted, then that is a bargain the clan is prepared to make.

Another method of holding the Taint at bay involves Jade Petal Tea; see the *Player's Guide*, page 50. This does not eliminate the Taint, and does not reduce it; but those suffering from mental or physical illness due to the Taint can be recalled to themselves and have their pain alleviated for nearly a day by a cup of the tea. The Kaiu family controls all of the plants used to make the tea; others have tried to grow the plants elsewhere, but although their tea seems to be the same as the genuine article, it does not reduce Taint symptoms at all. Perhaps the soil is wrong, or perhaps the Kaiu have a secret fertilizer or growing process.

Touch of Corruption

All creatures from the Shadowlands (goblins, ogres, oni, etc.) carry the Shadowlands Element. Characters can also acquire the Taint – for better or worse. Characters begin with a Shadowlands Rank of 0, but this Rank increases as the character acquires Shadowlands Points. Each Shadowlands Rank is made of 10 Shadowlands Points, just like Honor and Glory.

As was said above, prolonged exposure to the Element of Corruption causes the taint. For every day spent in the presence of the Element, a character must make a Simple Earth roll. The TN for the roll is 5. If the character succeeds, his Earth successfully resists the corruptive effects of the Shadowlands Taint. If he fails, he becomes Tainted (see Tainted Characters on page 117). For every additional day, the TN goes up by 5.

Example: A samurai spends a day in the Shadowlands. The GM calls for a Simple Earth roll at a TN of 5. The character makes his roll, so he escapes the corruptive effects of the Shadowlands. At the end of the second day the samurai must roll again, but this time, the TN is 10. At the end of three days, the TN increases to 15. This process continues until the samurai is clear of the corruptive element.

The Power of Jade

After a thousand years, the Kuni have found a few methods of staving off the Element of Corruption. They have discovered that samurai who carry pieces of jade with them seem to stave off the effects of the Shadowlands. Samurai who carry jade with them into the Shadowlands find the jade turns black and soft as it absorbs the corruptive elements.

A single piece of jade about the size of a man's finger is enough to protect the samurai from all corruptive effects for about a week. This means that after the week has passed, the Earth rolls start up 24 hours later at TN 5.

Multiple pieces of jade provide extended protection, but only to a point.

- One piece of jade 7 days
- Two pieces of jade 12 days
- Three pieces of jade 16 days
- Four pieces of jade 19 days
- Five pieces of jade 21 days

(All times are approximate.)

Ratlings

Among all the races indigenous to the Shadowlands, the Nezumi stand out as a singular anomaly. It is a common misconception that the Nezumi – known by the peasantry as "ratlings" – are evil minions of Fu Leng, or at the very least Tainted pests. The ironic truth, however, is that they alone may hold the secret to defeating the Taint – and perhaps one day Fu Leng.

Few would take such an assertion seriously, but the facts speak very clearly. The Nezumi fill the Shadowlands in great numbers, making their homes both within and beyond its borders, yet they have somehow resisted the corrupting effects of Fu Leng. The Empire first heard of this from Hiruma scouts, who encountered these intriguing creatures during their initial expeditions into Fu Leng's realm. Subsequent interviews, tests and multiple detection spells confirmed the Hiruma assertions: the beasts are immune to the Taint.



Even a lifetime in Fu Leng's Realm does not adversely affect them. Although shugenja have not yet discerned the exact nature of their immunity, certain hypotheses suggest themselves after examination of their physiology, survival tactics and tribal culture.

Nezumi society centers around survival, and on the cyclical pattern of their nomadic lifestyle. Their basic social unit is the tribe or pack, usually consisting of seventy to one hundred adults. Each pack is led by a chieftain, a shaman, or a group of "bosses," directing the others in completion of necessary duties. There does not seem to be any common way of choosing or maintaining leaders; they usually emerge through a combination of competence and goodwill. With the packs' small sizes and relatively unified purposes, this informal method of leadership is more than sufficient.

Most packs are self-sufficient and would rather steal what they need or live off the land than barter for it with other groups. While they maintain friendly relations with the Hiruma and can even be considered informal allies of the Crab Clan itself, they are not known for their trusting ways, and shy away from direct human contact for the most part.

Nezumi are skittish about combat and rarely engage in direct hand-to-hand fighting. This leads many humans (most vocally, the Lion Clan) to condemn them as cowardly. The Nezumi do not dispute the claim, and loudly extol the virtues of living over dying in any conceivable situation. To assume that they are poor fighters, however, can be a fatal mistake.

The Nezumi's favored combat tactics are quick and direct guerrilla techniques, and when engaged in battle, they fight with imagination and ferocity. Their most common tactic is a "strike and retreat." When a threat presents itself, the pack members scatter like leaves in the wind, with a stealth the Scorpion would envy, to confuse the enemy and make it hesitate before choosing a target. In so doing, the maximum number of Nezumi can escape to cover, ensuring that the pack as a whole survives.

From their hidden positions, they then begin a deliberate process of shadowing the threat. They follow from a safe distance, watching it and attempting to determine its intentions. During this process, they communicate with each other through an unnerving series of twittering yelps, which echo throughout the entire area disguising their proximity and numbers.

If the threat seems intent on pursuing the pack, or if it presents a danger too large to ignore, they engage it in a ruthless combination of coordination and individual bravery. One Nezumi advances, attacks the enemy quickly, and pulls back before the adversary can retaliate. While attention is focused on this first Nezumi, a second advances, strikes, and retreats, usually from the opposite direction. This pattern continues, with assaults coming faster and faster until the enemy is disposed of. With the Nezumi's

speed and knowledge of terrain, the tactic proves blindingly effective. A historian once observed the Tattered Ear pack dispose of an entire gang of ruffians in this manner, picking off the brigands one by one until the survivors were too unnerved to do anything but cower and whine.

Of course, this is not the only battle strategy used by the Nezumi. They are quite adept at thinking on their feet and can develop effective battle strategies at a moment's notice. It simply represents their most oft-used and efficient method. Those who witness them in action will never underestimate Nezumi fighting prowess again.

Making Nezumi Non-Player Characters

Legend of the Five Rings does not normally allow Nezumi to be played as PCs. However, GMs may want to flesh out their Nezumi NPCs to fill a more important role in their campaign. The simplest way to do this is to use the Nezumi statistics found on page 121; these adequately convey the difference between Nezumi and humans with a minimum of fuss and effort. Feel free to add an additional skill or two to help round out the characters.

Some GMs, however, will wish to invest more time on a particularly prominent Ratling NPC. Such characters may be created much the same way as human characters are: the Ratling's Traits and Rings begin at 2, and the character may spend 25 CPs on increasing Traits and Skills. There are other key differences between ratling and human characters, however, which must be applied when creating a Nezumi.

- The following skills are forbidden for Ratling characters:

Acting, Calligraphy, Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Horsemanship, Investigation, Law, Meditation, Shintao, Sincerity, Tea Ceremony, Theology; Commerce, Locksmith; Poison, Seduction, Torture

Furthermore, the skills Dance, Music, Painting and Poetry are limited to Nezumi works only. All ratling "arts" are simple, tribal traditions with none of the formal ritual that marks Rokugani culture. The skills are instinctive in ratlings, a matter of watching and participating rather than formal training. While performance varies from ratling to ratling (and the skills are included to reflect that variance), the dances, ballads, and songs are bizarre and alien to human sensibilities. Ratlings suffer a +15 to their TNs when attempting to impress humans with High Skills.

- All ratlings begin with the following Skills automatically: Defense, Hunting, Lore (Shadowlands), Stealth. Ratling Bushi are further granted two skill points to spend on any Bugei Skills they choose (these Bugei Skills are learned through instinct and individual teachers, not through any formal school).



- Ratlings do not gain Advantages or Disadvantages.

- Ratlings cannot join a bushi or shugenja school and do not have the special abilities that such schools convey. A ratling shaman begins with three spells, which he has learned through memorized rituals rather than spirits or scrolls. In order to learn an additional spell, a ratling shaman must find another shaman willing to teach it to him or her.

- Ratlings are hardier than humans, and do not suffer from injuries as acutely. An NPC ratling has only four Wound boxes on his or her character sheet (0, +5, +10, Dead) but each box holds a number of Wounds equal to four times his or her Earth score.

- Ratlings do not have Honor or Glory. Their tribal structure is very simple and they rarely acknowledge the status of other tribes and humanity. Treat their Honor as 0 in regards to any human dealings. It cannot be raised or lowered in any fashion. They are, however, immune to the effects of human Honor; Ratlings cannot be impressed or cowed simply because a given samurai has performed impressive deeds in the past.

- Regardless of how the character is created, one trait remains universal among all Nezumi. Ratlings are absolutely immune to the Shadowlands Taint. They cannot be corrupted by the forces of Fu Leng, and do not suffer any of the normal effects from exposure to Shadowlands terrain. They are further immune from the corruptive effects of Shadowlands spells and any "tainting" abilities of oni and Fu Leng's creatures. They are not, however, able to cast Maho spells, summon or bind oni, or participate in any other "voluntary" process that would otherwise grant them the Taint.

- To determine a ratling's starting possessions, roll two dice. The character may spend that number of points on any the following pieces of equipment:

- 1 point – a shiny object of some sort (beads, a necklace, etc.).
- 1 point – a spear or sharp stick (1k1 DR).
- 1 point – a storage pouch and belt.
- 1 point – a robe, kimono or other covering.
- 2 points – a knapsack or traveling pack.
- 3 points – a knife (1k1 DR).
- 4 points – a wakizashi or short sword (1k2 DR).
- 4 points – a helmet or scrap of armor (+3 TN to be hit for each piece).
- 8 points – a katana (2k2 DR).



"We are monsters. We are nightmares. In the land of the spiritually blind, we are cursed to see clearly."

– Isawa Akuma

Long ago, legends say, the Isawa used the darkest of magics to defend their homeland. Sorcery of blood and sweat, defined by the summoning of creatures and rituals whose specifics are best left lost to time, was practiced by the ancient inhabitants of Gisei Toshi. Only after the coming of Shiba and Isawa's oath did they learn that such magic slowly corrupted the souls and turned the mind to evil. An old text reads:

"Once an animal has the taste of human flesh, it seeks it ever after. So, too it is with the dark sorcery known as maho, whose lure of blood and power is greater than the will of a human heart. Though you try to escape it, with each beat of your heart, it returns to haunt you. Though you have left it behind, it will never leave you..."

The Phoenix shugenja have developed spells to counter the "Shadowlands sickness," but they are far from reliable. Often times, the will of the samurai is too weak to fight off the supernatural corruption turning his blood to tar. Some speculate the Crab shugenja may even encourage their samurai to gain the infection. After all, the sickness does bring supernatural strength and a berserker's courage along with the putrid countenance. And only a Crane would worry about his appearance...

The Element of Corruption

The most prominent documents about *maho* are the 'Iuchiban scrolls,' records of rituals to raise dead, lay curses and other forbidden magics. Other scrolls, including those of Iuchiban's second-in-command, Asahina Yajinden, are kept in the Phoenix vaults for safekeeping. By studying these spells and the lesser documents



taken from each *maho-tsukai* which the Phoenix have destroyed, the Isawa have gained quite a bit of information on how to perform and control maho magic.

While it is possible for an ordinary shugenja to use the power of maho only once, with each subsequent use it becomes harder and harder to resist. The magic becomes easier, and more effective. The spells take less time to cast, and are less strenuous.

Maho requires prayer to the Dark God, whether or not the caster is aware of where his energy is being sent. Each word of petition, each stick of incense serves only to awaken and further the power of Fu Leng, and bring about his eventual release. Thus, the Isawa are firmly dedicated stamping out the use of maho. After destroying a *maho-tsukai*, the Isawa collect anything the sorcerer had studied for defense against the next *maho-tsukai*. Although some say the horrors of the First War can never happen again, that does not stop the Isawa from collecting the information. Just in case.

The two *maho-tsukai* best known to the Phoenix are Iuchiban, the ancient Blood Sorcerer himself, and Isawa Akuma, who dedicated his studies to summoning and controlling great Oni. Although the Phoenix deny it, it is whispered that their libraries hold the diary of Iuchiban's first experiments, as well as several copies of his tainted scrolls and magics.

Akuma was a Phoenix shugenja who attempted to further the clan's knowledge by creating his own spells for entrapment and control of powerful Oni. His fate is well-known throughout the Empire, as is the terror which bears his name.

The Dark Way

Young Isawa Tanayama crept quietly along the polished hallways of the Isawa Shugenja School. It was the Hour of the Rat, and everyone was asleep. The air was cool and silent. Tanayama cupped his hand around his candle flame, lest he be discovered. Up ahead was the school's library.

The dreams started not long after he found what appeared to be a hidden panel high up on a shelf. In them, voices whispered of power and respect. The thought of circumventing years of backbreaking study and arduous work appealed to him.

Oh, at first Tanayama did his best to ignore the dreams, but they grew ever more insistent. Perhaps if he simply looked at the secret cubbyhole, curiosity would be assuaged and he could get a decent night's sleep.

Stopping at the corner, he peered around to make sure he was alone. He was. Who would need to protect scrolls from their own shugenja? It was a lapse in security of which Tanayama would take advantage. On the balls of his bare feet, he quickly padded down to the library door.

When he opened it, his heart sank. There, seated at a table lit by a single flickering lamp, sat Master Iku. Fearing a sound thrashing in the morning, he fumbled with an excuse.

But the old man interrupted him. "Come in, boy. I've been expecting you," he rasped. It was then that Tanayama noticed the open panel, the aged parchment on the table. "Now you will learn about true power."

Those who practice *maho* serve Fu Leng. They may believe that they bend the power of the Shadowlands to their own will, but in the end they are mistaken. Shugenja who practice maho are selfish and greedy. They have no concern for duty, honor, lord or family. By using the Element of Corruption, they seek an easy route to power. For them, the ends justify the means, and usually the ends are their own self-aggrandizement. Or they believe they are simply taking a short cut – they don't plan to travel the Dark Way for long, just this once – but they end up as Fu Leng's creature.

After the war between darkness and light, between Shinsei and his Seven Thunders and Fu Leng, many believed the threat from the Shadowlands was over. The Black Scrolls were safely hidden by the Scorpion Clan. No one would dare use maho after so noble a battle.

Yet three shugenja did just that. Nakanu, Yajinden and Iuchiban each sought out Fu Leng for their own aims. They are said to have





The most prominent document, known as the “Iuchiban scrolls,” fully details the rituals involved in raising the dead, laying curses, summoning oni and other forbidden magics. The other two documents, the Nakanu and Yajinden scrolls, are less detailed and less reliable.

Game-Mastering a Maho-Tsukai

Those who practice black magic are called *maho-tsukai*, or “servant of magic.” They practice a variety of techniques such as raising the dead, calling down curses, divination and enchantments, and summoning Oni. It’s a common misconception that sorcerers do what they do simply because they’re mad. That robs maho-tsukai of their subtle nuances and makes them paper tigers. Tsukai have their own motives, which most Rokugani don’t understand.

In a world where duty to one’s lord and family is the highest calling, the maho-tsukai puts himself first. These people want something – be it power, fortune, fame – and take the easy path to get it. While everyone else adheres to the Celestial Order, maho-tsukai believe they are somehow superior to the will of heaven. Those who claim a higher cause, such as ‘strengthening the Empire through conflict,’ really only want power over others. Ironically, no matter how much power they desire, they wind up serving Fu Leng.

Some tsukai become interested in maho for scholarly reasons. They seek to understand the Shadowlands or the Oni. They convince themselves that what they do is for the greater good. Some foolishly believe they can control the Element of Corruption. These hapless souls tend to live only a short time after they succumb to the subtle manipulation of maho, as they are slowly controlled by the very element they seek to master. Others are merely curious. A few even serve Fu Leng faithfully, working to further his ends. These craven individuals hope to improve their position, believing Fu Leng will lift them up over their betters. Almost all maho-tsukai believe they’re the ones in charge, when really Fu Leng is. These tsukai, ultimately, are puppets on a stick.

Most maho-tsukai try to hide their activities. Some live in seclusion, far from prying eyes. Others hide in plain sight, serving as Fu Leng’s spies. They appear as normal shugenja for as long as they can, serving their clans. In a society where everyone wears a mask all the time, they cannot keep up the pretense for long. Eventually, because of their haggard appearance or a misplaced word, their mask slips.

Not all a sorcerer’s allies are supernatural. Weak, cowardly individuals are drawn to tsukai like moths to a dark flame. A tsukai who manages to survive for long eventually attracts attention from

awakened Fu Leng’s spirit in Jigoku, and made pacts with him for power. Fu Leng had his own agenda, though, for all who call upon evil end up his pawn. Little is known about Nakanu and Yajinden. The first is credited with raising the dead, and the second followed Iuchiban, teaching him the *tsangusuri* lore of the Asahina and creating the fabled Bloodswords.

But the greatest expression of the sorcerer’s art came in Iuchiban. Many hundreds of years ago, he was the most prominent shugenja in all Rokugan, and some say a trusted advisor to the Emperor himself. It was a Unicorn shugenja and a Lion samurai (both magistrates of the Emerald Champion) who discovered the shugenja’s researches in maho, and together they were only barely able to thwart Iuchiban’s plans to assassinate the Emperor.

Discovered, Iuchiban fled Otosan Uchi. Soon thereafter, an army of undead moved out of the Twilight Mountains, Iuchiban at its head. Armies of samurai from each of the Seven Clans, led by the Emerald Champion, rode against Iuchiban and his cult of Blood Speakers. After a mighty battle that lasted seven days, they defeated Iuchiban. Or so they thought, for his evil did not end.

The shugenja was put to death, but even that did not end his evil, as his spirit was restless and refused to move into Yomi. Eventually, Iuchiban was bound in jade and entombed deep in Shinomen forest. His tomb is guarded by traps both supernatural and mundane (the tomb was constructed by Crab engineers and Scorpion and Phoenix shugenja), and despite the fact that it has remained undisturbed for three hundred years, even mention of the sorcerer’s name is enough to give even the boldest samurai the shivers.

The Forbidden Scrolls

Only three documents record the forbidden formulae of maho. Many industrious shugenja have attempted to make copies of these documents, but despite the best efforts of the Phoenix Clan, all attempts have been unsuccessful.



others like him – brigands, thieves, and the like. Most believe the Celestial Order somehow cheated them. Truly powerful tsukai sit like spiders in the center of a web of agents and allies. Those who confront them should be exceedingly cautious.

Maho Mechanics

First of all, remember that maho should be strictly an NPC-only sort of activity; it's extremely unheroic to go around cutting people open to power spells graciously granted by Fu Leng. Maho-users, however, make wonderfully straightforward enemies for the PCs, with none of the inconvenient moral gray areas sometimes encountered in Clan vs. Clan storylines.

Learning a maho spell is very difficult for most shugenja. Shugenja who are not maho-tsukai who attempt to learn a maho spell are considered to be learning from a scroll written by "someone with a completely alien mindset," and must therefore roll their Spell Research keeping dice equal to their Earth Ring, with a TN equal to the spell's Mastery Level x20. (See page 203 of the Player's Guide for more on learning spells.)

Luckily (or unluckily, if one is not a maho-tsukai) it is very easy for an NPC to immerse himself in the Element of Corruption and gain the insight he needs to learn these spells easily.

Anyone seeking knowledge of maho needs only call upon the spirits of the Shadowlands with the spell Summon. Once summoned the spirits gladly show anyone – the caster, his friends, anyone interested in learning – how to immerse themselves in the ways of the Shadowlands.

Being immersed in the Shadowlands normally requires blood rituals, opening the gates of the soul to the darkness, and at least one ritual murder. Once an NPC has spent a week or so under the tutelage of the Shadowlands spirits, he can learn any maho spell as if its scroll were written by someone he knows well (i.e. his Spell Research/Earth roll has a TN of the spell's Mastery Level). He also gains a point of temporary Shadowlands Taint.

NPCs who find that they are having difficulty locating scrolls containing maho spells need not fret. The same spirits of death and destruction which taught them to immerse themselves in the ways of the Shadowlands will cheerfully supply them with any Rank 1 maho spells they ask for. Higher-ranked spells are also available to those who perform "Favors" for them.

Who can learn maho?

Absolutely anyone can learn Maho spells (those who can't read can request the spirits to dictate, albeit for a price), but not anyone can actually cast Maho. Almost everyone is born with the innate ability to use magic, but many people allow this gift of the Fortunes

to atrophy. Anyone who has not properly exercised this gift by the time they reach puberty loses the potential to cast spells. For this reason, maho can only be used by shugenja, by peasants who grew up using folk magic, and others who are versed in the ways of magic. Bushi, who have spent their lives learning the art of the sword, cannot cast maho without assistance.

Casting a Maho Spell

Casting a maho spell is similar to casting a normal spell with the following exceptions.

A maho-tsukai must spill the blood of an intelligent being on the earth to cast maho spells. He must do a number of Wounds to the victim equal to twice the spell's Mastery Level.

When he rolls to cast the spell, he gains a number of Shadowlands Points equal to the difference between the TN and the number rolled, whether or not the casting was successful. This can be minimized by carefully choosing which dice to keep, but practitioners of maho always walk the razor's edge.

A maho-tsukai does not cross off any spell slots when he casts a maho spell. The energy required to cast the spell probably did not come from the caster; whether or not it did, the lost energy is represented in the form of Wound Levels, either to a victim or to the caster himself.

Maho and the Shadowlands Taint

Every time a character casts a Maho spell he risks gaining one or more Shadowlands Points. If a character ever has 10 or more Shadowlands Points, his Shadowlands Taint permanently goes up by one rank and his Shadowlands Points are reduced to zero.

Any shugenja who has at least Lore (Maho) 1 can perform a simple ritual which removes one Shadowlands Point. If the ritual is done regularly (at least once a week) it eliminates one Shadowlands Point per month. Shadowlands Ranks cannot be removed except by powerful magic. Once a character becomes tainted by maho, its stain will always be on his soul. This ritual will never remove a character's last Shadowlands Point.

If a character has a Shadowlands Rank equal to or higher than any one of his traits, he has surrendered to the effects of the Shadowlands in one way or another. The effects of having a higher Shadowlands Rank than a Ring Rank is devastating to a character and normally results in Fu Leng taking active control of the character. The actual effects of having a Shadowlands Rank higher than a Ring is up to the GM but some examples include going insane if the Taint exceeds Intelligence, becoming a mindless undead creature if the Taint exceeds Stamina, losing one's soul if the Taint exceeds Void, and so on.



Maho Spells

Traditional magic involves summoning the energy of the Elements and petitioning the Fortunes with prayer. Maho-tsukai have only one source of energy to worry about: Fu Leng. All maho involves prayer to the Dark God trapped under the earth in the Shadowlands. In order to gain favor with Fu Leng, sorcerers must spill blood. There is good news, however: it doesn't have to be the sorcerer's blood ...

Mastery Level 1

Summon Undead Champion

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: Dead Body

Range: Touch

This spell creates a Zombie (if used on a newly dead creature) or a Skeleton. The creature will follow the caster's mental commands as long as he remains within 25' of it. If he allows the creature to leave his radius of control it will revert to its natural habits and begin killing everything in sight. The caster can use other spells to control this creature once it has left the radius, but it is otherwise not obligated to obey him (even if it reenters the 25' radius). No one may control more Undead Champions with this spell than his School Rank. See page 142 for Zombie stats.

Raises can be used to affect additional targets. Each raise animates an additional dead body.

Drain Soul

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 5 minutes

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 10'

The target's Stamina is reduced by one for the duration of the spell. Multiple applications of this spell are cumulative.

Bleeding

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 25'

The target begins to bleed at a rate of one Wound per round until he takes an action to bind his wound. Raises can be used to affect additional targets.

Pain

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 25'

The target is racked with terrible pain. He is not able to act for the duration of the spell. Additionally, he must make an earth roll with a TN of 15 or cry out in pain (dishonoring himself). Raises can be used to affect additional targets.

Limb Disruption

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 hour

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 25'

One of target's limbs (chosen randomly) is savagely injured by a blast of dark energy. All of the target's TNs involving the affected limb are at +15 for the duration of the spell.

Mastery Level 2

Choking Death

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: Two weeks

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 10'

The target contracts pneumonia. If the target is kept warm and comfortable for the next two weeks, he will have a 20% chance of dying (50% otherwise). If he is cared for by someone with the Medicine skill, the caretaker may make a Medicine/Intelligence TN 15 roll to reduce the chance of death by 10% plus an additional 5% per raise.

Unlike natural pneumonia, this condition is not contagious.



Control Undead

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 1 hour

Area of Effect: 1 undead target

Range: 100'

The caster seizes control of one undead target. It obeys his mental commands without questions or regard for its own safety. If the undead is currently being controlled, the caster must make an opposed Earth roll against the current controller; the winner of the opposed roll gains control of the undead creature. Raises can be used to affect additional targets. Each Raise allows control of an additional undead target.

Curse

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: See below

Range: Line of Sight

This is a generic curse spell, usable by anyone intimate with black magic. Curses are simple, but require a sympathetic component: a lock of hair, a fingernail clipping, an ounce of blood, etc. It is not enough to gain a piece of clothing of the subject of the curse; the caster must gain something that contains spiritual energy of the target.

If the curse is successful (see below for curse suggestions), the caster must keep the item in physical contact at all times. If the caster ever loses the item, the curse is broken. This is the only way to break a curse.

Possible curses:

- The Scorpion samurai who finds that everyone trusts every word he says
- The Dragon who couldn't dream
- The Crab who couldn't lie
- The Unicorn who cannot sleep under the same roof twice
- The Lion who couldn't whisper
- The Phoenix who draws too much power when casting spells
- The Crane who can't be quiet
- Vampire Curse: this character has a super-powerful Trait that drains from everyone else's Trait

Consider curses very carefully. They can ruin a player's good time, and that's not what being a GM is about. When you're considering placing a maho curse on one of your Player Characters, ask yourself: "Will it be fun for the player?" Remember, having a curse put on a character is taking control away from the player.

Make a curse a challenge, but also make it fun for the player and the group as a whole. The best way to do this is to employ the "Too much of a good thing" rule.

For example, you have a player who has created the archetypical handsome, lady-killer Crane samurai. You could curse him ugly... or you could curse him irresistible. Imagine what would happen if every woman he meets falls instantly in love with him. It's a little less mean and a lot more entertaining, and it's what the player wanted in the first place: a character that no woman could resist!

Curse of the Water Spirits

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 1 month

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 10'

The target becomes absolutely terrified of water. Even the prospect of entering a bath tub causes him to panic. In order to willingly come within 5 feet of a sizeable amount of water, the target must make a Willpower roll with a TN of 25. This is considered a Fear test for the purposes of the Advantage 'Death Trance'.

Curse of the Unblinking Eye

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 10'

The target of this spell is completely unable to sleep. Every day he must make a Stamina Roll with a TN equal to the number of days he has gone without sleep. If he fails the roll, he gains a cumulative +1 to all of his Target Numbers until he is cured. In order to overcome the effects of this spell the Target must make a Meditation/Void roll with a TN of 30 (the cumulative +1 TN modifiers do not apply to this Meditation roll). He may attempt the roll once per day, but once he succeeds, he has broken the curse. If the TN modifiers caused by this spell ever reach +75, the target goes irrevocably insane.

Mastery Level 3

Animate the Dead

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1

Range: Touch

This ritual requires 10 hours to cast. This spell must be cast on a living target who must be present for the entire ritual. Once



successfully cast, this spell turns the target into a rotting undead creature. He remains self-aware and is able to freely use any of his skills or spells (although any spell he casts is considered *maho* and must follow the rules for casting *maho*). The self-aware undead created by this spell are considered to be controlled by themselves for the purposes of resisting the control of other *maho* users.

The undead state granted by this spell makes the target immune to the effects of the Shadowlands Taint, but keeps them from spending Void. Additionally, undead do not generally have blood so undead that wish to cast spells must seek out the blood of the living.

Corruption of the Elements

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 100'

Range: Touch

One of the four elements is hideously corrupted within the radius. Anyone attempting to cast spells from the corrupted element within the radius has the spell's TN increased by 25. This effect can be undone with cleansing rituals.

Stealing Breath

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Concentration

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 25'

One of the target's lungs collapses. He must make an opposed Earth roll against the caster of this spell each round or collapse to the ground, helplessly gasping for breath.

Mastery Level 4

Summon Greater Kansen

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: 1 Hour

Area of Effect: 1 Kansen

Range: 10'

Over the next round a misty specter like creature appears before the caster. For the duration of this spell it follows his mental commands without question or regard for its own safety.

Kansen Stats

Earth 4

Fire 4

Water 4

Air 2



Attack 5k4
 Damage 3k2
 Wounds 75: dead

Special: Invulnerability (see page 139)

Summon Oni

Mastery Level: 4
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: 1 Oni
Range: 100 miles

The most powerful Oni within the range of this spell is instantly teleported to any location within 100' of the caster. This spell does not grant any control over the Oni. The caster may choose the direction that the Oni is facing when it appears.

Mastery Level 5

Dominion of Fu Leng

Mastery Level: 5
Duration: 1 Hour
Area of Effect: 1 Target
Range: Line of Sight

The caster seizes control of any undead creature – the target may not resist. While controlled, the target will obey the caster's mental commands with no regard for its personal safety. The caster may attempt to cast the Dominion on a self-aware undead creature (such as a subject of Animate the Dead or Fu Leng's Champion); if the spell is cast successfully, the caster controls the undead creature for the next round. At the beginning of the following round, the undead creature makes a contested Willpower roll against the caster; if the self-aware undead creature wins this roll, it breaks free of the Dominion. Raises may also be used to affect additional targets; one additional target can be affected for each raise.

Fu Leng's Champion

Mastery Level: 5
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

This ritual requires 10 hours to cast. This spell must be cast on a living target who must be present for the entire ritual. The target of this spell becomes any type of undead that exists in the GM's world (although the GM may require raises for exotic breeds of undead).

The Bloodspeakers

Who are the Bloodspeakers and what are their aims? The simple answer is that they are the followers of a massive cult started hundreds of years ago by the maho sorcerer Iuchiban. They are absolutely dedicated to putting their master – or any sufficiently powerful member of their organization – on the Emerald Throne. They meet in secret, they practice *maho*, and they engage in all the unwholesome habits we've come to expect from an evil underground cult. Human sacrifice is not uncommon during their dark rituals, and the terrifying powers they wield are visible in every porcelain-masked zombie they have brought to supernatural life. Beyond that, however, lies a deep-set series of beliefs which have endured over five hundred years of active persecution.

A society as bound by tradition, and as rooted in the belief of karma and destiny as Rokugan is, invariably produces dissatisfaction among certain members of the populace. A peasant may dream of becoming a great hero, only to be told to mind his fields. The younger son of a noble family might yearn for the daimyo's throne, only to be dismissed by an accident of birth. Such rejection often leads to questions – why must I remain where I am? How can destiny be so cruel? Who is to say what I am capable of? For most of these issues, Rokugan society has but one answer: honor to your ancestors, respect for the Celestial Pattern, obedience to your betters. And that answer does not always settle a restless soul. Driven by feelings of injustice, unfairness, and a social system binding them to life of drudgery, they search for other roads to fulfillment – or for ways to get even. Iuchiban's path of bloodshed and madness tempts those who feel that life has treated them unfairly, and who are on the lookout to exact their vengeance upon the world.

The majority of Iuchiban's followers come from the lower classes – poor merchants, disgruntled peasants and eta or other hinin. The few members of the samurai caste who join the Bloodspeakers tend to be in rough straits, either by birth, political circumstance or bad



luck, and wish to do something about it. All of them, however, are motivated by a desire for power – to seize for themselves that which fate would deny them.

To this wide variety of people, Iuchiban offers a means to free them from their suffocating existence. Unfettered either by the rigid apparatus of the Empire or the overt taint of Fu Leng, they can participate in their own form of power without regard for the consequences. Joining the Bloodspeakers expresses a twisted sort of rebellion against everything the Emerald Empire holds sacred – the majesty of destiny, the power of one's ancestors, the supreme authority of the Son of Heaven.

This feeling is particularly strong among the eta – the lowest of the low in Rokugani society. Some eta see great value in what they do. After all, were it not for them, the dead would rot in the streets, the condemned would receive no justice, and battlefields would be rendered unusable for generations. And in return for these vital services, they receive scorn, rejection, even arbitrary execution at the hands of their rulers. Iuchiban's teachings take root here more easily than anywhere else, for none store up resentment like social outcasts, and the handling of dead flesh is something the eta know all about.

At the heart of Bloodspeaker philosophy lies the teachings of its founder. Iuchiban's research contains a great deal of philosophy, and justification of his unholy rituals. To the cult, the human body contains the greatest resources of all, for no other medium so perfectly combines the five elements of nature into one cohesive unit. Unlike bushido or other philosophies, however, the Bloodspeakers believe that only drastic measures can bring out the body's true potential. By properly sacrificing a part of the body – through bloodletting, murder, or the raising of the dead – they can convert it into energy to use as they see fit. Each display of maho, each abomination they commit in the name of their art, produces magical effects to rival the greatest shugenja. For those who have lived all their lives below the samurai caste – or worse, for those who do not wish to yield to the whim of spirits – such practices hold great allure. Their promise of power has been enough to keep the cult alive through five hundred years of active persecution.

With power comes the ability to wield it, and Bloodspeakers are further dedicated to making the most of their dark magic. For now, they try to spread their membership, explain their philosophy to those who might sympathize, and occasionally strike against the instruments of Imperial authority. In the long term, however, they seek nothing less than the destruction of the Hantei dynasty. By overthrowing the current system and replacing it with one based on their own philosophies, they will gain revenge for centuries of persecution while simultaneously proving the superiority of their beliefs. This overriding goal keeps the Bloodspeakers' individuality

from overwhelming their effectiveness, and lets them focus on something "more important" than self-aggrandizement.

The Bloodspeakers' relationship with their founder reflects the individualist bent of their philosophy. They do not worship Iuchiban as a god, or revere him like some ancestral spirit. Rather, Iuchiban represents the pinnacle of what their philosophy can achieve. He commanded power to shake the very foundations of the Empire, and the bravest samurai still shiver at mention of his name. Deep within their secret hearts, every Bloodspeaker aspires to such heights. In addition, persisting rumors of his immortality, as well as the simple

fact that he himself created the cult and his teachings, grant his name a certain awe among his followers. Certainly, if he were to appear again, as he did three hundred years ago, they would obey his commands with reverent devotion. But admiration of their founder is not the same as worship, and should not be confused as such.

Nor do the Bloodspeakers serve Fu Leng – at least, that's what they tell themselves. Iuchiban's teachings emphasize the power of the self, and the need for the individual to determine his or her own fate. Such does not include eternal servitude to a mad god. While their methods may be similar to Fu Leng's and their rituals reek with unholy implications, most Bloodspeakers remain secure in the knowledge that their ways are not his ways and never will be.

Or so they believe.



Average Bloodspeaker Cultist

EARTH 2

WATER 2

Perception 3

FIRE 2

AIR 1

VOID 1

Skills: Athletics 1, Knife 2, Stealth 2, Torture 2, Commerce 1

Honor: 0

Glory: 0

Advantages: Allies

Disadvantages: Dark Secret



What they do not realize, however, is the inherent corruption present in the rituals they cast. The “energy” they believe they are unleashing is actually a variant of the Shadowlands Taint – the “sixth element” which Fu Leng uses to corrupt those who intrude upon his realm. Accordingly, Bloodspeakers who practice maho gain Shadowlands Points as outlined in the Maho section (see page 122). But unlike corruption gained in Fu Leng’s realm, the price of Bloodspeaker maho rarely manifests in physical form. There are no sores, no abnormal growths, no transformation into hideous and unspeakable shapes. Thus, members of the cult can convince themselves that they do not serve the Dark Lord, but rather shape their own destiny.

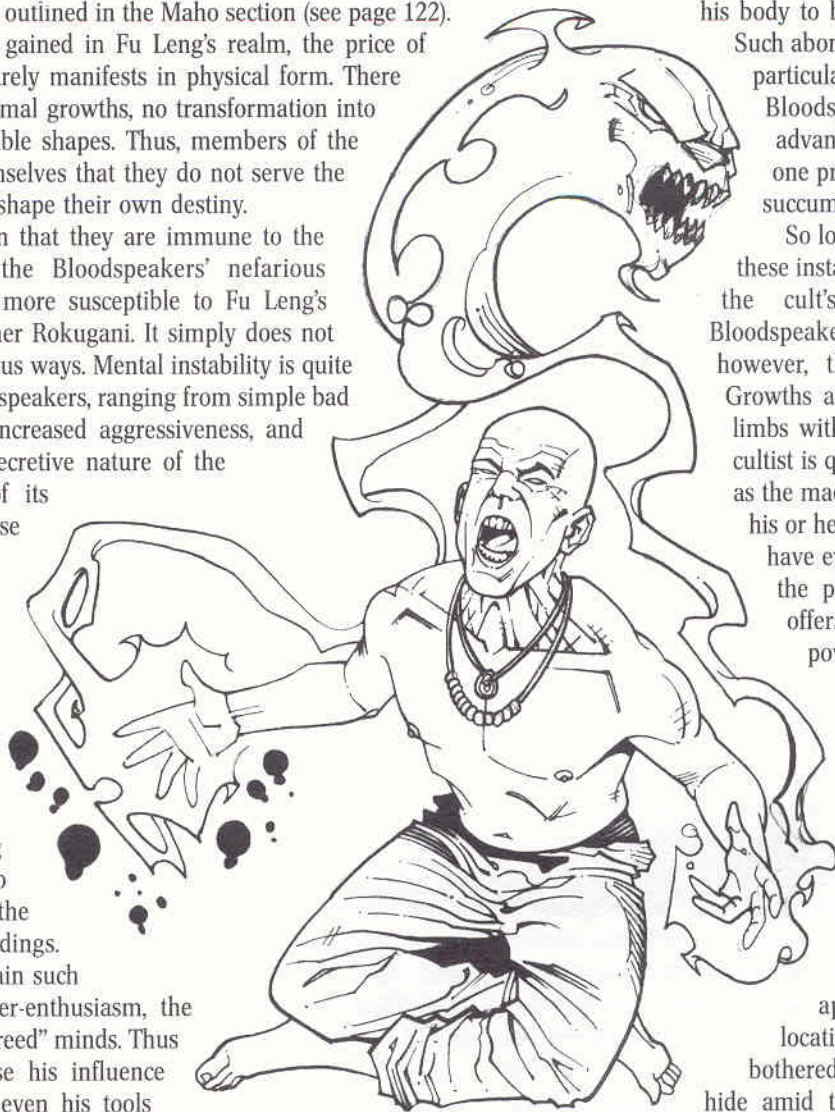
This does not mean that they are immune to the Taint. Far from it; the Bloodspeakers’ nefarious practices make them more susceptible to Fu Leng’s influence than any other Rokugani. It simply does not manifest itself in obvious ways. Mental instability is quite common among Bloodspeakers, ranging from simple bad dreams to paranoia, increased aggressiveness, and lunatic ravings. The secretive nature of the cult permits many of its members to hide these instabilities from others, but they rage uncontrollably when in private or during Bloodspeaker gatherings. Reports sometimes circulate of cultists attacking each other in a wild frenzy, or throwing themselves onto sacrificial altars in the midst of the proceedings. But their leaders explain such incidents away as over-enthusiasm, the revelations of “newly freed” minds. Thus does Fu Leng disguise his influence within Rokugan; not even his tools realize whom they serve.

Insanity and mental instability are not the only signs of Shadowlands influence in the cult. While a member may appear normal on the surface, their muscles and other internal organs often become overrun with corruption in the latter stages of the Taint. A pleasant demeanor without can hide a hideous monstrosity within. This gruesome tendency became apparent at the Battle of Sleeping

River; when cult members were cut down by the assembled Clan forces, they revealed grotesque mutations just beneath the surface of their skin. One Bloodspeaker had a series of suckered tendrils wrapped around his heart and lungs. Another’s internal organs had been replaced with black tumorous growths, which filled his body to bursting like a sack full of onions.

Such abominations are not universal, or even particularly common among low-ranking Bloodspeakers. But the higher one advances in their ranks – the more maho one practices – the greater the chances of succumbing to unwholesome degradation.

So long as they remain within Rokugan, these instabilities stay unseen, hidden behind the cult’s secrecy. Should a tainted Bloodspeaker ever enter the Shadowlands, however, the equation changes drastically. Growths and tumors sprout within minutes, limbs wither or drop off altogether, and the cultist is quickly reduced to crazed screaming as the madness destroys whatever remains of his or her sanity. Few tainted Bloodspeakers have ever traveled to the Shadowlands, so the phenomenon is rarely seen, but it offers conclusive proof that Fu Leng’s power lies at the cult’s black heart.



Organization and Rituals

The Bloodspeakers presently number some three hundred members, mostly scattered about the Lion, Crane and Scorpion lands. They usually appear in extremely isolated locations, where they are not likely to be bothered, or in large cities where they can hide amid the multitudes. They have no set calendar and do not meet on any regular basis.

Tradition holds that Bloodspeakers may only meet during the new moon, but few rigorously adhere to it. Meetings are held when necessity dictates.

The cult bases itself around single cells, each one designed to be self-sufficient. Most Bloodspeakers know very little about cells other than their own. A few senior members know the location of more



than one cell, and serve as intermediaries when the cult must act in unison. This ensures that the discovery of one cell will not lead to the destruction of the entire cult. A given cell will have anywhere between five and twenty-five members, most of whom hold ordinary occupations in a nearby community. Every cell has one acknowledged leader – usually the most powerful maho-tsukai among them – and two or more assistants.

Meetings consist mainly of readings from Iuchiban's text, maho rituals to increase participants' power, and planning strikes against threats or enemies. They are held in empty places – abandoned farms, secret basements, woodland clearings far from any path – usually under the cover of night. Most contain at least one blood sacrifice, as members entreat the advice of dark spirits or demonstrate the developing extent of their powers. Occasionally, a strong display of magic necessitates a greater sacrifice – usually an unwilling victim who will not be overly missed. Lone travelers, local troublemakers or fellow eta make the best choices; few notice when they vanish and fewer still ask questions when they do. Such sacrifices go toward creating zombies, summoning powerful creatures, or laying curses upon distant enemies; they are invariably attended by every member of the cell. Eta members dispose of any remains (or procure them, if zombies are the order of business) while others plant rumors suggesting that their unfortunate victim may have business elsewhere – a girl in another province, perhaps, or the death of a distant relative.

Initiation into the cult takes place only after careful observation of the prospective member; survival lies in secrecy, and the Bloodspeakers have suffered too many setbacks to trust outsiders. Many join on the recommendation of family members, and fathers often teach the ways of the cult to their children in order to ensure its existence for another generation. (This may be another reason why the Bloodspeakers thrive among the eta, whose duties are inherited from generation to generation.) Others are allowed to join only after careful study, and the local cell leader must give his approval. During the initiation ceremony, a prospective member

must cut his or her arm open and drain a certain amount of blood into a ceremonial bowl. The lead Bloodspeaker then works a minor maho spell with it – usually summoning an evil spirit to witness the proceedings – while the initiate pledges his or her life to following the cult's creed.

The Bloodspeakers are patient; they have learned to wait and move only when circumstances permit it. Their ultimate aim of dethroning the Hantei cannot be achieved overnight; the cult's leaders realized this after Iuchiban's aborted coup attempts. Therefore, the Bloodspeakers must think in the long term, and refuse to gamble on all-or-nothing ventures. Instead, they act quietly, moving in secrecy and directing attention away from the cult itself. Assassination points towards an innocent scapegoat, arson is blamed on bandits or local Nezumi. While they have not reached the Kolat's mastery of stealth and control, they know how to cover their tracks well. They also encourage new membership in younger generations, ensuring that the cult will continue after they have passed on. Many eta families have belonged to the Bloodspeakers for hundreds of years, and pass its rites on from father to son like any other tradition.



Location and Number of Bloodspeaker Cults Nationwide

Crab lands:	32 members in 3 cells
Crane lands:	75 members in 6 cells
Dragon lands:	4 members in 1 cell
Lion lands:	68 members in 6 cells
Phoenix lands:	50 members in 4 cells
Scorpion lands:	47 members in 5 cells
Unicorn lands:	40 members in 4 cells

Leadership

Leadership in the cult varies from cell to cell. As small as it is, it can afford a certain flexibility, and allows individual cells to decide for themselves who speaks for them. Most cells tend to gravitate towards a particularly charismatic or ruthless head; those who prove unworthy are often upended by ambitious underlings. Care must be taken not to become too autocratic, for a cult of "improving the self" rarely responds well to blatant exercises of authority. Those who remain in charge for any length of time successfully balance their personal power with enough charm and subtlety to soothe those beneath them.

Conflict between cult cells almost never occurs. Rokugan is too large, and the cells too spread out for such incidents. Internal cell struggles, while uncommon, occur with more frequency. So long as they remain undetected to the outside world, such displays are tolerated by the cult's upper echelons.



Fu Leng's Realm

From the Journals of Kuni Mokuna

The Lord Fu Leng is a cruel father. The creatures he births seem designed to be not only frightening and powerful bringers of pain, but bearers of pain as well. Their forms are ill-proportioned, their bodies malformed and twisted against the balanced symmetry of nature. They live in pain; they breathe it and move through it every day of their lives. The evil essence that flows through their veins burns them always, and their gnarled, shrunken hearts beat angrily against the torment of their existence. They know only pain, anger, fear and wretchedness. Their only escape is to share this horror with others, to cause pain instead of feeling it. They live to hurt and maim and kill, to torture and abuse as they are tortured and abused by their Dark Master.

This, I believe, is a fundamental truth of the Shadowlands, one that must be understood in order to defeat its inhabitants. And though this revelation may engender, in some, a small sense of sympathy for the creatures of Fu Leng, do not mistake my observations of their unfortunate circumstances for pity or concern. All minions of the Fallen God are unnatural abominations that must be eradicated in order to return the world to its former state of balance. What greater mercy can we show these miserable beings than to end their pain and torment?

– The Journal of Kuni Mokuna

Goblins

Goblins are found throughout the Shadowlands. These unsavory creatures populate every region of the corrupted Lands from the desolate plains to the stinking, waterlogged swamps. They are exceptionally hardy and adaptable creatures – their survival depends on it, since they are too stupid to move to better living conditions.

Legend maintains that the goblins were Fu Leng's first failed attempt to create a powerful race of minions. Unfortunately for him, the Dark Lord's experimental soldiers turned out to be less than perfectly suited to his needs. They were small, stupid, vulgar, unorganized and prone to mass and individual hysteria. They were physically weak and easily outmaneuvered. Their misguided mimicry of human behavior ran to little beyond the most rudimentary skills and talents. Despite these flaws, however, Fu Leng allowed his creations to survive. They took root in his foul kingdom and prospered there.

Their entire society is a haphazard, twisted mockery of our own, down to their dreadful parroting of any word they hear. Their most common reaction to humans, aside from blindly attacking, is to mimic whatever we say, screeching it out without reason or comprehension. They apparently have a language of their own, but it is too guttural for humans to understand. I have my doubts that they can even communicate effectively with each other in this garbled tongue; perhaps that is one reason that they have so much trouble organizing.

Thankfully, there are some rare, exceptionally adept goblins which have managed a rudimentary grasp of our language. Basic communication with these individuals is possible, though hardly reliable. Goblins, racially, call themselves 'Bakemono', and are divided into many great 'tribes', such as Biteeye and Breakjaw.

Some would surmise that because goblins behave so foolishly, they must have childlike or even animalistic minds. This is not the case, however. Goblins possess a certain kind of primitive intelligence – they absorb information and have the ability to learn from experience. They could not survive in the wilds of the Shadowlands were it otherwise. The problem is that they misinterpret so much of what they see. Combat they can understand. Hunting and the basic skills of survival are not a problem. Anything beyond that is subject to gross distortion in the course of their parroting. What they comprehend and repeat may bear little resemblance, if any, to what is actually being observed.

Goblins are cruel, malicious, selfish and violent by nature. They quarrel among themselves constantly and murder among their own kind is a common, acceptable activity. They simply toss out the bodies of their dead with the garbage – which usually means shoving it against the far wall or heaving it from the doorway to rot where it lands.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that these awkward creatures are not dangerous. A lone goblin is no threat, but lone goblins are rare. Their main asset is strength of numbers, which they use to devastating effect. They attack in screeching swarms, overwhelming opponents with sheer numbers and berserker

enthusiasm. Goblin combat tactics are laughably simple, but at the same time should not be underestimated.

Size and Build

Goblins range in size from about one ken-an tall (three feet) to almost two (five and a half feet). They are bipedal and their normal mode of locomotion is an ungraceful upright gait. Despite this, they can move quite quickly for short spurts – scrambling and scuttling close to the ground like a dog. However, they lack the physical stamina to endure any prolonged runs at top speed.

The proportions of the goblin's body are a warped, exaggerated reflection of our own form. A goblin's head is excessively large, with a skinny neck that would seem unsuited for the task of holding it up. The rib-cage is narrow and the torso is often pitched forward from the weight of a bulging potbelly. Many goblins have crooked spines, resulting in hunched or uneven shoulders. Limbs are spindly and sinewy, the muscles bundled and knotted in unattractive lumps. Arms tend to be overly long and legs a bit too short. Hands and feet are excessively large, with long, gnarled fingers and toes tipped with claws.

Their noses are large and uneven, often hooked downward or upturned in pig-like snouts. Their pupilless eyes are sunk into fleshy pockets, glaring from beneath their bony brows. The lips are thin and stretched, contorted always into fiendish grins or malevolent scowls. Chins tend to be small and pointed. Their flesh is mottled grey-green, with spots, warts and wrinkles. Wiry hair peppers their hide and sprouts from their ears and armpits. Most goblins have little hair on their heads, though some have enough to sport feeble topknots of matted strands.

Magic Mud

An intriguing example of the goblins' idiotic enthusiasm for battle is their so-called "magic mud attack." Goblins claim to have discovered a certain type of "magic mud" – black and thick, it catches fire with the slightest spark. I assume this to be some type of foul pitch.

They presumably realized that they could reproduce our "flaming arrows" attack by dipping their projectiles in the stuff. It is not difficult to see how their twisted logic progresses from there: if

arrows can be dipped in pitch and ignited, how much better it would be to dip an entire goblin and ignite it. An individual covered in the substance and set alight certainly gives opponents pause.

I witnessed one such attack near the Kaiu wall. After gleefully rolling in the "magic mud," the chosen goblin was set alight by his fellows. Howling in agony, the incendiary goblin rushed toward the enemy, arms waving in frenzy. He broke through the astonished front line of the opposing forces and killed or badly wounded six bushi before collapsing in a smoldering heap.

This has been an especially favored technique among certain goblin tribes. They are extremely proud of this innovation, and it is considered a great honor to be slathered with the black goo and set alight. Those who participate are considered great heroes, believing that the "magic mud" grants them the battle fury of Fu Leng himself. What we see as agonized screams and panicked thrashing are viewed by the goblins as divine warrior rage. They line up at the pitch barrel like children waiting for sweet rice cakes.

Foolhardy? Certainly. But under the guidance of a shaman, and against a party unprepared for such an onslaught, such tactics can be devastating. If their leader can identify a focal unit in the opposing army, he will order his troops to engage that unit at all costs.

In small engagements, this usually means very little; the goblins will expend themselves trying to reach their target. In a large-scale battle, however, with many flaming goblins charging at once, the tactic can be devastating.

Warmongers

Goblin leaders, or Warmongers, are physically distinguished from common goblins by their increased size and sturdier construction. Their skeletons are thicker and stronger, they are more powerfully muscled and they are more aggressive, commanding and intelligent. Whether this is the result of specific breeding patterns or merely the natural rise of the strongest specimens to leadership positions has yet to be seen.

Goblins with enough cunning and ambition to lead are quite rare. These individuals ascend quickly and ruthlessly to command positions and take on the roles of warmongers or shamen. A force of goblins led by such an individual is much more dangerous than the average band of wandering goblins.





Shamen

A few goblins have managed to tap the power of magic. While they are by no means highly skilled, they can nonetheless cause much trouble and harm. Exactly how they work their magic is somewhat of a mystery; I interrogated a small number of 'shamen' and they do not seem much smarter than the average goblin. They understand nothing of magical theory, the elements or spirit summoning, and obviously do not revere the kami. They seem to know only particular spells, apparently acquired through theft and the careful repetition of ritual. This is one instance where their mimicry of human behaviors seems to have been beneficial. They wave their arms and chant and repeat the spell, and incredibly, results are forthcoming.

It is also common for these goblins to have gained some knowledge of *maho* and they are sometimes quite adept in its use.

Goblin Tactics

A lone goblin is no threat, but lone goblins are rare. Their main asset is strength of numbers, which they use to devastating effect. They attack in screeching swarms, overwhelming opponents with sheer numbers and berserker enthusiasm. The standard goblin fighting technique involves a sort of mad rush to the target. Goblins will bite, claw, pummel and kick. If they have weapons, they will slash and swing with manic abandon. Individuals will be pointed out by the Warmongers or designated leaders, and attacked in overwhelming numbers until defeated. The mob then moves as one to the next target, whom they attack until slain, and so on.

Kumo

The kumo, or Great Spider Spirits, are the lost souls of those who have been consumed by violence and revenge. Many of the oldest legends of the Spider Spirit claim that the original beast was spawned during a civil war between the Crane Clan, when the Doji fought the Kakita for control of the clan and its wealth. The resulting bitter feud lasted for several decades, and during its rampant destruction, the spirit of the kumo was born. It devoured all the souls of the warriors who had enjoyed the battle, made its home within the spirits of the courtiers who encouraged the bloody warfare, and when it was

finished, it emerged in physical form upon the southern lands of the Crane, turning what had once been farmland into bitter, salted swamp.

Other kumo have since appeared, but whether they are spawn of the original, or spontaneously formed from violent feuds is unknown. What is known is that the great Spirit of the Kumo still lives, residing in a great tidal whirlpool off the coast of the Crane lands.

Ogres

Fu Leng's first creations, the goblins, are vile and dangerous, but they were not the merciless tools of destruction that the Dark Lord desired. He decided to experiment and redesign in order to create a more threatening minion. The results were the ogres.

Much more intimidating than their diminutive kin, ogres stand nearly three ken-an (eight feet) tall, brutish beasts with thick hides, sharp tusks and more brawn than brain (unlike goblins, who have little of either).

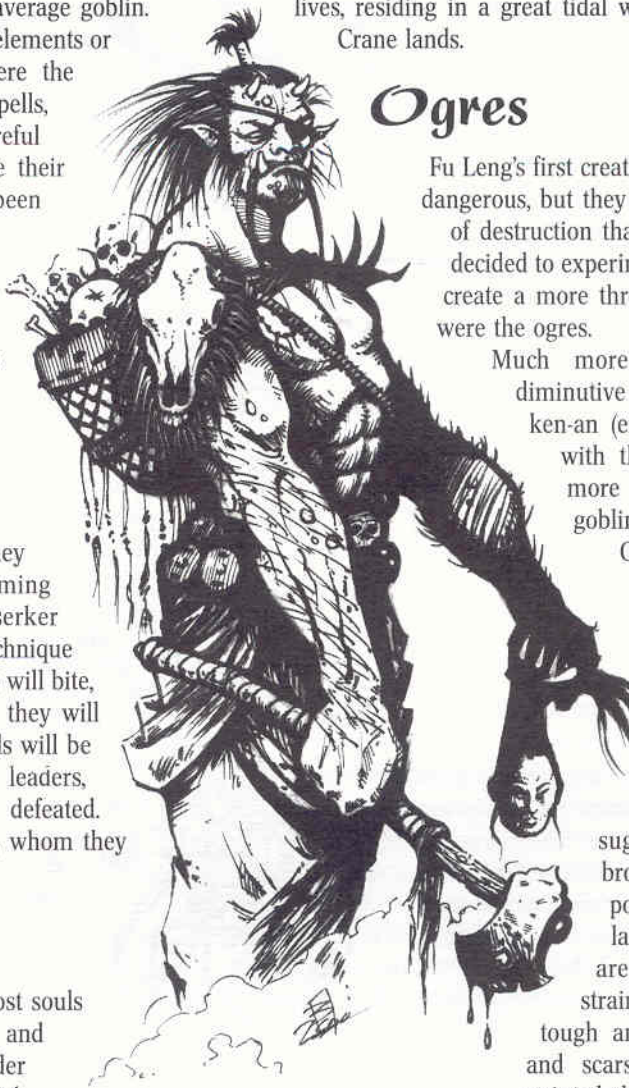
Ogres' bodies are strong and powerful, bulging with muscles and knotted veins.

They are less ill-proportioned than the goblins: an exaggeration of sturdy, strapping human men.

Every feature of the ogre suggests power. They have broad, barrel-like chests, long, powerful arms and legs, and large meaty hands. Their necks are thick and roped with straining tendons. Their skin is tough and gray, with mottled spots and scars from past battles. Black, pointed claws sprout from their fingers

and toes, and their oversized lower jaws bear tusks that point to the sky. Some ogres have horns or bony knobs protruding from their skulls, others have full heads of shaggy, tangled black hair. The latter often pull their hair back into scraggly topknots.

Ogres are generally solitary creatures. They are fiercely territorial, establishing an area that they patrol diligently and defend





against others, including their own kind. They are unbiased in their hatred of others – any creature entering their domain is considered a trespasser, prey to be hunted and destroyed. Kuni scouts have also reported incidents of ogres working together.

Ogres are not subtle beings. They may not be the sons of Osano-Wo, but Crane poets write of them: “their rage trembles the earth as the storm shakes the sky.” In Crab terms, this means they are big, ungraceful and loud. You can more often than not hear an ogre long before it comes into view. Their grunts, growls, and bellows echo across the desolate landscape of the Shadowlands, often accompanied by terrified screams. Their heavy footsteps evince no concern for stealth.

Their fighting ‘style’ consists mainly of smashing, crushing and ripping. They do not employ ‘techniques’ – they do not possess the intelligence, discipline, or finesse to develop such concepts. Despite the ogre’s unrefined tactics, an unfortunate individual caught by their mauling hands will often be crushed into paste. All too often, overconfident samurai are broken like twigs after maneuvering too close to an ogre’s grasping limbs.

Oni

Oni. Demons. Creatures of such despair that children and adults alike awaken, screaming, at the whisper of their presence. They are the greatest of Fu Leng’s creations, his prized children. They are the death of the Emerald Empire, and in their blackened claws a vision of corruption and hatred rises. If Rokugan can be destroyed, it will be their might which turns the green fields into black swamp and mire.

Some shugenja through the Empire pride themselves on their maho abilities, summoning lesser Oni to serve their whims in exchange for some small essence or a taste of blood. But these minor sorcerers have no understanding of the true power of the creatures they dabble with, and should a great Oni come at their call, their very souls would be forfeit to its power.

There is no mercy in their hearts. No compassion, no soul. The Oni are the truest creations of the Shadowlands, the greatest danger which Fu Leng has ever turned against his enemies.

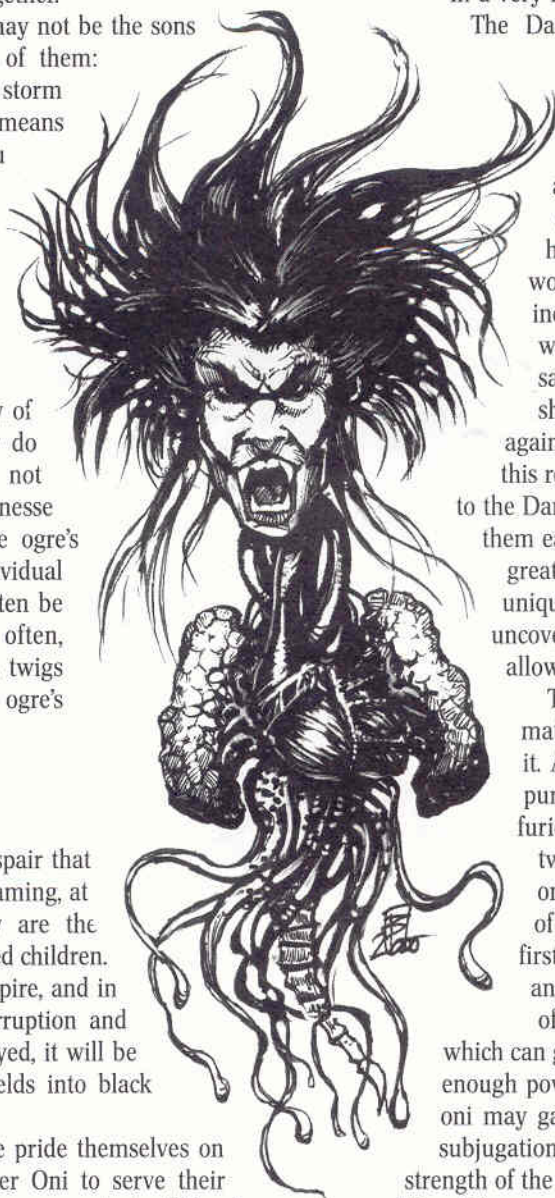
In a very real sense, they are Fu Leng.

The Dark Lord has developed many unique Oni monstrosities. Each is deadly in its own way, each seems to have been individually crafted by its Master, and all bear limitless hatred for their human foes. Fu Leng has also spawned many subspecies of Oni, endlessly replicating particular servants who have performed exceptionally well, or which would benefit from an increase in numbers. Each individual is exactly like its brethren, performing with the same abilities, the same skills, and the same amount of intelligence. Such Oni form the shock troops of the Shadowlands army, sent against the Empire in unending waves. Presumably, this repetition serves a specific purpose known only to the Dark Lord. It does have the advantage of making them easy to predict, which has allowed us to learn a great deal about them. While information on unique Oni remains elusive, time and tenacity have uncovered the weaknesses of numerous subspecies, allowing us to combat them much more effectively.

The evil spirit beings of Jigoku have no natural material form or physical shape as we understand it. As the elemental kami spirits are creatures of pure energy, charged with positive or negative furies, these beings are formed from the invisible twining of corrupt energies. Therefore, when one of these dark beings is brought to our World of Forms, it must have its shape defined. It must first be granted a name, one to which it can cling and bind its corporeal identity. The proper name of a person, a human being, is the only sort which can grant the oni physical form, for only it contains enough power for the spirit to subsist on. Eventually, the oni may gain total control of the namer. How long this subjugation takes depends on the namer and the relative strength of the oni bound to him. Namers with a strong mind and forceful personality are usually better able to resist the oni’s influence.

Oni Lords

Four times in recorded history, powerful Oni summoned by foolish shugenja managed to not only gain control of their namers,





but somehow break their bonds and roam Rokugan freely. No one knows how the Oni accomplished this, nor the final fates of the shugenja they escaped. Some speculate that the Oni (Akuma, Kyoso, Shikibu and Tsuburu) somehow devoured their namers' souls. Others maintain that the Oni somehow banished the namers' souls to Jigoku in their place.

However it happened, once the Oni overtook the souls, they destroyed the namers' bodies as well. In all cases, the remains of the unfortunate namers were found horribly mutilated. Some say the gaping wounds looked as if they had been made by something bursting out from within. The destruction of the namer made the Oni's physical forms on earth permanent, and severed any bonds that the summoner had over them. They were now free, with physical bodies as well as their inborn spirit energy, to move through our world.

These rogue Oni went on terrifying rampages, destroying farms, villages, even entire provinces in the revelry of their newfound freedom. Eventually, the pull of the Festering Pit drew them to the Shadowlands where they established themselves as powerful 'Oni Lords.'

Onikage (Steeds of Fu Leng)

Horses that die in the Shadowlands rise again as *onikage*, creatures with scaled, horse-shaped bodies, long fangs, crocodilian tails, glowing eye-sockets, and clawed hooves. They range from dark green to bruise-purple, with tentacle-like manes of contrasting color. Those stripped of flesh by other onikage rise as skeletal versions with identical statistics. Beheading prevents this. Undead Moto often use onikage as steeds.

Trolls

Trolls are much more reclusive than their kin, the ogre. Whether they are merely an offshoot of the ogre breed or an entire species unto themselves has yet to be determined by the Kuni scholars of the Emerald Empire. Like ogres, trolls are large and solidly built, designed mainly for pure brute force and physical power. But while the ogres are rather lean – their bulk being made up of almost solid muscle – trolls possess more fatty tissue. Their sickly green flesh is flabby and corpulent, with a moist sheen that gives them a slippery appearance.

They are more misshapen and move less gracefully than the more properly proportioned ogres, and do not stand as tall,

measuring a little more than two ken-an (between six and seven feet). They have great hanging jowls with protruding fangs and their beady, glowing eyes can be seen gleaming in the darkness from a good distance. Their arms are abnormally long, with grossly stretched fingers possessing multiple joints and deadly claws.

Unlike the ogres, trolls have two obvious sexes, and unlike the goblins, they tend to live together in 'family units' of up to five individuals. Troll females only seem to reproduce once every several years; I have not been able to observe the birth or juvenile stages of these reclusive creatures, so I do not know the particulars of that process. I assume, however, that like all other Shadowlands creatures, the mothers do not show affection or care for their offspring. Survival to adulthood is most likely based on rapid maturation and inborn survival instincts, not on any care provided by the parents.

Trolls tend to linger in the swampy regions of the Shadowlands, preferring a humid, moist environment. They are amphibious – able to breathe both air and water. Trolls often lurk just below the murky surface of the mire, ready to spring upon passersby. They can remain underwater for many hours without emerging, and exercise inhuman patience while waiting for their prey. In addition to hunting, troll 'families' also roam the swamps foraging for food: picking bits of rotting matter from the muck and rooting about in the mire for the foul wriggling creatures that populate these regions. Unlike ogres, trolls have no compunctions about what they consume, and greedily devour even the most repellent morsels.

Troll Tactics

As a rule, when trolls spot humans entering their area, they scatter and vanish into the swamps, leaving nothing but rapidly disappearing footprints. They then wait for the interlopers to venture further into the swamp, where the trolls ambush them from their hiding places. When springing an ambush, they move with blinding speed, emerging from total concealment and overwhelming their victims in the blink of an eye.

Trolls attack by striking out and raking with their razor-sharp claws. They are surprisingly fast for their cumbersome outward appearance and can strike with dexterity that belies their misshapen appendages. It is best to stay out of a troll's reach, for it takes only a second for one of their arms to lash out and rip bloody gashes across an opponent.

When attacking, trolls become quite agitated, bouncing and hopping about while emitting terrible, ear-splitting screeches. I believe this is a deliberate tactic used to disconcert and confuse the enemy. It can certainly be distracting and often provides them with a decisive edge in combat.

Zombies and Skeletons

Some nine hundred years ago, the mysterious Kuni family, bound by their clan's oath to defend Rokugan from the Shadowlands, began researching the foul nature of their adversaries in hopes of finding ways to destroy them. Their task was fraught with peril, for those who learned too much were driven insane, or worse. The Shadowlands taint corrupted dozens of Kuni shugenja, and while they discovered countless dark secrets, their name has been tarnished ever since. To this day, one cannot mention the name "Kuni" without evoking images of madness, cruelty, and sinister magics best left undisturbed.

At the vanguard of these early researches was a shugenja named Kuni Nakanu, a distant cousin of the original family founder. Nakanu had traveled into the Shadowlands on patrols and observed some of the effects the twisted lands had upon his fellows. The dead in the Shadowlands never stayed dead for long; within a few hours, they would invariably rise again as undead zombies and turn against their living brethren. Nakanu was fascinated by this process and longed for some way to turn it against the Dark Lord. If the Crab could raise their own undead armies, they would no longer have to risk living men in constant battle. Fu Leng would lose a valuable asset, and the Crab would gain an implacable ally. With this goal in mind, Nakanu vowed to master the dark magic needed to raise the dead.

He spent years researching the phenomenon, studying and cataloging the nature of the undead. He learned how the bodies of the dead became possessed by dark spirits called *kansen* and how they gave the corpse locomotion after the original soul had departed. He studied their simple brain functions, and the appetite for living flesh which drove everything they did. He conducted numerous experiments, both in the field and within the locked rooms of his laboratory. Some whispered that he even kidnapped live subjects and used them as "test cases"; if he did, the details of his experiments are blessedly sparse.

Nakanu wrote down everything he learned in a detailed series of notes, which later became the basis of the *maho-tsukai* technique. Once he had assembled enough information, Nakanu began the arduous process of learning how to master it. He spent another two years establishing and perfecting a method of spellcasting, one which could focus Fu Leng's dark energies into a controllable spell. Finally, after countless hours of research and work, he achieved his goal; he was able to raise a zombie in the Shadowlands before Fu Leng could, and command it to perform any action he desired.

But even this was not enough for Nakanu. He needed to know more; a single zombie, or even a group of zombies, was inadequate for his purposes. He wanted an entire army, one which could defend Rokugan's southern border against any threat. He began studying ways to resurrect large groups of the undead, to control them as a general would control his troops. In his obsessive quest, he went too far too quickly.

One dark night, he attempted to resurrect seventeen corpses at once, and could not control them all. His mastery slipped when the first attacked him, and the rest fell upon him in a heartbeat. In the space of minutes, he was devoured by his own horrible creations.

Shadowlands zombies (simple bodies which rise again from the ground of the Shadowlands once their original life has been lost) are mindless killing machines which pursue and strike anything without the Shadowlands Taint. They cannot understand or make speech, and will not take orders from *maho-tsukai*. However, necromancers, *maho-tsukai*, and Oni (even dim-witted ones) can control them enough to shape them into a

passable army.

Spell-made zombies are deliberately created by a *maho-user*; if the spell to awaken the zombie fails, the corpse animates without control and attacks the caster. If successful, the zombie must be given a mystically made porcelain mask, which, if removed, or destroyed, also destroys the zombie. The intellect of these creatures





is limited, but they can understand simple commands. They obey only their controlling shugenja, and do not act except on his command. They will let themselves be destroyed unless told to fight back.

The true porcelain mask fetishes used by the Blood Speakers not only focus dark energies and allow creation of zombies who will unwaveringly obey the mask's enchanter, but cause them to understand more complex instructions. They have a self-preservation instinct, and will fight to defend themselves without specific orders. These zombies are almost man-like in intellect, retaining many of their original memories and prejudices from their previous time among the living.

Plague zombies are zombies whose body tissues and organs carry stigma of the Wasting Disease, one of the first Black Scrolls opened. Any region which has plague zombies can be assured of finding the signs of their passing: the Plague.

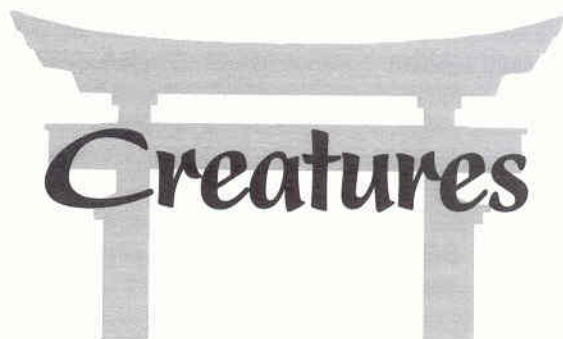
Skeletons are aging zombies whose flesh has rotted away, leaving bare bone and cartilage. No more intelligent than their more fleshy comrades, their lighter frames move with greater speed than the stumbling and lethargic zombies.

Raising the Dead

One of the most harrowing aspects of the Taint is its effect on the recently dead. Any human who dies within the Shadowlands' borders will rise within hours to become a mindless minion of the Dark Lord. These zombies are simply shells of their former selves – their souls having (presumably) fled at the point of death. I believe that their souls are replaced by malevolent spirits controlled by Fu Leng. Or perhaps they retain some ghost of their former selves – now utterly corrupted and bound to the Dark Lord's service. None know for certain, save the damned, and they do not divulge such secrets. In any case, the bodies continue to rot and decay as time goes on, eventually becoming no more than animated skeletons.

Shadowlands Madmen

The horrible, Tainted bushi of the Shadowlands are known as "maho-bujin." Bujin are those warriors whose Taint has exceeded their spirit's will to resist the call of the Dark Lord. They feel an irresistible urge to travel into the Shadowlands, often walking until their feet bleed, slaughtering anyone in their way. If they are lucky, they will be killed by Crab patrols, traps or marauding creatures before they reach their destination as a living servant of the Dark Lord... until the end of eternity.



Special Abilities

Carapace

Creatures with Carapace have natural armor. This can be an actual hard shell, or thick skin, or simply an ability not to feel blows. On all Damage rolls against a creature with Carapace, reduce all dice that roll below the Carapace rating to "1".

Fear

Some creatures are innately fearsome, and cause even brave samurai to quail. When characters encounter a creature with Fear, they must roll their Willpower against a TN of five times the creature's Fear rating. Any character who fails this roll may not use Void Points when fighting the creature, and must drop all dice that roll lower than the Fear rating on all rolls made against the creature.

Invulnerability

Some creatures cannot be affected by ordinary weapons. Creatures with Invulnerability take only one Wound when struck by normal weapons. Weapons made of jade or crystal, and *nemuranai*, generally do full damage against Invulnerable creatures. At your discretion, a katana that has been handed down through a sufficient number of generations may be capable of inflicting Wounds on an Invulnerable creature; two or three generations who carried the sword (and who are now dead, and therefore spiritually available to guide the blade) ought to be good for at least half normal damage.



Shadowlands Creatures

Ordinary Goblin

Earth: 2

Fire: 2

Water: 1

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2

Rolls For Damage: 4k2 (sword)

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds: 8: +10; 15: Dead

Goblins are found throughout the Shadowlands. These unsavory creatures populate every region of the Corrupted Lands, from the desolate plains to the stinking, waterlogged swamps. They are exceptionally hardy and adaptable creatures – their survival depends on it, since they are too stupid to move to better living conditions.

Goblin Shaman

Earth: 2

Fire: 2

Water: 2

Air: 1

Reflexes: 2

School Rank is considered 1.

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2

Rolls For Damage: 4k2

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds: 10: +10; 20: Dead

Goblins practice a primitive form of magic that resembles maho. They use the maho rules on page 125. Goblin shaman School Ranks are always Rank 1.

Goblins, sadly, aren't very good at magic. Every time a goblin shaman attempts a spell, increase his Target Number by at least 5 – by 10 if he's trying to do something complicated at the same time, like walk, or remember what he's aiming at.

Goblin Warmonger

Earth: 3

Fire: 3

Water: 2

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 5k3

Rolls For Damage: 5k2 (sword)

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 with armor)

Wounds: 15: +10; 30: Dead

Goblin Warmongers are bigger and smarter than their counterparts. They are clever enough to figure out how to put on the armor and swing the swords. When the Goblins raid Crab castles, the Warmongers always lead the way.

Other Creatures

Bog Hag

Earth: 3

Fire: 2

Water: 2

Air: 2

Reflexes: 3

Rolls when Attacking: 4k2 in natural form

Rolls for Damage: 2k2 in natural form (Claws) or weapon damage

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds: 10: +10; 20: +15; 30: Dead

A bog hag's natural form is that of a loathsome green crone with sharp nails and jagged teeth. It thrives by stealing the skin of human victims, especially those of beautiful young women. It wears such a skin like a suit, and can even masquerade as a given victim for short periods of time.

Special Abilities:

If a Bog Hag successfully scores a hit against an opponent with her claws, the opponent has a 2 in 10 chance of catching a disease. The disease is permanent until treated by a healer or shugenja's healing magic, and causes boils, blisters, and a loss of Stamina at the rate of one rank per week.

Mujina

Earth: 1

Fire: 2

Agility: 6

Water: 2

Strength: 3

Air: 2

Reflexes: 5

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 5

Rolls when Attacking: 3k2

Rolls for Damage: 1k1 (rocks or hurled objects)

TN to be Hit: –

Wounds: –



Physically, the mujina do not seem particularly threatening. They appear as squat orange humanoids with spindly limbs and vestigial bat wings, and stand approximately one-third as tall as an average human. Their broad faces sport comically large glowing eyes and a grinning mouth full of small sharp teeth; a pair of horns crowns their heads. These features are common to all mujina, but beyond that, their appearance varies wildly in body shape and proportion. Some are thin and gangly, others rotund. They are capable of dextrous flight, although their wings seem too puny to support their weight. They can move with blinding speed, and in numbers can overwhelm a man almost before he is aware of their presence.

Mujina suffer no damage from physical blows and cannot be harmed by most spells. Elemental Ward will keep them at bay, and is usually enough to get them to move on; they are easily bored and will rarely have to patience to wait out a warding spell.

Conversely, the only way they can inflict damage is by throwing something at an opponent. The more valuable the object, the more likely it is to be used as an impromptu missile. Mujina attacks are intended to vex and harass, no more; their damage rating reflects this nonlethal tendency.

Nikumizu

Earth: 1

Water: 1

Fire: 1

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls when Attacking: 1k1

Damage: Does 4 Wounds per turn while attached.

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds: 2: +5; 4: Dead

Nikumizu are diminutive, grub-like things. They lurk in dark, moist crevasses – among rocks, in swamps, dead trees, under fallen logs or burrowed into the earth. They are about the size of a man's forefinger, and roughly the same shape. They are worm-like, with a thin, brittle shell that can be easily crushed within one's fist.

Their mouth parts are designed to pierce flesh and burrow into it. If a nikumizu succeeds in getting under the skin, it begins to feed on muscle tissue, starting wherever it entered (usually somewhere on the limbs or extremities) and moving toward the torso at a rate of about three inches a minute. As this extremely painful feast continues, the affected portions of the victim's body become useless – permanently, unless magical healing is employed.

Special Abilities:

When a nikumizu has squirmed beneath the skin of an opponent, their attack is automatically successful, and deals 4 Wounds each turn. Once attached, they can only be removed by a character

proficient in Medicine. The procedure itself deals 2k2 Wounds to the recipient for each Nikumizu to be removed.

Ratling, Typical

Earth: 2

Fire: 3

Water: 2

Air: 1

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2

Rolls For Damage: 4k2 (spear)

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds per Level: 10: +5; 18: Dead

See page 121 for more detailed Ratling information.

Ratling "Shugenja"

Earth: 2

Fire: 2

Water: 3

Air: 2

Rolls When Attacking: 2k1

Rolls For Damage: 3k1 (knife)

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds per Level: 7: +5; 15: Dead

Spell Casting: Ratling shamen use barbaric rituals (such as bleeding) rather than scrolls to cast their spells. A Ratling shaman may know three spells whose TN's cannot exceed 15, all of which can be cast without scrolls.

Ratling Bushi

Earth: 4

Fire: 4

Water: 2

Air: 2

Rolls When Attacking: 4k4

Rolls For Damage: 6k2 (sword) (Some have superior weapons which give them 7k3.)

TN to be Hit: 20 (sometimes 25 with Light Armor)

Wounds per Level: 10: +5; 20: +10; 30: Dead

Ratling Bushi can (and often do) use the armor and weapons of men that they've scavenged from fallen samurai.

Ogre

Earth: 2

Stamina: 6

Fire: 3

Water: 1

Strength: 6



Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 5k3

Rolls For Damage: 8k2 (big club, maybe small tree)

TN to be Hit: 20

Carapace: 7

Wounds per Level: 15: +5; 30: +10; 45: +15; 60: Dead

While huge and strong (and far more clever than their smaller cousins), ogres still lack certain advantages that human beings take for granted. They have no social structure and cannot organize into large groups. They lack the skills to make tools, surviving instead on hunting and banditry. And their battle tactics – while terrifying – have no finesse, and skilled samurai can usually find ways to defeat them.

Ogres are solitary creatures, only gathering together in times of great upheaval. They subsist by waylaying travelers, or by hunting the great beasts that prowl the Shadowlands. Of all Fu Leng's creatures, they are the most likely to be found in Rokugan proper, since their small numbers make it easier for them to penetrate Crab defenses. See page 135 for more information about ogres.

Tanglevine (Fudoshi)

Earth: 3

Water: 0

Fire: 0

Air: 1

Rolls when Attacking: 1k1 (special)

Rolls for Damage: none

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds: 5: Dead (each vine)

It is only fitting that one of the few forms of vegetation that will grow in the Corrupted Lands is as deadly as many of its creatures. This unobtrusive vine grows in tangled mats on the ground in many areas of the Shadowlands. If one steps into its midst, the tendrils instantly begin to rustle and tighten, reaching up to coil around arms, legs and necks. If unable to escape its clutches, the victim will eventually be smothered by the plant's constricting coils.

The plant seems to gain no sustenance from its victims, and most likely the fudoshi's sole purpose is to acquire bodies to rise as zombies in the service of Fu Leng.

Special Abilities:

When the tanglevine attacks, it rolls and keeps a number of dice equal to the number of vines (tentacles) striking at the victim, up to a maximum of 10 strikes a round – the largest fudoshi known to exist. If the victim is struck successfully, he temporarily loses one point of Agility per attached vine. For example, a large fudoshi strikes with six vines, rolling 1k1 six times, and hits with three. The

victim immediately loses three points of Agility. If the victim's Agility reaches 0, he is immobilized and loses consciousness in a number of rounds equal to his Willpower unless freed by an outside source.

Victims will rise as a zombie approximately 24 hours after they are killed.

Troll

Earth: 2

Stamina: 5

Fire: 3

Water: 1

Strength: 5

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 5k3

Rolls For Damage: 6k2 (big club, maybe small tree)

TN to be Hit: 30 **Carapace:** 7

Wounds per Level: 10: +5; 20: +10; 40: +15; 55: Dead

The green, flabby, but powerful trolls prefer to attack from ambush, and are much more likely to be met in the swamplier parts of the Shadowlands than sneaking through Rokugan proper. If faced with superior forces, trolls disappear and remain out of sight until their foes are gone. They fight with all the ferocity they can muster until at least one of their number has been slain. When traveling through the Shadowlands swamps, it is imperative to maintain constant vigilance for these dangerous foes, and to give them a wide berth if at all possible. See page 137 for more information about trolls.

Zombie

Earth: 0

Stamina: 3

Water: 1

Strength: 3

Fire: 1

Air: 0

Rolls When Attacking: 1k1

Rolls For Damage: 5k2 (improvised weapons – many do only 4k1)

TN to be Hit: 5

Carapace: 7

Wounds per Level: 60: Dead (see below)

Special Abilities:

Immune to Pain: Zombies take half damage from slashing weapons (round down) and ¼ damage from crushing weapons.

Invulnerable: Whenever a Zombie suffers 15 or more Wounds from a single blow, it loses a random limb:



- 1-2: Left arm
- 3-4: Right arm
- 5-6: Left leg
- 7-8: Right leg
- 9: Cut in half
- 10: Decapitated

If a zombie loses an arm or leg, the arm or leg slithers behind the zombie, keeping up the best it can. The zombie cannot reattach the limb. If it is an arm, the hand will try to attack anyone within reach. Zombies take no TN penalties from Wounds.

If the zombie is disemboweled (cut in half), the top half will continue to claw after its targets. If the zombie is decapitated, it collapses and dissolves into black ooze the next morning.

Lesser Oni

Oni no Gekido

Earth: 4/6/2

Water: 3/7/2

Fire: 5/7/3

Air: 4/5/2

Attacking: 5k5/7k7/3k2

Damage: 3k3/7k7/2k2

TN to be Hit: 20/25/10 **Carapace:** 3/8/0

Wounds: 40: +5; 50: +10; 60: +15; 100: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear: 2 in normal state, *Fear:* 4 in Rage

Oni no Gekido usually has the first set of stats – Earth 4, Water 3, Carapace 3, etc. Keep track of each time Oni no Gekido rolls a 10. When it's rolled five 10s, it rages for 1–10 rounds.

While in its Rage state, Gekido uses the second set of stats – Fire 7, Carapace 8, etc. For the first two rounds of Rage, it is immune to normal weapons and all spells cast at it have their TN increased by 20. Once the Rage ends, the third set of stats are used (Earth 2, Fire 3, etc.) for 1–10 rounds.

When in a normal state, Gekido is a tough opponent, but when it flies into its fits of Rage, it is nearly impossible to kill. The Rage starts randomly and without warning – there is not necessarily a trigger. Rages usually last from 5–10 minutes. In the first two minutes, Oni no Gekido is unstoppable and immune to all attacks, physical and magical. It will destroy anything in its path. As the Rage subsides, it becomes increasingly vulnerable and weak. After the Rage has ended, Gekido is at its most fragile for a period of about two minutes. In this state it will attempt to keep its distance

and gather its strength. A relatively weak attack could possibly destroy it in this state.

Oni no Gekido delights in the destruction it causes when enraptured in its terrifying rage, flinging itself about to smash buildings, trees, anything in its way. Entire villages have been destroyed by Oni no Gekido's fury. Those fortunate enough to survive tell tales of its high-pitched, maniacal laughter, and its slithering, hissing voice as it whispers fervent praise to its Dark Master.

Oni no Ugulu

Earth: 6

Fire: 2

Water: 2

Strength: 8

Air: 1

Rolls when attacking: 4k2

Roll for damage: 8k3 (claws) 8k4 (tree club)

TN to be Hit: 10

Carapace: 16/special

Wounds: 20: +5; 45: +10; 60: +15; 75: +25; 100: Dead

Special Abilities:

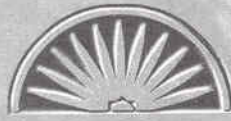
Fear: 4

Immune to all arrows except armor piercing

Each Ugulu is immune to one or more spells. Each such Oni is different, and the spell to which each is immune is chosen by the GM for each one.

Towering over thirteen feet tall, Oni no Ugulu is a big, ugly brute with a nasty temper. Its footsteps shake the ground and its bellows and growling laughter echo across the land as it approaches. It has a thick purplish hide, covered with coarse hair. Normal arrows bounce harmlessly off it, though armor piercers can sometimes penetrate if fired from close range. With its great horns, glowing eyes and tongue like a serpent of flame, Oni no Ugulu strikes terror in all who lay eyes upon it.

It attacks mainly with great sweeps of its massive, clawed hands. A solid strike by Oni no Ugulu can crush a man's bones to powder. While it lacks skill and strategic cunning, its strength and stamina are great, and it may take a dozen or more men to bring it down by normal means. The Rokugani have not yet discovered its variable magical immunity, and think that it is still vulnerable to any magical attack. Those who have discovered the true state of affairs have generally not been in a condition afterwards to report their findings to the Empire.



The Living Darkness

The Beginning

When Mother Sun and Father Moon gave names to all that they beheld, something, a little slip of nothing, did not want a name.

– Goju's Celestial Agonies

The Living Darkness is literally as old as the world. In fact, it is the last remainder of the primordial stuff that made up the universe before the Sun and Moon named the world, giving it form and shape.

Because the Living Darkness never took a name, it was never bound to a shape. In its purest form, the Darkness has changed little in the passing millennia. It is a single entity. It is aware. And more recently, it is hungry. The Darkness has no shape of its own, but at some point in time, perhaps by accident, it stumbled into a formed, sentient entity. It no longer matters if that first consumption was man or animal. The darkness discovered that what it ate, it could be without losing its "nothingness". And by being, it could affect.

The Living Darkness has changed little in the scheme of things, but it has changed steadily. It absorbs all that it destroys, keeping and mingling the memories and minds, the victories and the vices of its prey. The individual personalities of its victims have no impact on the whole. Similar to dropping a coin into the ocean, the impact is too small to be noticed by any but the coin and its owner. But over time, the basic, consistent nature of its quarry has touched the Darkness.

In a very real sense, the prey has taught the hunter. The nature of the Darkness has shifted with the ages in which it's fed. When men roamed in open fields of grass and faced each dawn with the single concern of seeking out sustenance and a safe place to sleep,

the Darkness did the same. When men settled in villages and began to cultivate his fields and domesticate his animals, the Darkness learned contentment. Eventually, men's villages became cities, and he raised armies to defend them and to go out and take the lands of other men. From this age, the Darkness has learned ambition and the value of power.

The Darkness' hunger has grown specific. Like a hound, it scents power as if it were blood. This doesn't mean that the Living Darkness is out to devour every daimyo and karo in Rokugan. Real power doesn't always rest with those in positions of authority. It strikes one at a time, selectively taking targets that may have no apparent worth in and of themselves. Like a game of Go, a stone placed in the beginning of the game can win the day.

Some have speculated that the Darkness seeks the key to Rokugani magic, because that is where real power lies. Since it was never properly named, the Darkness remains outside the natural order, and so has no real connection to it. Fearful voices have whispered that it is raising armies of nameless legions to march on and enslave humanity. Still others fear that the Darkness seeks to steal so many names that it eventually undoes the act of creation performed by Lady Sun and Father Moon, returning everything to the primal state in which the Darkness itself exists.

Evidence can be found to support any and all of these claims. People in places of high office have been taken, but so have those who were apparently of no account. There are very few people in Rokugan who are even aware of the existence of the Darkness. And of those, fewer still have any real understanding of what it is doing. If the Darkness has a single, defined objective, no one has yet been able to determine what it might be. It may not even be possible for anyone who has lived out less than one life to comprehend the machinations of an entity with countless years and lifetimes behind it.

The Scorpion Connection

Not surprisingly, the ones who have the most knowledge of the nameless entity are the Scorpion. Specifically, there are those among the Shosuro family that know of a Shadow deeper than the one they walk in. First year Shosuro ninja cadets are all called for a special review at the end of each year. They stand in a line, shoulder to shoulder, no man touching another. They do this just at twilight. While the students wait, their teachers all stand before them, swathed in full cloaks, the same gray as the dusk. With them is another figure, dressed in the same cloak but seemingly darker, as if the fading light of day refuses to touch him. This stranger walks down the line and, reaching out with one long, dark hand, touches each of the recruits in turn.



To some, the touch is feather light, as if a mild breeze had slipped past them. Others experience a deep chill and afterwards find patches like frostbite on their skin where the fingers rested. On rare occasions, some have been known to go mad on the spot, frothing and convulsing on the ground. Their fellow students tell of their faces warping and their limbs twisting as if their bodies could no longer reconcile themselves to their own shape. The families of these students are sent polite letters explaining that their offspring did not survive the training process. But always one or two students do not return for exercises the next day. Their fellow students are informed that they have gone away for specialized schooling. The parents of these students also receive a letter saying that their children will not be returning home.

The truth is that Darkness still remembers its old bargain with Shosuro. When the first Thunders walked into the Shadowlands to fight the dark might of Fu Leng, only Shosuro returned. Most Rokugani know the story of how Shosuro lived just long enough to pass on the Black Scrolls before succumbing to her wounds. But there are those among the Scorpion Clan who tell a different ending. They whisper that Shosuro returned changed, and that the day Shosuro was seen no more was the day that Soshi appeared with his shadow brands.

Soshi and the Darkness

After Shosuro's very public demise in the Emperor's palace, her body was carried back to Scorpion lands. Her clothes and mask were burned in a very private ceremony, attended only by Bayushi, a few of his closest advisors, and a young shugenja that had not previously appeared in Bayushi's court. However, there were no witnesses to the cremation of Shosuro's actual body.

As the badly wounded Shosuro was struggling on the long trip out of the Shadowlands, she realized she would not reach the lands of the Empire. But Shosuro had been aware for several days of a strange presence that had watched the entire battle with Fu Leng, and had never made itself known. Sensing it nearby, and knowing that the Black Scrolls must reach Rokugan, Shosuro called out to the presence.

The Living Darkness had followed Shosuro and the other Thunders since they entered the Shadowlands. Whether it was drawn by a strength previously unknown to it, or knew of their coming, the legends do not say. Shosuro is said to have claimed that it watched as they fought and defeated Fu Leng. When the last Thunder began to make her way back to where she'd come from, it followed her. The Darkness was hungry for so great a power, so painfully close. But it could sense that even at the moment of death and greatest pain, it was still too small to overtake them.

When Shosuro called for the Darkness to come, it went to her eagerly. Although Shosuro did not recognize what she had found, she knew that it may hold her only hope of escape. It spoke to her without words, and offered strength – in exchange for servitude.

"I will give you what you cannot take," Shosuro offered. "But it will be on my terms or not at all."

And so the Darkness gave itself to Shosuro, and she gave herself to it, and together, they re-entered Rokugan. Shosuro knew the danger of what she brought, but she also had seen the carnage wrought by the Evil Kami. If it were a choice between Fu Leng's return, or the slow invasion of Shadow, she preferred the Darkness.

She had no concept of the immensity of her decision. Although the Nameless Darkness seemed small and weak, she could not have conceived the strength to which it would grow... over a thousand years, and a thousand nameless souls.

Shosuro placed her confidence in Rokugan's ability to find some way, over time, to fight back the Darkness. But even a Scorpion can't always strike the perfect bargain. In her desperation, Shosuro overestimated her ability to control her shadow.

She returned as she'd planned, and delivered the Black Scrolls, but she also carried something more. In the bag with the scrolls, she carried an item which the Darkness coveted, a hand made of a blackness so deep it seemed made of shadow itself. Given to her by the Darkness, the Obsidian Hand held not only the flesh of a God, but a piece of the soul of the Shadow.

After her scene at Otosan Uchi, Shosuro playacted her own demise, the perfect way to keep her secrets within the Scorpion Clan. Bayushi, her most trusted ally, had her 'body' brought to Scorpion lands where Shosuro took on the identity of Soshi, a shugenja capable of a new kind of magic: the magic of Darkness. The brands which Shosuro/Soshi gave to her allies, her servants and her children is drawn from the very Shadow substance in Soshi's own body and spirit. Of the souls it touches, one in fifteen are taken by the Darkness... never to return. These nameless souls have been the price of Shosuro's bargain for a thousand years.

Soshi, now ensconced in his identity as Bayushi's new head shugenja, assisted his lord in the construction of Bayushi castle. But that was where the plan began to fade.

Soshi had intended to keep the Darkness subjugated to his will, using it as he had always used others. But Soshi now found himself becoming further and further adrift from his old life. He began to suspect that the very idea of taking on a new identity was not his own, but the Darkness'. In this new identity, everything was less sure than it had been, and foothold was all the Darkness required. Suddenly, all of Soshi's identities began to muddle, each one trying to break away as the Darkness offered each in turn its own chance



at power. The control that Soshi had mastered began to unravel as the distraught Bayushi watched helplessly.

Prowling ears could hear voices coming from Soshi's chambers late into the night. Bayushi's voice would ask questions, sometimes outlandish, other times bizarrely simple. He would ask after the nature of shadow, and how one could walk on nothing. Then he would plead to know Soshi's favorite season, sounding as if his heart would break.

Sometimes it was Soshi's voice that answered, but other times, it might be any of a dozen other voices, men and women. And on occasion, the listener might even believe that it was the dead Shosuro's voice that answered.

Still, Soshi continued their ruse. He appeared in court regularly at the side of Bayushi, and introduced *Shinobi*, shadow magic, to the Scorpion. But Bayushi was never quite the same, seeming always a little sad, a little distracted.

Goju

The story of the lost family of Goju is unknown to the Empire, and even the Ikoma cannot tell the tale. Goju's singular work on the Darkness, the *Celestial Agonies*, was never shared with the Clans. The Scorpion have no record of it among their secrets, the Ikoma libraries do not know of it, and even the Emperor's records do not contain a copy of the Black Text.

Little is known of the Goju, save for brief mentions of a mortal by that name, at the beginning of the world. When the *Kami* chose their Great Clans, Goju fled in terror, hoping to escape their influence. Perhaps it was Goju's weakness that drew the Darkness to him, or perhaps it recognized Goju's fear as kin to its own. It is certain that the Goju are not a 'family,' at least not anymore. Although they may have all once been descended from the original Goju, they are certainly no longer simply composed of relatives. Instead, the Goju include his descendants, as well as those transformed by the Darkness who desperately seek to retain their name. Sorcerers of shadow, they are all that the Shosuro wish to be, but cannot attain. Where Shosuro had her Bayushi, the Goju had no such undying loyalty, nothing to keep them from turning fully to the Lying Darkness.

Their magic is not *maho*, nor is it the way of the *Kami* (both of which the lost minions of the Shadow are incapable of using). It is true *Shinobi*, the art of twisting reality by giving form to formlessness, and removing form to create substance. There are no members of the Goju family who are not Shadow-corrupted, and they remain loyal to their dark ally through all its incarnations. They expect nothing more than to be taken by the Darkness (and thus, given a form of immortality) when they have served their use. This

strange mutation of *bushido* serves the Lying Darkness well, and it uses its minions mercilessly.

The Goju allow the Shadow to take them as it pleases, and use their power for as long as the Shadow allows them to exist. In return, the Shadow has taught the Goju its deepest secrets and most powerful horrors. They are the masters of *shinobi*, but servants of the greater Shadow. The bandits which Kaagi met in the Unicorn Chase were most likely led by Goju, fanatic bushi completely willing to die to free their companion.

All true Goju have a Void of 0, representing their separation from the Sun and Moon, and the Darkness's theft of their innermost identity.

Ninja

It is important to note that not every ninja is a part of the Living Darkness. Nor is every Shosuro training facility a home to it. But there are places that few have seen where young men and women train in a stranger form of stealth than at most Shosuro schools.

The Living Darkness gives some of its substance to the Shosuro family; out of this they craft their Shadow Brands, calling on the formlessness of the Darkness itself. Shadow brands are a diluted form of the raw Shadow substance that the Darkness uses when it creates minions. Although the Shosuro claim the 'dye' is made from the leaves of a poisonous plant, the truth is that even they do not know what the 'brands' are created from. The leaves of the plant they use stain the skin, true, but easily washes away. When the brands are administered, during the *tejina* ceremonies, the *kage yakiin* is applied, first with the plant, and then... with Darkness.

Because the art of *kage-yakiin*, or *kage-do*, uses only a fraction of the Darkness, it takes longer for the branded individual to be affected. It requires two shadow brands to achieve one Shadow Point (see page 149). Once this occurs, the individual in question has the attention of the Living Darkness, and each subsequent brand equals one more Shadow Point.

A messenger of Darkness comes every year and chooses a handful of Shosuro students to be its arms and legs, its eyes and ears. These students finish training in isolated compounds. The buildings, all one story, are built of a slick, black wood unlike that found anywhere else in Rokugan. The students live in a dormitory, sleeping through the days and attending classes at night. Their masters, all identical in appearance, teach them to become one with the dark. As the students learn of the Darkness, it learns them as well, so that by the end of their 'training' they have become a part of the Darkness. It can then use their forms at will, wear their faces, know what they knew. This is the first of the three forms of Possession.



The Powers of the Darkness

The Darkness's best weapon is its very nature, being unbound to a single shape. It can look like anyone or anything, becoming solid in whatever form it chooses, familiar or bestial. Or it can take no shape at all, free to move through solid substances. In its natural unform, regular weapons can't harm it, although if it is assuming a material shape and does not want to give up the ruse, it may feign injury. Jade and most conventional magics are also ineffectual. Despite its resemblance to shadows and its mimicry of them, the nature of the Darkness is not affected by normal light.

However, light reflected through the facets of crystal shines through any representation or manifestation of the Living Darkness, and injures its physical minions.

The Darkness is in a unique position of extreme power mixed with strict limitations. Because it exists outside the natural order of things, it can only directly affect those who invite it into themselves. However, over the years it has learned craft and through that, it knows a hundred ways to work its way through those openings. The Darkness will attempt to find a weak spot, a place where it can gain a hook in its intended prey. Once it has done so, it is free to attempt to use its powers. The greater the Darkness's hold, the easier it becomes to affect the individual in the future.

However, if the Darkness cannot gain some advantage with its intended prey, then it can affect them only through its minions, men and women that have allowed it in, and so have given it control over them. The Goju make the perfect weapons for the Darkness in cases such as these.

What Makes a Character Vulnerable

The Darkness looks for things that are unbalanced in people. The best defense is a passive one. Having a high Void rank goes a long way toward protecting a person from the Darkness. Characters with any obsessive qualities are more susceptible. Also, letting desire or ambition cloud one's judgment, and accepting gifts from the Darkness, gives it a clear road in.

Another tool of the Living Darkness is fear. The fear that made it hide from the Sun and the Moon is the only legitimate feeling it has ever experienced. Everything else has been an imitation of the feelings and sensations it has witnessed in those around it. But it understands fear, and associates fear with power since its own terror of Sun and Moon keeps it hidden still. Through the years the Darkness has become expert at invoking the deep sense of horror that makes its victims more vulnerable.

There are three methods by which the Darkness grows. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. And any one of these can be practiced on man or beast.

Absorption

This is the most time-consuming, but also the most profitable course. Absorption is an intimate process by which the Darkness draws the victim in a piece at a time, slowly stealing away everything that makes him or her an individual. Sometimes this process is voluntary (as it is with the Shosuro cadets), although the victim normally doesn't understand the enormity of what is occurring. The Darkness lures in the victim, either by giving them special abilities or by breaking down their barriers, emotionally and mentally.

Objects of the Absorption gradually find that they do not remember certain things about their lives: their favorite color, the name of their sister, which knee they scarred as a child. Outwardly, they also become less and less themselves. Their features lose their distinctiveness until there is nothing that identifies them from any other face. Eventually, these features will slip away, leaving only a physical shell as smooth as a pebble. By the time this occurs, the Darkness has completely stolen their identities, taking them as its own.

After this has been accomplished, the Darkness may use any knowledge or ability that the victim possessed. (This does not include sorcerous abilities; being outside the laws of nature, the

The Lying Darkness

The Lying Darkness. The Shadow. The Dark Madness. Ninja. The Living Darkness. Walking Nightmares. Insanity's Maw. The Enemy. The Word. The Deep Nothing.

The Shadow has many names in Rokugani folklore, and anyone who speaks of it may use a new term. The Unicorn, remembering the name their forefathers gave it long ago, most frequently refer to it as the "Lying Darkness." It has no name of its own, and no mortal being can give it one. In fact, it has become so strong that even the Sun and Moon may be unable to name it if they tried. The namelessness of this entity reveals its greatest strength....

It is nothing at all.



Living Darkness is unable to wield the raw elemental forces that constitute Rokugani magic.) It can also wear the form whenever it chooses. When the Shadow does this, the form is, for all intents, solid. It can be touched, smelled, etc. But it can also be unraveled whenever convenient. Rokugan is filled with stories of the ninja shape-shifter, a creature able to wear any form of its choosing and to disappear like smoke. In actuality, there is no limit to the numbers of these beings because they are not separate entities at all, but extensions of the Living Darkness.

The best defense against this kind of attack is a passive one. The higher a character's Void ranking, the more difficult it will be for the Living Darkness to affect them. Characters who spend time alone in the presence of the Darkness experience confusion. Even if their Void is high enough to prevent their being taken, their minds will be fuddled as if waking from a deep sleep.

Mimicry

The Darkness can also mimic any form it chooses. The individual being copied is not affected in any way by this copying process. However, if the Darkness intends to keep the form for any length of time and does not want to chance interference, it may do away with the original, either destroying the body or leaving it somewhere it won't be found.

Although this method is much easier and requires almost no time, the Darkness does not receive any of the benefits of absorption. It cannot draw on the memories and abilities of the victim, and the copy is poorer, since the Darkness has only what it has observed to draw from. Intimate acquaintances will notice things awry. The eye color may not be exact. The copy may be left-handed instead of right. Copies also do not have the victim's knowledge to draw on. However, if the *doppelgänger* is dealing only with those who did not know the original, the facade may hold up very well.

Corruption

The Darkness also keeps physical minions. It imparts special abilities to a willing vessel in return for the target's service. However, the nature of the Darkness's formlessness is eventually incompatible with material forms. Physical side effects result after only a brief time in this kind of relationship. Much like the Shosuro cadets who were unable to withstand the touch of the Darkness, these vessels begin to shift. Their features do not fade, but they cease to fit, giving the faces an asymmetrical, deformed quality. The bodies respond in kind; one leg becomes too long, or the fingers on a hand no longer all bend in the same direction. These minions are extensions of the Living Darkness, and as such, their forms are subject to its will. Initially, the Darkness can exert sufficient control over the minion's form to keep it from degrading very badly. Eventually maintaining

the extension's integrity requires too much attention from the Darkness. When this happens, it withdraws its support entirely, leaving the minion to its fate in a body which no longer possesses enough cohesiveness to function. These creatures don't normally last more than a few hours or days before expiring horribly, their limbs and internal organs twisted and rearranged.

In exchange for its minions' total obedience, the Darkness moves them at incredible speeds, using its influence on them to make them briefly less substantial. This allows them to attack and disappear at amazing rates. The Darkness can give them fantastic powers of stealth, advanced bodily functions such as exceptional hearing or sight, and even limited *shinobi* abilities once they are prepared and have proven their loyalty.

The Darkness in Dreams

The Darkness has learned that humans are more susceptible to suggestion while asleep. It is not an unusual tactic for it to visit its victims in dreams, offering them gifts that they might never accept in the waking world, or else bringing them such extreme nightmares that they are emotionally distraught after waking.

Any Void resistance rolls made to resist the Shadow while asleep are at TN + 10. Also, dreamers who suffer from fear effects while under attack from the Darkness in their sleep will be unable to use Void the next day, giving the Darkness an advantage.

If a manifestation of the Darkness 'physically' attacks someone in his dreams, and is successful in 'killing' him there, the character must make a Void roll at TN 5 (have the player make this roll without knowing what TN he is attempting to reach – it provides more suspense, and enhances the feeling of risk). If he fails, he truly dies, leaving strange marks on his body – hand prints, bruises, and claw marks from the inside. The Darkness rarely attempts this, as it is an obvious, clumsy and ineffective – the Shadow's ultimate goal is not to kill, but to absorb. Anything less is a waste of effort.

The Darkness also knows how to take advantage of emotional ties between people. By maintaining an emotional link with someone who already belongs to the Darkness, characters leave themselves open to attack. When the Darkness wears the form of someone dear to a PC, he must make his Void resistance roll at a TN + 5.

Shadow Bolts

When the Darkness gives power to a minion, it spreads some of its own substance into the pawn. The receptacle's own body struggles to contain the darkness and keep its own form, but this can only be maintained for a limited period of time.

The Darkness uses a similar techniques as an attack. A fully corrupted minion (6 Shadow Points) can fling a solid bolt of its own



material at a target, once per day. A physical creature struck by this attack experiences in an instant what takes weeks, months, or even years for a corrupted individual to undergo.

A minion of the Living Darkness which creates shadow bolts rolls 5k5 against their chosen target's TN to be hit. If the bolt hits, the target must roll his Void against the Shadow's To-Hit roll. If he is unsuccessful in matching the number, he receives 3k3 Wounds as the shadow bolt enters his body, exploding with the raw stuff of nothing. Further shadow-bolts will continue to harm him, until he finds himself literally unforming where he stands, his features and limbs slipping out of place until they physically break into nothing.

A recipient of a shadow bolt who successfully resists the damaging effects of the attack is still infected with the Darkness. The Shadow will always know where the character is, and the character will be plagued by nightmares, manifestations, and other attacks by the Darkness as it attempts to complete the conversion. He will feel occasional hands within his body, pressing outward, and his vision will shift and change from time to time. In effect, he will never be rid of the Living Shadow, and it will never allow him to be free of its influence. His body will begin a slow breakdown, resulting in a subtle shifting of features, and the rise of unusual marks or slightly shortened (or lengthened) fingers, toes, or limbs.

Because shadow bolts are not physical, they can not be removed with medicine or surgical skills, even if an entire limb is amputated. There is no physical sign of the infestation other than the faint 'twisting' of the body, and there is absolutely no sign of Shadowlands Taint.

Only a full manifestation of the actual Darkness can perform the shadow bolts. Minions – creatures with less than 6 shadow points – don't have the capacity.

The Swarm and other Physical Manifestations

The Darkness cannot create new ideas, but it can imitate anything it has observed, and since the world was created, it has had quite a lot of time. It is capable of reproducing creatures it has seen, altering them slightly to suit itself. A swarm, for instance, is similar to any mass of flying insects, but it performs as an extension of the Darkness' whole being.

The Lying Darkness can also create a pocket of blackness, the absence of light, by un-naming the things that the affected observer sees. This is a temporary process, lasting only a few moments. The Darkness is actually only borrowing the name briefly, but by doing so creates an isolated void, a small space of nothing. The intended effect is to unnerve the target, pushing for yet another opening through which to insinuate itself.

Darker Possibilities

There are rumors of one more manifestation of the Living Darkness. Isawa Kaede's mother, Ninube, was a manifestation of the Darkness, but her father was a human man. Kaede's father, the Master of Void, named her at birth, and seems to have banished the Shadows from her, leaving her entirely human. But this known incident leaves open the possibility of other similar occurrences. As of yet, there is no definitive understanding of what a child half human and half Shadow might be capable of. Perhaps Kaede, child

Shadow Points	Ability	Description
1	Stealth	The PC receives a bonus of 2 dice, rolled and kept, to any actions which involve stealth.
2	Swiftiness	The PC can travel quickly across small or great distances (up to a number of feet equal to 100 x their total Shadow Points) instantly, up to a number of times equal to their Shadow Points. Their body moves as shadow; stepping into one patch of darkness and out another (both shadows must be large enough to encompass the character's normal form). They may not pass through solid objects with this ability (see below).
3	Insubstantiality	As the PC becomes increasingly attuned to the Darkness they can become less solid, allowing them to take half damage from normal weapons, but they receive twice normal damage from crystal weapons. Further, they may (with 1 round of concentration) pass through solid objects with a successful Stamina roll at TN of 5 (paper), 10 (wood), 20 (stone), 30 (metal or flesh) a number of times per day equal to their Shadow Points.
4	Mimicry	This is the last stage at which the player still retains control of the character. They still have much of their minds, but are on the edge of losing control of their bodies, which are becoming twisted and obviously mutated. This less solid state allows them to duplicate the Darkness' trick of mimicry, appearing as anyone they have observed. The detail of the copy is exact, and can only be discovered with a successful Perception roll versus the Shadow minion's Intelligence x 5.



of a Goju (Doji Ninube, mother of the recent Ninube line of *shinobi*) and a mortal, will know in time.

The Weaknesses of Darkness

Aside from avoiding the Living Darkness, maintaining a high Void Ring, and trying to stay clear of temptation, there is very little a PC can do against a direct manifestation. The only defense which has been discovered so far came back from the Burning Sands with the Unicorn.

When her children were all devoured, Lady Sun cried, and her tears fell to earth. When Hantei cut open the Moon's stomach, drops of his blood fell and mixed with the tears, creating men. However, not all of Lady Sun's tears mixed with Lord Moon's blood. Those that fell to the ground and lay alone slowly hardened, until they were bright, clear stones... crystal. These remnants of the Sun still have enough of a kinship with their owner to affect the Darkness. They still possess a fragment of her True Sight. This is why light refracted through crystal can see through the Darkness. It's also why the Living Darkness can't pass through crystal. The substance is older even than the Darkness.

Characters may not be able to use this as a very potent weapon against the Darkness, but it may buy them a bit of time, or protect them from some of the minor manifestations. Even in small doses, it is helpful in determining whether someone is a part of the Living Darkness. If the light strikes a creature corrupted by the Darkness, it causes that creature 3k2 Wounds. Physical minions and those not fully converted can also be fought and destroyed by conventional means. Some attacks will be more effective than others depending on which abilities the Darkness has granted them.

The Darkness and Your PCs

There are several things to consider when introducing the Living Darkness into your game. It is more powerful than the characters. It is not a fair enemy. It is not something that can be foiled and defeated once and for all. The Darkness is a primal force. The PCs cannot stop typhoons from occurring; all they can do is weather any given storm.

In short, the PCs cannot completely defeat the Darkness as an entity, so don't put them in a position where they have to. The Darkness is a capricious enemy. Its motives are vague and its methods are obscure. The characters' exposure should therefore be limited to dealing with specific incidents.

It is critical to remember that having a PC absorbed by the Shadow is tantamount to killing the character. (You, the GM, take

control of the character to use it as a pawn of the Darkness.) Therefore, the same cautions and considerations that apply to killing a PC need to apply here as well. When you're using the Darkness in your game, the characters should feel as if they are threatened in a very real way. There should be consequences to their actions and their inactions alike. However, before a character is devoured, they should have put their own foot into things.

The Darkness is an intimate enemy. For it to use many of its powers on an individual, the character needs to have given it an opportunity. Dangle carrots for your players. Give them the chance to open their own door to the enemy. If they do so, regularly, then the chances of the Darkness gaining a foothold is increased.

There are a number of ways to tempt your characters, some subtle, some not. Let's assume that your players encounter the Darkness and it chooses to try to Possess them. The PCs must make a resistance roll, using their Void against a TN of 20, modified by the circumstances of the 'attack': using a loved one's face, or if the character has the remains of a shadow bolt inside them, raises the TN by 5. Other circumstances can raise this number even higher, as the situation demands. Each time the character fails, the Darkness gains a point of influence with the character. When these points of influence become higher than the character's Void ring, the character has been completely absorbed by the Darkness, and can no longer be played as a PC. Every time your player accepts some boon from the Darkness, a power, a favor, an influence, etc. the resistance TN is permanently raised by an additional 5.

Remember, even if the characters are unwilling to allow the Darkness in, or if they are strong enough to avoid contamination, they can still be affected by the physical minions.

Touched By The Darkness

Odds are that eventually one of your PCs may be corrupted by the Darkness. Whether this occurs inadvertently or deliberately on their part, it brings up several issues for you as the Game Master.

Baiting the Trap

In any good RPG session, the characters have at least some control over their fates. The things that they do should affect the outcome, even if the results aren't necessarily the ones they expect. It's important that at the end of a game session, your players be able to look back and say, "I can see that what I did in the beginning affected the end of the game."

This is especially true when the things that happen directly affect the player's character. For the purpose of infecting PCs with the Living Darkness, it is of the utmost importance that they have at least some choice in the matter. Before you introduce the Darkness



into your existing game, take a bit of time, and develop a plan of attack for each of your players. Take into consideration the character's personality: a predisposition toward power, a revenge obsession, etc. These things would attract the Darkness. Then, decide on a strategy to tempt them into giving the Darkness a doorway in.

Tailor each introduction to the characters' weak points, since this is how the Darkness would begin. A crude example might be to approach a PC known for his ambition and lack of moral fortitude and offer him the opportunity to join outright. In exchange for swearing allegiance to a new master, he will be granted powers of increased stealth, etc. How much of the nature of his new master you reveal is up to you.

This is a great opportunity to play off of your PCs' disadvantages and backgrounds as well, the things that really make their characters unique. Offer your characters things they want, but with strings attached. Put them on the table in front of them and let them look at them for a good long while. Let them think about it. For example, if a character took the Dark Secret disadvantage, give him the opportunity to get rid of it. Perhaps he has the misfortune of being under Benten's Curse; the Darkness can give him the illusion of beauty and charisma. It can get rid of the ghost that's haunting them. It can ease their craving for *sake*. It can offer them the head of their Sworn Enemy on the proverbial platter. It can even bring back their lost love. And it all looks so easy. There may be a cost, but how could it really compare with the satisfaction of your life's goal suddenly within your reach, or your most heartfelt desire in your grasp?

Consequences

Whenever a PC becomes contaminated, he is Marked by the Darkness. This Mark is similar to a Shadow Brand (see *Way of the Scorpion*), but exists on the inside of the individual's skin. It becomes visible, rising to the surface, whenever the individual actively uses a power of the Darkness. The Mark becomes more visible each time he achieves another Shadow Point as well. Eventually, it will become an obvious and permanently visible design. The design often appears in the form of twisted lines, similar to chains or dripping blood, but has no substance - the chains seem three-dimensional, but are flat against the skin, while the blood seems to run from the skin, but leaves no trail and no stain against clothing. The Mark always appears to have substance, but once touched or investigated, is no more than a stain upon the PC's skin.

Influence

Once the Darkness has a hold on the character, it begins to exert influence as well. The strength of this influence increases as the PC accumulates Shadow Points. Whenever it suits the storyline, the

Darkness may try to exert influence on affected PCs. When you decide that the Darkness is going to take a hand in events, use the following procedure to determine its success or failure.

The Darkness rolls one die for each Shadow Point the character possesses. If the action is in line with the personality of the PC, the target number is the character's Willpower x 2. If it is somewhat out of character, the target number is the character's Willpower x 5. If it is entirely against the PC's nature (such as turning and striking down another party member), the TN is the character's Willpower x 10.

As PCs accumulate more and more Shadow Points, they are likely to perform many out-of-character acts. Their features begin to fade, and other members of the party may start to notice the change. Other characters can roll their Air at a TN of 40 - (5 x the affected character's number of Shadow Points) to see if they notice something seriously amiss.

The Darkness in Your Game

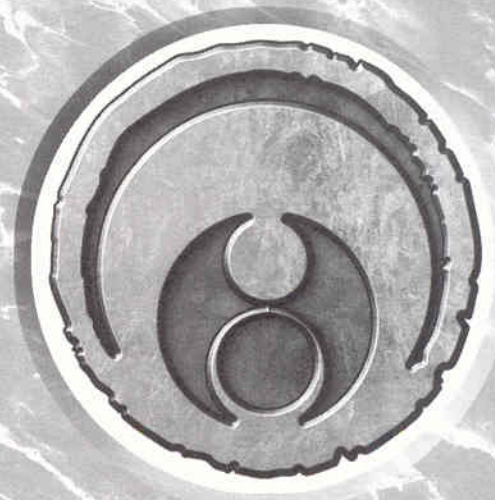
Here's some tips on deciding how best to use the Living Darkness in your game. As has already been stated, the Darkness is a vast entity. Trying to destroy it would be like trying to march out and slay the Fire Dragon. Therefore, avoid games where the goal is to get rid of it. Here are some other goals that may be more reasonable:

- They may stumble into knowledge revealing some or all of the nature of the Darkness. They make it their mission to seek out proof of its existence and reveal it to the rest of Rokugan in an effort to warn them.

- One or more of the characters may be infected with the Darkness and on the lookout for for any other traces of Shadow in the hope that they can somehow find a way to reverse the process. Although there is no cure, it may be possible to slow the process for a while. The closest anyone has come is Isawa Ujina, the Master of Void. (See the Who's Who section in *Way of the Phoenix* for Ujina's story.) After being struck with a bolt of pure Shadow substance, most would have succumbed immediately. But Ujina's affinity for Void and his immense will have allowed him to exist for years with the corruptive thorn still within him. It has warped his body obscenely, but has yet to claim him. He has been unable to remove it.

Another option is to not reveal the full nature of the Darkness to your players at all, but to have it appear at various points, mixed in with your more regular games. That way the characters can identify that something is amiss, but will be unable to pin down the precise details.

Chapter Four: Bushido



How to Run an L5R Campaign

"What you call T is merely a door that moves when you inhale and exhale."

– The Tao of Shinsei

Before an author begins writing a book, he has a rough idea about his characters. He knows about their strengths and weaknesses, a few of their characteristics and a vague idea of how they would act in different situations.

As much as this writer would like all GMs to aspire to be novelists, not all of us make our gaming societies the same way. Often in our home-brew campaigns (L5R or otherwise) we have a notion of where the world came from, who our gods are, where the King of a certain nation was born, and how often the volcanoes erupt. Maybe your style is to create the characters first and shape the environment to fit the clans you've made, putting an emphasis on the power hitters of your world. Or perhaps your games have been designed with a chunk of rock, and you add the people and nations like spices to the already existing terraform. In that case, the people are like everyday humans, merely moving through history with a real and determined fate. In these games the level of power would

be vastly lower, and the chance to influence the environment becomes less likely and less obvious. How you choose to play your Rokugan is up to you. Making the PCs weak so that they don't greatly disrupt the Clan War canon storyline is one thing, but remember that it's no fun to blow up the Death Star after Luke and Han have done it.

Players get an idea of the game world from reading the sourcebooks. If a game emphasizes the level of religious involvement in the campaign world, then the players can instantly see for themselves that there is a pious elite governing the dictates of daily life. Some games give the players every detail from the cost of tuna to the size of a bag of rice, while others play up the importance of the major conflicts and only lightly touch on specific cultural details, leaving GMs and players to guess at the significance of hand shakes and salutes.

It is the GM's duty to detail the most important facets of a campaign in advance. No player wants to find out, after spending seven character points on Poetry, that the adventures are on the Wall and in the Shadowlands; and no player wants to make a Unicorn explorer who spends his days guarding a thicket of rice from bandit raiders. The following information will detail how to assist the players in character creation and in aiming them in the right direction.

The Open Campaign

They've come to the table with a True Ronin, a Matsu Deathseeker, an Ide Courtier, an Isawa Void Shugenja, and a Kaiu Engineer. Now you have to give them a purpose to be together. This sort of game, where the players are allowed to make any characters they like and it is the duty of the GM to make them fit, is an Open Campaign. Open Campaigns allow players the freedom to take on characters that they would like to play but forces the GM to deal with the repercussions. We're not telling you not to play this sort of



campaign, but be prepared to do a lot of work and be flexible when you run one.

You can require your players to decide how their characters know one another. If the players know this going in, they may think twice about making widely divergent character types. If they are just finding out, talk briefly about the campaign and where it starts, and then let them brainstorm. Players that can come up with characters like these are likely to be able to flesh out their backgrounds well, and creativity should be encouraged.

PCs who play relatives of one another tend to create unkempt campaign environments, where stories of their childhood overwhelm the present setting, upsetting the fun for everyone. GMs may have to use a firm hand to direct this sort of story if the players are unable to get a workable concept going.

The magistrate game is not always ideal, either. Don't force them to play magistrates just because it suits your campaign. If you run an open campaign, remain open and go with what your players decide to do.

Encourage the PCs to adjust their character concepts slightly before the game starts in the service of party unity. The Matsu Deathseeker in the opening example might be able to change to an Otaku Battle Maiden with a little bit of work, while the Isawa Void shugenja could become a Kuni shugenja, reducing the number of represented clans to two from four. Often the most non-descript characters can be persuaded to join a team of real samurai, especially if they're looking for fealty, or are prisoners being returned to face trial. With a little bit of work, your campaign should start to look less like a costume party, and more like a story.

The Closed Campaign

In a closed campaign, you give the players guidelines for creating characters. Here, you let your players know what sort of campaign you have planned. This is exactly what a Campaign Handout is for.

Alert them to whatever storylines you are ignoring, and those you are focusing on.

The GM has a lot of control over the character creation process with this type of game. For instance, the GM may decide that only bushi or Crane characters will be allowed in the campaign. Perhaps he generates a select set of characters and the players must "dice off" to see who gets to pick. A less restrictive list could look like this:

1 Ise zumi

1 Bushi (any type)

1 Dishonored bushi – starts with Black Sheep and Social Disadvantage

1 Iuchi shugenja or 1 Kitsu shugenja

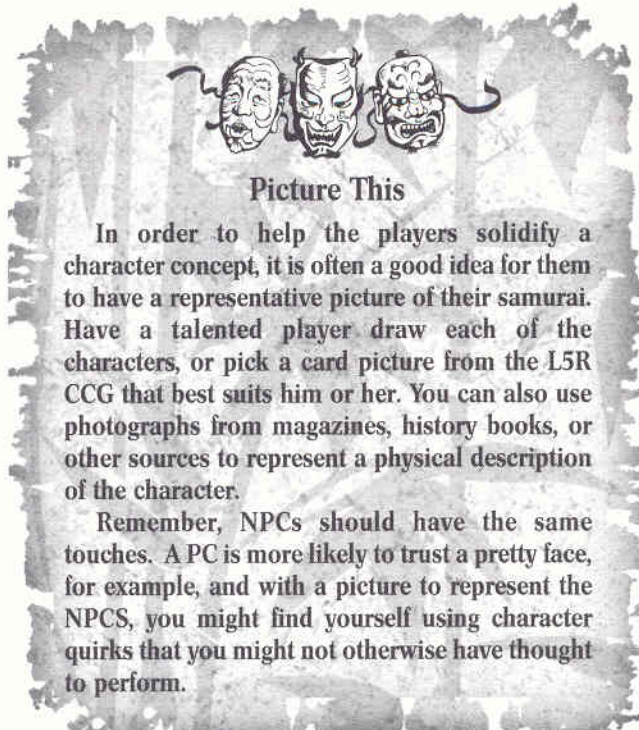
1 Ronin, true or ex-Lion

Only one of these characters may be a Clan or Imperial Magistrate. Only two of them may buy the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage.

GMs are encouraged to be as specific as they like with the Handouts and these characters, and to dedicate their first session of play to walking the players through the entire creation process. The closed campaign frees up the GM's time, but limits the players' options.

Compromise

Nothing is worse than a party in which one player whose character is killing peasants at an alarming rate, and the others have to sit back and watch their honor ratings plummet because they can't get him to stop and they don't want to be forced to kill another PC. While one player is free to do what he wants in this situation, it is at the cost of other players' integrity, and the role-playing is being compromised. Rather than meeting on a common ground between characters, the players are in extreme camps that refuse to budge, and that is no way for a team to get along. When one player begins to pollute the cord that binds the PCs together, it is time to cut the strand and set the PC adrift on a raft in the ocean.



Picture This

In order to help the players solidify a character concept, it is often a good idea for them to have a representative picture of their samurai. Have a talented player draw each of the characters, or pick a card picture from the L5R CCG that best suits him or her. You can also use photographs from magazines, history books, or other sources to represent a physical description of the character.

Remember, NPCs should have the same touches. A PC is more likely to trust a pretty face, for example, and with a picture to represent the NPC, you might find yourself using character quirks that you might not otherwise have thought to perform.



Adventure Themes

*"For the coward there is no life.
For the hero, there is no death."*

– *Kakita Toshimoko*

Running an adventure is the core of any gaming session. Without the adventure as a reference, there is no way to gauge the flow of action. Most adventures are simple, straightforward, and short. They include a single plot, a few important NPCs, a twist or two, and a climax to bring it all together. A second plot-point can sometimes come near the end of the story, to give closure and focus to the final act. This second plot point is commonly related to the first in theme, but does not have to draw from the same style. Later, we will discuss the use of plot points and the difference between the first and a possible second (and in epics, a third, fifth, tenth, and so on).

This section is dedicated to designing your own L5R adventures. The charts and concepts in this chapter and at the end of the book are not exhaustive, and should not supplant the creativity of the GM, but they can be useful tools in plotting a complicated campaign.

Black and White in Rokugan

Many game worlds are designed for easy conflict, filled with monsters, beasts, and horrors that exist simply to be fought and killed. Rokugan, the land of the Emerald Empire, is not such a setting. A character is often knee-deep in a web of intrigue and suspense, and the question, "Who's the bad guy?" is not easy to answer.

Villains provide a foil for the player characters, getting in the way of their goals, actions, and loyalties. They produce strife, either intentionally or unwittingly, and they provide the players with an enemy to be defeated. In Rokugan, however, a villain might only be

antagonistic because he opposes a player character's goals; someone who denies a samurai the right to seppuku could be a villain, as might a trusted lord. Some characters are "villains", while others are only chance encounters, rogues, and interesting people to meet in your games.

Rokugan is filled with people, and it is the Gamemaster's job to define them. He creates NPCs, conceives their purposes and personalities, and then places the PCs in situations where they must confront the NPCs, for good or for ill. If every villain is merely a carbon copy of the previous one, your players will quickly become bored. And when NPCs become flat, two-dimensional, or unmotivated, even the most detailed adventure soon becomes no more than a killing spree.

It can be problematic to create NPCs that are villains in every sense of the word. Save for genuine psychopaths, people always have some good qualities. Take a Lion daimyo who is slaughtering Crane peasants. He might be:

- A loyalist, fighting to regain a lost clan treasure that was stolen by the Crane. In this case, his loyalty should be commended.
- Slaughtering the peasants because they have contracted a horrible plague, which they are about to spread through the lands of both the Lion and the Crane. His methods may seem brutal, but – in the end – he may save more lives than he takes by eliminating the village.
- Convinced that the village is corrupted by the touch of the Shadowlands, and that the only way to eliminate the Taint is to destroy them all. Here, his sense of duty to the Empire would be commended by even the most rough-shod Crab.

So, then, why is your villain a bad guy? It's entirely possible that he is a raving lunatic, simply killing peasants for amusement, but that doesn't make for a good story. In such a case, the Lion's lord will simply command the seppuku of his insane minion – or better yet, allow the PCs to slay the madman before he causes more shame and trouble.

By making villains fully defined people, and giving them important (and justifiable) goals and motivations, you create more than a simple enemy. You create drama. And when the player characters discover why the "mad Lion" is killing off a village of peasants, they just might find themselves joining the destruction.

Honor, Glory, and Loyalty

We are often asked about the difference between Honor and Glory in the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG*. When you create and



play a villain, you have a wonderful opportunity to play these two statistics against one another.

Honor, the internal measure of a character's self-worth, is determined by his true actions. A samurai who always obeys his daimyo is certainly honorable, as is one who impeccably follows the code of bushido. But if the samurai is only pretending to observe these codes of conduct, he will temporarily act as if his honor is much higher than it truly is on his character sheet. He is only playing at being a truly 'honorable' samurai, of course, and when his facade is disrupted, the NPC's true status will be revealed through his actions.

Glory is an entirely different situation. Because Glory is the representation of how the world views the character, and a measure of how well-known and respected he is, it is rare (if not impossible) to have a character who appears to have a much higher Glory than he truly does. Unless the character is an impersonator, "borrowing" the Glory of a much more famous individual for a short time, he has little to no impact on how his Glory is seen by others. This is not a literal Glory-stealing; rather, even if no one knows the character Shosuro Jomiko, when she dresses up like the famous general Matsu Tsuko people will recognize Tsuko (her Glory precedes her), even though Jomiko herself has a much lower Glory score.

It is quite possible for a person to have an extremely low score in one of these traits and an extremely high score in the other. Someone who dutifully performs deeds for his lord accrues Glory, but if those deeds are underhanded, he will certainly lose Honor in the process. (Though the outside world only sees that the samurai is trusted and cared for by his daimyo, the samurai knows in his heart the truth of his actions.) On the other hand, a samurai who consistently follows the code of Bushido, but is forever placed upon the Crab Wall with no superiors to record and celebrate his deeds, may have a high Honor, but gains little or no Glory.

A character's loyalty may have nothing to do with his sense of self-worth (Honor), however, or the status (Glory) which has been accorded him by his peers. At its heart, Rokugan is a world of choice and consequence. If your players aren't having to think about their actions, then they aren't being challenged in a manner appropriate for the world. Use villains to challenge their morals, their perceptions, and their sense of duty. Force them to consider their actions against the code of bushido - but also by their own moral sense of right and wrong. Many of the greatest epics involve a hero whose suffering is derived from differences between his personal beliefs and those he is forced to adopt.

Themes

One of the opportunities that Rokugan offers is the ability to design an adventure incorporating more than one theme within the genre. Many games lock themselves into action or espionage without providing alternate gaming forums. Conversely, these games rarely get played for long periods, and GMs quickly become drained of ideas. In Rokugan, GMs are free to create almost any adventure with any theme, keeping the feel of the world new and vibrant every time players encounter it.

Action

In an action adventure, the PCs are presented with a straightforward challenge involving monsters, spirits, humans, or natural disasters. It is an opportunity to use combat and physical abilities for problem-solving. This is a very popular style of play, and also has the highest body count.

Action adventures should have a high degree of energy and ensure a wide array of action opportunities. Too much of the same thing and the players will grow bored. Remember that fantastic events can upset the balance of the world, and GMs who insist on making things weird for the sake of surprise may ruin the delicate nature of Rokugan. Spicing up the game can be dangerous if not handled properly.

Comedy

Although Rokugan is not perfectly suited for comedic adventures, players and GMs can have fun chasing after the dark sorcerer whose plans are always falling apart, or following the guidance of the cryptic little Shintao teacher who tells them to walk off the edge of the world. With comedy, the ideas are simple, but the action and drama are askew. Serious themes done in a comic manner can be very macabre, and funny themes taken seriously become slapstick and deadpan.

Comedic adventures can break the monotony of a serious campaign and interject an element of humor for a single night. A continuous stream of such games, though, can damage an otherwise careful GM's reputation, and pigeon-hole him into a single style of gamemastering. Comedic gaming is also riddled with digressions (no pun intended); it is nearly impossible to maintain the veil in a comical game, but it makes for an excellent style for one-shot adventures.

GMs should not overlook the "comedy of errors" plot structure. An incompetent bureaucrat might give the PCs the wrong traveling papers, or promote them to high-ranking magistrates without proper cause. A Doji courtier who keeps losing her gifts for the Emperor, or a Hida samurai who never seems to have the right weapon at the



right time, are great NPCs in a game where nothing seems to go right.

Other types of comical adventures include witty dialog with samurai shouting puns and insults to each other in court, and "Fuzzy Samurai", where the players are actually human-sized animals from their clan (Lion, Crane, Dragon).

Horror

Running a horror roleplaying session - whether in a fantasy game like *L5R* or one more close to the bone like *Call of Cthulhu* - takes patience and practice.

In order to be scary, you have to twist your players' perceptions, to make them approach the story in a different way than they might otherwise. Mood and atmosphere are key elements to a horror game, and it goes without saying that the setting for a horror session should evoke an atmosphere of foreboding and dread. Hold the game at night, keep lighting to an absolute minimum, play creepy music on the stereo, etc. Without these sorts of trappings, your session hasn't got a chance. But that's pretty basic stuff; if you want to be scary, you've got to take it a little bit beyond.

Roleplaying, as always, should be fun and engaging; that doesn't change just because you're playing a horror game instead of a high fantasy or action-oriented one. The need for entertainment gets lost sometimes when dealing with frightening topics; the desire to treat the topic with proper gravity overwhelms the enjoyable aspects of the game.

Some GMs who run horror believe that you have to treat things with the utmost seriousness in order to be menacing: barking out orders, keeping the players disoriented, occasionally delivering threat-laden pronouncements, etc. While this may be true, it shouldn't be the only element of your repertoire, and should never reach a point when it becomes more intrusive than it needs to be.

Often, GMs feel as if they must scare their players through these

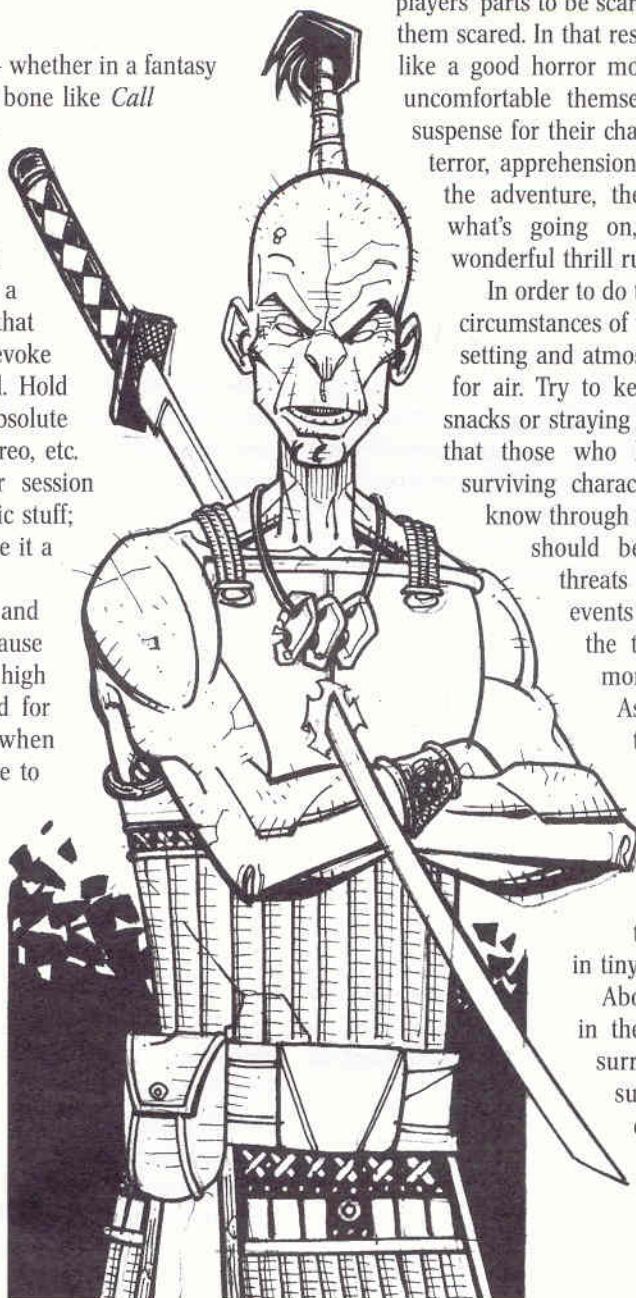
tactics, instead of the characters they're portraying. This doesn't work. Nothing short of open violence against the players (which we don't recommend) is going to make them fear for their own lives. If you direct your efforts towards them and not their samurai, they're eventually going to get annoyed and stop playing.

Evoking the proper mood involves both a willingness on the players' parts to be scared, as well the GM's ability to make them scared. In that respect, a good horror game should be like a good horror movie; the players don't want to feel uncomfortable themselves; they want to feel fear and suspense for their characters. By vicariously experiencing terror, apprehension, etc. through the circumstances of the adventure, the players will become excited by what's going on, and leave the session with a wonderful thrill running through their guts.

In order to do this, keep the players focused on the circumstances of the adventure. Immerse them in the setting and atmosphere, and don't let them come up for air. Try to keep people from wandering off for snacks or straying off-topic in their conversation. Hint that those who leave the table might not have surviving characters when they return. Let them know through your descriptions that their samurai should be scared; emphasize the unseen threats of their surroundings or the eerie events which lead them to it. And when the time comes to hit them with the monster, hit them as hard as you can.

As the suspense crescendos and the threatened danger manifests, move quickly, describe things rapidly; don't give them time to think. If you pull it off effectively, you'll find the players hanging on your every word - and loving the session, even if their PCs end up in tiny little pieces.

Above all, keep the creepiness focused in the game, not the game table. Your surroundings - the low lights, the suspenseful music - should help convey the game world, not substitute for it. If you can do that, then the horror of the session will come alive, and leave your players begging for more.





Intrigue

The single most prominent adventure convention in Rokugan is intrigue. L5R is a very social game, and PCs will often be called in to “watch” or guide NPCs as their mission. Subtle adventures that start small are more likely to turn into something larger later. The intrigue-based adventure gives PCs that gentle push forward before dropping them into a web of back-stabbing treachery. When done right, such an adventure can have more tension and suspense than a hundred goblin hunts.

In adventures featuring intrigue, the PCs are often involved in schemes affecting one or more of the Great Clans. Any clan can be the focus of a “conspiracy”, and the more esoteric clans – Unicorn and Phoenix, for example – who are thought to rarely involve themselves in trouble, can make for excellent surprise villains.

Although not every intrigue involves secret societies plotting the overthrow of Rokugan, these games can form a good conclusion to a lengthy campaign, or an introduction to bigger things on the horizon. Conspiracies involve cults and secret societies; Bloodspeakers, ninja, Kolat, and the like are all fair game for this sort of adventuring. GMs should create an organizational tree for intrigue-based adventures, detailing every character controlled by every other character, who they know, and what they’re after.

Mystery

Mystery adventures are hard to pull off in an RPG. Any story that keeps vital, obvious clues out of the PCs’ hands, replacing them with subtle hints and conjecture, is sure to receive an audible groan from the players. If a mystery adventure requires the players to hunt down a specific culprit, the clues must be obvious. But when that happens, it stops being a mystery and starts becoming an investigation.

Mysteries are supposed to keep the PCs guessing; the medium by which we play does not allow for a properly devised mystery. In order for a mystery to work, every detail, or everything, must be described – the face of every NPC, their dress, the interior of every room, everything. If you intend to mystify and “trick” the players, you must define everything to be fair. Otherwise they will know where the trick is coming from, or they will be blind-sided and not appreciate the element of surprise that you have created.

GMs interested in running a mystery adventure should focus on a subtle plot, and keep the story light and flexible. The more you set in stone, the harder it becomes to maintain the suspense. Mix in a few other plot conventions as well, and your story will be much more interesting. To press for a long-term mystery, hint at it slowly over time. Do not rush to the villain; do not play your hand too soon. Remember, great murder-mystery villains are always your second guess...

Romance

Any game that includes the romantic involvement of two characters (PCs or NPCs) falls into this category. Historically, romances have been the favorite of cultures around the world, but our action-junkie lifestyles often preclude this sort of gaming. GMs interested in running a romantic adventure should take a few important details into consideration.

First, roleplaying games often shy away from this theme, and rightly so. Not only is it difficult for most gamers to portray romantic characters, but it is also difficult for most GMs to keep romantic adventures exciting for any period of time. A campaign built upon earning the hand of a maiden could become boring after the third session of “wooing.” GMs should consider mixing romance with another theme.

Usually, romance works best as a subplot. Perhaps the love of a samurai’s life is being sent by her lord to a place where he cannot see her. Or the hero of the story finds himself serving on the Wall, with his loved one left alone at the Imperial Court, where other, more convenient suitors prowl. If this subplot were used, the GM might hint at details happening in the court, with short scene-cuts, and then return to the action to find the hero, tied up and unable to return to his love. Bear in mind that a romantic subplot does not necessarily have to involve the PCs. It can be about the NPCs and their need for the players to help them; the issues of duty and obligation come to the forefront in this style of game, tugging on the heart-strings of honorable samurai.

Despite all of this, adventures may succeed while concentrating on this theme. GMs who know their players are up to it might have a seductress approach of one the party members and subdue him for a few sessions. This works especially well with players who cannot make it each week. Perhaps a story like *Romeo and Juliet* (which translates very well to L5R) continues to unfold around the PCs during a period when they are preparing for war.

The Kharma Rule

But what about when a character dies? Losing someone’s beloved samurai can be a difficult change for the player, and for your carefully tailored campaign. A samurai is always ready to die for his lord, to throw away his life at a moment’s notice. While this makes for wonderful samurai drama, it can also make for a high mortality rate in your L5R campaign. Players understandably get quite tired of every character they make ending his life with his own sword in his gut.

Because L5R can have such a high mortality rate, we suggest you implement the “kharma rule” described here. You may also wish to employ the kharma rule if a character has died honorably, gloriously, or selflessly, or if his death fulfills that character’s destiny.



Essentially what the kharma rule does is transfer points from a player's dead character to his next character. There are many ways to justify the transfer of points, but it's up to you and your player to determine the reason.

Kharma and Dharma

The Rokugani believe in reincarnation (the rebirth of the soul in another body). Two important concepts in reincarnation are kharma and dharma.

Dharma is a character's "soul duty." When he is born, his destiny is already put in place. He is part of the Celestial Order. His dharma is his "soul duty", his place in the Celestial Order. His kharma, on the other hand, is a measurement of how well he performed that duty. Those who perform their dharma well have great kharma, which will follow them into the next life.

It is that last phrase, "the next life", that has brought so much controversy to the shugenja schools across Rokugan. When is the "next life" that Shinsei spoke so cryptically about? Are Rokugani born again in another world that will exist after this world is dead and gone, or will they be born again in this world to continue their role in the Order? None can say for certain.

Ending and Beginning

When a character dies, it is up to the GM to determine if he fulfilled his dharma. Did he serve his role in the celestial order, or did he deny his role and attempt to live his life "under his own terms" as many young samurai are wont to do? Assuming that he performed well, show respect to his passing in some in-game way – tributes from his superiors are always appropriate. It is also expected that a PC samurai may pass down his sword, and possibly his lands and titles if his daimyo approves.

When a character has just died and his player is looking up at you with soulful eyes, you may also give him extra Character Points to make a new character whose power level is in line with the previous character's. Use the following table as a guide:

Desired Character Rank	Total Number of CP
1	30
2	75
3	125
4	185
5	250

Example: Ted and Shiba Usobe

Ted's favorite character – Shiba Usobe – recently died while protecting his daimyo, Shiba Ujimitsu. Usobe was watching Ujimitsu

enter into a duel with a dishonest Crane and saw the glint of poison on the Crane's blade. Usobe shouted a warning to his lord and killed the Crane with an arrow. A Crane diplomat demanded justice for the samurai's interference; Ujimitsu reluctantly agreed, and Ted's favorite character was forced to commit *seppuku*.

At the end of the game session, the GM announced that Ujimitsu himself wrote a haiku to the memory of his devoted samurai – which raised Usobe's Glory to 6. Then he asked Ted to make a new character. The GM reminded Ted that Usobe had a daughter, who could be his next character. Since Ujiko was Usobe's first-born child, she begins with a starting Glory one Rank lower than her father.

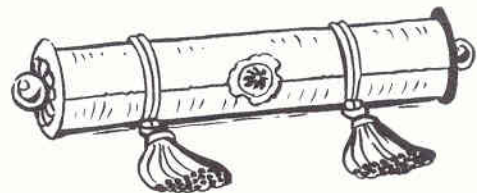
Usobe was a Rank 4 Shiba Bushi. The GM decides that his daughter should be a Rank lower than her father, which establishes her as less-experienced than Usobe but not a novice, and not a drag on the party, all of whom are Ranks 3 and 4. The GM therefore gives Ted 125 Character Points to spend on Ujiko.

Ujiko inherits her father's sword, which happened to be a *nemuranai*. She also inherits any lands and titles he may have acquired. Since Usobe was a magistrate, she will perform those duties as well; Ujimitsu was generous to the daughter of his favorite magistrate.

Now Ted has a brand-new character who carries on the legacy of his old character. There are some reminders of Usobe still lingering in the air (his sword on her hip, his title, his lands, etc.), but Ujiko has many characteristics that are distinctly her own.

Conclusion

There is no hard and fast formula for using the Kharma Rule. It's a tool, just like the other rules we've provided. Put it in your GM toolbox and take it out when you find a use for it. Play around with it, adjust it to your own needs or just ignore it completely. Some GMs use it so players will not have to be playing a Rank 1 samurai in a group of Rank 3 and 4 samurai, while others like the feel of the passing on of tradition. It's also a great incentive for true samurai drama. Reward players with bonus points if they perform especially fearless deeds. Remember that a samurai gives up his life so his family can have better position in the Clan. The Kharma Rule provides GMs and players with a tool that allows samurai to throw away their lives with the certainty that their sons and daughters will have a better life.





Experience

Typically, a campaign will run from 1–4 times a month, and each character will earn experience based on their actions and heroic feats. Some campaigns will run more often; some will be much more erratic. A good GM has a sense of pacing that allows him or her to determine how ‘rapidly’ their characters should advance through the levels, and how swiftly their skills and training should grow.

While giving 1–3 points of experience per game may be ideal for a GM that is running more than once a week, or one who prefers a slower running game, many players would like to see immediate results. A Strength 2 character that becomes a Strength 4 character after two months of play is exciting for players, and although unrealistic, has merit in a role-playing game where the GM and players are focused on “fun” (which is why we’re all playing).

A gentle experience point curve would give players about 1–3 EP per session. At this rate, it would take most characters about 12 sessions to progress from Rank 1 to Rank 2, and about twice that long for further ranks. A more moderate curve would dole out twice as many points, handing out 4–7 points per session and promoting PCs somewhere around the sixth game session, and every twelfth or so thereafter. A GM bent on rapid promotion could give out 8 to 10 EP per session, with characters hitting Rank 2 in their third or fourth session and blazing through a Rank about every sixth session thereafter.

The experience point award per session is not set in stone. With the expansion of scale from the first-edition rules, PCs have a higher plateau to aspire to. Also, you can have a large spread in EP amounts. In order to encourage staying in character, for instance, you could award everybody three points, but give the person who was “best roleplayer” at that session a further 3-point bonus. Be careful to spread such bonuses around, though, since if one player always gets the bonus, it breeds resentment among the others. Once again, never forget that this is your game. Do what you want with it.

Using NPCs

There are many prominent personalities in L5R and it can be quite intimidating to a GM to portray them all accurately. Those GMs who are familiar with the L5R CCG already have some knowledge of these personalities, how they behave, their motivations, and their histories. Doji Hoturi, Bayushi Kachiko, and the Hantei Emperors are all crucial to the overall L5R storyline, but they can also be very useful for GMs to begin their own storylines. However, as useful as these NPCs can be, they can also be very difficult to roleplay. Outlined below are a few of the way to get these NPC working for you rather than against you.

The most basic way to use these NPCs is to keep them hidden. Every daimyo, great general, and magistrate has plenty of karo, yoriki, and hatamoto to aid him. Rather than have Doji Hoturi contact the PCs himself, Hoturi may send one of his most trusted advisors to approach the PC’s with an offer. Alternately, perhaps Hoturi is much too busy to see the PCs himself when they come to present some information, and the characters must contend with one of Hoturi’s many assistants. This is a great technique for new GM’s who are still trying to acquire the feel of the world. Such prominent characters as these can also upset the game if the GM is not careful. Players may feel that they are merely walking in the shadows of these giants and have no free will. Keeping the prominent NPCs hidden can alleviate this problem. Also, if at a future time the PCs do meet one of these characters, it will be a new and exciting event, a highlight to remember, not just a reminder of the greatness of the NPC.

If you do decide to use someone like Bayushi Kachiko at some point, here are some other techniques that may help you roleplay them with the proper air of authority. The first way to handle a personality of this caliber is quite simple: never ask questions. Always make statements. If the NPC wants some information, just leave a pregnant pause at the end of his statement. “Ahhh, Hoturi-san! I’m so glad to see you. That man with you... he must be...” A



simple pause like this causes an uncomfortable silence that players will rush to fill, often giving away more information than they intended to. This also works for any daimyo. Clan and family lords like to think they know everything. If they ask a question, they show that they lack information. By leaving a pause, the PCs are invited to "remind" their daimyo of the information.

These NPCs should be intimidating to meet, so help your players feel intimidated. Try standing while speaking. Keep the players seated and make them look up at you while you speak. This is a subtle technique, but well worth the effort. Before they know it, the players will physically feel the power the NPCs have over them. For further effect, describe how long their characters are left waiting in the large, empty meeting room before the NPC actually arrives. Even after the NPC arrives, have tea served in silence followed by more waiting. Only when the players are fidgeting in their chairs should you deign to address them. To show their power, NPCs of this caliber should look like they control the entire situation. If the events begin to slip from their grasp, so will their power and the PCs' awe. Upsetting a player's personal space is another good way to intimidate them. Just as in real life, Rokugani like their personal space. Exploit this. Get in the players' faces when you talk to them. Just being a little too close can be as intimidating as any threat of physical harm.

Help your players identify the NPCs. It's hard to feel any kinship, trust, or hatred for anyone if you can't tell who you are talking to. Since it's just you the GM in front of your players, you may wish to adopt shticks, to help the players identify the NPCs. How does Kuni Yori sound when he speaks? How does proud Matsu Tsuko stand in court? Voice and posture are two good ways to bring some personality to NPCs. If you are portraying someone like Kuni Yori, you may wish to use a hoarse whisper while speaking. Make the players take an active role in listening to you. Never repeat yourself. Have a slight grin on your face at all times like you know a secret and are willing to share it with someone who proves worthy. When you are roleplaying a proud Lion like Matsu Tsuko, stand tall and puff your chest out. Keep your players seated so you can look down on them. Make yourself the center of attention; sneer at your players, and never let their attention waver.

Used properly, personalities like Toturi, Kachiko, and Kakita Toshimoko are powerful tools for the GM. The techniques presented above are just a few of the ways to make the NPCs work for you, not against you.

Adventure Ideas: Skills

Legend of the Five Rings has a detailed list of skills, advantages, and disadvantages. With over fifty skills to choose from and numerous quirks to add to your samurai, the game may be overwhelming, and there may never be enough CP to properly outfit a character for the adventures ahead. GMs may find that certain advantages and disadvantages are cumbersome and may decide to remove them from the game, but PCs and GMs are always encouraged to create their own.

As you will see in this section, the growth of L5R has caused many abilities to overlap in function and appropriateness. GMs will have to sift through the game and pick out the pieces that fit their vision of Rokugan.

Skills

GMs should have an idea of how they want to portray their "version" of Rokugan before they begin to run adventures. Earlier we mentioned the idea of a campaign pack handout for the players. Keep that in mind as you read this section, and add to that handout any skills you wish to emphasize in your campaign.

Combining Skills

There are occasions in the L5R RPG where combining skills together makes a great deal of sense. It can be very useful to combine Battle and Tessen into a single roll to make decisions quickly and command troops to follow orders. Investigation combined with a Lore skill could detail what is amiss about an item or historical reference. Courtier, Dance, Music, Acting, and Bard could be combined to compose a great play for the court with a grand soliloquy, music, and even courtly dancing.

There is a simple way to do this for L5R, but GMs should only use this system when making two separate rolls does not make any sense. The combining of skills is reserved for those detailed



situations where separating them won't do. If someone must understand the relevance of a historical fact in order to realize that a page is missing from a book, the GM can justify combining rolls. In order to determine what is wrong about some animal tracks, Investigation and Hunting could be combined. If the animal had been domesticated, Animal Husbandry would be in order. Contrariwise, Etiquette does not need to be combined with Courtier in order for a samurai to know how to act in a court. If the GM requires that a PC to first learn the ecology of the goblin before he can figure out what is wrong with the wounds in the goblin corpse, then two separate rolls are in order.

In order to combine skills, first the GM must determine the necessary abilities to perform the feat. Once the skills are determined, add all of the skill points together and divide by the number of skills involved (rounding up). Add one to the result for each skill beyond the first. This is the total number of skill dice that the player should roll, keeping dice equal to the appropriate Trait as usual.

Example: Laura's Agasha has been investigating a trail that leads to a *maho-tsukai*. Inside a cave, she discovers powders, liquids, bone fragments, and blood. She would like to try to learn something about the evidence and the GM determines that her Lore (Maho), her Kagaku (chemicals), and her Anatomy are all relevant. Because the site has all of them, the GM calls for her to combine her skills, and then keep dice equal to her Perception. She has a Perception of 3, Anatomy of 1, Maho Lore of 2, and Kagaku of 3. Her skill total is 4 (1+2+3 = 6; 6 divided by 3 is 2; plus 2 for the two extra skills used equals 4).

A simpler method, and one that uses less math, is to take the lowest skill of the group and add one to the total for each additional skill beyond the first. This system is much more abstract, does not take into account the extent of knowledge that a character might have, and impels PCs to not combine skills unless the totals are equal. It requires that the GM ask players to consider all the appropriate skills. It is, however, faster and keeps the action moving. In the above example, Laura would roll 3 dice for her skills instead of 4 (Anatomy 1 + two additional skills). Because her Anatomy is so low, she may not even wish to bother combining skills at all.

In both systems, if the GM considers a Skill relevant and the character does not have the appropriate Skill, the Rank 0 should still be factored into the equation. The end result of combining Skills is that players get much more data all at once, and the GM must draw the conclusion for the player that the character would logically make in the situation based on the Skills and roll.

An interesting twist in this system is to use a different colored die for each Skill and for each Trait, so that the GM may interpret how much each skill is affecting the equation.

Know Your Strengths

Each Skill in the list below has an adventure hook to provide GMs with ideas on how to use them in their games. The adventure hooks are in the Challenge/Focus/Strike style: the Challenge sets up the adventure, the Focus draws the PCs in, and the Strike tells what happens afterwards.

Feel free to modify the family names to your liking. A Kakita can easily become a Shiba, and a Kaiu and Mirumoto are simple enough to interchange. Only when a specific profession is in question should the integrity of the name be honored, and even then Bayushi Tori and Bayushi Muri are not so different; someone appropriate may even be in your campaign already.

There are many Skills in L5R, including the specialized skills from each of the books in the *Way of the Clans* series. No story can possibly use all of them, and it is difficult to imagine one in which the GM requires a Calligraphy roll as often as a Lore (Maho) roll. Know going into your campaign which Skills will be important and which will not. Remember that Skills which you deemphasize that later become important can be supplied by knowledgeable NPCs.

Not all of the Skills, Advantages and Disadvantages listed in the Player's Book are mentioned here with Challenge/Focus/Strike ideas. For a complete list of Skills, see the Player's Book or the Character Option Compilation in this book (page 243). This list only includes the most common Skills, with appropriate adventure ideas to encourage a GM's creativity.

We previously mentioned the idea of a campaign handout. GMs may wish to include in such a handout a list of the Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages available at the time of character creation.

High Skills

These Skills are useful in Intrigue-style games, or games with a concentration on courtly life. They should be discouraged in games where the GM intends to elevate the action, and keep the combat score high. Nothing is more infuriating to a player than to put four points into Calligraphy and never once to be allowed to use it. Be kind and have some reason for using these skills.

Acting

Kabuki (Awareness)

Noh (Awareness)



Characters with this Skill have training in theater. There are two kinds of theater in Rokugan: Kabuki theater and Noh theater. Kabuki theater is flamboyant and full of action and color. It is "samurai" theater, telling the great and tragic tales of lords from the past. Most Kabuki players wear large gowns and paint their faces or wear elaborate masks. Women rarely engage in Kabuki theatre, as the art has been adopted and mastered by men over the centuries, but those who do are treated with the same reverence as samurai-ko. There are a few plays that tell the tale of a young woman donning the clothes of the Kabuki and disguising herself as a man playing a woman. When done correctly these are considered very fine satire, and brash young nobles are quick to cite their "inner meaning."

Noh theater, by contrast, is quiet and subtle, with light music and little movement against a black backdrop. It is similar to interpretive dance or performance art. Noh actors are known for their deep focus, concentration, and ability to ignore the outside world while they perform delicate interpretations of mood and emotion. The present trend in noh theatre is to present it silently, and to project feelings to the audience with gestures and facial expressions. The effect is quite powerful, and many audiences have been moved deeply by the skills of such a noh actor.

Noh is a sophisticated musical drama that relates a felicitous or often tragic story. A masked protagonist performs in dance and song, with one or two others in unmasked subsidiary roles, accompanied by a chorus, drums and flute. Shorter comic plays called *kyogen* are interspersed to enliven a full performance.

Characters must choose which form of theater they are trained in. Most characters will probably be more interested in Kabuki theater, while a very dramatic or overly sympathetic character may be more akin to performing noh. GMs may find the option of disguise a little overbearing in their campaigns and are free to ignore it. It is more of a Shoshuro acting ability than a High Skill and GMs may choose to make it a separate Low Skill: even though acting is an honorable samurai skill, disguising oneself is extremely dishonorable. Samurai with an Honor of 2 or higher will find the act abhorrent, and even samurai with Honor 1 may question the act of "hiding." Samurai do not fear confrontation, and it requires quite a bit of "convincing" to justify the act of disguise to others.

GMs may require that players choose kabuki or noh, but not both force them to spend more points on the Skill. This may be very harsh in games with very little use for acting, but in a realistic campaign may force them to stick with the fundamentals of their training. Again, this is an option is not recommended in games where the GM doesn't feel the need to distinguish them.



The Sins of Lord Bumikari

This play opens in a darkened setting. The still stage is disrupted as a geisha cries out and stumbles to the stage floor. She is carrying red strings close to her chest and two more have been tied to her wrists, symbolizing bloody wounds. She dies slowly and quivers on the floor as the young Lord Bumikari enters and falls to his knees beside her. When two eta enter, the audience is aware from his furtive demeanor that Bumikari intends to hide the body. "I found her... this way..." is all he says as the eta carry her body away. These are the first five words of this stark masterpiece, and the play continues in a fantastic yet disturbing manner for the duration of the evening.

Lord Bumikari develops a nervous manner and his relationships with others begin to suffer. In court his outbursts of hysteria are seen as weakness, and courtiers begin to whisper about transgressions in the home of Bumikari. Tension develops and intensifies between Bumikari and his wife. At the end of the play Bumikari is commanding his troops to storm the castle of his enemy, Lord Shubi. As more and more men die fighting, his wife learns of the murder of the geisha, and confronts him alone at home, while his army waits outside to be led by their general. Lord Bumikari must either commit seppuku and lose his army to Lord Shubi, or murder his wife and step out onto the field of battle to lead his men to greatness. It is here that the play ends, before resolution. The lights go down on the stage and the actors leave the stage forcing viewers to determine for themselves the fate of Bumikari.

Challenge

The PCs are in the home of an important noble or daimyo under siege by bandits or enemy forces, which the noble's men cannot fend off. Soon the voice of the enemy general shouts above the clamor, "The women and children may be spared. I only wish to see the blood of Ide Gujiko spill on these stones."



Focus

Ide Gujiko is a respected and important member of the Unicorn clan. His death would surely be a blow to the power of the Unicorn in court. He has decided that the death of her guests would not be prudent either, as after all they had nothing to do with the siege. Surely they would be spared. A messenger is dispatched, and his bloodied body is returned with a note impaled on his chest: "No samurai shall escape alive." There is only one thing to do.

Strike

If the PCs do not object, the geisha of Gujiko's estate dress the samurai in feminine kimono and paint their faces with make-up to disguise their manly features. Ronin and Crab may prove difficult to disguise, and even skillfully applied make-up cannot disguise the mannerisms of a uncomely Hida. The PC's Awareness x 5 should be used in the darkness as a TN for the unsuspecting army. Roll 4k2 against each PC to determine if someone in the crowd spots them as they are escorted out with the rest of the non-samurai guests. Samurai that are caught might as well wish for death. If Gujiko is caught, the general will have him strung up and bled like a criminal.

PCs that sit back and let this happen will live to fight another day, but will surely lose additional honor for their cowardly inaction.

PCs who object to idea of being dressed as geisha may stay behind as a decoy and die fighting the overwhelming foe, an honorable act and one that will be hailed with great Glory if Ide Gujiko survives, and if he could ever talk about this night.

Astrology (Intelligence)

This is the skill of identifying heavenly bodies and patterns, such as stars and constellations.

Challenge

A superstitious NPC (possibly a friend of the PCs) harps constantly on her last visit with a seer. She is convinced that she is cursed and her entire family will die in a horrible fire. She begs the PCs to aid her and save her family, offering them a tremendous sum of money and her own hand in marriage if they are successful.





Focus

One of the PCs decides to try to predict her future, and all of the signs and stars do indeed suggest that the NPC is doomed. No fair or objective interpretation of the stars implies anything but tragedy for the NPC.

Strike

The good news is that images of fire are not prevalent in the fortune. The bad news is that the NPC will certainly die a horrible death – unless the PCs can find a way to interfere with her destiny.

Bard (Awareness)

This is the Skill of telling a story well. Storytelling in Rokugan is an ancient tradition performed by each clan, and mastered by the Ikoma. Bard historians are known as Omoidasu in the Lion clan, and as storytellers to the remaining clans. Only distinguished samurai can retain the services of a personal bard. Every great lord has a bard in his court, telling tales of the great samurai that have graced the face of Rokugan. Bards have the unique knack of educating and entertaining all at once. A very successful bard may captivate an audience for many hours, putting the best Omoidasu in high demand by powerful daimyos.

When using this skill to tell a story, the samurai rolls Bard/Awareness against a set TN. The target number to appease an audience is up to you, but an imperial audience is more likely to be critical of a work from a new bard than a smaller court in the home of a local noble. The end result of the story should generate a single box of Glory (or more, depending on the lord and audience and the situation) for the samurai who is the subject of the bard's story. For each Raise on the roll, the Glory award is one higher. This award should be in addition to any awards the daimyo has already given.

Other uses of the Bard skill can include finding hidden meanings in an oration. A simple Bard/Perception roll may reveal clues or useful information in your campaign. A samurai may also roll Bard/Intelligence to know if the work being performed is original or whether it has been taken from the voice of another omoidasu.

GMs may wish to use this skill in situations where the players are not interacting with each other or the NPCs and the game has slowed down. An omoidasu may tell a story or history that "inconspicuously" relates to the quest at hand. The details may be subtle and may require the players to decipher the cryptic message, or the story can be an obvious correlation to theirs, and the outcome may hint at the climax of their own lives – especially if the bard is telling a tragic tale!

GMs may ask players to role-play their orations or merely have them make a roll, depending on level of play. In any case, the effects of an oration may very well incline two Clans to war, or cause

neighboring lords to settle their differences and make peace. In connection with many of the other High Skills – Tea Ceremony, Painting, Poetry, History, Lore, Calligraphy – samurai with the Bard skill may find themselves messengers for their daimyo or peacekeepers in volatile situations. Some bards, in contrast, purposely speak ill of others; these characters generally do not live as long.

It is important for bards to demonstrate a knowledge of all subjects. Lore, History, Law, and other High Skills are the fundamentally important to the art of story-telling. Without something to talk about a bard is forced to resort to writing speeches about harvests and Lady Sun. During play, it may become important to mix the Bard skill with the topic in question. If a PC is using the Bard skill to talk about the incredible fighting style of a Daidoji, or the tactics of a wise Ikoma, he may wish to draw upon his knowledge of these fields to embellish his story. In the case that a samurai wishes to combine his storytelling with another Skill, GMs have a few options. They may allow the player to spend an additional Void Point, a completely valid option, but this may be an unusual way to use Void in the campaign, and players may think a simple Bard roll too mundane a task to "waste" Void Points on. The GM may ask for additional rolls prior to the Bard roll depending on the subjects involved. Each successful roll at a TN of 20 or more earns the samurai a free raise to his final Bard roll. Or the GM may simply allow one additional die for each relevant Skill the PC has, regardless of rank. A tea ceremony before an oration may not be as effective as players and GMs would like – dramatic prose combined with a quiet ceremony may be unnerving to nobles that are accustomed to a different style of story telling.

Bragging is another form of storytelling. A Matsu screaming at a battlefield or at the gates of a stronghold may wish to use his Bard skill to expound on his exploits. In such a case, roll the samurai's Bard and keep his Glory (always keep at least one die). The total of the roll represents the reception of the bragging, and an extremely high total (50+) may require the enemy to make a Fear check. In situations where combat is not inevitable, the samurai may generate such a total, which then becomes the TN for an opposing NPC's Willpower check before he will consider engaging this samurai, in effect increasing his Glory Rank for the duration.

Challenge

Lord Gugijin has asked that the samurai deliver a message to the Imperial court. The Doji are presenting a new bride to the Seppun family and the PCs' daimyo is eager to register his favor towards the wedding, but he cannot attend due to pressing matters at home. The PCs must escort a respected and elderly Omoidasu, Ikoma Sukemi, who will convey their lord's good wishes.



The Gift

Your sensei presents you with an elaborately wrapped gift. Remembering that it is impolite to unwrap the gift in front of the giver, you thank him for his generosity and leave. Sometime later after you work up the courage to look inside the box, you are surprised to find a rather ordinary river stone inside. What is the meaning of this gift?

Several months later, your sensei greets you and asks you if you are enjoying the gift. After you answer that you have placed it in a space of honor in your household (whether you actually did or not) he smiles and tells you why it is such a special gift.

"Long ago I engaged in my first duel," He explains. "My opponent and I had decided to hold it by a river and ask the kami of the water to judge the outcome. As his sword left the saya, I tripped on a stone jutting up from the soil. I fell backward, causing his strike to cut through the air, where I no longer stood. As he looked down at me, I struck with the fury of a hundred samurai. That stone is the only reason I'm standing here today."

How did the PC react to receiving the stone as a gift? If they reacted poorly and threw it away, they'll have some serious explaining to do when their sensei visits. Or they can try to remember where exactly they left it and retrieve it before their revered teacher arrives to view his cherished gift. Good luck.

Focus

Two weeks into their travels, the party stops at a way station for the evening. Sukemi dies in his sleep, and the PCs find his body in the morning, all of his scrolls and equipment intact. The eta, following precedent in such situations, are to burn the body and all of its belongings, and return Sukemi's wakizashi to his family.

Before they can put the body onto a funeral pyre, the players must decide whether or not to take the scrolls Sukemi would deliver

at the wedding. In addition, now with only a few days left in their journey the PCs must deliver the oration themselves.

Strike

Upon arriving in Otosan Uchi the samurai find the city bustling with news of the wedding and hundreds have arrived to witness the marriage of Seppun Umitsuki to Doji Horiko. Many samurai have assemble to share gifts with the Doji bride and Seppun husband, and the players are now stymied on how to impress the court. Horses, peacocks, ceramics, katana, and everything imaginable are being presented in the hopes of currying the favor of the new couple and the proud families. Do the players present the very sincere and personal story written by Ikoma Sukemi as an epitaph of his life and a praise of marriage as the beginning of a new one? Or do they purchase a ceramic swan and pass it off as their lord's gift? Perhaps a samurai even commits seppuku as a gift to the new bride.

Calligraphy (Perception)

Calligraphy, or *shogaku*, is the art of writing in the ancient language that was given to man by the Fortunes. A character with Calligraphy can read and transcribe the ancient scrolls in their shugenja school library. As every shugenja school writes their scrolls in a different language, a shugenja must know more than one style of Calligraphy in order to read the scrolls of another school. Assume that the Calligraphy skill a shugenja purchases includes the school style of his Clan.

Calligraphy allows a samurai to write in both kanji (characters) and the rarer kana (script). Calligraphy is the writing skill, while Oratory/Rhetoric is the ability to convey information. When judging the quality of a letter, combine the two skills.

Challenge

The PCs find a lacquer box with a single strange kanji drawn on the top. Inside are a handful of odd coins and stones. The symbol on top of the box, however, is indecipherable to the PCs and there is no mention of the mark in any of their shugenja schools.

Focus

No one recognizes the symbol and everyone that they turn to seems as perplexed as they are with the kanji's meaning. Even the Asako have no idea of the true meaning. They, however, would like to study it.

Strike

If the PCs analyze the brush strokes or visit a Kitsuki, they learn that each brush stroke does not form a kanji, but is a direction on a map. Further investigation reveals that the map leads to several



places where a single brush stroke can be on a stone, a tree, under a rock, etc. The final location is somewhere under the earth. What they find is up to the GM.

Cipher (Intelligence)

This advanced form of Calligraphy allows the encryption or decoding of written information. The Asako use an even more cryptic version of this to keep their texts from being read by outsiders. Magical and sensitive knowledge is often coded in this manner for this reason. In game terms, the GM secretly makes a Cipher/Intelligence roll whenever a PC with this Skill tries to encode something. Later, when someone with the same Skill tries to decode it, they roll Cipher/Intelligence vs. the original total. Calligraphy does not permit decoding of ciphered material. A samurai may never have a higher Cipher Skill than his Calligraphy Skill.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Cadence Advantage.

Challenge

A messenger arrives with a scroll for the PC. When asked where it came from, the messenger knows only that an old beggar gave it to her along with a few coins. The kanji are flowing and beautiful and the story encapsulates the life of a humble young man, growing to become a great warrior. The story ends with the hero dying while fighting a powerful corrupted evil, but saving his home village.

Focus

Upon closer examination the PC notices that the kanji are arranged in such a way that a powerful spell is hidden between the lines. Attempts to learn the origin of the scroll are useless and the messenger knows nothing beyond what she was told. A shugenja may need to be consulted regarding the spell's power and use. Eventually, the PC learns that the spell is used to destroy and banish Oni.

Strike

The beggar is a Fortune in disguise. He needs the PC to retrace the steps of the boy in the story and fight an evil that is sleeping beneath a mountain. In Rokugan, doing exactly what one's ancestors have done is expected and usually the best course of action to success. GMs interested in running this adventure should write out the story and detail the hero's every action so that the PC knows what to do next.

Dance (Agility)

There are two styles of dancing in Rokugan: court dancing and folk dancing. Court dances are performed almost exclusively by

women. Folk dancing is performed by the peasant folk, both men and women alike. When this is taken as a High Skill by a samurai, it is court dancing, known as Bugaku.

Challenge

An important ritual must be performed by a powerful shugenja of the clan. In order to complete the ritual, a dance that has not been performed in over 300 years must be completed by the PC.

Focus

Once the ritual begins and the PC starts dancing in time with the shugenja's chant, the ancient kami of this dance will imbue the samurai with the skill to complete the dance.

Strike

Once the ritual is finished, however, the kami will find leaving the PC difficult. After all, she has not been called on in over 300 years, and contact with a living being is satisfying.

Etiquette (Intelligence)

This is the Skill of knowing what to say and how to say it. A character with a high Etiquette is confident in his social skills, and never makes mistakes in front of the wrong people. This is a very important Skill for all samurai. Those who wish to spend time at court may find it important for not offending their host, while a Rank 1 Bushi may see the importance of treating his neighbor, lord, or rivals with respect. Demonstrating a lack of concern for etiquette demonstrates a person of low character, and no samurai wishes to earn the wrath of his lord for sitting the wrong way in court.

GMs may find the use of this Skill difficult in their games. Most situations are so commonplace that the PCs are bound to perform them perfectly, unless they purposely attempt to offend their lord. Unusual situations, however, such as funerals, gempukku ceremonies, or weddings may be so important to a lord that a slight breach of etiquette would certainly incur his wrath.

Challenge

The PCs are asked by their Lord, Isawa Unushika, to visit the home of a neighboring lord, with whom he has long disputed claims to a local fishing village. The peasants are being taxed by both lords, and neither is willing to forego their claim for the good of the empire. The situation has come to a head and Lord Isawa Jishin is prepared to take further action in the Imperial court, escalating beyond the bounds of their Clan's authority and appealing directly to the Emperor. This could bring great dishonor to the Clan, and both lords may be forced to commit seppuku. It is the duty of the PCs to ensure that this does not happen.



Focus

Carrying with them many scrolls and maps of the region, the samurai must travel to Isawa Jishin's estate and try to assuage bad feelings between the daimyos. Jishin is a proud and powerful lord and he is not easy to please. Although his home is lavish and he treats the visiting samurai well, the PCs may find his manners antisocial and the occasion to negotiate does not present itself immediately. After several days of food and entertainment, Jishin is prepared to listen to them. He invites them to a tea room inside his home and has his greatest bushi perform the tea ceremony for the samurai – this is a great dishonor to them, as Jishin does not see them as worthy enough to perform the ceremony himself (after all, Unushika sent children to his home to argue his case).

Proud samurai may wish to excuse themselves at this time, alerting Jishin to their dissatisfaction, but this would force Unushika to face the Emperor, and the PCs will find themselves without a lord. Dutiful samurai may ignore this transgression, simply allowing the bushi to complete the ceremony. Afterwards there is an awkward silence. Jishin purposely forces the PCs to talk first, thus forcing them to show their weakness. If the PCs wish to make a Willpower test, Jishin rolls and keeps 6 dice. Once they begin talking about their lord's wishes to end the feud, Jishin is stubborn and refuses to cede the village to such a cowardly samurai as Unishika.

Strike

Here is the real test. Do the PCs challenge the lord to a duel, demanding that he retract his comments and apologize for his effrontery, or do they instead let their honor stand on its own legitimacy and continue to ignore the churlish treatment? The PCs need to tread lightly here or not at all. The situation is dire and a poorly treated daimyo may return the PCs with respect, while PCs that tip-toe could be seen as weak – the exact opposite effect they desire.

Falconry

This skill is used to train and fly birds of prey. It should be noted that although Rokugani do occasionally hunt birds for food, they eat very little flesh, and never red meat.

Challenge

The PC finds a wounded falcon on the ground next to a tree. It appears that the falcon has been trying to get up for sometime. It has a small piece of leather on its claw and its hood is still on. The mon of the Kitsu is burned into the cloth hood.

Focus

The falcon is partially trained, but its owner is nowhere to be seen. The bird appears to have taken a fall and with the hood still on was unable to take flight. If the PCs give it care and repair its broken feathers, it will heal in a few days.

Strike

A young Kitsu girl was training her falcon when she was gouged by the falcon's claw, and she threw the bird to the ground. She left it, ran home, and told her father that it had flown away when its hood was removed. She even provided a hood to her father as evidence. When the PCs trace the falcon's owner, the girl is sure to incur her father's wrath.

Heraldry (Perception)

A character with Heraldry has studied the banners and sigils of the clans and families. With a Simple Heraldry/Perception Roll vs. a 15, a character can know one of four things about a person when viewing their banner: 1) their name; 2) their Clan and Family; 3) their Honor Rank; and 4) their Glory Rank. With every Raise, the Herald can know an additional fact from viewing the banner. This skill can be highly interpretive and GMs who wish to provide the PCs with hints instead of subjective data are welcome to do so.

Challenge

The party is traveling on an important road, and see a large unit approaching them bearing many banners and standards. The personal banner of Matsu Agetoki (or any prominent samurai from a clan that none of the PCs are from) flies above the soldiers as they march up the road toward the PCs.

Focus

The PC interprets the symbols incorrectly and thinks that the unit is at war. The PCs can stop the advancing unit, return from where they've come and alert the next settlement, or try to detour the army.

Strike

The unit in actuality is on route to an important celebration and depending on what the PCs do next, there could be a lot of retribution coming their way.

Hunting (Perception)

A character with Hunting is skilled in all manner of outdoor skills. He knows how to track, how to make a fire, set up camp, etc. and can survive for days in the wilderness without food or water, using only the land's natural resources. A hunter knows how far to stand from an animal to fire his bow and which animals to avoid.



Hunting on a lord's or the emperor's land without permission is punishable by death. The constantly-changing Shadowlands make tracking much more difficult, and it is dangerous to forage in those corrupted lands. Although a hunter knows much about birds of prey, he needs the Falconry Skill to train a hawk or falcon.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Kharmic Tie Advantage or Haunted Disadvantage.

Challenge

The PCs' daimyo, or a Unicorn daimyo with great political pull, has requested that they find and kill the mythical white stag. He asks that they return with the head and offers several eta attendants to help cart it back.

Focus

Rumors abound in villages everywhere of the mythical white stag. Eventually, the PCs are drawn to a serene glade where they find a rare, white stag drinking from a stream. The hunt can last as long as the GM would like; however, the end result should be that one of them kills the stag. Have everybody who fires on the stag make an Archery roll, with the highest roll bringing down the beast.

Strike

The samurai who killed the stag is cursed. Although the effects are not immediate, the stag's spirit will plague the PC and eventually the curse will begin to affect his judgment. The local villagers can be asked for stories about the stag and the myth behind its origin. The samurai should learn more and more as time goes on and eventually hears rumors of the stag's curse.

Investigation

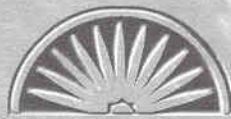
This character (with Perception) knows where to look for clues, how to put disparate facts together (Intelligence), and (using Awareness) how to interrogate suspects. Investigation does not interpret the information for the player. It is used to provide details, clues, and insight that would have been lacking otherwise. It is still up to the player to decipher the information that she has been given. Investigation is similar to Nazodo and Ichi Miru from *Way of the Dragon*, and GMs should be sure to understand the differences among these Skills.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Sensei Advantage.

Challenge

The samurai enters his sensei's dojo to find him murdered, blood flowing from his neck. There is no sign of a struggle and the





assailant appears to have attacked from the side. There should be much concern and distress over the death of one's sensei.

Focus

On the ground are a metal shard with six points, a broken egg, and a piece of black cloth. None of the items are the sort of thing a samurai would carry, and the PC remembers hearing stories of "ninja" as a child.

Strike

Rumors of "ninja" activity draw the PC to investigate legitimate and illegitimate claims. This is a great campaign starter for a single-player or two-player campaign.

Kagaku (Intelligence; Agasha and Kitsuki only)

Kagaku is the study of elemental observation, experimentation, and reaction. Characters with this Skill are knowledgeable in the cause and effect of chemical reactions and can create the items and effects found in Appendix III of *Way of the Dragon*.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Courtier Skill. It also works well if an Agasha PC meets the NPC samurai that are retrieving the spice and flower for their lord.

Challenge

One of the samurai must retrieve a rare flower for his lord. The blossom grows only in the Dragon Mountains and it must be carefully handled. He must also retrieve a notoriously scarce spice from the Crab lands. In exchange for the spice, he has been given some items to offer in trade.

Focus

The spices themselves should be easy to get, although some short adventure could be designed to keep the PCs occupied. When mixed together, however, the spice and flower root create a powerful poison. If no one considers checking the effects, the PC will be delivering a poison to his lord. It should not be easy to connect the two, although a very difficult Courtier roll may suggest that the PCs know a little about their lord's dishonor (see below).

Strike

The PC's lord has recently committed a horrible transgression. Although the matter was kept quiet, he was denied seppuku. He knows that the spice and the flower combine to produce a poison. He cannot live with the shame any longer, though, and hopes that a death from an obscure poison will look like murder or happenstance rather than suicide.

Law (Intelligence)

"A samurai who knows little about the world serves only himself."

— Ikoma Tsuge

This character is familiar with the inner workings of Rokugan's legal system. He may argue cases with magistrates, defend or prosecute the accused, and write up legal contracts. GMs may determine that a samurai cannot be a magistrate without at least Law 2.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the History and Sincerity Skills.

Challenge

A case is being argued over the boundaries of a district, ownership of property, or something. One of the PCs is presiding on the day that the NPCs are arguing with the lord over rights. (Alternately, one of the PCs may be the individual accused in this case. This can make the PCs more interested in the outcome.)

Focus

The case seems very similar to a case argued in the past. A History or Law roll should be sufficient to determine this, but the GM may want to merely convey the information to the PC. In the past the lord ruled in favor of the plaintiff, but today he has contradicted precedent and ruled for the defendant.

Strike

The PC must alert his lord to the "mistake" without causing him to lose face. This is a delicate matter and GMs should be careful of what the PCs say and how they say it.

Manipulation (Awareness)

Manipulation is the art of using psychology and character interpretation in order to predict someone's actions. It can be used to determine wants, needs and desires and can also tell the character how to fulfill them. As with many other Awareness-based Skills, conversation is required to use this Skill.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Patron Advantage. It works especially well if the PCs bring a gift.

Challenge

A powerful and prominent lord is interested in being married. Any samurai who marries her is sure to do well by his Clan. The only problem that exists for matchmakers is their inability to determine what sort of husband she is looking for. Nothing to date



has interested her and many samurai have given up hope of catching her eye.

Focus

The PC's daimyo has sent him to visit the woman and see for himself what sort of man she seeks. "It would do well for myself and the clan if I were able to marry her. If I know the man she seeks, I will be able to be that man." The PC is sent with attendants, gifts, and anything else that may help.

Strike

Once there, the PC has few opportunities to even see the daimyo, let alone meet her. The place is crowded with every sort of courtier, matchmaker, and sycophant trying to win her affections, and there is no room to breathe. After a few days (and the appropriate "greasing of palms"), the PC is allowed to see the lord. After some discussion and private time together the PC is dumbstruck by her charm and beauty. She seems ideal and getting to know her is a treasure beyond compare. Of course, she is equally enamored with the PC and the two should hit it off quite well, once they get past the awkwardness of being so "impassioned" over one another. Despite the obvious boon to his own life, the samurai must now deal with his lord. Of course, if the PC is already married...

Medicine (Intelligence)

This character is familiar with the medical practices of Rokugan. He may treat diseases and cure wounds to make certain they don't become infected. He is familiar with massage techniques (used to center energies) and the basic tenets of acupuncture.

Although a superior acupuncturist should have at least Medicine 3, the Advanced Medicine/Acupuncture Skill is more appropriate. If a character applies first aid immediately after Wounds are taken, a successful Medicine/Intelligence roll (against a TN determined by the GM; a good TN is the number of Wounds taken) heals a number of Wounds equal to the Medicine Skill and doubles the healing rate. Diseases are cured at a much slower rate and many are beyond the means of Medicine or herbs. Medicine is different from Advanced Medicine and Herbalism. It is considered honorable for a samurai to practice medicine, and treating a wound is not considered "dirty." Pins and herbs are less clean, though, and few samurai would find themselves sticking a thousand needles into another person or spreading plant oil on an open wound.

Meditation (Void)

"Failure is caused by doubt and indecision. There is no cure for a weak mind."

– Mibuto, *Brotherhood of Shinsei*

A character with the Meditation Skill may make a Simple Meditation/Void Roll vs. 20 to gain back a single spent Void Point. (A character with the Brash Disadvantage may be assigned a higher TN for this roll.)

Meditation requires complete, undisturbed silence for one hour. Without this Skill it takes two hours to complete. If the Skill roll fails, it takes three hours, but no further roll is required. Remember, a Rokugani hour is one-twelfth of a day.

Meditation can serve many functions beyond replenishing Void points, such as cleansing oneself of negative energies from the outside world, reducing anger and hostility, and calming one's mind. A meditative samurai is sure to be calmer and more level-headed than one that does not meditate often enough. A samurai that is cursed or plagued by visions, ghosts, spirits, etc., can use meditation to shut off the outside stimuli and calm his inner spirit. GMs should exact a heavy penalty on PCs that have voluntarily taken a haunting.

Challenge

The PC has become cursed by an angry kami. The kami has found a weakness in the samurai and chooses to exploit and haunt the fallible PC.

Focus

The samurai must meditate upon the source of his suffering and tap into his center. The kami is strong and will not desist until the samurai is whole again.

Strike

No experience points may be spent by this PC on anything but his lowest Trait until he has regained his balance.

Music (Agility or Awareness)

"I have as much use for dancing and singing as I do for courtiers."
– Matsu Buruku

This is the Skill of playing musical instruments and understanding musical interpretation. Courtly music in Rokugan is referred to as *gagaku*, and a samurai with the High Skill of Music is assumed to know *gagaku*. Peasants perform folk music, which is considered a Low Skill.

PCs with this Skill may play musical instruments. For every Rank taken, a character may learn another musical instrument. The biwa is a wide bodied flute; the fue is a very popular long, bamboo flute; a hichiriki is a double-reed flute, not unlike an oboe; a koto is a zither-like instrument; a sanisen is the lute/banjo instrument; and san-ko are the three drums.



While playing an instrument is a demand on the character's manual dexterity (Agility), it is also a demand on his sense of tempo, pitch, and harmony (Awareness). When a character plays an instrument, he must use the lower of those two Traits.

Challenge

The performance of a fine orchestra is announced at an upcoming Crane celebration. The musicians are renowned for their talents and interpretation, and their style is considered one of the best in Rokugan.

Focus

When the evening of the celebration is at hand, the PCs gather for food, drink, and eventually fine music. The orchestra is made up of some 20 or so members and every instrument is represented.

Strike

Once the music begins, the host of the party radiates pride and all of the guests begin to enjoy the beautiful performance. However, something unsettles the PC that at first he cannot readily identify. Eventually he realizes that he has heard the music before. It is reminiscent of folk music from a small village near his home and the different instrumentation merely hides the fact that it is peasant music and not gagaku.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Research skill and the Curse of the Kami Disadvantage.

Challenge

In the Phoenix libraries is a single sheet of music, scored for the fue.

Focus

The scroll itself is used to summon a powerful Oni that has been banished for some time.

Strike

Playing the music opens a gate to Jigoku that returns the Oni to this world. The scroll for banishing this particular Oni is nowhere to be found.

Origami (Agility)

This is the art of paper-folding, the ability to transform scraps of tissue into cranes, horses, and other figures. A character skilled in origami can use tiny creases in the paper to create a likeness of just about anything. This Skill is primarily practiced in the courts of Rokugan.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Sensei or Allies Advantage.

Challenge

The PC has gone to visit a monk to seek assistance in unraveling a riddle he has heard.

Focus

The monk takes a piece of rice paper, writes on its face, and folds it into a beautiful and complicated origami hawk. If the samurai can open the paper without tearing it, he will have his answer.

Strike

A direct PC will tear open the hawk, while an honorable samurai will attempt to learn the folds before attempting to pull it apart. It should be very difficult and take several days of preparation. Once the character opens the hawk, the paper is blank. The answer to the riddle is "patience."

Poetry (Awareness)

The Rokugani consider poetry the highest form of literature. Haiku, the most common form, is a three-line, 17-syllable style of poetry (5-7-5 is the syllable configuration). This style is very popular with samurai for its concision and impromptu nature. However, it is not the only form.

A *tanka* is a 31-syllable poem written in a 5-7-5-7-7 pattern and is written in kana (script) rather than kanji. The *tanka* has been developed into a *renga* pattern by many highly skilled poets. The *renga* is a 48-syllable poem, with an initial 5-7-5 pattern followed by a 7-7 stanza which links to another 5-7-5 stanza. Both of these styles are considered archaic, but many great poets enjoy the challenging of writing in such a verse. Many other styles of verse have come and gone, but the Rokugani still continue to enjoy the haiku above all others.

There is also Unicorn travel poetry, which many outside the clan quietly say that anyone can write. It has six lines; the first two alliterate with each other, and the third within itself. The pattern repeats for the fourth, fifth, and sixth lines. The sixth line encapsulates the mood evoked by the first five lines and summarizes the poem. There are no constraints on meter, rhythm, or number of syllables.

Challenge

A great poet has come to visit the samurai. She was merely traveling through the lands and decided to pay a visit. She has heard of the PC and is interested to talk at length about poetry with him.



Focus

During the course of the night, the two begin to exchange haiku and discuss the works of great poets. Before long they are creating poems together and the poet has constructed a piece that she is very proud of. "My lord will enjoy this piece. I hope to give it to him with your blessing." The piece has but a few stanzas to go before being finished, but rather than rush the work, the poet says, "Sometimes a great sun rises in the morning, rather than setting at night." With that she retires, planning to finish the work in the morning.

Strike

During the night, the poet dies, leaving her unfinished work with the PC.

Political Maneuvering (Intelligence; Crane only)

Everyone in the Emperor's court knows a Crane's heart is an honorable heart. Therefore, to disagree with a Crane (especially if he has logic on his side) is to turn your back on honor.

With this Skill, the Crane can move opponents into the position of disagreement. This is done through simple conversation, but it must be done in public to gain the appropriate effect. The Crane uses traps of logic to lead someone toward the Crane's chosen outcome. If the Crane is successful, their opponent will find that if they disagree, they appear dishonorable. If they agree, then they must do as the Crane has suggested.

The Crane rolls his Political Maneuvering/Intelligence against a TN of his opponent's Awareness x 5 (the Crane gets a Free Raise if his opponent has the Gullible disadvantage, and is penalized by 5 if his opponent has the Clear Thinker advantage). If successful, the Crane's opponent would be acting without honor if they were to disagree with the supposition, so they must perform as the Crane has outlined. On the other hand, if someone is caught in the verbal trap and refuses to give in to the Crane, he loses one point of Honor. This honor loss may be increased by another point for each Raise the Crane uses on his initial skill roll. This Skill automatically fails if used against someone with a higher Honor rank (which the PC will not always be aware of).

Challenge

The samurai has pushed the limits of the court and a particular well-connected samurai too far.

Focus

The PC is now on the outs with most of the Rokugan's upper crust and must now deal with greatly reduced Glory, status, and responsibilities.





Strike

This sort of challenge can keep a PC on his toes and remind him that he is not invincible simply because he is a PC.

Shintao (Intelligence)

This is the study of the Tao of Shinsei, the guiding philosophy of Rokugan. A character must have a Shintao of 3 or higher to increase any of his Traits or Rings above 5.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Sensei Advantage and Oratory and Bard Skills.

Challenge

The PC's sensei has asked a favor. His son is preparing for his gempukku, and the sensei would like it if he recited some of the Tao and gave a short speech on its meaning.

Focus

The PC finds teaching the young boy difficult and frustrating, as he is uncooperative and uninterested in learning the Tao. He quotes passages incorrectly and continually refers to Shinsei in an inappropriate colloquial manner.

Strike

The boy is actually a brilliant Tao scholar and is training to become a monk. He will have no gempukku. Instead, he is assisting his father by testing the patience of the sensei's student. Did the PC maintain his harmony well enough to pass?

Spellcraft (Intelligence; Shugenja only)

This skill provides the shugenja with enhanced knowledge of magic and the kami. A shugenja with this skill can roll Spellcraft/Intelligence at a TN of 20 to sway a kami's view of him from hatred to mere dislike, or neutral to friendly. Further, Spellcraft can be used to identify spells being cast in the area, and to understand the complexities of an unfamiliar spell. Lastly, a successful use of Spellcraft/Intelligence at a TN of 25 can determine if a spell has been cast in the area recently, or to identify what spell has been cast on a person. This skill can be used to identify the residual effects of a spell that was cast in the recent past (up to 1 hour per level of Spellcraft).

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Skills Lore (Shadowlands), Lore (Maho-Tsukai), Investigation, and Research.

Challenge

The PC is sent out to investigate a *maho-tsukai* in a nearby region. The shugenja of the clan are very concerned, and the daimyo has specifically requested this PC for the investigation.

Focus

As the PC gets closer and closer to finding the maho-tsukai, the trail fails to turn up the normal evidence of *maho*. The usual signs (flesh, blood, etc.) are not there, and the PC finds that this tsukai has tapped into a type of magic unfamiliar to Rokugan.

Strike

The source itself cannot be found and the maho-tsukai will die before saying anything about his source of power. The PC is now faced with what to do about this new threat...

Theology (Intelligence)

Characters with this Skill are familiar with all the rites and practices of worshiping the many *kami* of Rokugan. Religious services are highly formal, and improper procedures may draw wrath from the kami... at least, that's what the people of Rokugan believe.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with Investigation and Etiquette Skills, and with the Sensei Advantage.

Challenge

A monk is teaching a version of the Tao that is quite different from the accepted norm.

Focus

As it turns out, he has an aged scroll with notes and translations from what looks like the original Tao. The words of Shinsei have certainly never been interpreted like this...

Strike

Whether or not the text is real is up to the GM. Some early copies of Shiba's original transcriptions did survive; whether this is a true copy or not might be difficult to determine. A visit to the original scrolls would not hurt.

Tsangusuri (Intelligence; Asahina Shugenja only)

This is the skill needed for an Asahina shugenja to create the minor, one-use magic talismans (or "fetishes") which are popular among the Crane. Such talismans often require an amount of time (as much as a week) to be spent finding the appropriate materials for creation and a successful use of Astrology must be made to determine the correct time and day for the ceremony to be performed. Lastly, the item must be made on a sacred site appropriate to the item's nature – an ancestral shrine, for example, or on temple grounds.



Challenge

An NPC approaches the party asking for assistance in a ritual. She asks them to find pure copper unmarred by a human hand, and a piece of cloth from an innocent woman's robe.

Focus

The PCs can find the items with some work, but it should not be without effort. The death of a few samurai at their hands can really muddle this story for the samurai.

Strike

If one of the PCs takes time to study the items and mull over their use, he may discern that the shugenja has great plans for the party.

Low Skills

Seduction (Awareness)

Honorable women do not act seductively. That activity is left to geisha. Seduction uses a Contested Seduction/Awareness Roll vs. the opponent's Awareness.

Challenge

A beautiful maiden of another clan approaches one of the PCs, entrancing him with her beauty and seducing him to her bed. In the morning, the maiden is gone – and no sign of her existence can be found. Other PCs don't remember her, the town has no recollection of her arrival, and her own clan denies that she ever existed. The PC's *obi* (sash) is missing, but nothing else is awry.

Focus

Nine months later, the maiden reappears in a dream. The PC is instructed to go to a small shrine nearby and look for a sign from the Celestial Heavens – and he finds it, in the shape of a squalling baby. The baby is wrapped in his own *obi*. To all appearances, the child belongs to the PC.

Strike

The 'maiden' is a Kitsune, *mikokami*, or other magical being who fell in love with the PC and wished to bear his child. The baby is magical, special, and many opponents will come after the child in order to end its pure existence. If the child survives to maturity, a prophecy will come true – and the PC will be rewarded beyond his imagining, with the ability to join his spirit-wife in her immortality!

Adventure Ideas: Advantages

The point cost for each Advantage is listed in parentheses, along with any relevant Clan or family.

Absolute Direction (1 Point)

This character never gets lost. He always knows which way is north, even in a garden maze in the middle of the night – or even after hours of fleeing from enemies. There are places in the Shadowlands, however, which can mislead even those who have Absolute Direction, so be careful when you're beyond the Wall... Also, spending too long in complete darkness will cause a samurai to lose his equilibrium.

Challenge

The samurai wakes to find himself underground. Aside from a tiny light source, he has no other items or tools.

Focus

Inspection of the area shows that the samurai is in a natural cave system, with tunnels occasionally opening into rooms. The room the PC starts out in has two exits. The PC has no obvious tool with which to mark the walls, so he must rely on his sense of direction to keep from backtracking.

Strike

The key is for the PC to choose a single direction and continue to maintain that direction no matter how many turns the cavern walls make. GMs should come up with creative encounters along the way. Of course, once he is out, he may well ask himself how he came to be there in the first place.

Aligned to the Elements (6 Points)

Note: This Advantage was originally printed as "Elemental Attunement" in *Way of the Phoenix*; it has been renamed so as not



to conflict with the Advantage of the same name from *Way of the Dragon*. Characters with this Advantage have a bonus to their use of one element, and a detriment to their use of another. A shugenja who is 'aligned' with one element is said to 'resist' another. Earth and Air resist each other, as do Fire and Water. For example, a character with Elemental Attunement to Fire gains a -5 to all TNs while he is using that form of magic, but a +5 to all Water spells. If an Earth-attuned character is being attacked by Earth, his TN to be hit is considered +5, while if he is being targeted by Air, the TN is reduced by 5.

Challenge

A kami of the element which a PC shugenja resists has gone mad and is causing destruction to a small village (flooding, fires out of control, etc.).

Focus

The PC is merely passing through the village, but none of the other PCs can (for whatever reason) stop the kami.

Strike

A clever PC will realize that controlling this mad kami is more difficult than summoning a kami of opposition to crush it (water

puts out fire, earth blocks the wind, etc.). A few Raises should be necessary to summon a kami of greater strength.

Allies (Variable)

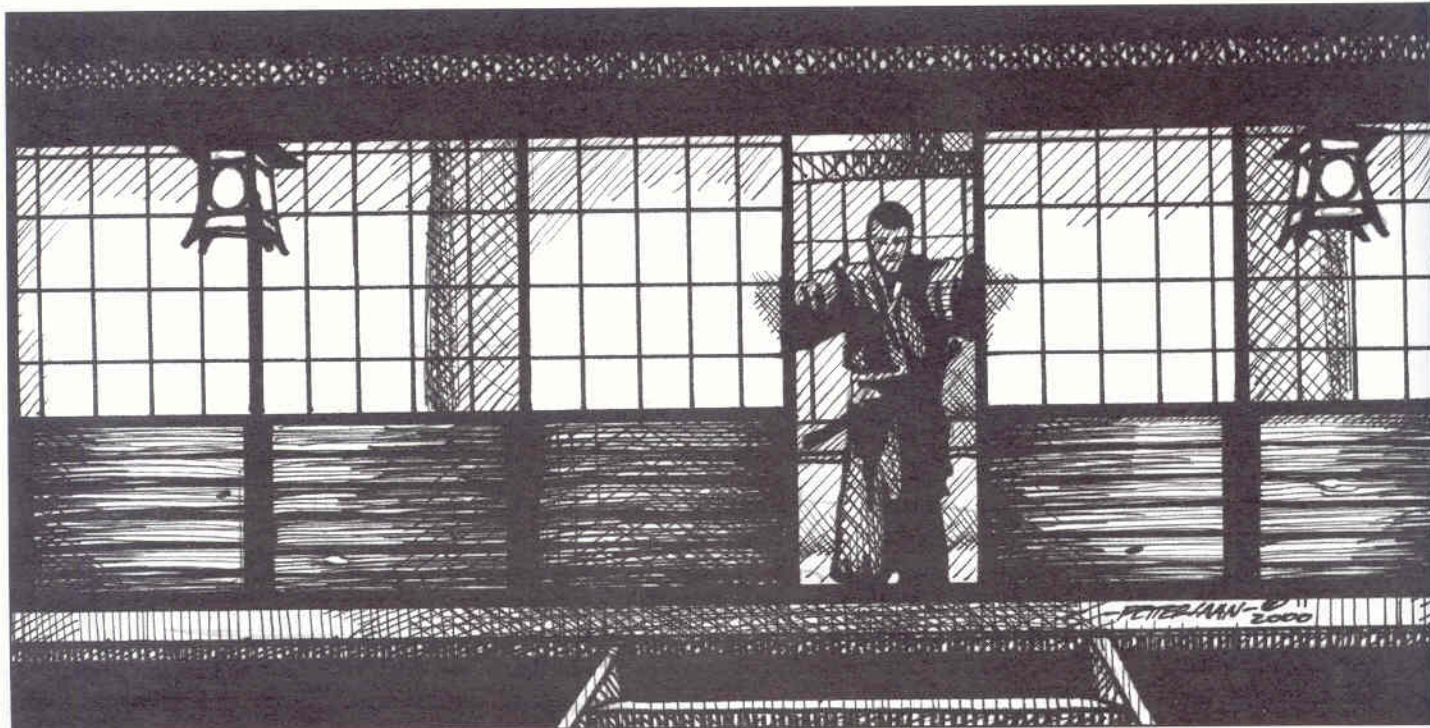
This samurai has friends with similar views as his own. For every 2 Points he spends on Allies, he can gain a single Minor Ally, and for every 4 he can gain a Major Ally. Minor Allies are folks who can get him legal things like food, shelter and perhaps a small amount of money. A Major Ally can get him things that are slightly less easy to acquire - such as fake travel papers, audience with a daimyo or a quick midnight ride out of the province. An Ally thinks like the samurai and is interested in the same goals, while (by contrast) a True Friend is someone that will go out of his way for the samurai.

Challenge

The PCs are trapped in an enemy's lands trying to get home. It is raining, the roads are flooded with soldiers, and everywhere they go the villages are sympathetic to the enemy. The PCs have been unable to find food or water and the situation has grown dire.

Focus

One of the PCs encounters an ally buying supplies from a lone merchant on a side road. The merchant has one tough-looking





yojimbo. The ally has just purchased the last of his food stores (enough to feed the party twice) for an inflated price.

Strike

How the PCs approach the situation affects how they get through this adventure. The merchant would be glad to return with more in two days, if the PCs will wait. Can they? Otherwise the ally will have to share his food with them; will he do so willingly?

Ambidextrous (3 Points)

This character may use both hands without penalty. Any character who does not invest in Ambidextrous has all TNs increased by 10 when using his off-hand.

Challenge

The PC has taken a grave wound to his right hand. It is up to the GM to determine whether or not this is permanent.

Focus

The samurai must now decide whether to draw his weapon with his off hand, or ignore the wound and try to wield his katana with a bloodied, damaged hand.

Strike

The act of drawing a katana with an off hand is a dishonor to the samurai and his ancestors. PCs should be reminded how the culture responds to warriors that draw with their left hand.

Benten's Blessing (3 Points, 2 Points for Crane Characters)

This character has been blessed by Benten herself. People are attracted to him, be it his looks or his charm... or both. He just has that certain "something." Whenever he makes a roll involving persuasion, keep an additional die (two if they are attracted to the character already). GMs should ask PCs to define what it is about their character that is distinctive. The word "beautiful" is subjective and does not define what is interesting about a PC.

Challenge

The players have been asked to attend an elegant party put on by a beautiful Doji hostess. She has invited the PCs' lord to the party, but he cannot attend and has sent the PCs in his place.

Focus

Once there, the PCs realize that all the guests are Crane or Scorpion courtiers of some merit. The verbal banter is beyond the abilities of even the best PC courtier and the way the guests receive

each other is superficial and obviously "sincere." It is up to the PCs to fit in and not create a scene, thus embarrassing their lord.

Strike

Eventually, through no fault of their own, the PCs become involved in the scheme of an important and alluring NPC. The PCs must maintain a level head while trying to work through the machinations of a "playful" courtier. The prettiest or ugliest PC should take the brunt of the NPC's abuse.

Balance (4 points)

This samurai has the ability to remain neutral - even level-headed - regardless of his inner emotional state. He may ignore any comments designed to taunt him or impel him to react. In game terms, this means he ignores any modifiers to his Honor roll. Also, during Iaijutsu duels, the samurai may Raise a number of times up to his Void + 2. Matsu characters may not purchase this Advantage.

Challenge

The PC's sensei has asked to meet him at his dojo. He has recently shown great skill and his sensei would like to show him a special technique.

Focus

The technique requires a great deal of focus and balance. It may take several weeks of determination to master the technique and even then the sensei will inform the samurai that he should not abuse the meditative powers that he has imparted to his student. Create a series of tests for the PC that require Willpower, Stamina, Strength, Void, and Meditation checks.

Strike

When it is over a great sample of his physical and mental talents should be taxed and he should feel his own body aching against the skill her master has shown him. In the end the PC could be offered the next Skill rank of Iaijutsu, Jiujutsu, Wrestling, or Kenjutsu for half price. If the Balance Advantage has not yet been taken, the GM may wish to offer it at this time, but only with much more training and a very high EP cost.

Blackmail (Glory of Blackmailee, Minimum 1)

This character has a bit of information or evidence that he can hold over someone's head. Because of this information, he can gain advantages over the guilty party. The cost of this advantage is equal to the Glory Rank of the individual. This Advantage costs one point less than usual for Scorpion Clan characters. Keep in mind that no one likes to be blackmailed...



A great way to start a campaign is with every PC blackmailed by an important Scorpion samurai. This gives the GM a hook to get everyone together, especially if they are all meeting in a field somewhere to get bushwhacked. A PC with Benten's Blessing is easier to notice and recognize than any other samurai. Therefore a -10 TN modifier should be applied to any roll to recognize a samurai with this Advantage.

Challenge

A PC has been blackmailing a powerful NPC. The NPC should have a great deal of influence or be a powerful military leader. The NPC has come to visit the PC without announcing himself and without an invitation.

Focus

When the PC arrives home, he finds his home ransacked and a very angry NPC sitting alone in a dark room, weapon at the ready. Two yojimbo are standing ready to work the PC over if he gets out of hand.

Strike

The NPC only wants to talk. He wants to remind the PC that his little game is wearing thin. If he persists on "asking" for favors, his son will be spending much more time away from home. Now, if the PC should decide to try and doing anything foolish, those yojimbo are likely to step in with an escalating series of punishments.

Bland (2 Points)

Characters who are bland by nature tend to be unassuming, quiet folk with average build and features. Because they are not striking in any way, it is easy to forget their name and appearance. They have no real distinguishing features, and many people simply look away when they pass nearby. Being bland is both an advantage and a disadvantage; someone who is bland has a greater likelihood of being ignored when disguised or not wishing to be noticed, but they also have a smaller chance of being noticed for recognition or award by their daimyo. One cannot be Bland and have Benten's Blessing, Benten's Curse, nor Dangerous Beauty. This Advantage cements the character's appearance and makes it difficult to detract from that, although Benten's Curse could be "acquired" later. A Bland PC is more difficult to recognize than other samurai. Therefore a +10 TN modifier should be applied to any roll to recognize a samurai with this Advantage.

Challenge

The PCs have just arrived in a new village or town. They are far from home and none of the faces look familiar. One of the PCs has

been mistaken for a criminal. A Magistrate of some appropriate kind (Imperial, Kitsuki, Clan) is handing the PC arrest papers, prepared to take him in.

Focus

The name on the arrest papers is not his, but no one in the city recognizes nor can vouch for the PC's identity. The other characters must decide if any of them are willing to stand up for him in open court and validate his claims. They have a few days to decide what they will do (a la *Return to Paradise*) and the GM should play up the tension of the PC's dilemma.

Strike

If the PCs speak to the court on the behalf of the arrested samurai, the Magistrate makes no contrary claims and allows the PCs to leave. No one's honor is marred by the incident and the event unravels fairly easily. The idea here is to create a feeling of tension and powerlessness that quickly fades after a samurai steps forward courageously in the defense of another - an important tenet of bushido. GMs may wish to award a point or two of honor to a lower honor PC.

Bloodlines (Kitsu only; 5 points)

The character represents the confluence of several pivotal bloodlines within the clan. The voices of his ancestors come to him without effort, at times to the point of annoyance. All spells and abilities involving any of his clan's ancestors directly keep an additional two dice, and ancestors cost him only half their original value in Character Points. The samurai's ancestors check up on him from time to time, however, and frequently drop in at inconvenient times.

Challenge

An ancestor has been contacting the PC in dreams, but the PC cannot seem to make contact consciously. His sleep has been interrupted and he wakes each morning agitated and groggy.

Focus

The PC must find out what is wrong. The PC's contact with his ancestors is unusually muddled and confusing. The ancestors that are making contact are unhelpful. The situation seems dire and the PC may get the impression that his link to the revered ancestors is fading.

Strike

The key lies in the PC's own will. The Kitsu must meditate to a state of complete relaxation, wherein he may interact with his



ancestors and uncover the true fate of the kami that has haunted him for so long. An excellent addition to this adventure hook would be an Isawa Void Shugenja or Asako *Henshin*.

Blood of Osano-Wo (5 points)

This character is a descendant of the great Osano-Wo, the Crab warrior whose stamina and battle fury rivaled that of the elements themselves. His blood has rendered the samurai resistant to cold, heat and extremes of temperature. He cannot be harmed by any weather-related phenomena and always succeeds at any Stamina checks involving temperature changes. Anyone attempting to cast a Fire spell or other appropriate spell (GM's discretion) on him against his will has a +10 to the spell's TN. This Advantage is typically only found among the Crab; however, the Blood of Osano-Wo is strong and flows through the breadth of Rokugan. Matsu and Mantis have been known to carry the blood with them, as the Crab marry only the strongest of samurai.

Challenge

The PCs have been assigned to protect a village in the Phoenix lands. It is nearly the end of the year and the cold months will bring bandits to steal the stored rice from the peasants.

Focus

The river outside the village has frozen over downstream, and the water is backing up and flooding toward the village. There is only so much time before the village is completely wiped out.

Strike

One of the PCs must enter the freezing waters and break up the stubborn ice. Some magic may be necessary, but the GM should require that one of the PCs actually enter the river and hack away at the ice. The river could also be blocked by a bandit-built dam, pulling the PCs from their post at the village, while the bandits raid the peasants.

Cadence (Crane only; 3 Points)

This is the secret language of the Crane artisans, capable of encoding detailed information into song, speech, or painting. Certain mythological figures have meanings which can be deciphered by those who have been taught the Cadence. It is never taught to a non-Crane, lest their enemies learn their secrets. This Advantage may be bought during play if the GM decides a Crane mentor can be found that is willing to impart such knowledge and spend several months (at least six) teaching them.

Challenge

The PC's sensei takes the samurai aside and presents him with a gift of a finely crafted piece of pottery (or other art that the PC is familiar with).

Focus

The gift has a story embedded in the art. If the samurai takes time to decipher and interpret the symbolism, it relates a story of a nemuranai sunk beneath the waves far to the north. The trip should be spiced up with adventure and peril. If the GM deems it necessary, another piece of art can be waiting with a new message at the PC's destination.

Strike

The item itself is not very powerful, but is a fine piece of art. If the samurai returns with it to his lands, his sensei will regard his skill as "growing" and tell him that he is ready to learn his school's next Technique. GMs should only allow this if the Insight is sufficient, but this adventure should garner the samurai enough Experience Points to advance.

Chosen by the Oracles (5 Points)

Occasionally, a child is noticed by the Oracles and guided gently through her life. While this does not mean that the person so chosen is destined to become the next Oracle, it means that the Oracle takes a definite interest in her life and well being - to the point of interfering when the individual is not doing as the Oracle thinks best. Because the Oracles are mystical, barely-human creatures, their idea of 'best' and 'worst' can be very different from our own, and their meddling can be a double-edged sword. GMs should read the *Player's Guide: Book of Air* for information on the supernatural.

Challenge

A vision of peril haunts the PC, speaking of horrible things to come for the people. The visions occur again and again until the samurai takes action. The trouble seems to be in a remote mountainous region, rarely visited by Rokugani. This can be a very unsettling adventure for an Asako.

Focus

One (or all) of the Oracles is trying to compel the PC to action. The act can be a short- or long-term adventure that challenges the PC and causes undue stress. The end result should be a far cry from the images contained in the visions, vexing the patience of the PC.



Strike

The visions and ensuing pilgrimage are merely a test. If the PC acts carefully, thoughtfully, and purposefully, the Oracle will grant a boon to the samurai that must not be squandered. But the Oracles are always vague and their gifts are not always clear...

Clear Thinker (2 Points)

It isn't easy to trick this samurai. Whenever another character tries to confuse, befuddle, or lie to him, add 10 to the Target Number. In many RPGs this Advantage is akin to 'common sense,' a game balancer for players who tend to behave in a manner that gets the party killed. GMs may want to insist that certain players *must* take this Advantage, but that's really up to you.

Challenge

A very tempting offer has been made to the weakest-willed PC. A Bayushi has offered him a position of power within the Scorpion clan in exchange for his family's prized katana which he wears on his saya. GMs should secretly make some Willpower rolls behind the screen that automatically fail.

Focus

Another PC gets wind of the deal, hearing that the fealty ceremony will take place in one week. Before the duped PC's clan learns of his dishonor, the PC has an opportunity to stop the alliance.

Strike

Assuming that the Scorpion have made a tempting enough offer to the duped PC, it's likely that the rest of the party will have an uphill road ahead of them in convincing him that giving up his ancestral katana is not worth anything the Scorpion can offer. The game may have an entire evening of role-playing ahead if the players get into a philosophical debate over loyalty, duty, and honor.

Crab Hands (4 Points; Crab Only)

This character has a familiarity with many forms of weapons, and can wield most of them with some degree of effectiveness. He fights with any weapon he does not have a Bujutsu skill ranking in as if he had a Bujutsu skill ranking of 1. This is not a "substitute" for regular skill ranks, and all weapon skills must still be purchased as normal. *Example:* Hida Shitoki has the Crab Hands Advantage, a Kenjutsu Rank 3 and no skill in Subojutsu. He fights as if he has a Kenjutsu Rank 3 and Subojutsu Rank 1. If he purchases a Rank of Subojutsu through experience, he still fights as if he had a Subojutsu Rank 1. This Advantage is only available to Crab characters. This is a powerful Advantage, and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.

Challenge

The samurai's katana has been stolen and he is alone in a remote village.

Focus

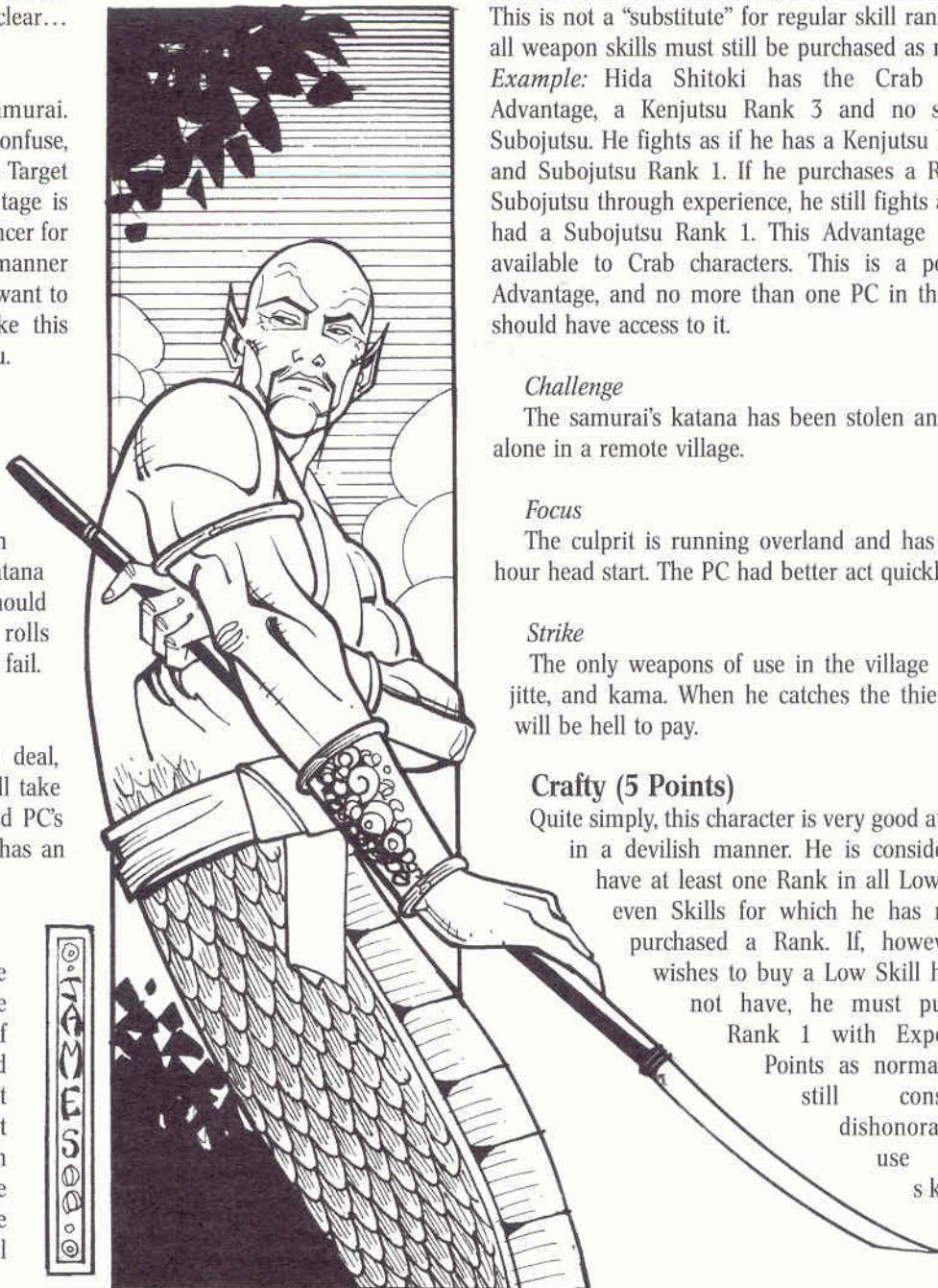
The culprit is running overland and has a two-hour head start. The PC had better act quickly.

Strike

The only weapons of use in the village are bo, jitte, and kama. When he catches the thief, there will be hell to pay.

Crafty (5 Points)

Quite simply, this character is very good at acting in a devilish manner. He is considered to have at least one Rank in all Low Skills, even Skills for which he has not yet purchased a Rank. If, however, he wishes to buy a Low Skill he does not have, he must purchase Rank 1 with Experience Points as normal. It is still considered dishonorable to use these skills, even





if the PC is not highly honorable. GMs may wish to impose that a Crafty PC may never have an honor above 2.5. Crafty PCs are considered resourceful by nature and GMs may wish to allow a Scrounging roll (Intelligence) to find a useful item in a crisis. The TN is dependent upon the value of the item. This is a powerful Advantage and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.

Challenge

The party has been left to die in the wilderness. Contact with their lord has been severed and the whole of Rokugan considers them lost.

Focus

One of the PCs must find a way for the players to survive in the wild. The game have left the area and the berries and fruit are not edible (or perhaps are poisonous). Someone must do something to save the party. The GM should create a host of opportunities to use Stealth, Poison, Hunting, and Scrounging.

Strike

Do the samurai admonish the PC for using Low Skills to save their lives? How do the samurai react? See the movie *Alive* for more on how the human spirit's drive to live resists social mores. In the face of adversity, man will do anything to live.

Dangerous Beauty (2 Points, 1 Point for Scorpion Characters)

This is a very different Advantage from Benten's Blessing. A character with Dangerous Beauty rolls three additional dice for the purposes of Seduction and other less-than-honorable temptations that involve appearance. Sincerity is not based on one's beauty, but Commerce sometimes can be. This is a powerful Advantage and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.

A character who wishes to purchase both Benten's Blessing and Dangerous Beauty must pay an additional 3 Character Points on top of the total Advantage price (a total of 8 Points, or 7 Points for Scorpion and Crane characters). This combination should be very rare. The uses for such an ability are endless and GMs should encourage PCs to refrain from abusing their beauty, lest the fortunes fail to shine on them one morning.

Daredevil (4 Points)

Whenever a Daredevil does something risky, or performs an impossible feat, the GM secretly rolls a die. If the die roll is even, the character receives a +10 bonus to the roll (unknown to the player) for that feat. Otherwise, there is no benefit from this Advantage. This

a particularly cinematic Advantage and GMs should consider allowing it in games that have a very heroic flair. Realistic games would rarely have use for such an ability.

This Advantage provides the PC with ample opportunities to put herself in harm's way. PCs that abuse this Advantage or try the same thing twice will find that it isn't so daring once it has already been done.

Challenge

The sensei has noticed the PC's unbridled passion for action. The sensei has created a series of tests that the samurai must overcome: the final test involves diving from a cliff into the sea some 60 feet below, beyond an outcropping of rocks jutting out into the sea.

Focus

Failure brings death.

Strike

Success indicates that the student is ready to learn.

Death Trance (3 Points, 2 Points for Lion Characters)

This samurai understands that death has no hold over him, and has taken the philosophy of bushido to heart. When he faces death, he enters into a thoughtless trance that gives him great courage in the face of adversity. A character with Death Trance automatically succeeds at Fear Rolls.

Challenge

The PC is faced with a Fear-inducing situation and, although he has never been asked to make a Willpower check before, he is now.

Focus

Faced with the sensation of fear for the first time, the PC may begin to question or doubt his own abilities. This provides the GM with countless opportunities to role-play. In the meantime, the ability is useless even under mundane circumstances. Requests to commit seppuku are denied.

Strike

Whether or not the PC gets back his ability is up to the PC's role-playing and the GM's fairness. An entire campaign could be built around re forging one's own courage.

Different School (3 Points)

This character did not go to his Clan's bushi or shugenja school, but was instead an "exchange student" at another Clan's school. This



requires the prospective student's family to cash in a number of favors, and may have some effect on others' perception of him; a Crab bushi who studied at the Kakita school would almost certainly be mocked by his cousins. This Advantage may only be taken once. Players and GMs should confer on how and why the Advantage is required.

Some GMs may disallow this Advantage altogether; others may decide that the mechanics of a different school should not cost the PC any additional points. As long as the PC is choosing a family and school based on style and not on optimizing points, the relative "harmlessness" of attending another school may incline the GM toward not charging any points for this Advantage. The ridicule the PC will receive from peers is more likely to be a disadvantage anyway: "Look, it's Matsu Gireko, who trained with the Dragon. She's not even a *real* Lion."

Ear of the Emperor (5 Points)

The PC has a (semi-)direct line to the Imperial Court, whether through familial connections, favors, social or political influence or simple respect. The terms of the connection must be clearly defined before a PC with this Advantage can be brought into play. The samurai is generally treated as if his Glory Rank is one or two levels higher. Depending on the circumstances, the PC might not need to be present in court when it is proposed, relying instead on a third party to relay and insinuate the desired information.

Challenge

The Seppun seek a champion to step forth and defend the honor of a recently insulted courtier. The Emperor has approved the duel and the two families must settle this dispute quickly and quietly.

Focus

A PC who has been abusing his connections in court is asked to return a favor by acting as a personal champion to the dishonored Seppun. It would be a disgrace to refuse.

Strike

The PC has a choice. Either he can face off in the duel or he can quickly find a champion who can... but remember, if a courtier chooses a champion, he suffers the same fate as his defender.

Elemental Attunement (Mirumoto Bushi only; 1 Point)

The bushi with this Advantage has spent many years training with shugenja. Now he is attuned to the shifts, ebbs and flows of elemental energy. With a successful Awareness roll (TN set by GM), the bushi may detect the use of magic in the immediate area.

Challenge

A magical catastrophe has occurred. The PC wakes one morning, sensing that something is not right. There are shugenja about and all of them have very different opinions as to what has occurred.

Focus

If the PC chooses to uncover the event on his own, he finds that someone has cast a maho spell and unleashed a great deal of negative magic into the world. The kami are unsettled by the event and the PC can easily track the source of the disturbance to a secluded location.

Strike

What the PC finds is up to the GM. Perhaps a Black Scroll has been read and used for the first time in over 1000 years or a Phoenix shugenja has unleashed a spell that murders kami spirits. The key here is to have the PC stumble upon something that should not be found. This adventure works well with the Kitsu Bloodlines Advantages (see *Way of the Lion*), or the Forbidden Knowledge Advantage below.

Forbidden Knowledge (Phoenix Only; 1–10 points)

This is a form of the 'Inheritance' Advantage. However, rather than inheriting a physical item or ability, the character has some secret knowledge which should be kept hidden from the rest of Rokugan. Because of the reclusive nature of the Phoenix, family secrets are passed only from one member of the household to another as death comes to take the original holder of the secret. Such secrets are considered to be the most precious knowledge a member of that family can hold. Each family is publicly known (within their clan) to have this secret, although the majority of Rokugan does not know. This information is jealously guarded by the Phoenix Clan.

This knowledge can be anything from the true ritual to summon an Oni to the location of a Black Scroll, or knowledge of a hidden *maho* rite dating back to the Tribe of Isawa, before the Empire came to Gisei Toshi. For each point spent on this Advantage, the character's secret is more potentially damaging to him and his clan, and he will be more seriously watched by his clan. In any case, members of his clan should be informed that they know he is a holder of some Forbidden Knowledge; NPCs tend to treat the character differently - better or worse, depending on the NPC.

GMs should consider each point in this advantage the equivalent of a skill rank in the Lore of that piece of very special and esoteric information. Values above 5 are still considered, and GMs should apply the "over 10 dice" rule if it becomes necessary.



Challenge

Someone has been asking for the PC. A stranger has been coming to visit the samurai whenever he is not around and word has reached her that someone is looking for him. The news should be unsettling, and a paranoid player ought to think someone is out to get his character.

Focus

The stranger leaves a message for the PC that they should meet somewhere relatively quiet. A remote road house is suggested two weeks from the day the message is left. Hopefully, the PC will be very worried at this point. If the PC is not completely paranoid, make odd shadows appear around the house at night while he tries to rest. After all, no samurai should ever fear anyone.

Strike

A family secret is in jeopardy and the PC must guard it. The stranger is a Yogo, who still has strong ties to the Phoenix or PC's family. He tells the secret to the PC once – and only once – and then commits seppuku immediately afterwards. Now, is anyone else looking for the PC?

Gaijin Gear (Unicorn Only; 2 Points)

This character starts the game with a piece of gaijin equipment of his choice. See Appendix 2 in *Way of the Unicorn* for a list of what is available; possibilities include a spyglass, a sling (which would require purchasing the Skill to use it), or perhaps an oil lamp with glass lenses. He may only purchase this Advantage once. GMs may decide that a PC of another Clan may purchase this Advantage with a good enough background story, but never at less than 6 or 8 points.

Challenge

An Ide merchant approaches the PCs announcing that his entire caravan of goods has been stolen. The bandits took it with them into the hills. Honorable bushi should be glad to help, while ronin will expect a reward – which he offers.

Focus

Many of the items in the caravan were very exotic and the gaijin gear may not yet have been searched through by the bandits (depending on how long it takes the PCs to find them).

Strike

When the PCs return with the goods, he offers the party one exotic item (which they must still buy with 10 Experience Points in order for it to continue to work, to preserve game balance) that any of them may take. The item should be relatively useful, but GMs

should remember, once an item has been introduced into the game, it's in the game-world for good.

Gentry (Variable, but at least 5)

Most samurai characters are not responsible for any land, instead being sworn to samurai of higher Glory and paid a stipend from the taxes their lords collect. Characters with the Gentry Advantage have land they must attend to and collect taxes from. This provides the samurai with additional income, but also requires some responsibility. After all, the samurai must now deal with bandits, wandering ogres, *maho-tsukai* and all other threats, real or imagined, to his fiefdom. Administrative duties over the area (cataloging births and deaths, etc.) are also now his responsibility, although he may assign an assistant to handle most of it. See the charts in the *Player's Guide* (pages 100–101) when designing the PC's lands.

Challenge

A village or holding of the character's has not been visited for some time. His yoriki and headmaster have not made contact in some time and the time for tax collecting has come about.

Focus

The samurai is expected to escort the tax collector to each village and return with the levied rice. Upon reaching the final village, the samurai and tax collector see that his village has been torn asunder by something...

Strike

Is it a hurricane? A creature from the Shadowlands? A disease or plague? A war band? Bandits? Ronin? Whatever the cause, the dishonor of permitting a village to be ravaged stains the PC and his lord.

Great Destiny (4 Points)

When this character was born, it may have been that the stars were aligned just right, or a birthmark was in just the right shape, but the ancestors smiled and a Destiny was created for this child. The great wheel moves this character slowly and surely towards this destiny. If this character takes damage that would kill him, he is reduced instead to a single Wound at the Out Level. The Seven Fortunes will only protect a character in this manner once per story. The GM will decide what the Great Destiny is, but need never reveal it. Once the Destiny has been fulfilled, these points are turned into 8 Experience Points. This is a powerful Advantage and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.



Challenge

The PC has been summoned to his lord's chambers. The daimyo seems pensive and concerned, and informs the PC that war is about to break out with another family. The remainder of the clan does not support the war, and the lord must hold his own against the warlike enemy. This works exceptionally well if the PC comes from a less warlike family and the enemy is the Hida, Otaku, or Matsu.

Focus

The daimyo offers the PC the title of hatamoto during the war, telling him "The ancestors have visited me and told me that you are the samurai to best lead my army." What PC would refuse such a 'request'?

Strike

The ancestors were actually 'Echoes of a Breeze' cast by an enemy shugenja, and the enemy knows the style and tactics of the PC. They expect to be able to overrun the PC without much resistance. What the enemy does not know is that the Fortunes dictated the fate of the world long ago and the samurai is destined for greatness.

Heartless (2 Points)

All attempts to woo or sway this samurai's heart to pleas of compassion, love or courtesy fall on deaf ears. Any appeal to his heart shall find it made of stone. Any Skills used with Awareness in such an attempt (such as Seduction, Poetry, Acting, or Sincerity) have a +10 to their TN. Note: this is an Advantage, where Insensitive is a Disadvantage. A PC cannot take both.

Challenge

The PC is approached by a Doji courtier who seems sincerely concerned over the fate of a small village and its people. She informs the PC that she cannot trust just anyone with this duty, but that he is renowned for being a samurai of his word.

Focus

The PC is immune to such a character and ignores her pleas. The attempts to appeal to his sensibilities have failed. Now the Doji must turn to another for aid, one less skilled or less trustworthy than the PC.

Strike

What should happen if the PC does not help? Whom can the Doji turn to? What should happen to the village? To the honor of the PC's or the Doji's family if help is not rendered?

A Heart of Vengeance (3 Points)

"The angry man will defeat himself in battle, as well as in life."
— Naka Kuro

The player should choose any Great Clan. For some reason or another, members of that clan will always draw his character's wrath. Whenever he uses any Skill against a member of that clan, he always keeps (not rolls) an additional die. He must take a 2-point Sworn Enemy from that clan when he takes this Advantage, but he receives no points for the Enemy. In social situations with the Clan, the GM may wish to penalize the character for his inability to remain impartial and rational. PCs should explain the history of this and how they have come to have such disregard for the Clan.

Challenge

The PC must escort a high-ranking member of the Clan he despises. Either the PC's daimyo has no other choice in the matter, or he has decided to teach the PC a lesson in tolerance.

Focus

The PC has strict instructions to remain courteous and polite, and not to injure the delicate relationship between his Clan and his charge's. Disregarding these instructions would cause a tremendous stain on the PC's Honor.

Strike

The NPC is very polite and humble. After some time, the PC learns more and more about the noble and might even grow to like him. The reach the end of their journey, where the noble is challenged to a duel by a drunk and thoughtless samurai from the PC's clan. The character must decide whether set aside his prejudices and defend the noble, or allow his clansman to butcher the man.

Higher Purpose (2 Points)

This character has dedicated himself to a single goal, a single objective. Whenever he takes a step towards achieving his Higher Purpose, he gains an extra experience point at the end of the session. This objective should be clearly defined by the PC and GM to eliminate confusion.

The Higher Purpose Advantage is a toned down version of Great Destiny. GMs should consider the scope of their campaigns and determine which best fits their styles of play. Great Destiny works well in a campaign where the character expects to reach a high level of acclaim without many specific goals. Higher Purpose, on the other hand, requires goals and direction: a specific path which the samurai intends to follow. An honorable samurai is expected to do what is necessary, while a rational samurai is expected to do what is right.



Imperial Spouse (2 Points)

In rare cases, a member of the Seppun or Otomo families marries someone of the seven Clans, and chooses to join the household of their spouse. Having an Imperial Cousin as a wife or husband is a mixed blessing – he will certainly know what takes place in the Imperial Court, even if he is as far away as the Phoenix or Crab Lands (letters from the Emperor's family travel rapidly). Also, he will be able to secure invitations, audiences with the imperial Advisors or one of the daimyo of the Imperial House (Seppun, Otomo or Miya), or extra koku and supplies for troubled times. However, if an Imperial spouse is in danger, the families of the Emperor may choose to take direct action, without considering the wishes of the PC, his clan, or their alliances. (Although she has changed her name to suit her wedding, a Seppun is always a Seppun.) Thus, the character may be constantly plagued by well-wishers, sycophants, and threats from the Imperial Families as they make certain that "our cousin is well-treated."

Challenge

The PC and her spouse have been invited to the wedding of a friend. The imperial court bustles with the news of the marriage of a Seppun and a Doji and the peace it will bring to the two families. Cynical samurai see it as yet another attempt to ostracize the whole of Rokugan from imperial life.

Focus

At the wedding the PC is approached by a renowned courtier who says he has important information about her husband. Needless to say, the PC should be very interested. However, before the evening's end, the courtier dies (a poison, or something equally subtle). What was the news? How will the PC ever know what the courtier intended to say?

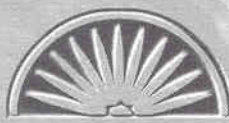
Strike

The idea here is to plant a seed of doubt and mistrust in the PC's mind. How can she trust her husband now? What will befall the family with such a turn of events? The GM should plant the necessary subtext to foster paranoia and mistrust in their relationship.

Inheritance (variable)

This character has received an ancestral item of some sort. This item has been carried by your ancestors and its spirit has become more powerful than a normal item. The cost in points and the nature of the item must be agreed upon with the GM, but even a minor magical item would cost 2 or 3 points. A Clan's Ancestral Weapon or Armor might cost 20 points or more.





The GM has the final say on exact effects of the Advantage. Additional boxes of Glory or an increase in Awareness whenever the item is worn are recommended. A GM can easily attach a point cost to a nemuranai that allows specific game effects: for example, a katana which allows the additional expenditure of Void points or an amulet that wards off Oni. This Advantage is intended to allow GMs to dictate the level of power in their own campaigns. The Kaiu and Kakita Blade Advantages, for instance, are merely specialized versions of this one.

Innate Ability (2 Experience Points)

When a shugenja has gained mastery over a spell, he can complete the incredibly complex motions and meditations required to appease the spirits without the aid of a scroll. For 2 Experience Points, a shugenja can begin the game with one spell as an Innate Ability. The shugenja no longer needs to have the spell scroll in front of him to cast the spell. If the shugenja casts the spell from a scroll anyway, he receives a Free Raise. A shugenja can have any number of spells as innate abilities, but cannot master a spell unless her Ring Rank plus her School Rank is equal to or greater than the Mastery Level of the spell. A shugenja can master a spell at any time during the game that the GM deems appropriate.

Inner Gift (6 Points)

The character with Inner Gift has been blessed with an uncontrollable talent, perhaps empathy, precognition, or the ability to sense danger. It is up to the GM to let the character know when his gift activates, and what that means to the current situation. A character with the inner gift of precognition, for example, might have a series of dreams about a bloody knife, only to wake up one morning and find that his dearest friend has been assassinated. A character with empathy might be able to tell when someone is lying to him, or a character with psychometry (reading emotions from objects) might gain a flash of insight when he picks up a samurai's fan. The gift must be clearly defined at the time a character purchases this Advantage. A character with Inner Gift can choose one of the following abilities: precognition, animal speech, psychometry, and empathy.

Challenge

The PC gets a flash of a horrible murder, but cannot determine the identity of either the victim or the killer. Their faces are muddled, although the character can clearly see the area around them. The murder will apparently take place in a castle.

Focus

The PC must find out who will die and who will murder him. With only the vision of the surrounding area to go on, he enlists the aid of a close friend, who helps piece together the location from the character's clues.

Strike

Arriving at the murder site, the PC makes a horrible discovery: the murderer is the same friend who led him here and the victim is the PC himself. He must figure out how to thwart the killings and, if possible, why his friend would want him dead.

Irreproachable (Variable)

This samurai is devoted to his word. For each point he spends on this Advantage, he adds +5 TN to his ability to resist seduction and bribery attempts. This character may not purchase Greed or Lechery. GMs should not allow PCs to spend a number of points on Irreproachable higher than their starting Void.

Challenge

The PC witnesses his lord murdering a geisha, courtier, or someone of note. The daimyo sees the PC and hurries away without speaking on the matter.

Focus

Later, the lord summons the PC to his chambers and offers him a very high position in the court. He does not mention the events of the previous night and grows angry if they are brought up.

Strike

The PC knows that his lord will expect him to stay quiet if he accepts the position, and also knows that his family's honor will be betrayed if he speaks. A character truly beyond reproach will remain quiet while refusing the "gift" or speak out once he takes it (thus implicating himself as well as his lord).

Ishiken-do (Isawa Shugenja only; 5 Points)

All Isawa who wish to become Void mages must take this Advantage. It is the basic latent ability all candidates for ishi status possess, allowing them to reach out into the Realm of Void and see the myriad patterns swirling between the other four elements. More importantly, it also allows them to comprehend what they are seeing. Should a person ever be exposed to the Realm of Void without this Advantage, the subtle eddies of Void would drive them insane. See *The Way of the Phoenix* for information about Void magic.



Kaiu Sword (Crab only; 4 Points)

This character has inherited a fabled Kaiu katana, a magnificent weapon which has been in his family's hands for generations. It keeps an additional die of damage (2k3), but it must never leave his side. If anyone outside of the character's family touches the blade, he loses 1 Honor point. If he ever actually loses the sword, he loses two Honor Ranks permanently. Only Crab samurai may take this advantage. GMs may allow non-Crab PCs with very strong, convincing backgrounds to purchase this Advantage, but at 2 or 3 more points.

Kakita Blade (4 Points; 8 Points for non-Crane characters)

Kakita blades are the finest swords in the Empire, thinner and more flexible than ordinary katana. A character who carries a Kakita sword has prestige and draws attention. A character may begin the game with a Kakita blade only under certain circumstances. Youths never receive a Kakita blade, and the weapons never leave the Crane lands except under particular conditions. Non-Crane characters almost never receive a Kakita blade.

A Kakita blade rolls and keeps one extra die when striking to hit an opponent, and allows its user to reroll a single damage die during an iaijutsu duel. A samurai who loses his Kakita Blade should ask for a quick death, because nothing can atone for such an affront to his ancestors.

At first glance, it appears that the Kakita Blade is a better Advantage than the Kaiu Sword, but each of these Advantages evokes a different style of play. Where the Kaiu Blade is useful and utilitarian, the Kakita Blade is a work of art. The Kaiu forge katana and the Kakita create blades. GMs should be aware that the Crane character will have a very different relationship with his sword than a Crab does with his.

Large (2 Points, 1 Point for Crab Characters)

This samurai big (either tall or wide or both). The average male Rokugani is approximately 5'6" to 5'8" tall. This character is anywhere from 6'0" to 6'3". This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Whenever the PC engages in social situations, he rolls one die less. However, all damage rolls are at +1 die (not kept).

Challenge/Focus/Strike

A ronin interested in joining the ranks of a Clan finds a PC samurai with this Advantage on a road and challenges him to a duel. The ronin hopes to impress his prospective clan by defeating such a huge (and therefore powerful) foe.

Leadership (7 points; 4 for Lion)

A character with the Leadership Advantage is able to bestow limited benefits on those who follow him. If another character is following a samurai with Leadership, he is able to use some of his leader's Skills. Whenever a character is following a leader's example (performing the same action as the leader), he automatically gains a bonus Rank in that Skill. If the character does not have the Skill, then he performs as if he had Rank 1. The leader's Skill must be higher than those who follow him, and must be at least Rank 3 in order for his followers to gain this bonus.

Challenge

A small village is being terrorized by bandits and the samurai's lord has ordered her to train them with the yari. The PC travels to the village to spend two hours each morning with the farmers, training them as ashigaru (peasant warriors).

Focus

The training goes well, with few snags. However, the harvest suffers from the amount of time spent training, and now the PC's lord has heard that he is wasting time on the training.

Strike

The bandits make a surprise arrival at the village as the samurai is doing kata with the peasants. The situation could get ugly.

Luck (3, 6, or 9 Points)

For every level of Luck, this samurai may re-roll one unsuccessful roll during a session. A particularly lucky samurai may be well-known for the trait and word may spread that his name means fortune (whether or not that is true).

Magic Resistance (2, 4, or 6 Points)

For some reason (determined by the player and GM), this character is highly resistant to spell effects. Perhaps he trained with the Dragon or Phoenix, or the kami themselves determined his path in life. For whatever reason, every two points spent on Magic Resistance (a maximum of 6), increases the TN of spells targeting him by 5. Therefore a +15 TN bonus is bestowed on a PC with Magic Resistance 3 (6 points).

Challenge

A shugenja of the PC's clan is in the midst of researching a new and powerful spell. The PC has been chosen to guard over and watch the shugenja during the ritual preparation of the spell.



Focus

During the preparations, the PC has a chance to speak with the shugenja's assistants, who ask him about his "karmic immunity" (the Advantage).

Strike

Something goes horribly wrong and the shugenja is destroyed by a powerful kami. The PC must now defend the shugenja's assistants (and possibly the surrounding community) from the enraged spirit.

Multiple Schools (6 Experience Points)

This is an unusual Advantage, in that it can only be bought after a bushi (and only a bushi and only to another bushi school) has progressed beyond level 1 in his school. GM permitting, this Advantage lets the player switch schools without losing his old techniques.

When the bushi switches schools, his old Techniques are "frozen." He won't learn any further techniques from his old school, but he'll begin learning new techniques in his new school immediately. As soon as he gains permission to begin training at the new school, he more-or-less immediately learns the Rank 1 Technique (GM's discretion on the length of training necessary, but probably not longer than 3 to 6 game months). The bushi then begins gaining Techniques in his new school as his Insight goes up.

Challenge

GMs should target the most balanced character in terms of insight and points. That PC's daimyo sees something special in the samurai, and decides that an urgent need of the clan requires that character's immediate attention.

Focus

The samurai's daimyo ushers him into a closed court and asks him to consider attending the school of a rival Clan to learn their skill with the blade. "You must insinuate yourself into the Clan and make believe that you have forsaken our Clan for theirs. Publicly, I shall denounce you as a traitor. In ten years, when your training ends, return to us and show us what you have learned. Then we will master what they have so carefully used against us." If the PC agrees, the agreement remains a secret between the two of them. GMs should make it relatively difficult to ensure the acceptance of the new student from the rival Clan, but it should happen. Once inside, the ways of the Clan will become familiar and routine and the schooling should move along smoothly (although a few early sessions of failure should be role-played out).

Strike

Before the PC's training ends, his daimyo dies and the truth of his true loyalty to his Clan is lost forever. Only he knows the truth. And now the armies prepare for war...

Noble Birth (Monks only; 3 Points)

Players of the *L5R* CCG may notice that the *ise zumi* are considered samurai in the card game. By default, *ise zumi* characters are not considered samurai. They are monks, and now occupy the top of the heimin class in the Celestial Order. However, although not all *ise zumi* belong to the samurai class, many samurai climb up Togashi Mountain and throw away their heritage for enlightenment. Some still retain their social status, despite their new place in the celestial order. *Ise zumi* who wish to retain their samurai status must take this Advantage. Those that do not remain monks - part of the peasant class.

Challenge

A Magistrate approaches a PC with this Advantage and argues the validity of his station as samurai, ordering him to drop his katana.

Focus

The PC must either comply or resort to violence.

Strike

If the PC abdicates, he may be arrested or killed as a peasant impersonating a samurai. If he resists, he may find himself staring down the wrong end of a duel.

Patron (Artisan only; 1-5 points)

Someone of importance has taken an interest in the PC. This Advantage should not be confused with the Allies advantage. A Patron expects a certain amount of reciprocal trade for his gifts. He will call upon the character from time to time, expecting some great work of art or a creation to celebrate the patron's latest achievement. However, such works will undoubtedly be circulated among the patron's followers, and which may cause a certain amount of fame and jealousy.

Although the Patron Advantage is similar to the "Sensei" Advantage, it differs in two ways. First, the patron may not know anything about the art itself, and may therefore be simply an admirer rather than a teacher. Second, the patron seeks to advance the character's political and artistic career by displaying the artisan's masterpieces in courts and public gatherings. In exchange for this, the artisan is expected to create masterpieces which flatter the patron and bring him glory. The artisan is also expected to perform



at the request of the patron whenever the patron has need for the artisan's services. GMs should welcome this as a role-playing opportunity involving an interested, involved, and well-developed NPC.

The more points an artisan spends on this Advantage, the more powerful and influential his patron will be – and the more often the patron will call upon the artisan to perform his art. The patron's starting Glory is 2 plus the number of points spent on this Advantage. The patron should be a landed noble (Gentry Advantage) and have whatever other traits are necessary for that station. If a PC takes this Advantage, the GM should be prepared to create an entire NPC based on the style of character the player has made.

Challenge/Focus/Strike

The Patron has commissioned an important work from the PC, at the same time the PC's lord requires his services as well. An important gathering and exposition is coming at the next festival and both the lord and patron require an award-winning piece.

Perfect Balance (2 Points)

This character rolls an additional die whenever performing actions involving balance.

Precise Memory (3 Points)

This character has a phenomenal ability to memorize facts, figures and written material. His mind records information easily, but this does not make him infallible. Neither does it give him any unusual ability to understand the information, nor learn new skills or languages. Characters wishing to remember something intricate, or precisely memorize large amounts of information, must make a simple Intelligence roll at a TN of 10. More complex information may require a higher TN to memorize. GMs should keep a short list of the highlights of the information. PCs that can be trusted may maintain these notes as well.

Challenge

The party has been sent out to scout for the hideout of a notorious bandit lord. The cunning brigand has hidden his headquarters well, and finding the location may be an intricate adventure in and of itself.

Focus

Once found, the PCs must detail the general layout of the lair and report back. A scribe has been assigned the duty of preparing their notes and transcribing the details of the lair.

Strike

Returning from the hideout, the party is ambushed by a bandit scouting party. Although the PCs drive them off, the scribe takes a grievous wound and his notes are covered in blood, making them useless...

Quick (3 Points)

This samurai is just faster than other folks. When determining initiative, he rolls (but doesn't keep) an extra die. This can be a powerful Advantage and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it. GMs may wish to review the additional rules governing this Advantage in the Book of Fire.

Quick Healer (3 Points)

The character heals Wounds as if your Stamina were one Rank higher. GMs may allow players to buy this Advantage more than once. If so, it costs 4 points the second time, 5 the third, and so on. If this rule is in effect, then PCs should be allowed to get extra levels of Quick Healer once game play has started.

Ratling Ally (4 Points; Crab 2 Points)

This character has a friend among the Nezumi, one who will help the samurai in time of need. He can act as a liaison between the PC and the tribe, provide accurate information on the surrounding landscape, or even assist him in covert tasks like scouting or hiding from oni. The player should design a name and personality for his Ratling friend, as well as a reason why the two of them are connected.

While other Rokugani may look upon the character with distrust for keeping such a tie, the Crab Clan knows its real value and will treat him with respect. GMs may wish to turn this Advantage into a bad reputation or hamper the PC with negative social effects. If so, the cost of the ally should become 1 point, and the PC should lose one die in social situations with individuals that are aware of the relationship.

Challenge

The PC's Ratling Ally has approached the PC asking for aid. Goblins have attacked his tribe and the Ratling needs the aid of the PC's family.

Focus

Other party members may notice that the Ratling acts distinctively human and even kneels when asking for a favor.

Strike

The PC will obviously help, but will the rest of the party see a value in aiding this creature?



Read Lips (2 Points)

With a successful Perception Roll, this PC can read the lips of anyone whose face he can see clearly. This can be a particularly useful skill in court. The TN is based on the conditions and the distance of the situation. It requires a base TN of 15 to read lips in an ideal situation. Increase the TN by 10 if the target is very far from the samurai (no one can successfully read lips further than about 50 feet or so). Poor lighting may also increase the TN. GMs may wish to require more raises when trying to read the lips of a Scorpion wearing a mask, a courtier with a fan, or a samurai with the Crafty Advantage.

Challenge

The PC has been asked to escort an important courtier to a ball or celebration. The courtier is an important emissary of the Clan and the PC is expected to protect, serve, and by all means obey and respect the hosts and other Clans.

Focus

Once there, the courtier begins to “put on airs” and introduces the PC as her personal yojimbo. Her deportment is careful and precise, but seems forced and unnatural. At one point she leaves the PC alone so that she may visit with friends.

Strike

From across the room, the PC notices the courtier speaking with others from a rival Clan. She divulges trusted advice about the PC's lord (and her own) to these fiendish “manipulators.” The PC must obey his lord's wishes and defend his lord's honor at the same time.

Sensei (Variable)

This samurai and his sensei have developed a bond that makes them inseparable. The PC would do anything to protect his sensei and his school, and the sensei would do the same. The cost of a sensei depends on his renown. The PC's sensei will not be able to accompany him on journeys (he has responsibilities, after all), but he will be able to assist the character in other ways.

The number of points spent on this Advantage determines the School Rank of the Sensei. Each point spent buys the Sensei one School Rank.

GMs may want to increase the point cost by 1 or 2 points depending on the devotion the sensei has to the PC. A particularly devoted sensei may see something in the PC that the PC himself is not yet aware of. A sensei can be expected to aid the PC in reaching the next level of training in situations where the PC's Insight is only a few points short. This too is up to the GM.

A host of adventure ideas can spring from the Sensei Advantage. A sensei can ask the PC to do him a favor that no other person would dare ask. The sensei can critique the PC in ways that no one else can. GMs should play up the sensei's importance by having him or her frequently interact with the PC and leaving those without this Advantage feeling left out.

A sensei should be a fully developed NPC with goals and a life outside of the PC. The sensei should not be “sleeping” until the PC arrives with another question. Samurai must treat their sensei well just as they must treat a parent or close relative well. Gifts and regular invitations for dinner are not uncommon, and can provide excellent opportunities for role-playing in addition to enriching the relationship between student and master.

Social Position (5 Points per Rank)

Characters who have additional Social Position gain a bonus to their Glory, and therefore to their position within Rokugan society. This can come from being closely related to a daimyo (or even the Emperor himself), or possibly from having a great omen appear when you were born. The player should note exactly how his character gained this Advantage. It is up to the GM whether or not it can be bought more than once. Most L5R campaigns assume that the PCs start as individuals who have yet to make a name for themselves. PCs running around with a Glory of 3 or 4 should be serving the Clan in a different capacity.

Strength of the Earth (2, 4, or 8 Points)

A character who has the Strength of the Earth may ignore some effects of Wound Levels on their rolls. The Wound Level penalty is decreased by 5 for every level the character has invested into Strength of the Earth. This can be a powerful Advantage; no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.

True Friend (Variable)

True friendship is a rare commodity in Rokugan. This PC and his NPC friend have gone through much together, and would do anything for each other. Having such a friend is a blessing, but also demands great devotion and loyalty. GMs should fully develop the characteristics of the True Friend with the player before the start of the campaign, keeping any information secret about the NPC that the samurai would not know. The cost for a True Friend depends on his influence and his devotion.

Influence

- 1 Point = A character of minor influence (a samurai without land or political position).



- 3 Points = A character of some influence (a samurai with land and/or political position).

- 5 Points = A character of great influence (a daimyo with land and political position).

Devotion

- 1 Point = Your friend would go out of his way for you, but would not risk family honor.

- 3 Points = Your friend would risk family honor to aid you, but would do so secretly.

- 5 Points = Your friend would do anything to aid you.

Just because a samurai calls upon the aid of a friend does not mean that the friend cannot call on the aid of the PC. For every instance that a PC calls upon a friend for aid the GM should make a note. After the PC has asked for help a number of times (say about three to five instances), the friend should ask something large of the PC. Many adventures can spawn from such a request.

Voice (2 Points)

A character with the Voice Advantage receives a Free Raise for rolls involving speaking. Although speaking applies to most any talent, this Advantage comes into play where the PC's words can significantly influence the outcome of the encounter. Oratory, Bard, Sincerity, Etiquette, and Courtier are all excellent examples of skills that may benefit from this Advantage.

Way of the Land (2 Points, 1 Point for Unicorn Characters)

This character knows his home province very well. He never becomes lost, and has memorized all of the best travel routes. He knows many of the villages by name and can find several landmarks even in the most tumultuous weather. Characters may purchase this Advantage for as many provinces as they would like, up to their Fire Ring. Way of the Land gives the samurai an intuitive sense of the land, having spent so much time in it.

Challenge

The party is moving through a loud, bustling city street, on the hottest day, at the brightest time. The people are tired and sluggish and the streets are crowded with traffic. Suddenly, a thief bursts out of the crowd, snatching a valuable item from one of the PCs.

Focus

The PC with this Advantage must lead the chase through the city, for only he is familiar enough with the territory. The thief uses

several dirty tricks to evade pursuit. At the climax the chase enters a busy section of the city and the samurai could lose his quarry.

Strike

The PC must use intuition here. Where he goes next depends on how he perceives the situation. Will the criminal hide within the city (which the PC knows well), or run into the open and hope to lose the PC in the wilds outside the city (which the PC knows even better)? GMs should try to keep the pursuit alive as long as possible.

Wealthy (1-10 Points)

For each point a character spends on this Advantage (up to a maximum of ten), they begin with four additional koku. GMs may wish to set a limit on how much can be spent, but since koku has a relative worth to samurai, a character may theoretically spend all her points on Wealthy and start the game with 50 koku. Players should remember that the koku can vanish very quickly. Once the koku is gone, so are the character's points. GMs may offer Crane PCs three koku per CP and provide a box of Glory for every 2 points spent on this Advantage.

Buying Advantages Once the Game has Started

The PCs may decide that they would like to purchase an Advantage once the game has started. This is rarely possible. A character does not suddenly become Large, or gain Crab Hands. Therefore, GMs should rule against purchases that contradict their campaign rules. It may be fun to buy Way of the Land, Gentry, or Blackmail for instance once the game has started, but all of these require role-playing opportunities to justify and no PC should be allowed to buy them without a very good reason.

If a player wishes to purchase an Advantage after the game has begun and the GM wants to accommodate him, he should design an adventure around it. The adventure should create some plausible explanation for the new trait and allow the PC to earn it only after much trial and tribulation. The GM should consult the player in question, but keep the adventure's nature a secret. You may even want to hold off on running it for several sessions, until the player has forgotten (or at least deprioritized) the request. That way, the adventure will come as a surprise and the player will emerge with the sense that he has earned his character's new Advantage.

The Experience Point cost for buying an Advantage is twice the cost of the Advantage. Inform the player of this in advance and require him or her to spend the EP before running the adventure in which the PC acquires the Advantage.



Adventure Ideas: Disadvantages

Disadvantages are worth points; when your character takes one, he gains the number of Character Points listed. These are added to and not subtracted from the Character Point total. No character may gain more than 10 points from taking Disadvantages. You may not take a Disadvantage more than once unless the Disadvantage specifically permits it.

The Disadvantage system in L5R is purposely very deadly. The effects are designed to hamper any PC that would think the Character Points so important to take one hand, a bad leg, or a bloodline curse.

GMs may wish to lower the 10 point Disadvantage limit. It is often difficult to monitor so many Disadvantages in a large group. 6 points is a fair limit that allows the PCs to take one or two good character "features" while still not unhinging the GM's sanity.

Antisocial (2 or 4 Points)

This character has difficulty getting along with others. Perhaps this manifests as shyness, troubled speech, discomfort around people, or even bouts of depression. Whatever the symptoms, he finds it hard to communicate his feelings properly or withdraw from contact with others. This is a debilitating Disadvantage for samurai and players should consider carefully before taking it.

Moderately Antisocial: 2 Points. All social skills keep 1 fewer die.

Extremely Antisocial: 4 Points. All social skills keep 2 fewer dice.

This may result in the character keeping zero dice, which is an automatic failure. This rule is distinctive to this Disadvantage.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works well with the Dependent Disadvantage.

Challenge

The PC's grandfather, a well-known retired diplomat, invites him to court, where he still holds much influence. He has never seen his grandchild and is eager to meet him.

Focus

The PC arrives in the court to find many faces staring at him. His grandfather has obviously prepared them for his arrival and they are eager to see his "prized" descendent.

Strike

The PC's grandfather kneels on the dais next to the presiding daimyo. It is obvious he is an important karo and he seems to beam with pride as his grandchild enters the room. Then he opens his mouth and speaks...

Ascetic (3 Points)

"Want is the road to suffering. Without want there is only what there is."

– Togashi Hoshi

This character isn't interested in material wealth or temporal power, glory or gaudy fashion. This world is only a transitional place between one reality and the next, and he has passed beyond the need to cling to it. An ascetic bushi owns only one kimono, one pair of sandals, one obi, and his daisho. Ascetic shugenja own one kimono, one pair of sandals, one obi, and a pouch full of scrolls. Maybe – maybe – they own a hat.

These are the only material objects the PC will ever own. He is unconcerned with Glory, but Honor is still very important. After all, a liar is concerned with the immediate consequences of his actions, and thus still clings to a material world. An ascetic samurai has no need of such things and therefore is more concerned about a person's actions.

GMs should not concern themselves over awarding the PC Glory, although great role-playing opportunities can arise from a samurai rejecting his lord's offer of Glory. Mainly, the PC and GM should come to an understand of the PC's views on Honor and Glory and allow the PC to monitor his own behavior.

Challenge

Just because a samurai is ascetic, does not mean that he is above reproach. A seducer approaches the PC and offers him something he has no need for, but finds himself wanting.



Focus

The PC initially refuses the offer, but as time goes on, his desire slowly grows. After a few days, he finds he can think about little else.

Strike

The PC must now judge himself and decide how he must deal with his newfound desire. Will he purge it through prayer and meditation? Will he treat it as a burden and carry it with him always? Or will he give in to temptation and be forced to deal with the consequences?

Adopted Blood (Variable)

This character's parents were adopted (or perhaps he himself was). He must prove himself to overcome the stigma of being a recent addition to the clan. For every point gained from this Disadvantage, he must gain an additional five points of Glory before he may move up a Glory rank. Each time he goes up a Glory rank, this penalty drops by five. **Example:** A samurai takes four points of Adopted Blood. He has a Glory of 1. It will take 30 Glory points before he is recognized as a Glory 2 samurai. It will take 25 after that to become a Glory 3 samurai; then 20, and then finally 15 until the Disadvantage is gone. Remember, the more points in the Disadvantage, the more disrespect the samurai receives from his peers.

Challenge

The character is approached by his real parents' (or grandparents') Clan. They offer him full membership in their Clan (i.e. without the Adopted Blood disadvantage) as well as other material inducements (i.e. a bribe) if he betrays his adopted Clan to them.

Focus

Such an act would certainly result in a loss of Honor, but which is more important to the character - Honor or Glory? More importantly, the character will probably gain a Sworn Enemy or three if he betrays his current Clan.

Strike

Would his parents' Clan trust him if he was willing to betray his Adopted Family in such a manner? He might wind up a dishonored ronin if things do not go according to plan. Perhaps, if his parents' Clan offered a bribe, his greed would overpower his common sense. Of course, if the Clan could resort to such tactics so easily, what evil has befallen it? Perhaps the offering Clan will follow through with the bargain and the character will have a new position of respect in

his Clan with only a Sworn Enemy or two (from the Adopted Clan) to show for his trouble. Then again, perhaps they have something far more sinister in mind...

Bad Reputation (2 Points)

This samurai has already earned himself a bad reputation in Rokugan. Whenever other samurai see him, they add a die to the recognition roll, but they begin with a bad impression of the PC if they do recognize him. Choose a single word to define his reputation.

Challenge

The PC has some free time between duties for his lord and decides to visit a remote village to reflect. While traveling, he encounters a Magistrate from another clan, who immediately recognizes him and hassles him for papers, reasons for traveling, etc. The encounter should not be pleasant.

Focus

A few miles down the road another Magistrate, this time an Imperial, stops the samurai. He does not recognize him, but gives him grief anyway. If he mentions the other Magistrate, the Imperial Magistrate looks at him quizzically and proceeds to harass him even further. He will be sure to mention the samurai's "bad attitude" to his superiors, who will themselves pass it on to others.



Adopted Blood

Challenge:

The PC is expected to represent the clan at a tournament involving Archery. The tournament is being held by the Crane Clan and samurai are expected to be on their best behavior.

Focus:

Once there, many clan members will show scorn and distrust toward the samurai. Even high-ranking courtiers of the PC's clan take time out of their politicking to chide the "new recruit."

Strike:

The Scorpion are also on hand (albeit secretly) and many of them have the ability to offer fealty to a samurai who does not feel welcome or accepted.



Strike

Upon returning to his lands, words of the PC's behavior have surfaced and his lord quickly takes him aside and chides him for representing the Clan so poorly.

Benten's Curse (2 Points)

There is just something about this character that others find repulsive. It could be a horrible scar, a hideous laugh, or a disturbing mannerism. Whatever the reason, others will be courteous toward him, but more than likely will attempt to avoid him altogether when they can. A character with the Missing Eye Disadvantage may also take this Disadvantage for the missing eye, if the scar is horrible to look at, especially if he doesn't wear an eye-patch. The TN of all the PC's attempts to be cordial, persuasive, or use Etiquette are increased by 10.

Challenge

The PC has been offered the hand of a prominent samurai in marriage. The PC's lord would be very pleased if he would accept.

Focus

They two have not yet met and as the day of the wedding approaches the two Clans have grown more and more excited about the prospect of peace between the two families.

Strike

The bride-to-be is not at all excited about the prospect of marriage, and will attempt to assassinate the PC – repeatedly – with whatever means are possible. Even if the PC catches his 'spouse' in these activities, he cannot refuse the marriage – or their clans will go to war.

Black Sheep (6 Points)

This character has been ostracized from his family. The only thing keeping him alive is his lord's refusal to let him commit seppuku. He has no family ties – although he may purchase some with the Allies Advantage. Word has spread of the character's disfavor and everyone in the Clan treats him with vehemence and disdain. His father and mother consider him beneath them, and even his sensei refuses to deal with him. Any samurai from the character's Clan who sees him are expected to treat him as eta. He may not attend his family School beyond Rank 1 and must find another school to attend. Ronin may not take this Disadvantage.

Once again, characters rejected by their own Clan are sure to garner the attention of the Scorpion, or perhaps a minor Clan that needs samurai.

Depending on their clan, a PC may be forced to endure any number of trials. Perhaps a Lion can become a standard bearer or march at the front of a Deathseeker unit. A Dragon samurai might be forced to climb up the mountain a few times, with only a thin kimono on. Don't hesitate to beat samurai with this Disadvantage senseless. It is quite possibly the meanest in the game.

Challenge

The PC's daimyo summons him once again to his court. The PC is certain his lord will demand his seppuku.

Focus

On the way to court, a mysterious peddler approaches the PC with an offer: come with him, and he will induct the PC into a new Clan, one which understands his ostracized status. Strangely, the peddler never reveals his face; it's hidden behind an odd mask...

Strike

If the PC turns down the peddler, his daimyo does indeed demand his seppuku. However, if he mentions the Scorpion peddler on the road, he may earn a reprieve. The daimyo orders him to smoke out any of "Kachiko's traitors" in the area. If he does so, he may keep some semblance of honor, averting seppuku... for now.

Compulsion (2-4 Points)

This character has an uncontrollable urge (drinking, gambling, a love of geisha) that gets him into trouble. He must make an Honor Roll every time he confronts his compulsion to keep him from losing control and giving into his compulsion. The cost of compulsions depends on the TN of the character's Honor Roll:

TN 15 = 2 Points

TN 20 = 3 Points

TN 25 = 4 Points

Challenge

The character wakes up after a drinking binge with no memory of the previous night. He finds a bloody satchel in his possession bearing a message for the Emperor – with a broken seal.

Focus

A samurai, ronin, or bandit ambushed and killed the original messenger, then planted it on the character after realizing what he'd done. The character can't simply hide the message and pretend nothing happened because it contains vital information (a note from Bayushi Aramoro to Kachiko, word of the Crab's new allies, etc.).



Strike

The character must decide how to approach this mess. He could do what the assailant did and pass the message on to some other unsuspecting fool, or he could “take his medicine” and deliver an opened message to the Emperor...

Dependent (Varies)

This character has someone who is completely dependent upon him. Who they are (a child, grandparent, etc.) is up to the player, but they are helpless without the PC. Good examples of dependents include small children and aged grandparents, but a naive spouse could also be included as a dependent.

1 Point = Adult Dependent

2 Points = Elderly Dependent

3 Points = Child Dependent

Challenge

A friend of one of the samurai has just been accused of a crime. Her son has committed a grave offense and she must atone for it.

Focus

Her lord demands seppuku. If she obeys, her son will lose his mother, and his father has already died – in the war, or from disease, or from some other misfortune.

Strike

Instead of submitting to the seppuku, his mother promises to banish her child from the family or demand his death if her lord so wishes. If the child is banished, would the PC adopt the boy? If the daimyo wishes to kill the child, would the PC intervene and take the child's punishment instead? This scenario provides a great role-playing opportunity for PCs and GMs interested in exploring a darker side of Rokugani culture.

Dishonored (4 Points)

A dishonored PC has had his glory stripped, and may not commit seppuku for one of any number of reasons. He may have to fulfill certain conditions before he can die, or he may need to wait until a particular event has passed. It may simply be that the daimyo doesn't like the PC, and has no wish to grant him an honorable death. GMs should have little difficulty provoking and pushing such a character into adventures; the chance to restore their honor should be worth more than even their life.

Challenge

The only person (a lord, magistrate, etc.) who can cleanse the PC's shame dies.

Focus

The NPC's successor offers the PC an opportunity to redeem himself with a new proposition.

Strike

The new proposition conflicts with the original “deal” with the previous lord, and violates the PC's basic morals and beliefs. If he follows them, he may find more shame heaped upon his shoulders, even as he finally erases the dishonor which he carried for so long.

Driven (3 Points)

Similar to the Higher Purpose Advantage, a character who is Driven has a single goal that he will sacrifice anything to achieve. He will turn his back on his friends and family, and even sacrifice his honor to gain his goal.

Challenge

The PCs are asked to safeguard a small watchtower on the edge of the Clan's lands. Engineers are coming to rebuild it, but until then the border requires constant guarding.

Focus

The PCs slowly become distracted from their duty by the pleasures of a nearby village. It contains a tea house, sake house, inn, geisha house, and even a small building to trade wares. The PCs may develop a routine that allows one of them to visit the village while the others stand guard.

Strike

During the Driven PC's “free day”, the object of her goal (a hated Clan member, etc.) enters the sake house where he is loitering. His drinking has lowered his ability to resist temptation in the face of duty...

Epilepsy (4 Points; 5 for Crane)

Because the Crane families often interbreed with the Emperor's lineage, some simple genetic problems have evolved. One of these difficulties is epilepsy, a rare disease which can cause rigidity of muscles, shaking symptoms, and even death. Epilepsy is a genetic dysfunction which often arises when the character is under stress. Also, flashing lights (such as a fireworks display) can trigger a seizure. The Rokugani believe that characters with this malady have been touched by the kami, and that they are channeling divine influences. Thus, any character who shows obvious signs of epilepsy (shaking fits, spasms, etc.) might be shunned by common society, but treated as a mystic or holy man by those brave enough to come near.



When a character with epilepsy is in a stressful situation, he must make a Willpower roll at a TN of 15 to resist a seizure. If the character enters a seizure, he may make a Willpower roll each round at a TN of 20 to end the seizure. This Disadvantage is rare outside of the Crane, but not unheard of; non-Cranes should justify this Disadvantage by explaining their hereditary connection to the Imperial lineage.

Challenge

The PC suffers from a seizure, blacks out, and wakes to find himself in a monastery. A steaming bowl of soup sits beside the cot, along with blankets and clean clothes.

Focus

Once the PC has recovered, he finds the monks gathered at his door. They wish to speak with the “divine” individual and seek his wisdom on numerous issues.

Strike

Though initially flattering, the attention soon becomes more than the PC can bear. The monks ask him for advice on all matter of subjects, and it eventually dawns on the samurai that they have no intention of releasing him. He must figure out how to escape the monastery, or else convince the monks that their “blessed diviner” does not hold the answers they seek.

Fascination (2 Points)

The character has a fascination with something – music, horses, ancient history – and will go to any length to learn new things about it. A character with a fascination for spell-craft might resort to stealing scrolls from other shugenja. Someone who has a fascination with horses would go to any length to purchase (or otherwise obtain) one of the finest steeds of the Unicorn, and someone who was fascinated with the Naga would leap at the chance to travel into the forests of Shinomen, searching for Naga ruins even if the forest were crawling with monsters.

Fascinated samurai are easy to lure into adventures and GMs should consider plying them with trinkets and other irresistible temptations in order to place them in some dilemma or another.

Insensitive (2 Points)

The three most important things in this character’s life are his health, his welfare and his wealth. He cares little for the plights of others and he doesn’t make any pretense of keeping it a secret. The character must spend a Void Point whenever he wants to put himself at risk for another, even for his daimyo or the Emperor himself.



GMs should be aware that Insensitive characters are difficult to involve in stories and unlikely to display heroic traits. If you do not want this kind of samurai in your campaign, make sure that the players know this before taking the Insensitive Disadvantage

Challenge

A rival clan or family has launched an attack on the samurai's land. The attack came swiftly and the PC's clan has suffered a large number of casualties already. Although the situation seems hopeless, the daimyo summons all available samurai to defend his castle.

Focus

Before the PC can lend aid, a representative of the enemy clan approaches him and asks him to betray his lord. He is offered a bag of coins totaling 100 Koku and fealty in the enemy clan after the war.

Strike

The PC must decide whether to fight an impossible war and perhaps die, or serve the enemy for the sake of security.

Lechery (Variable)

Love is more important to this character than it should be to a samurai. For each point of Lechery, the PC's enemies get a Free Raise on all Seduction skill rolls they make against him. He may not make an Honor roll to resist seduction attempts. Lechery is not necessarily a dishonorable trait, but a samurai that puts priorities before his lord is sure to bring shame to himself eventually.

Challenge

The samurai's daimyo asks him to escort his wife to a distant locale. The trip should take a number of weeks and the samurai is expected to serve the spouse in every capacity.

Focus

The lord's wife is gracious and sympathetic and talks at length with the PC about many aspects of life. Her conversations are extemporaneous, but should draw the two closely together. At some point during the trip the lord's wife makes a pass at the samurai. It should be relatively difficult for the samurai to resist her advances.

Strike

What happens next is up to the player. Does he reciprocate? Does he give in but never say anything? Do the two continue their tryst?

Lost Love (2 Points)

This samurai once knew true love, and now it's gone. He tends to have fits of melancholy when reminded of his love. Whenever his

love is mentioned, all of his TNs are increased by 5 until he spends a Void Point to bring himself back to the present. Spending the Void Point prevents him from having a relapse into melancholy for at least an hour.

Challenge

While staying in a small village, the character encounters an eta who closely resembles his Lost Love. Of course, showing too much interest in an eta is dishonorable in itself.

Focus

The eta is simply a look-alike, but reminds the character of his Lost Love every time he travels through. Killing the eta would result in some serious emotional trauma (though no social penalties).

Strike

The character must simply avoid this particular village if he doesn't wish to be reminded of his Lost Love. Alternately, the eta might be related to his Lost Love in some improbable manner, and, if approached properly, could shed some light on his Love's life before he met her.

Meddler (2 Points)

This character cannot resist getting into other people's business. He always has an opinion and enjoys sharing it with others. He knows what's best for everyone and has no qualms about telling them. This can get him in a lot of trouble. The Rokugani are a very private people, and meddling in another's affairs is considered an insult – it implies that they can't take care of their own house. Sticking one's nose in other people's business could get it cut off. All of this character's Courtier and Etiquette rolls have their TN increased by +10.

This Disadvantage is a great way to get samurai together: Meddlers take a keen interest in whatever those around him are doing.

Momoku (8 Points)

Every Rokugani hero has the potential to achieve "greatness." Periodically, there come moments in every hero's life when he must tap into a reserve of "something extra" to perform a miraculous feat or obtain a remarkable victory. Characters with the Momoku Disadvantage do not have this reserve to tap into. They must rely solely on their own skill and daring to solve the problems they face.

Perhaps this is because of some dark dabbling with *maho*, or due to their ancestors' disgrace before, or angering of, the Fortunes. Whatever the cause, this character cannot use Void Points. As far as



he is concerned, Void is a distant, unknowable thing, and he has either turned a blind eye or is without the knack for it.

Challenge

A Phoenix Void Mage has summoned an extremely powerful oni, which has broken loose from his control and begun ravaging a village or castle. The bravest Phoenix warriors sent to fight it have vanished from sight once it fixed its five eyes on them. However, each eye can only see one of the elements, and the Isawa are reasonably certain that the character with the Momoku Disadvantage has no Void 'essence'. Therefore the oni's fifth eye probably cannot see him. He is the obvious choice to kill the beast, being immune to its deadliest power.

Focus

Just because it can't cause him to vanish from existence doesn't mean the oni isn't still a formidable opponent. Perhaps the other four eyes can still do something nasty to the character, or perhaps the oni is simply physically imposing even without the special power. If he hurts the oni too badly, it might try hiding in the village or castle in order to launch a surprise attack on him.

Strike

If the PC can blind its fifth eye, it won't be able to use its power on anyone, and the rest of the characters can help him kill it, assuming he can stay alive that long.

Moto Curse (0 points)

All Moto characters must take this Disadvantage, but other families and clans may take it as well. The PC's family has been in part corrupted by the Shadowlands. While his clansmen understand your situation, other Rokugani first heard his family name in connection with the evils of that dark land, and the samurai finds himself the victim of great prejudice. Other clans refuse to give him Glory, recognition, or awards. They won't trust him and won't be hospitable unless pressured by other Unicorns (add +15 to TNs on all social skills with non-Unicorns). On the other hand, they also fear him somewhat, so they give him no trouble... at least not to his face.

Interested players may take this Disadvantage, even if they are not Moto. They must be able to justify the bloodline in their ancestry (the Moto returned with the Unicorn, after all). Beyond that, the samurai earns no bonus for having this social stigma.

Challenge

An old woman approaches the PC and tells him that his "real" father was a Moto.

Focus

The woman provides no additional information about the truth and the PC is left to second-guess his own heritage.

Strike

Until he comes to terms with this and proves the truth, he is assumed to have the Moto Curse and people will treat him as such.

Obligation (2 or 4 Points)

The character owes someone a favor, and someday they are going to collect. An Obligation is worth 2 Points if it is a small favor and 4 Points if it is a large favor. When the character's Obligation is cashed in, the character is honor bound to do everything in his power to complete the request – even at the cost of his own life, if the Disadvantage is a 4 point one. If he fails, or refuses, his Honor is permanently reduced by two full ranks (for a 2 point Obligation), and he may additionally receive the Black Sheep Disadvantage (for a 4 point Obligation) for no points.

A small favor would include something that would not threaten the character's position and/or family's standing, but would cause him inconvenience. A major favor requires a great deal of effort and risk on the character's part, and will take significant time and resources to repay.

Hundreds of adventures can start with a simple obligation. The key to getting the most out of this Disadvantage is to have the NPC owed ask for little things a lot, and never actually request the brass ring that would square the deal. This should keep your PCs occupied for a while, especially if everyone in the group has this Disadvantage.

Overconfident (3 Points)

This character never retreats, never chooses to fight another day. He possesses the youthful illusion of immortality. When faced with superior forces, he must make a Battle/Perception skill check at 30 or he stays and fights. He may not purchase Great Destiny.

This Disadvantage works well for PCs playing the "Western" hero in an "Eastern" game. GMs should monitor this Disadvantage closely and make sure the PC is playing the game you are running.

Challenge

The samurai has been left behind to cover a retreat.

Focus

The odds are overwhelming and he faces 20 or so enemies by the time the party finally reaches safety.



Strike

You may choose to take pity on the PC if she plays it out well.

Small (3 Points)

This character is below average height and weight. His movement rate is figured as if his Water Ring were one less. Small characters roll one fewer Damage die when using a Tetsubo or Die tsuchi. This character may not purchase the "Large" Advantage.

Challenge

The son of a goblin warmonger has carried off a baby from a Rokugani village to prove himself to his father. The short character is the only one small enough to fit through the stone entrance to the goblins' lair, and must go in after the child alone.

Focus

A number of goblins reside in the lair, and only small weapons can be used in the close confines. After taking some losses, the goblins leave the baby where the character can find it. Once the character picks the baby up and tries to leave, they attack *en masse*. The character is then encumbered by the child during the fight.

Strike

A clever character can get out of this alive, and a rash one can get both characters killed. Perhaps the PC can find the baby, then yell to a shugenja ally waiting outside to clear the entrance with a fire spell before running outside as fast as possible. Maybe the PCs had better have a plan...

Soft-Hearted (2 Points)

This character has a profound respect for human life. His conscience overcomes him whenever he is about to commit an act of cruelty. Whenever he tries to take a human life, he must make a Simple Willpower Roll against a TN of 20 or he can't follow through with the Action. If he kills someone, all of his TNs are at +10 for the next full day, and he must somehow attempt expiation.

It is easy to compel to action those samurai who have this Disadvantage. Almost any adventure hook can be used to get the PC involved. GMs should consider a host of ways to get the samurai started.

True Love (3 Points)

Finding true love in Rokugan can be a painful experience. Any character who takes True Love finds himself torn between his true love and loyalty to his Clan, his sensei, and his family. Whenever he must choose between love and duty (to the Clan and/or family, sensei, daimyo, etc.), he must spend a Void Point to choose duty. Also,

if he ever loses his True Love's favor, he may spend no Void Points at all until he can gain the favor back.

Challenge

The character's clan takes his True Love hostage and assigns him to guard her. It's up to the GM to determine exactly why this has taken place.

Focus

One of the True Love's siblings shows up to rescue her. The PC is bound by honor to prevent the rescue from taking place, and the sibling is unlikely to abandon the attempt unless killed. It will take quite an effort to resolve the situation without bloodshed.

Strike

If the character manages to guard his True Love for three days, his clan releases her. The entire ordeal was merely a test of the PC's loyalty. How the True Love handles the ordeal – and its effect on their relationship – may be considerably more complex.

Vanity (1 Point)

A vain character is gorgeous and/or brilliant – and he knows it. He considers himself the strongest, the bravest, the most handsome samurai ever. The rest of the world doesn't always notice his clear superiority, though, so he had better make sure they know it! Players should role-play out this Disadvantage, and GMs should assign appropriate penalties based on how other characters react to the PC.

Bragging under the Bard Skill is an important combination with Vanity. GMs can make the PC spend his one point on this (or give them one rank for free, but only for the purposes of bragging).

Challenge

The character makes an outrageous claim about his own abilities in front of an important person, like a clan daimyo. The character must prove his words by performing the task he was bragging about.

Focus

An enemy of the character's clan (or of the character himself) sees this as an opportunity to embarrass the character (or his clan) and arranges to make this impossible task even more difficult. For example, if the character has boasted that he could survive for three days in the Shadowlands with only a knife, then his enemy might arrange for an ambush on the third day, if he lives that long.

Strike

The character's friends might arrange for some secret assistance of their own. If the samurai actually manages to fulfill his wild



claim, he will probably receive a few points of Glory; make sure that the adventure is a killer, particularly if the player made the boast without any prompting from you.

This Challenge/Focus/Strike works exceptionally well on PCs who do not have the Disadvantage and merely make a habit of bragging about their exploits.

Yogo Curse (0 Points)

All characters from the Yogo family automatically have this Disadvantage. At the beginning of character creation, all Scorpion characters roll one die, and re-roll any 10 as usual. If the roll is at least 15 (one ten and at least a five), they have inherited the Yogo curse. Once in your life, they will betray the person they love the most. Some action, either intentional or unintentional, will cause that person pain. The more they try to avoid it, the more painful the betrayal will be.

Because of the curse, the Yogo family has been forbidden to marry within the Scorpion Clan. However, true love rarely listens to rules, and taboo often breeds tragedy. Interested players may take this Disadvantage, even if they are not Yogo. They must be able to justify the Yogo bloodline in their ancestry, but beyond that they are merely inviting trouble into their lives.

Challenge

A seer or oracle warns the samurai that his curse will come to pass within the next seven days. He receives a letter from the person he loves the most that same day. The letter says that the lover's father or mother has been poisoned, and will die within a week unless the character retrieves a rare flower from the mountains.

Focus

Several similar types of flowers bloom in the mountains, and the PCs will lose several days trying to find the exact type unless they consult with a skilled herbalist first.

Strike

The lover was misinformed. The flower isn't the antidote - it's the second half of the poison. If not administered, the parent loses the use of their legs. If administered, though, the parent goes into convulsions and dies immediately.



It Takes a Village

In order to run an effective campaign, you must build your own Empire. Although many *L5R* supplements give you information on prominent cities such as Otsan Uchi and Ryoko Owari, smaller towns and villages require personal tailoring. The following information is presented in order to give you some ideas, hints, and tips on creating your own settings, from foundation to tiled rooftop.

This is a simple settlement generator for creating villages, towns, or cities quickly. With a little more effort, it will help you to develop the core ideas and flesh out the settlement with NPCs, adventure hooks, and a detailed key of events and buildings.

Design and Planning

Here the gamemaster sets down some rough guidelines as to what role the settlement will play in the campaign. Whether it is a home base or important activity, a temporary rest stop, or a vital strategic point in a war, identify a purpose for the village. Although its actual function in Rokugan can be determined below, the GM should decide for himself how the village appears in the game.

The following charts are linear, but random. Bear in mind that these charts do not replace your imagination. Feel free to develop or change them as you see fit.

Settlement Size

The GM should determine the settlement's exact size. No chart has been devised for this, since thousands of villages dot the landscape and their size can vary according to your needs. There are six vital pieces of information to the design of a settlement.

Physical Size

This determines the actual scope of the settlement. A hamlet might have so few people that it could almost constitute a single



family. Larger villages, on the other hand, would be more complex, and have more facilities available. Towns and cities hold considerable importance and are always walled and fortified. Remember, there are very few emigrants within Rokugan. Heimin do not move unless a samurai has ordered it.

Population

The population of a feudal culture is very delicate. Societies such as Rokugan's hold about 20 people per square mile. An agrarian nation without high-tech farming techniques cannot support a higher population density. Therefore, villages house very few farmers, while producing a great deal of food.

The Relative Wealth, Societal Virtue, and Criminal Activity rankings will all be explained below, while the number of buildings represents non-residential homes with important functions to the settlement. It is up to the GM to determine what function these buildings have, and how the locals regard them. Great game ideas can come from a simple roll and spawn into stories the GM cannot control.

Size	Population	#Bldgs/Virtue/Wealth/CrimAct
Hamlet	2 dice x 2 (4-40)	0-1/+3/-3/1
Village	2 dice x 10 (20-200)	1-2/+2/-2/1-5
Town	2 dice x 50 (100-500)	2-3/0/-1/1 die
Large Town	1 die x 50 (250-2500)	4-6/-1/0/2 dice
City	10 dice x 100 (1000-10000)	6-8/-3/+1/3 dice

Relative Wealth

How does the village thrive? What purpose does it serve in Rokugan? Villages that supply rice make up 99% of Rokugani settlements. In addition to rice, however, a village may also produce silk, tea, or a host of products the clan requires. The Surplus Wealth indicates any additional Koku the village produces each season. This is a useful chart for PCs with the Gentry advantage, but can be exceptionally valuable to GMs interested in determining the value of a village or city to the local economy. The GM should add the economic base (i.e. how the settlement sustains itself) to the settlement's relative wealth. The final value should give a general idea as to how "rich" a settlement is. With both it and the economic base above, the GM can develop a system for determining the relative value and worth a location has to the ruling daimyo. Where 10 represents a hugely wealthy region, bringing in as much as 1200 surplus koku each season, a 1 or 2 is barely getting by and a 0 is failing altogether.

Die Roll	Economic Base	Relative Wealth
1	Subsistence*	-1
2-3	Hunting/Fishing	0
4-6	Additional Agriculture**	+1
7	Extensive Additional Agriculture**	+2
8-9	Mining/Lumbering	+3
10	Mercantile/Manufacturing	+4

* Farming, fishing, etc. Enough to get by

** Vegetables, fruits, exotic foods, etc.

Settlement Specialties

Beyond the economic base of a settlement lies its specialty. Some settlements aren't known for anything, but many others have a striking feature that makes them unique. Many settlements of Rokugan are very famous for their tea or silk. Others produce artisans or skilled craftsmen. Below is a short list of ideas for specializing your settlements. GMs should be creative in explaining what makes the feature so attractive, or noteworthy. Many settlements that are known for an auspicious event, or significant feat are named after that distinguishing feature. Shinsei Dropped His Hat Here Village and the City of the Hantei's Rest are named for specific events while Thick Stone Hamlet and The Town of Rich Flavor are named for what they produce.

Roll one die. On 1 or 2, roll on this chart to see if the village is known for anything. If the Relative Wealth of a settlement is 8 or higher, automatically roll at least once on this chart. Otherwise skip this chart, and move on to Societal Virtue. (To roll on this chart, take two differently-colored dice, choose one to be the tens digit and one to be the ones digit, and roll them both.)

Roll	Specialty
01-05	Alcohol
06-10	Artisans
11-13	Bamboo
14-17	Bridges
18-22	Carpenters
23-24	Caves
25	Celestial Events
26-28	Chefs
29-32	Cloth
33-37	Craftsmen
39-42	Entertainers



43-45	Festival, one specific
46-48	Food
49-50	Forest
51-53	Fruit Orchards
54-56	Gardens
57	Geisha
58-60	Grain
61	Jewelers
62-63	Lake (also Pond, Pool, etc.)
64-66	Mills
67	Mines
68-69	Natural Feature - Rocky Outcropping, Waterfall, etc.
70-71	Natural Port
72	Purification pools
73	Rice, a unique grain
74-76	River (also Brook, Creek, Stream, etc.)
77	Rope
78-81	Shrine
82-83	Silk
84-87	Smiths
88-89	Stonemasons
90	Sweets
91-93	Tea
94-95	Temple
96-98	Tofu
99-00	Weavers

Societal Virtue

The virtue of peoples in unpatrolled regions is much different from those in the cities. Rokugan has a strict way of life, but that does not prevent peasants from behaving in accordance with their communities mores as opposed to the will of the Empire. The final Societal Virtue of a society is represented by a value of -2 to +13. By rolling one (non-open-ended) die and modifying the number by the societal virtue listed above, the GM can generate a relative total on the fly for determining how well mannered and pious the people are.

Criminal Activity

The Criminal Activity directly correlates to the prosperity of a settlement. Like Societal Virtue, the criminal activity in a region is determined by rolling a single die and modifying the roll. A high

relative wealth can also affect this roll (GM's discretion). A number between -2 and +11 indicates the relative criminal activity in a region. Where -2 means that a village has practically no criminal activity, a +11 indicates rampant corruption and illegal behavior. Crime bosses and gang wars may inhabit the settlement, and most local merchants probably pay for protection even if there are samurai present. The higher the roll, the more likely the local daimyo will assign yoriki and magistrates to the settlement.

Function of Buildings

In a settlement, it may be necessary to determine what buildings serve important functions. The Population chart above provides a listing for the number of buildings (beyond residential huts) in each settlement type. The following list comprises the exceptional or important structures in a settlement, and GMs should take note that many of these settlements do not exist outside of large towns and cities. As mentioned above, these buildings are somehow important to the settlement and the GM should determine exactly why. (As in the Settlement Specialties chart, this chart uses both a "tens" die and a "ones" die.)

Roll	Building Function
01-04	Animal Husbandry (roll one die) 1-5 Horses 6-7 Dogs/Cats 9-10 Falcons
05-11	Armorer/Weaponsmith (roll one die) 1 Ex-bushi 2-4 Possesses blacksmith skills
12-15	Blacksmith/Foundry (roll one die) 1 Ex-bushi 2-5 Possesses weaponsmith skills
16-20	Carpenter (roll one die) 1-2 Possesses talent to create musical instruments
21	Chef
22-25	Cobbler
26-30	Clothier/Weaver (roll one die) 1 Being used for smuggling
31	Criminal Front Roll again to determine what legitimate business is here.
32	Doll Maker (roll one die) 1-2 Doubles as a Kite Maker
33-34	Game House Dice, Go, Shogi



33-36	Geisha House	7-8	Kenjutsu Academy
37-40	Governmental Office (roll one die)	9	Library
	1-2 Gokenin	10	Shugenja Library
	3 Karo	74-75	Scribe/Calligrapher (roll one die)
	4 Magistrate		1 Accomplished forger
	5 Office of the Governor	76-77	Seer/Astrologer (roll one die)
	6-7 Scribe		1-2 Shugenja
	8-9 Yoriki	78-82	Shrine (roll one die)
	10 Serves two functions		1-2 Amaterasu
41	Glassblower		3-4 Kami
42-45	Grain Mill (roll one die)		5 Onnotangu
	1-4 Doubles as a distillery		6-8 Shinsei
46-51	Grocer		9-10 The Seven Fortunes
52-53	Guard Post	83	Shipwright
54	Herbalist/Healer (roll one die)		Only possible in harbored settlements.
	1-2 A shugenja	84-85	Silk Works
55	Jeweler	86	Stonemason
56-57	Lacquer Ware	87	Sweet Shop
58	Kite Maker (roll one die)	88-94	Tea House
	1-2 Doubles as a Doll Maker	95	Theater
59	Metalsmith (roll one die)	96-97	Warehouse/Counting House
	1 Ex-bushi	98-00	Wickermaker
	2 Possesses armorer skills		
	3 Possesses blacksmith skills		
	4 Possesses weaponsmith skills		
60	Monastery		
61	Origata Master (gift-wrapping)		
62	Pottery Works		
63	Peasant Residence (roll one die)		
	1-4 Heimin - Craftsman		
	5-10 Heimin - Farmer		
64-67	Private Residence (roll one die)		
	1-2 Bushi		
	3 Courtier		
	4 Diplomat		
	5 City Governor		
	6 Karo/Hatamoto/Gokenin		
	7 Magistrate		
	8 Shugenja		
	9 Yojimbo		
	10 Yoriki		
68	Ropemaker		
69-71	Sake Works		
72-73	School* (roll one die)		
	1 Artisan Academy		
	2-4 Dojo		
	5-6 Iaijutsu Academy		

** only possible in cities.*

Note: An eta village or a crematorium will always be located outside of a settlement, separate from the samurai and heimin. The eta village includes leatherworkers, butchers, and morticians.





The GM's Grab Bag

Running *Legend of the Five Rings* can be difficult, since it uses a culture and concepts that many Western minds find strange and difficult to comprehend. However, while your characters and players learn about this world, don't forget that this is a game. In that vein, here are some tips and tricks for running even the most generic RPG, all tailored to helping you keep a long-term *L5R* campaign running smoothly.

Death

In all campaigns, the primary reason a player quits is because a cherished character dies. Often, the GM doesn't plan these deaths, which seem to happen from random bad luck or poor planning. Here are some ways to deal with a character's death, and to help a player with chronic 'feet in the grave' syndrome stay involved in your game.

Players get killed by statless bad guy

Every fight in *L5R* can be deadly, and sometimes random thugs become far more dangerous than you intended. During fights, make sure that the right NPCs are kicking butt, don't be afraid to flinch on dice rolls, and don't feel bad if you have to roll fewer dice next round. At the same time, it can pay to show a little clemency. Although the *L5R* combat system is unforgiving, having the PCs near death is much easier to deal with than killing them. If you don't have everything planned, the NPC killing your player's samurai can always stop and offer him mercy. Perhaps she has her reasons, which you can always develop later.

The dice just come up wrong

Nothing can stop your game quicker than a PC dying for no good reason. "The dice did it," the GM cries. But that doesn't bring back a favorite character, and now you've got a hole in your campaign that

the Shadowlands Horde could charge through. If you've been following the tips in this book, you may have learned by now how to stop this from happening every time you pick up some dice. But what do you do if the PCs kill someone important to the game world and you can't resurrect them with a few drops of GM healing juice?

While, the *L5R* system owes much of its deadliness to the initiative system, GMs should not let that hinder how they handle things. Giving every NPC the Quick advantage to offset the PCs' advantages is not a remedy; it just makes things slightly more difficult for the players. So what do you do when the PCs are bearing down on an important supporting player? As GM, you can employ a few graceful fiats.

For instance, Rokugan is filled with ancestors, spirits, kami, and other supernatural forces. Who is to say that the guiding hand of a player's ancestor doesn't force him to turn his blow? Or perhaps a gust of wind from an air spirit blows dust into the eyes just before a fatal cut. What if the sword twists in the samurai's all-too-often perfect grip? No one wants to pull tricks like this, but as GM, you may be forced to use these tactics to save your important NPCs. If you do this too much, the players will look to kill every NPC they can, just to watch you jump through hoops. If you don't do this at all, your PCs could end up killing Shinsei himself and putting a serious crimp in all of your plans.

The players' trust is the most important commodity you have. No NPC's life is worth violating their belief in your game sessions. Every time you up the ante, the players expect compensation: a big-time ending, a brilliant plot twist, or some other spectacular development. Don't let them down. Reward their patience (and willingness to let a hated villain live) with something that will knock their socks off. GM fiats never go over well, but if you can reward them for their trust, you'll keep them coming back for more.

Details

Problem: you've defined the overarching plot of the campaign, but still lack some important details. You've written the beginning, you've got the NPCs, the climax will be a perfect dance of synchronicity, but somewhere in the middle, the core of your story – the subplots, the development, the slow build – is missing. So how does a GM produce a masterpiece without such vital ingredients?

Good themes and subplots can often come from the players. The Advantages, and Disadvantages which they choose are an invaluable resource for producing great subplots and adventures. The inner pieces of a campaign should involve the background plots that the PCs did not expect you to pick up on. The previous section contains many adventure hooks for using the PCs' abilities and disabilities



against them. Don't overlook those resources when planning a campaign.

Where?

Players invariably pursue the things you didn't intend them to. What you didn't want them to care about, they most certainly will. Rokugani call this concept Chasing the Wind. If the Wind is moving so swiftly, it must have somewhere to go, right? Do not be alarmed if the players begin to follow the trail of rose petals instead of the trail of blood. It happens. Luckily for GMs of *L5R*, most characters value duty and honor more than anything else, and a samurai can easily be put back on track with a few test of honor rolls, or a stern talking-to from his superiors.

Fully motivated NPCs make for excellent interludes when the action is slow. By having a well-developed supporting character make regular appearances, her presence during the "what do we know" segments won't feel so contrived and clunky. A kindly old NPC who only shows up to save the PCs is a naked plot device, and the players will resent him. Pace things, put the NPCs where they should go, and never point out that the players did anything wrong, and they'll respect you for it.

Introduction of Characters

It is a good idea, at the beginning of a new campaign, to spend about 30 minutes per player on a one on one session. It gives the player a chance to get into character and figure out how he intends to deal with simple situations before they meet the rest of the party. Many great novels dedicate a single chapter to each character or pair of characters before they all meet. By giving each player a moment in the sun, you make every character important to the story. Incorporating their individual tastes into subplots only makes them happier.

In Medias Res

In medias res is Latin for 'in the middle of things'. In role-playing games it is a technique used by GMs to get play started immediately. By dropping the PCs directly into the action, the game starts with both feet running. The players don't have time to think about what is going on, so the game takes off like a shot, and never slows down. Action-junkies in particular enjoy this style of play. If the game isn't about the action, then it may not be the best choice, but a murder mystery opening with a dead body on the porch or a bloody knife in a PC's hand is sure to get things rolling.

Here are a few ideas for starting an adventure *in medias res*. Roll the die, consult the chart, and begin the adventure with the appropriate words. Where you go from there is entirely up to you.

Roll In Medias Res

- 1 Focus or Strike...
- 2 Siege...
- 3 The Battle Maiden is thrown from her horse...
- 4 The geisha cries out shrilly and falls to the floor...
- 5 The Magistrate hands you your arrest papers...
- 6 The Oni charges...
- 7 The ronin flees...
- 8 Your daimyo hands you pommel first the wooden katana...
- 9 Your daimyo sprouts an arrow in her throat...
- 10 Your sleeping companion is dead and the blood is on your hands...

Building Your Campaign

What do you want to accomplish with *L5R*? The Clan War story was told in the CCG, the Hidden Emperor tale is completed, and the Scorpion Clan Coup has been told in the RPG products for the past two years. You've just finished reading hundreds of pages of details on how to run *L5R*, but you're not sure exactly how to apply it. The first question you have to answer is "what story do you intend to tell?"

The most important thing to decide is the style of play, and how you want to begin things. You don't always have to have an ending mapped out ahead of time, but you should have some idea of where the campaign is going. Determine if your campaign will be a contiguous epic, a short mini-campaign, or merely a series of adventures. Once you have all of that squared away, write a brief handout detailing everything the players should know to get started in your campaign world.

Setting

In Rokugan contains six Great Clan regions (plus minor holdings and abandoned territory), eight mountain ranges, and innumerable villages where a game can take place. No chart can possibly develop every possible location for an adventure. Instead, GMs will have to pick the specifics while turning to this section for general location ideas. This list is not exhaustive and should not replace the imagination of the GM. (As in the Settlement Specialties chart, this chart uses both a "tens" die and a "ones" die.)



Roll Location

01-02	Beach
03-10	City
11-15	Court
16	Forgotten/Sacred Place
17-18	Geisha House
19-22	Holding
23-24	Mine
25-26	Merchant's Quarter
27-30	Noble's Estate
31-35	Outpost
36-42	The Shadowlands
43	Ship
44-48	Shrine
50-60	Stronghold
61-66	Tea House
67-70	Temple
71-73	Tower
74-80	Town
81-88	Village
89-94	Way Station
95-00	Wilderness

A *Beast Encounter* involves any of the animals of Rokugan. *Chapter 2: Within* has a list of creatures commonly found throughout the wilds of the Emerald Empire.

Ghosts, spirits, kami, and ancestors are all considered *Spirit Encounters*.

A *Monster Encounter* includes Nezumi, Naga, and any Shadowlands' creature.

GMs should plan a short series of these sort of encounters ahead of time, or generate a few on 3 x 5 index cards before game play begins. They can then roll on the chart when things becomes slow, and integrate the encounter quickly and smoothly into the campaign.

Constraints

Constraints are the details the GM adds to the plot to make it unique. By invoking constraints onto the plot, the GM creates limits by which the PCs must still accomplish their goals. A humbling constraint may be difficult for a proud samurai, while a shameful burden may tax an honorable one. Not every adventure requires constraints, but they do keep the game focused, letting the players remain on course and focus towards their goals. Several constraints work exceptionally well at keeping the PCs on target.

Ancestor Guidance

The samurai know that their ancestors exist. Every step of the way, the spirit of a great-grandmother continues to remind the PCs that they are being watched. Perhaps a PC samurai seeks vengeance in the name of her ancestor, or a visit from a spirit inspires her to seek out an ancient artifact. An ancestor should shape and affect the actions that the samurai takes, though it shouldn't provide all the answers.

Curse/Disease

A curse or disease should be something that dogs the PCs for numerous sessions. A *maho* spell which causes limbs to fall off may be too powerful, while a disease that slowly eats the samurai from the inside out over 20 years may not be felt in the course of a single session. In order for the curse to be effective it must hinder the PCs constantly, but not cause them to stop playing and focus on the situation at hand.

With this constraint, the party may only complete a given goal when the curse is lifted or the disease is cured. (Theoretically, the goal could be the removal the curse itself, but this changes it from a hindrance to the goal of the adventure.) Curses tend to work better than diseases in this circumstances. In Rokugan, a disease may be just as debilitating as a curse, but tends to vex the players. No one

Encounters

The GM should always plan encounters ahead of time. Random encounters usually have no preparation, and in a game as deadly as *L5R*, the consequences of a few bad die rolls can result in the butchery of an entire party. Nothing is worse than having a campaign end early because a random ambush of snakes poisoned the party. This section will help you to devise encounters on the fly without having to risk such a catastrophe.

Roll on the following chart whenever you find the gears of the game grinding to a halt. (Roll two non-open-ended dice and add them.)

Roll	Encounter
2-16	Human Encounter
18	Beast Encounter
19	Spirit Encounter
20	Monster Encounter

A *Human Encounter* is self explanatory. Remember that in Rokugan most of the NPCs that the PCs will encounter will be neutral to them, and it is a rare occurrence that an ally or enemy will just appear on the road.



wants their mighty hero to die of the flu and the GM should consider using diseases that do not cause the players to object to their characters being "tooled."

Diplomacy

With this constraint, the PCs must treat someone (or everyone) with courtesy and kindness. Their mission (whatever its particulars) is sensitive, and a samurai who dishonors his clan by acting rudely will certainly spark a war between two rivals. Other than forcing the PCs to behave, this is a relatively simple constraint, and GMs should try it their first few sessions. It works exceptionally well on most character types, and forces the players to stay in character for an entire session.

No Magic

Simply put, magic does not work or is forbidden in this adventure. Shugenja must find another way to be useful to the group. Perhaps all of their scrolls have been stolen, or the adventure takes place in a zone of the Shadowlands where magic does not work. This is a heinous constraint, especially in a group with only one or two shugenja. It should be used to promote problem solving and interaction, not to penalize a particular character.

No Harm May Befall the Guilty

The PCs are expected to treat the antagonist and relevant NPCs with care. If returning a noble to justice, they must keep him alive and unhurt. If protecting a noble, they should not kill anyone who threatens the noble's honor, and if fighting against another clan, they must take their enemies prisoner rather than slay them. GMs should feel free to impose this rule against everyone or just a specific NPC, depending on the circumstances.

No Weapons

Similar to 'No Harm', an adventure where the PCs cannot draw their weapons, or where they have no weapons at all, forces the players to think rather than act. Although *L5R's* deadly combat already causes the PCs to come up with solutions other than going for the katana at the first sign of trouble, GMs playing with different rules may wish to impose this unnatural law onto the game. It could be very interesting to tell a Hida to abandon his tetsubo, and many solid role-playing sessions could arise in a situation where combat may not occur.

Poison

Similar to the 'curse,' the PCs have been poisoned at the onset and must deal with it while still trying to achieve their ends. Perhaps the poison has no real strength, and was administered to weaken the

party's resolve or to toy with them for the sheer pleasure of it. Or perhaps the poison is real, and will weaken the party over a critical period of time. GMs should consider who poisoned them, and whether the PCs will chase after the poisoner, or the main adventure goal. This can easily become a side adventure between larger stories.

Secrecy

Your lord asks you to murder a rival, but he cannot admit it publicly. You do not have official sanction to follow his orders, and no traveling papers will be issued. Additionally, your honor will be destroyed if you are caught, and your lord will disavow all knowledge of your activities. A Lion or Crane asked to act in secrecy may find it distasteful, but the code of bushido can be twisted to serve anyone. A Scorpion, on the other hand, considers such secret duties his stock in trade.

Shame

The shame or dishonor of a samurai may not be expunged through seppuku, and yet he must still serve his lord. Perhaps the story opens with a PC's shame and the adventure involves trying to restore his honor, or find the culprit responsible for his shame. If completed successfully, the adventure will exonerate the samurai or permit him to commit seppuku.

Time-Limit

A time-limit is fairly straightforward, and can be fun if implied in or out of the game. "You have until this clock runs out, or the end of the evening." Or "The adventure ends after three days. You must find the child before then, or your lord may not even permit you to commit seppuku." Keep careful track of the time in this type of adventure: the players will want to use every moment to their advantage.

Building the Team

A good way to avoid duplication during character creation is to ask the players to build a team. Each character can be created together during the same session to ensure that players do not overlap each other's talents. With a team, the GM ensures that the players have some knowledge of each other; he may even require that part of character creation involve coming up with a reason for the PCs to be together. This can save the GM a lot of headaches in the future.



The Haunting of Usagi Castle

The adventure that follows is intended to introduce a party of new characters into the world of Rokugan. It serves the purpose of introducing the players to the game's mechanics, giving them a taste of the setting and culture, and offering a springboard into a larger campaign set during the period of the Clan Wars.

Synopsis

The player characters are summoned to Ryoko Owari (see Chapter 1, Location S3) by Asako Moharu, a Phoenix Inquisitor with a modest reputation for bringing the wicked to justice.

It has been only two years since the fall of the Scorpion, and Rokugan is hardly a peaceful Empire. The Emperor is ill and in his weakness many see opportunity. The clans are at one another's throats, and war seems imminent. In the meantime, supernatural phenomena seem to be occurring with increasing frequency. The practice of maho and sightings of Shadowlands-tainted creatures as far north as Dragon territories have sprung up with disturbing regularity.

No one is more concerned than the Phoenix Clan. They have mobilized their Inquisitors like never before, sending them to the furthest ends of the Empire to seek out evil. Unfortunately, the Inquisitors' numbers are few, and they cannot be everywhere. To assist them, the Phoenix Clan has called in every favor from the Imperial Courts that it could manage, begging the Great Clans to volunteer samurai from their ranks to help the Inquisitors.

Unfortunately, in times like these, even the most practical and compassionate clans can give only so much. Experienced warriors will be needed in the coming conflict. Those who have been lent to the Inquisitors are generally the young and inexperienced.

This is where the player characters come in.

Game Master Notes

The first part of the adventure involves an interview with the party's new commanding officer, Asako Moharu. She asks questions intended to test the characters' worthiness as samurai, as well as how much they value the virtues of bushido. This initial meeting is intended to give the players a handle on the setting and the behavior that will be expected of their characters.

From there, the adventure will throw them headlong into a supernatural investigation. To discover the truth behind the haunting of Usagi Shiro, the characters will have to utilize wisdom, skill, and perhaps a bit of luck. Though in the end the characters are a very small part of the society that is the Emerald Empire, this adventure is designed to illustrate that even a small and inexperienced group of samurai can have a definite effect upon the course of history.

How To Use This Material

The majority of the information presented in this adventure is intended for the GM's eyes only. "Flavor text" intended to be read out loud to the players is presented in italics, like this:

The daimyo topples to the ground. The assassin leaps nimbly out the window. Just then, thirty bushi charge into the room, see the dead body of their lord, and glare at you. They don't look happy.

Ryoko Owari

The characters arrive in Ryoko Owari in the early morning (Hour of the Dragon). Asako Moharu's initial interview is not scheduled until the late afternoon (Hour of the Monkey). Thus, they have most of the day to wander around the city. Read the following as they enter the city:

You have heard many tales about the City of Lies. At the height of the Scorpion Clan's power, it was a contradiction, a haven for vice and corruption, and a mighty cultural center of the Empire. Since the Scorpion's banishment, things do not seem to have changed. Every corner boasts a merchant hawkling wares the likes of which you have never seen. You have passed a half dozen kabuki theaters, acrobats performing in the streets, and samurai flaunting their wealth and power as servants bear them through the streets in richly decorated palanquins.

A few of the buildings look damaged by fire, but the city seems to have recovered well from the Scorpion's defeat. The Imperial Legions have replaced the Scorpions, imposing martial law to enforce order. However, even the stern Legions seem to be getting a bit soft in the face of the pleasures of the City of Lies, as evidenced by the pair of



armored Legionnaires you notice stumbling drunkenly from a sake house. The overall mood seems to be one of casual disregard. The rest of the Empire may be on the brink of war, but for Ryoko Owari it's business as usual.

You do, however, notice an underlying tension in the populace. Rumor has it that the Legion will be moving out of the city soon, relocating their forces to Beiden Pass. If that happens, who will protect the city from itself?

If the characters wish, they may explore Ryoko Owari. A few of the following encounters might help to accustom the player characters to life in the city for a samurai.

1) A squad of Imperial Legionnaires stops the party and asks to examine their traveling papers. They examine the party's credentials at some length, possibly even detaining the party at an outpost for a brief time. The party's papers are all in order of course, and the Legionnaires gruffly apologize for wasting their time. Apparently there have been problems with Scorpion ronin visiting the city in the guise of travelers.

2) A merchant approaches the party with an array of pretty but useless items. The merchant is respectful (bowing constantly) but is used to pawing off his wares to samurai and doesn't give up unless they chase him off. He's quite a good salesman, pointing out the finest points of his worthless costume jewelry, cheaply made knives, and other rubbish. Characters that are gullible or loose with their koku may have to make a few Willpower rolls to resist buying something.

3) An eta is roughly shoved out of the way by a Legionnaire, thrown tumbling into the mud. The poor man staggers to his feet and glances around. After a lifetime of abuse by arrogant samurai, he's had it. He spits on one of the player characters. The eta is in the wrong here for certain, but depending on the abused player character's reaction, this could be a defining moment. Does the character cut the eta in half or help wash off the mud and challenge the arrogant Legionnaire?

4) Nokoku, a traveling monk of Daikoku, wanders the street. He was raised in a cloistered monastery, and finds the thick crowd confusing. He asks the characters to escort him to the temple quarter. Along the way, he strikes up a conversation, asking pointed questions such as "Which Fortune do you find to be the most useless?" or "You are a warrior. Do you accept the role because you like to kill, or because you tell yourself it is necessary?" and "Is it true that samurai have no fear? Why is that? Are you afraid of it?"

The monk isn't trying to be annoying. He's just doing his job, which is making people think. If the player characters become violent or angry, the monk reluctantly shuts up. Then he quietly steals the violent character's koku as a donation to his temple. On the other hand, if they give a clever answer, Nokoku can become a helpful ally.

5) A drunken samurai happily approaches the characters and, mistaking them for someone else, invites them to have a drink. He laughs openly, makes a lot of noise, and generally causes a scene. Everyone else ignores him. Extremely honorable characters may want to do the same. Anyone who goes along with his delusions for a free drink may suddenly find themselves facing a very angry samurai as soon as he sobers up and realizes his mistake.

Meeting Moharu

After the characters have had their fun, you should tell them that it's nearly time for their appointment. If the characters haven't thought of it already, give each of them an Etiquette/Awareness roll at a TN of 10 to realize that it's proper to give a fellow samurai a gift as a show of respect. In this situation, reporting to a new superior, it isn't just appropriate, it's *expected*.

When a samurai gives a gift to another samurai, it's considered improper to buy something (the gift should be something thoughtful and personal), and it's considered an outright insult to give a sword (suggesting that the samurai's lord can't provide for him).

Feel free to give the characters any sort of time limit to come up with an impressive gift. Whether that time limit is hours or minutes all depends on how much you want to see them sweat. Remember, even a clumsily selected gift can make a good impression if it's given in an impressive manner. ("This may appear to be just an ordinary leaf. In fact, it fell from the tree when I first laid eyes on Ryoko Owari. That is when I realized that, like the leaf, we are all alone in the world. We can do naught but play our parts. I hope that when you look upon this leaf, you think of me, Asako-sama.")

When the gift is given, the characters are invited inside to meet Moharu.

Moharu's quarters are small, and feature little decoration. The only items of note are a small shrine to Shiba in the rear, and curled strips of paper marked with mystical sutras hanging from the ceiling. In the center of the room, a woman in black robes kneels in deep meditation. Her eyes flicker open as the servant closes the door. Her hair is long and dark, and her features are quite beautiful. Her black eyes regard you coldly.

"Konichiwa," she says, rising and bowing slightly. "I am Inquisitor Asako Moharu. You must be another team sent by the Phoenix. Welcome." She gestures for you to have a seat. "We have



much to discuss. If you hope to serve the cause of justice, I would know if you are worthy of the task. I have no doubt you consider yourselves honorable samurai, but I have been judging the character of ones such as yourselves for over fifteen years."

Yes, that's right, she said "another" team. The party is merely one of four teams of investigators that report to Moharu. Moharu merely organizes the groups and follows up on their investigations. She does not accompany them unless her aid is absolutely necessary. (If the party drags her out into the wilderness, for their sake it had better be necessary.)

In the meantime, servants bring tea for Moharu and the party. She is blunt with the following questions, offering them to each character without preface or explanation. Do not read the virtues listed in parentheses out loud; these are the virtues that a character who gives that particular answer finds important. If a character is unable to answer, Moharu moves on. Indecisiveness is an answer, albeit an unimpressive one.

1) *While you are on watch, you notice a visitor from another clan wandering your lord's estates, lost. Do you offer your assistance (courtesy) or do you maintain your vigil (duty)?*

2) *During battle your clan is winning, but you see a kinsman fall. You are carrying the clan's war standard. Do you let it drop to the earth so you can save the life of your brother (compassion) or do you stand firm to uphold the name of your family (honor)?*

3) *Your clan is meeting with a rival ambassador. Her clan has recently broken a truce with your own. Do you show the ambassador the respect her station deserves (courtesy) or do you criticize her openly for her clan's traitorous deeds (honor)?*

4) *Your father is slain in an unjust duel. On your deathbed you swear that you will see that he is avenged. You later learn that your*

enemy is accused of a crime that you know he did not commit. Do you step forward with testimony so he will be freed (honesty) or fulfill your vow by allowing him to be executed (sincerity)?

5) *You learn that a farmer has been setting aside rice from his taxes to feed his starving family. Do you report the theft to your lord (honesty) or do you forgive the farmer and help him feed his family (compassion)?*

6) *Your forces have been overwhelmed by a superior force. You are the last samurai standing. Do you attack so that you can join your comrades in death (courage) or do you flee so that someone might live to report the attack (duty)?*

7) *You are ordered to deliver an urgent message. You come across a battlefield, where your lord's forces are struggling against a hated enemy. You notice that your clan's general has made a grievous tactical error. If you ride out to tell him, your forces will surely win, but your lord's message will not be delivered in time. Do you join the fray (courage) or hurry to fulfill your promise (sincerity)?*

If a character answers, but gives a reason that clearly does not lean toward the virtue listed here ("I don't report the farmer because I want to blackmail him") then Moharu judges their character accordingly. If they wish to lie, have them make opposed Sincerity/Awareness rolls against Moharu's Investigation/Awareness. If Moharu succeeds, she gives no outward sign, but judges the character accordingly.

In the end, you can't really fail this test. However, a character who answers decisively, and whose answers most closely reflect Moharu's biases, will be placed in command of the group. Moharu places the virtues in this order of importance: honesty, compassion, duty, sincerity, courage, honor, courtesy.

The Assignment

After a leader has been chosen, Moharu gets on to business. She gives the party their assignment and dispatches them immediately.

To the southwest of Ryoko Owari stands the ruins of Shiro Usagi. Once, this was the home of the Hare, a minor clan, given their status almost four centuries ago for meritorious service against the armies of Iuchiban. Two years ago, their castle was destroyed by the Scorpion. Later, their Clan status was revoked as punishment for the practice of maho.

Now, the heimin in the area near Shiro Usagi are reporting strange occurrences. One in particular, a young boy named Otu,





claims that he was attacked on the road by ghostly samurai. I want you to go down there, and find out what is going on. If the survivors of the Hare, or anyone else, are summoning dark spirits, deal with them. If it is something else, deal with it. If it is a hoax, deal with it. In any case, report back to me in two days.

The voyage to Shiro Usagi is a peaceful one. The ruins stand in the shadow of the great Shinomen Forest; close by, to the north, is a recently constructed village of crude huts and houses. Many families live in this area, and each home has at least one ronin living among them. These are the survivors of the Hare who were forced to cast aside their names. There are perhaps a dozen Usagi ronin in the village, and they look upon the visiting characters with suspicion, fear and contempt.

The spokesman of the village is a young ronin named Muso. He is a former Hare, and proud of it. He can tell the characters anything they wish to know about the castle and its environs, and will even offer to join the party and show them around the area.

A few things can be easily learned for a bit of asking. Usagi Castle was destroyed two years ago by the Scorpion general Bayushi Tomaru. Usagi Oda was the last daimyo of the Hare, an aged widower with three children. Oda died in a duel during the final days of the siege, giving his life for the right to free a few loyal retainers (many of whom live in the village now). The youngest child, Kinotu, is said to have died during the siege. Ozaki, the eldest, vanished on the last night of the siege. Tomoe, Oda's daughter, was taken by the Scorpion and also disappeared. Months afterward, witnesses from the Fox, Crab, Crane, and Falcon Clans denounced the Hare ruling family as *maho-tsukai*. As there were no survivors of the immediate family to contest the testimony, the Hare were abolished. Since then, the proud retainers of the Usagi live as ronin. A few of the Usagi admit to having seen something moving around in the ruins at night, but they aren't sure what. The ruins are considered unlucky, and strictly avoided. The Hare were a superstitious clan, and the ronin maintain this tradition.

If the characters ask around or accept Muso's help, they easily find Otu's home. He is the only son of Genko, an old farmer who lives by himself near the edge of the Shinomen. When the characters arrive, they are respectfully greeted by Genko. Genko seems fearful, but this is not unusual for a farmer greeting a band of unfamiliar samurai. If asked to see Otu, Genko falls on the floor in terror.

"Please, honorable masters, do not take my son," he pleads. "He has done nothing. We are but a poor family. I swear to you that he saw nothing in the ruins. He was just telling a story, that is all. He's just a young boy with an overactive imagination. Please, just leave him be!"

A Investigation/Perception roll with a TN of 15 divines that Genko is lying. He seems utterly terrified that the characters are going to harm his son. If the player characters can placate the farmer and convince him that they mean no harm (Sincerity/Awareness at a TN of 20 or just good role-playing) he'll agree to it, but still seems fearful. If asked why he's afraid, he simply says "The spirits of the Shinomen are unrestful. I have not been myself. I beg your forgiveness, noble masters," and falls to the floor again. Astute characters may sense that there's more going on, but they're not going to get anything else out of Genko at the moment.

The truth is, a group of ronin in black masks and black armor burst into Genko's home late last night. While Otu slept, the men pinned Genko to the ground and stuffed his mouth full of cloth so he could not scream. Once he was immobilized and silenced, a man in white robes wearing a plain white mask with no features entered the room and stood over the helpless farmer. "Forget what you have seen," he warned, "and tell your son to do the same, or you will pay Jigoku's price." Genko then fell into a deep sleep and had nightmares all night. He awoke in his bed, and still isn't sure whether it really happened, but he isn't taking any chances with the life of his son.

Otu doesn't know a thing about the incident last night, so he's more than happy to speak to the characters. He is a young boy of about seven or eight. He stares at all the samurai with wide-eyed awe, and nearly trips over himself bowing and showing his respect. Though Genko cautions Otu to be respectful of his betters, the boy is in a daze of hero worship. He wants to know everyone's names, what clans they're from, and what battles they've been in. The characters don't have to agree to the boy's requests by any means, but their treatment of the boy is important later on.

Otu's tale is fragmented, as he's a excitable, hyperactive little boy. If the characters ask what he saw, he says "I saw ghosts." If they ask where, he says "In the castle." If they ask what he was doing in the castle, he looks ashamed and says "I was playing. I know I'm not supposed to go there, but I thought it would be fun." If asked to describe the ghosts, he says "The first one was a nice old man, wandering the castle. He was lost and tired and I wanted to help him. He looked up at me and he looked familiar, but when I got close, he disappeared. That's when the other ghosts chased me away." If asked about the other ghosts, he says "They were angry, and they were fast, but I was faster. They were big and mean and tall and black, all black. They looked like you, except they were wearing masks."

Otu will gladly show the characters the spot where he saw the ghosts, but only if during the daytime. He's scared to go back to the



ruins after nightfall. This means that the characters will have to spend the night. Genko's home is hardly large enough to accommodate more than two characters, and only if Genko sleeps on the floor (which he will). Muso will gladly arrange more accommodations in the village.

If the characters are wary at the mention of black-garbed masked "ghosts," they should be. They are unfortunately on their own. As sympathetic as Moharu and the Legions might be, they cannot act on the word of a peasant child. Otu's testimony means nothing. This investigation is up to the player characters.

Investigating the Ruins

The ruins of Shiro Usagi are deserted. It is apparent that the surviving Hare made some attempt to rebuild the burnt-out castle after the siege, but when the Emperor denounced their Clan, they abandoned the site. Looters occasionally wander the ruins, looking for treasure, usually the lost Ancestral Sword of the Hare. Scavengers rarely find anything, and often end up chased away by angry Usagi ronin.

Otu can lead the characters to the area where he saw the ghosts. He found the first ghost near the center of the ruins, in a large chamber that is now open to the sky. A broken table lies among the wreckage. A bit of deduction by the characters (Engineering/Intelligence at TN of 15, or simply asking Muso) will reveal that this is the room where the daimyo met visitors. A thorough search while the sun is up (Investigation/Perception at TN of 20) will reveal that someone has been digging around in the ruins recently, and made some effort to conceal their work. Some of the holes are as much as six feet deep, hastily covered up with timbers and sticks.

Whatever did that, it wasn't a ghost.

If the characters arrive at night, hoping to ambush the "ghosts," then they find exactly what they're looking for. At about midnight, a lonely figure suddenly appears in the daimyo's meeting room. He is an elderly man in plain robes of red and white. He has a long white moustache, is entirely bald, and has a weak, quivering chin. He constantly grasps at his right side, as if looking for something that is no longer there, and he quietly sobs to himself. A Heraldry/Intelligence roll at a TN of 20 reveals that red and white were the colors of the Hare Clan. (None of the ronin in the village dare wear these colors anymore.)

Characters who make a raw Perception roll at a TN of 15 will notice that the man's feet aren't touching the ground! If the characters ask Muso who the man is, the Hare is too terrified to speak; he obviously knows the ghost. The ghost, of course, is Usagi Oda, the last daimyo of the Hare. Oda's Glory was 4.3 in life, but has declined somewhat over the two years he has been dead as the

Empire has made an effort to forget him and his Clan. It is unlikely that starting PCs will recognize him unless they've studied the Hare Clan.

It's about the time that the characters realize that Oda is not quite what he seems that the Oda notices them as well, even if they are hidden. He floats toward the nearest player character with hands outstretched. If one character in particular was very kind to Otu, Oda moves toward that character.

"My son..." he moans. "Kennō is gone, my daughter is gone, my son is gone... my son is in danger... where has he gone?"

If the characters attack, Oda peers at them in confusion and becomes enraged. (He can't really harm them, but he can put on a frightening display.) If anyone attacks with a crystal, jade, or magic, Oda screams in pain and vanishes until tomorrow night, when he appears again.

Muso immediately challenges any character that harms Oda's spirit to a duel.

If the character approached by Oda stands his ground, Oda continues to approach. Tell the player that he has "a bad feeling about this," and that as the ghost draws nearer, a numbing cold begins to well up in his heart. Ask that character's player what he wants to do repeatedly, trying to make him second guess his choice to stand steady as the frightening specter draws nearer. When Oda finally stands before the character, allow a raw Willpower check at TN of 20. This TN is lowered to 10 if the character intentionally walks out to meet Oda or tries to speak to him, and is negated entirely by the Death Trance advantage.

The first character that flees must make a Willpower check at TN of 30. If this roll fails, the character develops a bright white streak in his hair and gains a special Haunted Disadvantage. (See the box on page 215. Do not give this Disadvantage to more than one character. At your option, give this Disadvantage to a character of your choosing who is disrespectful of the ghost. The Disadvantage will be quite useful in an upcoming adventure.)

When someone finally speaks to Oda, this is what he has to say.

"They have taken everything..." the ghost says, its voice hollow and impossibly lonely, "yet they return to take more... I do not know what they are searching for... but they are always searching... always taking... they took my life... they took my castle... they took my son... they took my daughter... they are taking my son... they are taking my son... they are taking my son!" The ghost screams in rage, its cold milky eyes fixing upon your own. "What do the Scorpions want with my son?" he demands, sobbing and clawing at you in rage. His fingers pass through your body with



a numbing cold, doing no damage. The ghost crumples on the ground, sobbing and clutching its head. "They have taken everything else... I only wanted to see him one last time... my son..."

With that, the ghost of Usagi Oda rises and floats away alone, ignoring the characters. (He's headed in the direction of Genko's house, moving very slowly.) Muso looks greatly disturbed by the apparition. "Oda-sama must be mad from the pain of his death," he says sadly. "Ozaki is not a child."

The characters may now abruptly realize that Oda is not talking about Ozaki, and he's not talking about the past. If the player characters don't catch on, Muso does, and he rushes off toward Genko's house. If the characters don't figure it out and Muso is not with them, they'll find Genko's house a burning heap in the morning and have to search the Shinomen for the Scorpions.

Oda is referring to his other son, *Otu*. The Scorpion looters are preparing to murder Otu and Genko for bringing all these samurai to Shiro Usagi. They're just waiting for the party to come back so they can ambush them, too.

Ambush!

The Hare are not *maho-tsukai*. Since the time of Iuchiban, when their clan was founded, they have known the dangers of black magic and have fought against it. They are experts on maho but only so the Hare would always be prepared to fight their eternal enemies, the Bloodspeakers.

Of course, there's no convincing some people. Soshi Sanru is a bitter Scorpion looking for a quick route to power so he can gain retribution upon those who destroyed his clan. He believes that maho will serve his purpose well, and that there must be something hidden in the ruins that he can use. He has been excavating for weeks now without notice. He digs at night, and the Hare's superstition has kept away spectators. Otu was the first witness. Sanru delivered Genko a warning and thought that would be the end of it. Then the samurai (the player characters) came. Now the whole plan is a bust. More samurai are bound to come, and Sanru will never dig up the secrets of Shiro Usagi.

Sanru intends to kill a few of these samurai before he flees, and Otu is his bait. Sanru leads a group of Scorpion bushi equal to the number of characters in the party, plus one.

Sanru has no idea that Otu is Usagi Kinotu. Before Usagi Oda died, he gave Kinotu to Genko and made the farmer promise to protect the boy until the Hare were restored. Genko agreed – he doesn't like lying to samurai, but he would not defy the dying wish of his lord. He has taken good care of Kinotu since then and guarded the secret carefully.

When the characters arrive at Genko's home, the Scorpions are hiding in the trees around the house (Battle/Perception at a TN of 20 to notice them). One of them is hiding inside the house, holding Genko and Otu hostage. Sanru is in the forest nearby. If he hears the characters coming, he casts Essence of Air upon himself and hides (if the characters sneak up, there's a chance they'll catch Sanru lounging around in his bright, white robes). When the characters enter the open area around the house, the Scorpions in the trees open fire and Sanru begins unleashing Fires From Within. Sanru won't threaten the lives of the peasants except as a last resort. Sanru doesn't care about peasants, and doesn't really expect the characters to, either. (They're samurai! Who cares about peasants?) He just expected them to come back here for more information, that's all. Ironically, Sanru's prejudices could be his own undoing. He would be quite surprised to find out who the young hostage he is holding truly is.

If the battle starts to go poorly, remember that Oda's ghost is still on the way. He could show up at an opportune moment, frightening a few of the archers so that they fall out of the trees, or terrifying Sanru so that he faints dead away.

Resolution

Listing experience point values is pointless, as all GMs hand out experience to their own taste. Instead, here are some general guidelines...

If the characters discovered what was going on at the castle, Moharu is satisfied. Give a small experience point reward.

If the characters managed to defeat Sanru *and* saved the life of Usagi Kinotu (little Otu) then Moharu is impressed. Give a moderate experience point award.

If the characters saved the life of Otu and Genko, know what the Scorpions were up to in the ruins, and managed to bring in Soshi Sanru alive for questioning, then Moharu is extremely impressed. Give a large experience point award. In addition, Moharu commends the characters and promises to give them more important assignments in the future. (The upcoming adventure, *Bells of the Dead*, fits this perfectly.)

Who's Who

Asako Moharu

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 2

Intelligence: 3



Air: 2

Awareness: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 2

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 2.5

Advantages: Major Ally (Phoenix Inquisitors), Forbidden Knowledge (Inquisitor) 2, Irreproachable

Disadvantages: Meddler, Driven (to punish the wicked), Soft Hearted

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 4, Knife 1, Law 3, Lore (Maho) 3, Medicine 3, Meditation 3, Shintao 3, Theology 4

Spells: (Water Affinity; Spells marked with an asterisk are innate abilities) Sense, *Commune, Summon, Path to Inner Peace, Reflections of Pan Ku, *The Tie That Binds, Heart of Mortality, Reflective Pool, *Perceive Harmony, Jade Strike, Hands of Jurojin, *Whispering Wind

To all appearances, Moharu is a stern individual, unforgiving of even the smallest lapse in judgment. In reality, she has a nearly boundless capacity to care, and is keenly aware of the needs of those under her command. The only reason she is so strict with herself and others is because she knows the responsibility that has been placed upon them all. She is a scalpel, cutting away the darkness. Should she or those that fight beside her waver, all of Rokugan will pay the price. She has been known, in the past, to settle the question of whether an individual possesses the Taint by firing a Jade Strike directly into their face, and letting the kami be the judge.

Moharu despises physical conflict, preferring to leave such menial tasks to underlings who possess a talent for it.

(Usagi) Muso

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Strength: 3

Fire: 2

Agility: 3

Air: 2

Reflexes: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Usagi Bushi 1 (The TN of any maneuver involving a leap has its TN reduced by 10. Muso can use this ability to add 5 to his TN to be Hit on Full Defense by cartwheeling about.)

Honor: 2.7

Glory: 0 (Hare ronin)

Advantages: Way of the Land (Hare), Quick

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (Ronin), Bad Reputation (Hare), Can't Lie

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 1, Farming 1, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 1, Jiu-jutsu 1, Lore (Maho) 1

Muso is a friendly, open individual. This is unusual for the survivors of the Hare, as most of them feel betrayed and cast out by the rest of Rokugan. Muso doesn't understand this attitude. He feels that only by welcoming the outside world and showing them the sort of people that the Usagi are will they be restored to their rightful place. They aren't *maho-tsukai*, they're heroes! Hiding in a forest isn't going to prove that to anyone.

Muso feels that lies have destroyed the Hare, and has sworn to the Fortunes that he shall not lie so long as he draws breath. He also avoids telling half-truths and deceiving people. Muso takes no offense at those who believe the Hare are *maho-tsukai* (the Emperor himself said it was so) but will go to any length to prove otherwise.

Muso does not realize that Otu is Usagi Kinotu. If he did, he would immediately turn all of his energies toward training, raising, and protecting the boy.

Soshi Sanru

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Perception: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 2

Honor: 0.6

Glory: 0 (Scorpion ronin)

Advantages: Read Lips

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (*maho-tsukai*), Small

Skills: Calligraphy 1, Courtier 2, Knife 4, Lore (Ghosts) 3, Lore (Maho) 2, Meditation 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 1

Spells: (spells marked with an asterisk are Innate Abilities) *Sense, *Commune, *Summon, By the Light of Lord Moon, *Wind-Born Slumbers, *Cloak of Night, Reflections of Pan Ku, Castle of Water, Fury of Osano Wo, Fires From Within, Passing, *Essence of Air

Sanru dresses in flowing white robes and a white linen mask that covers his entire face but allows him to see and breathe normally. He is a vengeful man who sees anyone outside the Scorpion as an enemy. He knows that maho can grant the power he needs to gain his vengeance. Now he just needs to find some.



The Scorpion bushi who serve Sanru are as vengeful as he, and are zealously loyal to the shugenja. They would gladly give their lives so that he might escape.

If confronted with unassailable odds, Sanru will beg for forgiveness and offer to surrender. Then, at the earliest opportunity, he'll try to stab the nearest character with a poisoned dagger concealed by his Cloak of Night spell and run away. (The Night Milk poison on the blade adds four damage dice to the first successful strike.)

Scorpion Ronin

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1

Honor: 1.5 (average)

Glory: 0 (Scorpion ronin)

Rolls When Attacking: 6k3

Rolls For Damage: 4k2 (Katana or Ya arrows)

Skills of Note: Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 3, Stealth 3

Special: The black armor and masks the Scorpions wear lower the TN of all Stealth rolls by 5.

The Inquisitors

The Phoenix Clan has the duty of protecting the knowledge of the Empire, and preventing the corruption of knowledge. To this end, the Elemental Masters have created a special type of Emerald Magistrate known as the Inquisitor. The Inquisitors seek out those that practice maho or bear the Taint of Fu Leng, and see that justice is done. The Inquisitors have great power, but little enforcement capability. They may accuse anyone save the Elemental Masters and the Emperor, but they have no power to deputize or levy troops. Inquisitors must prove their accusations personally or such accusations are likely to go unheard.

All Inquisitors are required to undergo grueling tests of mind, body, and spirit to ensure that they will not be corrupted. Very few complete the tests; there are only a handful of Inquisitors at any time, and they always travel alone or in the company of Kuni Witch Hunters. Though most are Phoenix, this is not a requirement. Other clans are merely reluctant to allow their shugenja to become tools of the Elemental Masters.

New Advantage

Forbidden Knowledge (Inquisitor)

This is a variant of the Forbidden Knowledge Advantage in Way of the Phoenix, given only to Inquisitors. As a service to the Inquisitors, the Dragon Clan gives each Inquisitor mystical eye tattoos on the palm of each hand, the "seekers of truth." Any spell cast for the purpose of revealing the truth, finding a secret, or revealing that which is hidden receives a Free Raise for every level of Forbidden Knowledge. On the downside, any Inquisitor who falls to the temptation of maho gains additional boxes of Taint equal to twice his Forbidden Knowledge each time he casts a maho spell. A character may not have Forbidden Knowledge higher than his School Rank, and may increase the power of his tattoo when he rises in rank by paying 4 Experience Points.

Inquisitors often have the Driven and/or Bad Reputation Disadvantages.



I'm Haunted!

Characters who become Haunted by Usagi Oda are visited weekly. Oda appears in the character's nightmares, ranting, raving, and making demands. Oda's demands are as follows, with the ordeal that must be met to satisfy the ghost listed in parentheses...

"Find Kennō!" (The Ancestral Sword of the Hare. Oda does not explain the name, but the character will know the sword the instant he lays eyes on it.)

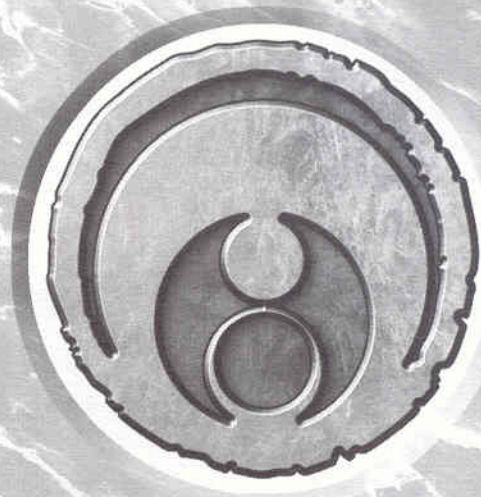
"Bring my children home!" (Kinotu, Ozaki, and Tomoe. Likewise, the character will instantly recognize Oda's children, even in disguise.)

"Restore my home!" (Rebuild Usagi Castle. The Hare Clan must be restored, or the Emperor will not allow any such thing.)

"Destroy the shadow-master!" (This seems to refer to Bayushi Tomaru. In truth, it is someone else entirely. This will be explained in Bells of the Dead.)

Oda will not stop tormenting the character until all of his demands are met.

Appendix: All and Nothing



Charts

The following pages contain a wide variety of charts to assist in the rounding-out of your campaign world. Some of them can be used when you're doing initial design work and deciding just what the PC's are going to run into; others are useful when you need a spur-of-the-moment encounter with an NPC bad guy, informant, or monster; still others are reference material.

The first set of tables fall into the first two categories. "Items & Trinkets", "Interesting NPCs", "Encounters", "Events", "The Shadowlands", "Creating Oni," and the Bandit Generator are all appropriate either while stocking a village, Shadowlands encounter, or storyline, or on-the-fly as the PCs become interested in all the little details of the NPC to whom you'd only assigned a name and clan.

The Battle Table is useful for resolving large armed conflicts, and as such only comes into play when there's such a battle going on. Its usage is straightforward, and allows you to concentrate more on the PCs than on the mechanics of large-scale warfare.

In the third category, the "Mastery Levels of Previously Published Spells" are self-explanatory, and the "Character Option Compilation" lists every published Skill, Advantage, and Disadvantage along with the books in which they appear.

Items & Trinkets

The following are lists of items, trinkets, and rewards that your characters can find or be given. In Rokugan, the art of giving and receiving gifts is one of the most respected matters of etiquette in the Empire. Remember, sometimes items are given not to actually reward the recipient, but to show the giver's honor to the court.

Rewards Charts

Non-Magical

- | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | A finely crafted tessen, or war fan. |
| 2 | A fine katana. |
| 3 | A Doji bride. |
| 4 | A family estate. |
| 5 | A fine horse. |
| 6 | A pillow book. |
| 7 | A small ship. |
| 8 | 1-10 peasant retainers. |
| 9 | A fine suit of armor. |
| 10 | A beautiful mask. |



Magical

- 1 An origami butterfly that flies around the room.
- 2 An amulet that always seems to be the family mon of the viewer.
- 3 A teapot that is never empty.
- 4 A servant carved of clay who can follow directions, but cannot speak.
- 5 A spell scroll of the GM's choice.
- 6 Magical travel papers that are valid anywhere in the Empire.
- 7 A bonsai tree with berries that are each as nourishing as a full meal.
- 8 A small object made of jade.
- 9 A katana that cannot rust, break, or go dull.
- 10 A carved stick that, when broken, casts a spell of the GM's choice.

Gifts

In the following examples, it is assumed that a daimyo gives the gift to a samurai for loyal service to the family and clan. In situations where this is not the case, simply change the term "daimyo" to whatever you choose. As always, the names of families and clans are open to change and should reflect the tone of your campaign. In many cases, the names of families were chosen to reflect those of less skill with the craft in question; the GM should feel free to customize it (e.g. the Shinjo carpenters are obviously nowhere near as skilled as Kakita or Kaiu, but the idea is quaint in its subtlety and subtext; GMs should change it to Asako or Agasha if they see fit).

Be aware that Rokugani do not view gifts the way westerners do. Every act of generosity is observed with equal care and respect. The following gifts are considered Fine Quality for the sake of being descriptive, but may be toned down to fit the situation. Again, GMs should customize names, materials, compositions, and construction to fit their own environments.

- 1 A healthy and beautiful bonsai tree.
- 2 A green ceramic vase painted with the kanji of "leadership" on one facing side. It should be displayed in a place of honor in the PC's estate.
- 3 A tall screen or tapestry painted with a Unicorn jumping over a roaring tsunami. Kanji have been drawn at the bottom telling a simple haiku of discovery and meditation.
- 4 The personal seal of the daimyo. It allows the PC to pass through most of his lands without question.
- 5 A haiku written by a great poet. It details the

glory of Jurojin and the lifelong health he provides.

- 6 Origami figures folded by a renowned artisan of the Kakita family in the figure of a tortoise, unicorn, etc.
- 7 Chop or wax stamp with family or clan mon. The handle is made of bamboo, perfectly cut and painted with a simple kanji expressing "joy." The stamp has been cut from a pine tree high in the Dragon Mountains and sealed with steam from a hot spring in the Phoenix lands.
- 8 The PC's daimyo offers the services of a skilled artisan or smith. It is expected that the servant will be treated well and returned in an appropriate amount of time.
- 9 Go or shogi board with finely crafted pieces - alabaster, mahogany, pearl, silver, and in rare situations, jade or crystal.
- 10 A fine tessen. The family mon is proudly displayed against a gilded field when the tessen is open.
- 11 Ornamental chopsticks made of ceramic or a wood that does not splinter easily.
- 12 A porcelain or fine ceramic tea set. The cups and kettle have been adorned with the image of a Torii shrine painted in a few simple colors.
- 13 An ornate lantern made of paper dyed red and painted with a kobune sailing against the horizon.
- 14 A carefully crafted incense burner made of cedar, with carvings of a simple dragon or fish and tiny kanji meaning "fortune, luck, and hope" along the base. A stick of rosemary incense has been set into the holder, to be lit during visits from the PC's daimyo.
- 15 Kanji have been drawn out on a very tall hanging scroll prepared by a master calligrapher. They tell of the heroism of the PC. It is intended for a "place of honor" in her estate.
- 16 Traveling papers to one or several realms, good for a season, or even several years.
- 17 A lock of hair from the PC's enemy, delivered by a peasant messenger. It is in a simple wooden box, and the lock is bound with two ribbons in the colors of the clan. The hair inside is wrapped in rice paper.
- 18 A crystal decanter made by a glass blower from the Burning Sands. It is exotic, though crafted by a clumsy hand when set aside the precise talents of Rokugani artisans. It is, however, unique, and when placed in the right room of the PC's home, it gives off a strange azure hue.
- 19 A biwa is delivered to the PC's home by a geisha or



trained musician. She plays the biwa for an hour or so for the PC, and shows the wide range of melodies that the carefully-treated wood and strings produce. Afterward, the biwa is left in the care of the PC with a short scroll detailing a particularly beautiful and popular piece of music. GMs may find it amusing for the daimyo to visit in a month, expecting a performance from the PC.

- 20 An Imperial family member is invited to the PC's home, and vice-versa.
- 21 The daimyo offers his own personal and very precious pet cat to the PC. The cat was a gift from the Imperial family (either to him, or directly to the samurai). The PC will have to spend a lot of time with the cat, getting it used to its new surroundings. Otherwise, it will find the way back to its previous owner. Such an act would certainly be considered a refusal of the gift, and a dire insult.
- 22 A songbird (nightingale) in a fine cage.
- 23 An lacquerware box, painted black with red veins, with a winter scene on top. A live cricket is inside the box. The gift is not wrapped, so that the cricket will not suffocate.
- 24 A fine poem written by a family poet, about an important battle in which the PC was involved. Details of youth and frustration are prevalent. The gift is read aloud in court by the poet before the gift is offered to the PC.
- 25 A stone from a sacred mountain.
- 26 A decorated or ornate wooden pillow.
- 27 An audience with a lord of the PC's choosing.
- 28 A thoughtless knick-knack that has little relevance.
- 29 Fine green tea from the Dragon Mountains, a rare drink from the Burning Sands, or a handful of sorghum seeds.
- 30 A scroll from *Walking the Way*, or a spell of the GM's own creation.
- 31 A memory book in a nice lacquer box. The pages tell of a lost history or arcane knowledge. The information could be about exploration beyond the borders of Rokugan, a lost Minor Clan, or a kami that has been banished.
- 32 The restoration of a relative's lost honor.
- 33 A stack of parchments written in a language that is not Rokugani.
- 34 A bottle of fine sake, shochu, or plum brandy. Perhaps a Yasuki merchant has procured an exotic alcohol...



- 35 A very large responsibility is offered to the PC (guarding an important tower, escorting an ambassador, becoming a karo or hatamoto, or any other task beyond the talents of common samurai).
- 36 A haiku, written by a great poet and transcribed in gold ink by a great calligrapher.
- 37 A piece of jade - either for a trip to the Shadowlands, or from one who has survived the trip.
- 38 Decorative candles carved by an artisan in elaborate designs fitting the current season.
- 39 A fine set of clothes.
- 40 A favor. (This is a grand gift and should not be squandered.)
- 41 A banner or war fan for leading the PC's own army.
- 42 Mirror (and make-up set for a courtier) in an elaborate wooden or lacquer case.
- 43 A performance by actors, a dance troupe, etc. at the PC's home.
- 44 A skilled artisan to serve in the PC's court or home.
- 45 A copy of Akodo's *Tactics*, Bayushi's *Lies*, or some other seminal text.
- 46 An elite yojimbo is provided to perform as the PC's champion.



- 47 Invitation to the Emperor's Winter Court this year.
- 48 A chime, mirror, incense, and candle. If this gift is for a shugenja, the items have been blessed.
- 49 Land. Such PCs get the Gentry Advantage, or a small village is added to their lands.
- 50 The PC is informed of a guarded family secret.
- 51 A fine book of literature written 300 or more years ago.
- 52-58 A fine tsuba crafted in the shape of a crane.
- 59 A scroll with a spell that cures a disease or curse. (The scroll is consumed during the casting of the spell.)
- 60 A piece of a map that may or may not lead to anything.
- 61 A small tower or fortification is added to the PC's

- home, or the PC is given control of such a structure which is somewhere outside the stronghold and no longer of use to the daimyo.
- 62 A few pages torn from a banned or rare book.
- 63 The PC is offered admission or a single visit to a specific school (chosen by the GM).
- 64 An ancient fan... with a mysterious origin.
- 65-70 A karo is assigned to the PC to aid them in their work. The assignment is permanent.
- 71 Appointment to a sensei.
- 72 A complement of soldiers - ashigaru to medium infantry.
- 73-75 A fine horse with tack and mon.
- 76-80 An Ikoma Omoidasu visits the PC's home, prepared to learn all that is necessary to tell the samurai's tale. The glory award should be reflective of the rules in *The Way of the Lion*.
- 81 The blade that killed the PC's father.
- 82-83 A fine tea set painted with birds and flowers.
- 84-85 A mempo - intimidating or glamorous.
- 86 A helmet crest, handcrafted by a Kaiu.
- 87 A blank pillow book for transcribing the PC's own diary.
- 88 A trip to the Wall, as an observer or as a participant.
- 89 A master smith's services are offered to the PC for a short time. The samurai is expected to care for and house the smith while the craftsman creates items for the PC.
- 90 A well-connected spouse is offered to the PC.
- 91 An ornamental blade forged from a rare mineral.
- 92 A blessing from a priest of the clan.
- 93 A feast in the PC's honor. Many members of the clan are invited and regaled with tales of the PC's deeds. The evening should be spectacular and unforgettable.
- 94 The services of a cartographer for a short time, while the PC explores an important region within the boundaries of the clan's holdings.
- 95 The elimination of a debt to an individual of importance.
- 96 A finely crafted hourglass, made from mahogany or a rare wood not found in Rokugan.
- 97 A parasol or umbrella with a flamboyant design, reflective of the giver or receiver.
- 98 An empty box made of a fine wood.
- 99 An delicate jade figure strung on a fine silk cord. It is reputed to have mystical powers...
- 100 A shrine built in honor of the PC's family.



Interesting NPCs

There are many prominent personalities in L5R and it can be quite intimidating to a GM to portray them all accurately. In general, NPCs define how your players will see the Empire. They embody all the virtues you try to express: the stereotype of the honorable bushi, the cunning shugenja, or the lovely courtesan are all very important to your overall L5R storyline. Although many players will wish to meet the 'established' characters from the L5R CCG and the *Way of the Clans* series, your own NPCs should be challenging and interesting as well.

Remember that your NPCs don't have to be better than the players' characters. Every daimyo, great general, and magistrate has plenty of karo, yoriki, and hatamoto to aid him. Remember that clan and family lords like to think they know everything, even if they don't. Your NPCs gain a personality through what they do not know as much as they do by sharing what they are familiar with.

Finding new ways to establish a character quirk or create a new personality will help define and establish your long-term NPCs, and make your short-term NPCs more interesting. Help your players identify NPCs by adopting voices, mannerisms, or obvious character flaws for each one. Characterization helps the players remember and interact with each of your NPCs. Make the players take an active role in listening to you.

We've added some charts to suggest ways that GMs can make their NPCs feel distinct and unique. These ideas come in no particular order, and can help when a GM is feeling tired or too overwrought to make a simple NPC interesting. You might be surprised how well your PCs take to the little geisha who knows a great deal about dolls. It may sound simplistic, but such a character mark will help make your world more vibrant and individual, and keep your players referring to their NPCs as more than slips of paper in the GM's notebook.

Quirks

The Quirks charts are not properly set up for random die rolls, being better-suited to GM choice. If you need a quirk or two in an emergency, though, simply choose a style of quirk, roll two dice to get a number between 01 and 100, and divide by the number of entries in the table. This has the possibility of generating a wildly inappropriate NPC, however, and you may find it more useful simply to pick a quirk for the NPC in question.

Background Quirks

1. A master of the tea ceremony
2. Benten's Blessing, Dangerous Beauty, and Voice
3. Blood Speaker
4. Cursed with a poison touch
5. Extremely lucky at 'Winds and Fortunes'
6. Forgotten Knowledge
7. Go Master
8. Has a child
9. Has an obligation to someone else
10. Has PC's grandfather's sword
11. Haunted
12. Hears Iuchiban calling
13. Hides behind important political power
14. Honor 5 Akodo
15. In debt
16. In love with one of the PCs
17. Is an Imperial family member
18. Is the feudal lord of a PC
19. Kolat
20. Made a pact with an oni
21. Maho practitioner
22. Maho-tsukai or maho-bujin
23. Married to a Seppun
24. Oni in disguise
25. Poison specialist
26. Possessed by an oni
27. Possessed by Yajinden or a similar Blood Speaker spirit
28. Powerful oyabun (crime lord) in another city
29. Rank 5 Kakita
30. Runs black market operation
31. Sacrificed name to an oni/Summoned an oni in own name
32. Shapeshifter
33. Shosuro actor
34. Typically wears blue



Debilitating Quirks

1. Has a limp
2. Mute
3. One arm
4. One ear
5. One eye
6. One hand
7. One leg

Mental Quirks

1. Becomes easily bored
2. Compulsively counts everything
3. Cries a lot
4. Delusional
5. Does math problems in head (Commerce 3)
6. Easily angered and unhinged
7. Eats constantly
8. Enjoys performing torture himself
9. Enjoys the company of older samurai
10. Fastidiously clean
11. Glutton
12. Has Intelligence 4 (or higher), but plays it off as otherwise
13. Has a favorite saying or proverb
14. Has an addiction
15. Has an extensive vocabulary
16. Hates children
17. Hears everything said by the PCs
18. Highly intuitive or empathic
19. Hypochondriac
20. Inquisitive
21. Intensely bitter about some particular thing
22. Keeps a log of everything
23. Keeps household shrine closed up
24. Laconic
25. Loves a specific food
26. Loves classical court music
27. Miserly
28. Overly sensitive
29. Phobic or maniacal
30. Psychopathic
31. Quiet, pensive
32. Short-term memory is spotty
33. Stubborn
34. Thinks like a westerner
35. Vain
36. Very cautious

Miscellaneous Quirks

1. A fortune or kami in disguise
2. Always carries or wears a favorite item
3. Always refers to a lord that does not exist
4. Anemic and sickly
5. Berates those beneath her
6. Can never remember names of people
7. Carries hidden weapons in sewn pockets
8. Carries shugenja scrolls written on fans
9. Chews tea leaves
10. Competitive
11. Constantly pets cat or dog
12. Deep sleeper
13. Devoted follower of Shinsei
14. Domestic animals and children are fearful of presence
15. Eavesdrops on others
16. Everything tastes like dirt to NPC
17. Gives commands to most anyone
18. Large
19. Light sleeper
20. Makes impossible threats
21. Nervous laugh
22. Never acknowledges loss
23. Never drinks alcohol
24. Never makes eye contact
25. Often draws patterns in the air
26. Overly polite and cordial
27. Performs origami endlessly
28. Purposely (and subtly) violates tenets of Rokugani etiquette
29. Rarely bathes
30. Raspy voice
31. Resourceful
32. Signature weapon
33. Speaks in the third person
34. Speaks metaphorically
35. Strokes beard
36. Surrounded by toadies
37. Treats peasants well
38. Verbose
39. Visits people in their dreams (Cross the Veil of Sleep spell)
40. Wears kabuki make-up
41. Wears ornate saya and obi
42. Writes bad poetry

Physical Quirks

1. Allergy
2. Blinks less frequently than the average person



3. Broken nose
4. Brushes or plays with hair
5. Chilling laughter
6. Cleans teeth with tongue
7. Closes hands together
8. Clumsy
9. Compulsively twiddles fingers
10. Constantly in motion
11. Covered in scars
12. Covered in tattoos (magical or otherwise)
13. Cracks knuckles
14. Deep voice
15. Disfiguring scar
16. Fights dirty
17. Grinds teeth
18. Has a swath of white hair
19. Has a unfocused or "evil eye"
20. Has no sense of smell or taste
21. Hisses through mouth while breathing
22. Hums tunelessly to herself
23. Lazy eye
24. Light on feet, graceful
25. Nagging cough
26. One long defined scar
27. Overeater
28. Raises one eyebrow to express interest
29. Says everything twice or repeats himself in a creative fashion
30. Sings to himself - poorly
31. Speaks with a lisp, stutter, or some speech impediment
32. Spins coins and fidgets with loose objects
33. Taps his feet while standing
34. Twists mustache
35. Two different colored eyes
36. Very attractive

Sage Knowledge Chart

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Astrology |
| 2 | Cipher |
| 3 | Engineering |
| 4 | Heraldry |
| 5 | History |
| 6 | Magic (Spellcraft, Maho-Tsukai, or Nemuranai) |
| 7 | Medicine and Herbalism |
| 8 | Shadowlands (Goblin Culture or Ratling Speech) |
| 9 | Shintao and Theology |
| 10 | War (Tactics and History) |

Hinin Table

An encounter with Hinin should be subtle; any hinin encountered on a road will step off so that samurai may pass. In a village or hamlet the hinin will avoid the samurai, and in cities they will blend in with the surroundings. Hinin spend their lives learning to avoid the gaze of a samurai, and samurai only notice them when they want to.

- | | |
|----|---------------|
| 1 | Acrobats |
| 2 | Actors |
| 3 | Butcher |
| 4 | Dance Troupe |
| 5 | Gambler |
| 6 | Geisha |
| 7 | Leatherworker |
| 8 | Magician |
| 9 | Mortician |
| 10 | Trickster |

Lesser Nobles Table

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Ambassador |
| 2 | Courtier |
| 3 | Daimyo's Karo or Hatamoto |
| 4 | Gokenin |
| 5 | Governor |
| 6 | Imperial Family Member |
| 7 | Imperial Magistrate |
| 8 | Local Daimyo and all Daimyo's Attendants |
| 9 | Low Ranking Military Officer |
| 10 | Retired, High-Ranking Samurai |

Ronin Table

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | A Familiar Ronin -
Someone went to school with her |
| 2 | A Old Ronin and a Crane -
"I need help to Protect a Village. I cannot pay." |
| 3 | A Small Hamlet -
Ronin Gather Looking for Work |
| 4 | An Honorable Ronin |
| 5 | Arrows From the Woods - Ronin Archers |
| 6 | Ronin Escorting a Heimin |
| 7 | Ronin Trying to Read a Sign |
| 8 | Samurai Disguised as a Ronin -
Pulls Out the Emerald Seal and tells the PCs |



- to "Come with me."
 9 Seven Samurai
 10 Weaponless Ronin -
 They've Been Robbed (see Bandit Table)

Magistrate Table

(7 in 10 Magistrates should be from the local family / clan)

Magistrates spend a great deal of their time on patrol. Not every magistrate is amid an investigation; GMs should find creative tasks for a magistrate to be doing. Remember, magistrates wield great power and are not afraid to remind anyone that they are in the lands of a great daimyo lord.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Clan Magistrate |
| 2 | Imperial Magistrate |
| 3 | Imperial Magistrate and Kuni |
| 4 | Imperial Magistrate and Mantis Assistant(s) |
| 5 | Kitsuki Magistrate and Eta Assistant |
| 6 | Magistrate Investigation |
| 7 | Magistrate Interviewing Peasants |
| 8 | Magistrate with Prisoners |
| 9 | Rank 4 Imperial Magistrate and Three Yoriki |
| 10 | Wasp Bounty Hunter |

Merchant Table

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Lone Merchant Carrying Goods on her Back |
| 2 | Lone Merchant Pulling a Small Cart |
| 3 | Merchant and Attendants |
| 4 | Merchant Exhausted From Exposure to the Elements |
| 5 | Merchant Tied to a Tree |
| 6 | Merchants Carrying Only One Type of Good |
| 7 | Merchants Trying to Sell Something Fake |
| 8 | Merchants With Nothing to Sell (pockets full of koku) |
| 9 | Stuttering Merchant |
| 10 | Two Groups of Merchants Arguing |

Craftsman Table

The shokunin class of peasant is known for making crafts for the purposes of sustenance. A peasant who creates quality wares should be known for his or her skill, and word of the peasant's worth will quickly spread. There are over 1000 varieties of lacquer ware, porcelain, tile-making, etc. Below is a list of the most common craftsman types in Rokugan.

- | | |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Box Maker |
| 2 | Doll Maker |
| 3 | Glassblower (Crab and Unicorn) |
| 4 | Metalsmith |
| 5 | Potter |
| 6 | Rope Maker |
| 7 | Stonemason |
| 8 | Tile Maker |
| 9 | Weaver |
| 10 | Wicker maker |

Condition of the NPC Encountered

NPCs do not live in vacuums. They do not stand around waiting for the PCs to walk by and visit them. They have lives that involve highs and lows, ups and downs. Often, GMs may wish to determine what an NPC is doing. A farmer on fire or burying a body should be explained with a story, which is half of the fun of this chart.

GMs who roll on this chart can assume the NPC encountered is alive, awake, and walking; anything else is an embellishment of the obvious static features of an encounter.

To roll on this table, roll two differently-colored dice, designating one as the "tens" die and one as the "ones" die. Find the result on the table.

Roll	Condition
01-04	Angry or Happy
05-06	Bathing
07-08	Being Entertained
09-12	Belligerent/Crazed
13	Bound and Gagged
14-16	Buying Something
17-19	Confused
20-21	Conversing/Negotiating with Someone
22-23	Crying or Laughing
24	Dead
25	Destroying Something
26	Dirty
27-28	Drunk
29-31	Eating
32-33	Embarrassed
34-38	Engaged in a Craft or Art
39-41	Fatigued



42-43	Fishing
44-46	Frustrated
47	Hiding or Burying Something *
48-49	In a Fight/Dueling
50	Lost
51-53	Mad/Deranged
54-56	Meditating/Praying
57-58	Nervous
59-61	On a Quest/Hunt
62-63	Overly Polite or Insulting
64-65	Panicked
66-67	Playing a Game **
68	Questioning Someone
69-72	Relaxing ***
73-74	Riding a Horse
75	Robbed/Ambushed
76	Running or Being Chased
77-78	Scared/Paranoid
79-81	Searching for Something *
82-83	Shamed
84	Showing Mercy/Being Merciful
85-86	Sick/Ill
87	Singing
88-89	Sleeping/Resting/Unconscious
90-91	Surprised
92-93	Tending to a Garden
94	Tutoring/Learning/Studying
95-97	Working
98-99	Wounded/Bloodied
00	Roll Twice and Combine the Results

* or someone

** *Rokugani play Go, Shogi, and Winds and Fortunes (see The Way of the Scorpion). Children have a host of games and no list of activities could ever replace a child's imagination.*

*** *There are many things a Rokugani does to relax and GMs should come up with a fitting recreation for the NPC dependent on caste, personality, and duty. Some things to consider are whittling wood, light banter between neighbors, kite-flying, etc.*

Who's In That Inn?

Sometimes it is important to roll up a few NPCs quickly. Below you will find a list of names, positions, Glory, and Honor. For non-

samurai, use Honor and Glory as a guide for how well-known and well-behaved they are.

Glory: Roll 2 dice and add them

2	Glory 6
3-4	Glory 5
5-6	Glory 3
7-9	Glory 0
10-13	Glory 1
14-17	Glory 2
18-20	Glory 4

Honor: Roll 2 dice and add them

2	Honor 4
3-4	Honor 0.5
5-8	Honor 1
9-10	Honor 1.5
11-13	Honor 2
14-16	Honor 2.5
17-18	Honor 3
19-20	Honor 3.5

This chart allows the GM to create the characters that break the stereotype. You may want to just choose the Honor after you've seen the family. After all, with this chart a Bayushi has as much chance to be honorable as a Crane. You may wish to add or subtract a point of Honor for characters that are exemplary or typical of their clan.

Where are the samurai with Honor Ranks of 0, 4.5, and 5? PCs should not encounter these randomly, but rather when you have a plan. Feel free to make such special circumstances occur. If you are rolling up an encounter for anything other than a member of the samurai caste, this chart can be used to determine what area of Rokugan an NPC may hail from.

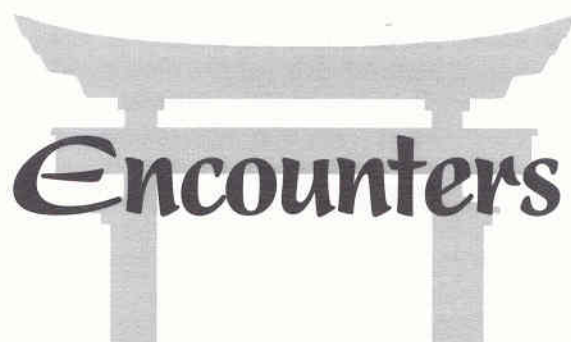


**Family Name: Roll 2 dice and add them**

2	Imperial Family: Roll one die
1-4	Miya
5-7	Otomo
8-10	Seppun
3-7	Crane Clan: Roll one die
1-2	Asahina
3-4	Daidoji
5-7	Doji
8-10	Kakita
8-9	Crab Clan: Roll one die
1-3	Hida
4	Hiruma
5	Kaiu
6-7	Kuni
8-10	Yasuki
10	Dragon Clan: Roll one die
1-2	Agasha
3-5	Kitsuki
6-9	Mirumoto
10	Togashi
11-12	Lion Clan: Roll one die
1-3	Akodo
4-5	Ikoma
6	Kitsu
7-10	Matsu
13	Phoenix: Roll one die
1-2	Asako
3-7	Isawa
8-10	Shiba
14-15	Scorpion: Roll one die
1-4	Bayushi
5	Shosuro
	Roll again; on a 1-4 they are in disguise (roll again to determine which clan they are posing as).
6	Shosuro
7-8	Soshi
9-10	Yogo
16-17	Unicorn: Roll one die
1-2	Ide
3-4	Iuchi
5	Moto
6-7	Otaku
8-10	Shinjo
18	Ronin: Roll one die
1-3	True Ronin

4-10	Clan Ronin
	Roll again to determine family affiliation; re-roll duplications
19-20	Minor Clans: Roll two dice and add them
2-4	Badger - Ichiro
5	Centipede - Moshi
6-7	Dragonfly - Tonbo
8	Falcon*
9-10	Fox - Kitsune
11	Hare - Usagi
12-14	Mantis*
15	Sparrow - Suzume
16	Tortoise*
17-20	Wasp*

* These clans do not currently have a true family name



The following charts are designed to kick-start random events within your plot. These charts can be used when a player is leaving the carefully created timeline of your established adventure, or when you are just looking for something to involve someone that keeps straying from the path.

Courtly Encounter Chart

- 1 Another courtier (such as a Crane Jester) takes a (dis)liking to one of the characters, and either helps or hinders them while they're at court.
- 2 A servant hurries into court and whispers into the host's ear. The message is important - possibly news of a murder or other unpleasant event.
- 3 A court game begins, and the characters are invited to play.
- 4 A samurai enters the court and insults the host.
- 5 One of the servants causes a disturbance. Perhaps the



- servant is drunk, or is stealing things from the guests.
- 6 A holy man (such as a Togashi riddle master) is in attendance, promising enlightenment to those who speak with him.
 - 7 A poet or other artist (possibly one of the characters) is invited to display his or her craft before the court.
 - 8 One of the characters is mistaken for someone else. Perhaps a message is accidentally delivered to the character, or they are challenged to a duel meant for someone else.
 - 9 A samurai petitions the host for permission to marry, attend a school, study under a sensei in the host's employ, etc.
 - 10 An old ally (or enemy) of the characters shows up.

Wilderness Encounter Table

Most anywhere in Rokugan that has not been settled, or farmed is considered the wild. Forests, Mountains, Swamps, and Rolling Hills are the places for such encounters.

1	Badger
2	Bear
3	Boar
4	Small Game
5	Snake
6	Stag
7	Tiger
8	Hunter
9	Wild Horses
10	Wolves

Road Encounter Table

Any road in Rokugan can be dangerous. Just because a village is linked to the main parts of the Empire by a mud path through wetlands does not mean that bandits and samurai do not travel along that path. Make sure the encounter makes sense, and determine what the NPC is doing here. Encounters with a † symbol have their own charts on these pages.

1	Bandits †
2	Beasts †

3	Farmers
4	Hinin †
5	Magistrate †
6	Merchant †
7	Monks
8	Patrol (Clan)
9	Ronin †
10	Special Encounter†

Village Encounter Table

Village life is different from city life. Villages and hamlets are home to heimin, and samurai rarely leave the beauty of a large city to visit the common folk. Encounters in a village reflect the lives of average Rokugani. Keep the action light and quick and do not dwell on anything unless the samurai take an interest in it. Undefended villages are a favorite stop of ronin and bandits. Encounters with a † symbol have their own charts on these pages.

1	Children
2	Craftsman †
3	Dog
4	Farmer
5	Fisherman
6	Headman
7	Hinin †
8	Ronin †
9	Yoriki / Doshin
10	Special Encounter †

City Encounter Table

This encounter could be on the streets, in a tea house, or even outside the governor's court. GMs should roll on this chart whenever the PCs ask them, "Who do I see?" or "What's going on?" Encounters with a † symbol have their own charts on these pages.

1	Artisan
2	Beggar
3	Courtier
4	Geisha
5	Lesser Noble †
6	Magistrate †
7	Merchant †
8	Priest



- 9 Yoriki / Doshin
- 10 Special Encounter †

Bandit Table

Bandits are a fact of life in Rokugan, especially in the current troubled atmosphere. Remember that even if the party is better-trained and better-armed than the bandits, it's still possible that they could suffer a fatality or two in a random encounter if they aren't careful.

- 1 A Bandit Ambush - Leaders and Followers
- 2 Arrows from the Woods - Bandit Archers
- 3 Bandit Hunting Party - A Leader, Dogs, and Followers
- 4 Bandit Tollbooth - Leaders and Followers
- 5 Bandits Dressed as Monks
- 6 Bandits Harassing a Lone Merchant
- 7 Bandits Preparing Ambush - Leader and Followers
- 8 Bandits Sharing/Splitting Goods
- 9 Clan Bandits (Low Ranking Samurai - Not Honorable)
- 10 Local Bully (Bandit Leader, Large, Rank 1 Technique)

Special Encounters Table

These encounters are considered rare by Rokugani standards, and are thus on a separate chart. Feel free to ignore or modify these to fit their adventure or setting; most of them require a great bit of work to make sense. Remember that these can seriously derail your plot, so use them sparingly and solve them quickly, if necessary. Encounters with a † symbol have their own charts on these pages.

- 01-06 A Cremation
- 07-11 A Famous or Important NPC †
- 12-18 A Ronin Carrying a Familiar Blade
- 19-22 A Shadowlands Encounter in the Heart of Rokugan
- 23-30 A Small Enemy Scouting Party
- 31-37 Armored Enemy Patrol (20+ Bushi)
- 38-45 Bandits Raiding a Merchant
- 46-47 Blind Beggar
- 48-52 Broken Arrows
- 53-54 Disemboweled Corpses
- 55-57 Disgraced Samurai Turned Heimin
- 58-61 Domestic Animal Roaming Free
- 62-65 Dogs/Wolves Eating a Dead Body

- 66-67 Empty House
- 68-71 Eta Robbing a Dead Body
- 72-74 Ghost Haunting
- 75-77 Heimin Detaining a Drunken Samurai
- 78-80 Lost Child (perhaps an Oni no Pekkke)
- 81-83 Merchant Selling "Magic" Scrolls
- 84-86 Non-Unicorn on Unicorn Horses
- 87-89 Omen or Prophecy †
- 90-91 Public Execution
- 92-93 Refugees
- 94-96 Samurai Praying at a Shrine
- 97 Shugenja Duel
- 98-00 Wedding Procession

Merchant's Caravan

The following is a list of items that a merchant might carry. A caravan could have many items on this list (11-20), while an individual merchant might carry only a few (1-5). Some of these items might not be appropriate in certain areas of the country, or within the lands of certain clans. Bear in mind your setting and location. Encounters with a † symbol have their own charts on these pages.

- 1-2 Alcohol (sake, shochu, brandy)
- 3 Amulets and talismans
- 4 Aphrodisiac
- 5 Armor
- 6 Bales of Silk
- 7 Banners
- 8 Barding (armor for horses)
- 9 Bedroll
- 10 Blacksmith Tools
- 11 Blank scrolls
- 12-13 Bolts of cloth
- 14 Bonsai trees
- 15-16 Bottles, empty
- 17 Bows and Arrows
- 18 Brushes
- 19 Buckets
- 20-21 Canvas
- 22 Ceramics
- 23 Chop set
- 24 Clothing
- 25 Cookware
- 26 Cut flowers, dried or fresh



27	Decorative pottery
28	Diamonds
29	Dice (Winds and Fortunes)
30-31	Dried Fish
32	Eggs
33	Fan
34	Farming tools
35	Finished statuary
36	Fireworks
37	Food
38	Forged papers
39	Games
40	Gardening tools
41	Gifts †
42	Glass-quality sand
43	Goat's milk (Unicorn lands only)
44	Gold, silver, or some other ore
45	"Good fortune" crickets in wicker cages
46	Grain, saddles, and grooming tools
47	Herbs
48	Heretical scrolls
49	Incense and Incense Burners
50	Ink in ceramic vials
51	Jade
52	Jewelry
53	Jeweler's Tools
54	Kabuki Masks
55	Kimono and clothing
56-57	Kite
58	Lacquerware
59	Lanterns and oil
60	Literature, pillow books, and haiku
61	Lumber, finished or otherwise
62-63	Mirror
64	Musical Instruments (of all kinds)
65	Paints, dyes, or glazes
66	Paper
67	Perfume
68	Pillow books
69	Poison
70	Raw cotton
71	River stones for gardens and other baubles
72	Rope
73	Sack
74	Sake and sake set
75	Saya
76	Scholarly works

77	Seeds for planting
78	Sheet music
79	Silk thread on spools
80	Songbirds in wicker cages
81-82	Spices
83	Statues
84	Stone suitable for carving
85	Strongboxes
86	Tea
87	Tea ceremony set
88	Tent
89	Tao of Shinsei (copies of)
90	Tools
91	Urns
92	Unfinished gem stones
93	Uniforms
94	Unrecorded koku or other valuables
95	Unrefined metal
96	Water
97	Weapons
98	Wicker baskets
99	Wood carvings
100	Writing implements





Weather Chart

Roll one die and apply these modifiers:

Spring:

If roll is greater than 7, subtract 1. If roll is less than 4, add 1.

Summer:

Add 1 to roll, re-rolling 1s.

Fall:

If a 1 or 0 is rolled, weather is very windy, with moderate temperature.

Winter:

Subtract 1 from roll, re-rolling 0s.

Far North, Far South, or High Mountains:

Subtract 1 from roll.

1 or less	Freezing Cold – Possible blizzard. Conditions hazardous for travel.
2	Freezing – Possible snowstorm. Conditions hazardous.
3	Very Cold – Possible sleet or hail. Conditions unpleasant.
4	Wet – Possible downpour. Conditions mild.
5–6	Warm – Dry, pleasant weather. Conditions favorable.
7	Wet – Possible downpour. Conditions mild.
8	Hot – Humid, uncomfortable weather. Conditions unpleasant.
9	Very Hot – Little chance of rain. Conditions unpleasant.
10+	Blistering – Possible drought. Conditions hazardous.

Omen/Prophecy Table

Anything peculiar that the Rokugani cannot explain as “natural” is often interpreted as an omen. Samurai may find the need to visit a seer, prophet, or oracle with regards to the phenomenon. Whether or not the event is truly prophetic is up to the GM.

1	Bird Falls out of the Sky, Dead
2	Bleached White Tree with Blood Red Leaves
3	Dogs Sleeping/Sitting in a Perfect Circle
4	Hail
5	Meteorite Falls to the Earth and Creates a Giant Crater
6	Pool of Water with Algae in the Form of a Kanji
7	Rainbow
8	Small patch of flowers surrounded by 1000 Butterflies
9	Thunderstorms in a Clear Blue Sky
10	Tree Falls in the Middle of the Path

Plot Complication Chart

1	A child is lost. The child may have been lured away by a mischievous kami, carried away by an evil Bloodspeaker, or even fallen into a well.
2	The village is besieged by a group of bandits.
3	The peasants in the area revolt, attacking any samurai they see.
4	A woman screams nearby. It could be a robbery, a woman stumbling across a dead body, an oni loose in the city, or even a trap for the foolishly heroic.
5	A dying man stumbles into one of the characters and gives him something – a mysterious message, a dying request, or even a nemuranai.
6	A wedding passes by the characters.
7	If the characters are not in a city, a peasant runs up to them, pursued by an ogre or oni, and begs for protection.
8	One of the buildings in the village catches on fire, and the villagers are too confused to organize themselves.
9	One of the characters has a holy vision.
10	Roll twice on this chart, combining the results. Ignore further rolls of 0.



The Shadowlands

Remember, a random encounter means random damage. GMs who resort to dropping bakemono randomly on the samurai are sure to find a few dead bodies once the smoke has cleared. Through careless planning, the dice can drop something as tough as a demon to something as weak as a small goblin. Be careful what you put into your games; no player wants to be surprised with an Oni on the side of the road. Remain consistent. If you do include a zombie rummaging through a merchant's sack, have a reason ready when the players ask. Encounters with a † symbol have their own charts on these pages.

Shadowlands Creature Encounter

- 1 Goblin †
- 2 Hida Patrol
- 3 Hiruma Scout
- 4 Kuni and Followers
- 5 Necromancer
- 6 Ogre/Troll †
- 7 Oni †
- 8 Ratling
- 9 Zombie/Skeleton †
- 10 Shadowlands Special †

Goblins Table

- 1 Goblin Hunting Party
- 2 Goblin Madcaps
- 3 Goblin Scavenger
- 4 Goblin Shaman
- 5 Goblin Shaman and Followers

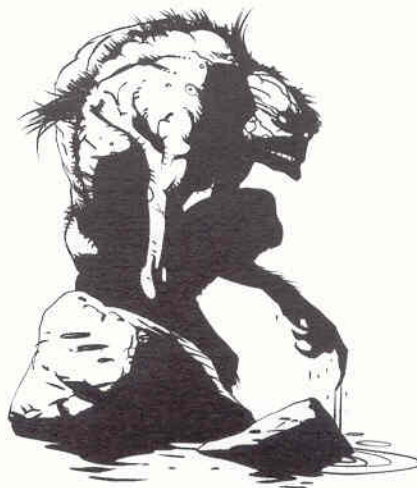
- 6 Goblin Warband
- 7 Goblin Warmonger and Followers
- 8 Half-eaten Goblin Party
- 9 Swamp Goblins
- 10 Two Goblins Fighting

Ogres / Trolls Table

- 1 Cave Ogre
- 2 Marsh Trolls
- 3 Ogre and Troll Fighting
- 4 Ogre Bushi with Followers
- 5 Ogre Sitting on a Pile of Bones
- 6 Ogre Warband
- 7 Ogre with Tree Trunk
- 8 Pile of Bones Lining the Entrance to a Cave
- 9 Sea Trolls
- 10 Troll Hunter

Zombie / Skeleton Table

- 1 Plague Zombies
- 2 Porcelain Masks on Ground
- 3 Rotting Headless Bodies
- 4 Skeletal Archers
- 5 Skeletal Carcass Pushing Up Through the Earth
- 6 Skeletal Troops
- 7 Zombie Troops
- 8 Zombie Troops in Armor (Clan)
- 9 Zombie with No Legs (still moving)
- 10 Zombies Controlled by a Necromancer





Creating Oni

For all the oni "species" documented here, there remain countless other one-of-a-kind oni, unique unto themselves. Canny GMs may wish design one of their own oni, or send a one-shot monster against players who think they have seen it all. In any case, the charts below may be used as an aid to spark the imagination, or as an on-the-fly way of creating an oni from scratch. The three groups of statistics are general guidelines based on the relative strength of the oni. They should be tailored to fit the GM's particular needs. The charts below them reflect the oni's physical countenance and overall appearance. Choose or roll randomly as you desire to create a suitably nightmarish image.

Lesser Oni

(can be defeated by most parties)

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Fire: 2

Air: 2

Rolls When Attacking: 4k2

Rolls for damage: 5k2

TN to be Hit: 15

Carapace: 4

Wounds Per Level: 10: +5; 25: +10;

50: Dead

Abilities: Fear: 1, Invulnerability

Moderate Oni

(causes problems for most parties)

Earth: 4

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 5k3

Rolls for damage: 6k3

TN to be Hit: 25

Carapace: 7

Wounds Per Level: 20: +5; 40: +15;

80: Dead

Abilities: Fear: 2, Invulnerability, one special ability equivalent to any shugenja spell.

Powerful Oni

(will eat most parties like popcorn)

Earth: 6

Water: 7

Fire: 7

Air: 6

Rolls When Attacking: 6k5

Rolls For Damage: 8k4

TN to be Hit: 35

Carapace: 9

Wounds Per Level: 30: +5; 60: +15;

120: Dead

Abilities: Fear: 4, Invulnerability, two special abilities equivalent to any shugenja spell

Oni Appearance Charts

BODY TYPE

2-5	humanoid
6	centaurian
7	bovine
8	ursine
9	porcine
10	feline
11	rodent
12-13	reptilian
14	amphibian
15	serpentine
16	avian
17-18	insectoid
19	combine any 2
20	combine any 3

TOTAL LIMBS

1-2	2
3-5	4
6-7	6
8	8
9	12
10	Countless

GRASPING LIMBS

1	None
2	1
3-6	2
7-8	4
9	8
10	Countless

DIGITS?

Yes/No #per limb

CLAWS?

Yes/No

1-3 barbed
4-6 serrated
7-10 razored
poisonous? Yes/No

LIMB TYPE

1-2 segmented (specify # of segments)
3-5 tentacled
6-8 haunched
9-10 jointed (specify # of joints)

SKIN COUNTENANCE

2-4 chitinous
5-7 smooth
8-10 slimy
11-12 furred
13-14 scaled
15-16 spiked
17-18 plated
19-20 bristled

ARMOR RATING

0-10

FEAR RATING

1-5



HEAD AND FACE

2-4	humanoid
5	bovine
6	ursine
7	porcine
8	feline
9-10	reptilian
11-12	amphibian
13	serpentine
14-15	avian
16	rodent
17-18	insectoid
19	combine any 2
20	combine any 3

TAIL

1-4	none
5-8	short
9-10	long

USED FOR

1-5	balance (heavy)
6-8	grasping (monkey-like, etc.)
9-10	weapon (scorpion's stinger etc.)

PRIMARY ATTACK

1-4	teeth
5-7	claws
8-9	charging
10	magic of some form

SECONDARY ATTACK

(reroll if the same as primary)

1-4	teeth
5-7	claws
8-10	charging

MAGIC ABILITIES?

Yes/No

Type (specify effect)

EYES

1	1
2-5	2
6	3
7	4
8-10	hundreds

TYPE OF EYES

2-5	human
6-10	animal (no whites)
11-14	insectoid
15-17	reptilian
18	glowing red
19	glowing white
20	glowing green

MOUTH

2-3	hinged
4-6	canine snout
7-9	porcine snout
10	none
11-13	beak
14-16	leech-like tube
17-18	insect proboscis
19-20	spider-like masticator

TEETH

2-3	none
4-7	sharp - piercing
8-11	sharp - tearing
12-15	sharp - needle like
16-18	sharp - jagged
19-20	blunt - grinding

NECK

1	None
2-5	thick and sinewy
6-8	jointed
9-10	serpentine

HABITAT

1-3	mountains
4-6	plains
7-9	hills
10-11	valleys
12-14	bogs
15-17	riverbeds
18-20	desert

RING RATINGS

From 3 to 7

WOUNDS

From 25 to 200





Average Bandit or Ashigaru Table

Roll one die:	Earth	Fire	Water	Air	Void	Description/Notable Skills
1-2	1	2	1 Per: 2	2	2	Scout; TN to be Hit 12 Skills: Kyujutsu 2, Tantojutsu 1 Hunting 1, Nofujutsu 1, Stealth 2
3-4	2	1 Agi: 2	2	1 Ref: 2	1	Warrior; TN to be Hit 12 Skills: Yarijutsu 2, Intimidation 1 Kyujutsu 1, Nofujutsu 2, Stealth 1
5-6	1 Will: 2	1 Agi: 2	1 Per: 2	3	1	Spy; TN to be Hit 17 Skills: Kyujutsu 3, Tantojutsu 2 Hunting 1, Nofujutsu 1, Stealth 3
7-8	3	1 Agi: 2	1 Str: 2	1 Ref: 2	1	Thug; TN to be Hit 12 Skills: Yarijutsu 3, Intimidation 2 Kyujutsu 1, Nofujutsu 3, Stealth 1
9	Prodigy: Roll twice and keep the best skills, Rings, and Traits of both.					
0	Roll on Bandit Leader or Village Doshin Table, keep equipment from this table.					

Standard Equipment: Yari, Ashigaru armor (+2TN), traveling pack, kimono, sandals, peasant weapon

Average Bandit Leader or Village Doshin Table

Roll one die:	Earth	Fire	Water	Air	Void	Description/Notable Skills
1-3	3	2	2 Str: 3	2	2	Budoka; TN to be Hit 15 Skills: Yarijutsu 3, Intimidation 2 Kyujutsu 2, Nofujutsu 2, Stealth 1 Jiujutsu 2, Defense 1, Kenjutsu 1
4-6	2	2 Agi: 3	2	3	2	Supai; TN to be Hit 20 Skills: Kyujutsu 3, Tantojutsu 3 Hunting 1, Nofujutsu 1, Stealth 3 Poison 1, Hisomu 2
7-8	3	2 Agi: 3	3	2 Ref: 3	2	Doshin/Bandit-Lord; TN to be Hit 20 Skills: Yarijutsu 3, Intimidation 3 Kyujutsu 2, Nofujutsu 2, Stealth 1 Jiujutsu 2, Defense 2, Kenjutsu 3
9	2	3	2	3	3	Ninja (non-Shadow); TN to be Hit 20 Skills: Kyujutsu 3, Tantojutsu 3 Hunting 2, Nofujutsu 1, Stealth 3 Poison 2, Hisomu 2, Ninjutsu 2
0	3	3 Agi: 4	3	3 Ref: 4	3	Ronin/Bandit-King; TN to be Hit 25 Skills: Yarijutsu 3, Intimidation 3 Kyujutsu 3, Nofujutsu 2, Stealth 1 Jiujutsu 2, Defense 3, Kenjutsu 4 (plus possible Rank Techniques)

Standard Equipment: Kimono, Traveling Pack, Katana, Wakizashi, Yumi, 10 Arrows, Light Armor (+5 TN), 2 koku



Mastery Levels of Previously Published Spells

The following table lists all mastery levels for previously published spells from many *Legend of the Five Rings* supplements. Except where noted, recalculate all Casting Times and Target Numbers by the new Mastery level. All other effects of the spells are as written in the original source.

The following abbreviations are used on this table: WtW = *Walking the Way*, WotCb = *Way of the Crab*, WotCr = *Way of the Crane*, WotDr = *Way of the Dragon*, WotMC = *Way of the Minor Clans*, WotP = *Way of the Phoenix*, WotS = *Way of the Scorpion*, WotU = *Way of the Unicorn*, WotW = *Way of the Wolf*, MGtR = *Merchant's Guide to Rokugan*.

Special Spell

Name of Spell	Location	Mastery	General Effect
Transform	WotDr	5	Transforms one Element into another.

Air Spells

Name of Spell	Location	Mastery	General Effect
The Archer's Reach	WotMC	1	Extends the range of missile weapons.
The Arrow's Flight	WtW	1	Makes an arrow hit its target.
Reflecting Mirror	WtW	1	Creates illusion of the caster.
Summon Bird	WtW	1	Summon a bird and ask a favor.
Awaken the Spirit	WotCr	2	Awakens the spirit in one item.
Castle of Air	WtW	2	Surrounds shugenja with vortex of Air.
Crow's Vision	WotMC	2	Allows overhead view of current location.
False Tongue	WotS	2	Cloaks conversation from others.
Fear	WotCb	2	Causes subjects to flee in terror.
Flight of the Dragonfly	WotMC	2	Illusion makes target difficult to hit.
The Four Winds Favor	WotU	2	Enhances the shugenja's range of hearing.
Gift of the Wind	WtW	2	Makes stationary target invisible.
Howl of Isora	WtW	2	Creates blast of wind.
Osano Wo's Strength	WtW	2	Deflects arrows and missiles.
Roaming the Wide Plains	WotU	2	Protects horse and rider from exhaustion.
Bad Karma	WotS	3	Causes target to botch one die roll.
Facing Your Devils	WotW	3	Pits target's strongest Trait against weakest.
Gust of Wind	WotCr	3	Turns missiles back on attackers.
Look Into the Soul	WtW	3	Allows viewing Rings and Traits.
Step Between the Stars	WtW	3	Creates a safe space between dimensions.
Binding	WotCr	4	Slows everyone in area around shugenja.
Forget	WotS	4	Alters subject's memory.
Teleportation	WotU	4	Allows line of sight teleportation.
Wisdom the Wind Brings	WtW	4	Allows a single question about someone.
Defender From Beyond	WtW	5	Summons spiritual defender.
Gate To Nowhere	WotU	5	Creates mysterious portal to Nowhere.
Glimpse of the Soul's Shadow	WtW	5	Doubles a target's speed and actions.
*The Mirror's Smile	MGtR	5	Allow target to mimic another person.
Walking the Way	WtW	6	Allows travel beyond the mortal world.

* Casting Time of this spell is not changed.

+ TN of this spell is not changed.



Earth Spells

Name of Spell	Location	Mastery	General Effect
Armor	WotCb	1	Attackers cannot re-roll 10s on damage rolls.
Clay Horse	WotW	1	Creates minor nemuranai to resist sleep.
Hidden Footsteps	WotMC	1	Purges a small area of all trace of passage.
Way of Earth	WtW	1	Increases Armor of target.
Grounding Energy	WtW	2	Grounds magic use in an area.
*Minor Binding	WotCb	2	Binds Tainted person with special manacles.
Rock Storm	WtW	2	Creates swarm of flying stones.
Whispers of the Land	WtW	2	Allows you to track a target.
Call Beasts	WtW	3	Summons and commands animals.
Castle of Earth	WtW	3	Surrounds shugenja with barrier of Earth.
Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin	WtW	3	Allows passage through Earth.
Essence of Earth	WtW	3	Increases the subject's Earth Ring.
Wall of Earth	WotCb	3	Summons a wall from the earth.
Fist of the Earth	WtW	5	Cracks open bottomless chasm.
Time's Deadly Hand	WtW	5	Inanimate objects crumble with age.
*Major Binding	WotCb	6	Binds oni or tsukai with special manacles.
*Oni Warding	WtW	6	Banishes an oni to Jigoku
Wooden Prison	WtW	6	Turns target into a tree.

* Casting Time of this spell is not changed.

+ TN of this spell is not changed.

Fire Spells

Name of Spell	Location	Mastery	General Effect
Last Rites	WotCb	1	Destroys and cleanses a body of the Taint.
The Burning Sands	WotU	2	Creates wall of flame.
The Elements' Fury	WtW	2	Ritually creates random ranged attacks.
Light of Amaterasu	WtW	2	Allows target to ignore wound penalties.
Osano Wo's Blessing	WtW	2	Makes a fire difficult to extinguish.
+Purity of Shinsei	WtW	2	Cancel spell-like abilities.
Castle of Fire	WtW	3	Surrounds shugenja with large wall of Fire.
Eyes of the Phoenix	WtW	3	Causes temporary blindness.
Flames of the Goddess	WotMC	3	Creates apparitions of Fire.
Essence of Fire	WtW	4	Cancel Rank Techniques during duels.
Kuro's Fire	WotW	4	Hurls fire by spending Void Points.
Wrath of Osano-Wo	WtW	4	Causes arrow to explode with magic Fire.
Fiery Wrath	WtW	5	Causes building to burst into flames.

* Casting Time of this spell is not changed.

+ TN of this spell is not changed.

Water Spells

Name of Spell	Location	Mastery	General Effect
Breath of Mist	WtW	1	Makes earth into a thick bog.
Cross the Veil of Sleep	WtW	1	Speak to a target through dreams.



Name of Spell	Location	Mastery	General Effect
Dance of the Unicorn	WotU	1	Creates fog of purifying mist.
Speed of the Waterfall	WotU	1	Doubles downhill speed.
Wall of Bamboo	WtW	1	Creates wall of bamboo from nothing.
Energy Reversal	WtW	2	Switches a Trait between two subjects.
The Horse's Nose	WotU	2	Allows shugenja to track by scent.
Ride Through the Night	WotU	2	Allows horse to gallop without exhaustion.
Water's Sweet Clarity	WotMC	2	Allows random visions of the future.
When Two Become One	WotU	2	Horse and rider use highest Traits of either.
The World Is Not Heavy	WotU	2	Negates all effects of encumbrance.
Inari's Blessing	WtW	3	Summons basic foodstuffs.
Kharmic Vengeance	WtW	3	Disables a target with guilt.
The Path Not Taken	WotW	3	Redistributes shugenja's spell slots.
Wonderful Origami Furoshiki	WotU	3	Collapses objects into folding paper pouch.
Yuki's Blessing	WotU	3	Freezes water into a bridge of ice.
Curse of the Jackal	WtW	4	Reduces targets intellect to animal level.
The Penetrating Drop	WotU	4	Causes water to erode object to destruction.
Master of the Rolling River	WtW	5	Creates burst of torrential water.
Open the Waves	WtW	5	Parts a body of water.
+Sukinjin's Gift	WtW	5	Reflects spell back on its caster.
Suitengu's Embrace	WtW	6	Causes target to drown.
Wheel of Fortune	WtW	6	Shuffles target's Rings randomly.

* Casting Time of this spell is not changed.

+ TN of this spell is not changed.

Void Spells

Name of Spell	Location	Mastery	General Effect
Contemplate the Void	WtW	1	Allows target to use multiple Void.
Drawing the Void	WotP	1	Grants an extra Void Point, once per day.
Sense Void	WotP	1	Allows extrasensory perception.
Spiritual Presence	WtW	1	Increases target's Ring by shugenja's Void.
Winds of Change	WtW	1	Gives unskilled character a skill at Rank 2.
Altering the Course	WotP	2	Allows shugenja to spend multiple Void.
Essence of Void	WtW	2	Paralyzes target with lower Void.
Kharmic Intent	WotP	3	Allows shugenja to share Void with target.
Moment of Clarity	WotP	3	Gives unskilled target skill at Trait + 2.
*Depth of the Void	WtW	4	View and change the future slightly.
Void Release	WotP	4	Allows target to substitute highest Trait.
Void Strike	WotP	4	Allows shugenja to steal Void Points.
*Rise From the Ashes	WotW	5	Retroactively negates all damage.
Void Suppression	WotP	5	Forces target to substitute lowest Trait.
Divine the Future	WtW	6	Ask the GM a single question.

* Casting Time of this spell is not changed.

+ TN of this spell is not changed.



The Battle Table

The system below gives the Game Master a simple mechanic for determining the course of battles. Like everything else in this book, this system is only a guideline. The GM can use all, part, some or none of it. The Battle Table doesn't simulate "realism" very closely; it is meant to help the GM determine the outcome of a battle with only a little bookkeeping, while at the same time allowing some drama to come into play for those involved.

Battles are resolved in Battle Turns. Each Battle Turn is approximately thirty minutes. Every Battle Turn, players decide where they will fight in the battle, and the GM determines their success and whether they get a chance to make a significant contribution to the battle's outcome.

Resolving Battles

Step One: Declaration

Every Battle Turn, each player indicates how his character will be fighting this Battle Turn. The players must choose between the four levels of activity: Reserves (farthest from the actual fighting), Disengaged, Engaged, Heavily Engaged (in the thickest part of the fighting).

Step Two: Advantage

After the engagements have been declared, the GM announces how the battle is going in this Battle Turn. The current advantage can be even, can favor one of the sides of the battle. If the battle is going against your army, there is more danger, but there is also more chances for an Heroic Opportunity. The Tides of Battle can be determined randomly, through the story, or perhaps even be affected by the players' actions in previous Battle Turns.

Step Three: Determination

Each PC adds his Water Ring to his Battle Skill, then rolls a single die. The die roll is added to the Ring + Skill to find the final result in the left hand column. Using the table and reading across the row from the result until the column is reached that corresponds to the Tide of Battle and Level of Engagement, the player will find their result for the Battle Turn.

Step Four: Resolution

In each Battle Turn, the characters suffer a certain number of Wounds. This is referred to as Dice of Wounds (e.g. "2 dice"). Subtract the character's Reflexes + Defense Skill from the total. The final result is how many Wounds the character takes during this Battle Turn of fighting from blows that he could not avoid. You will notice that shugenja always take less damage than their bushi brethren; this is due to the standard strategy in Rokugan of having a guard of soldiers to protect the comparatively fragile and valuable shugenja.

Step Five: Reward

Characters accumulate a certain amount of Glory during each Battle Turn, and should keep a tally of their total. Simply having earned the Glory, however, is not actually the same as receiving it. A samurai that has done many glorious things on a battlefield must still report his deeds to his lord (or better yet, have someone else report them) and then be publicly commended by his daimyo or commander.

It is recommended that no samurai be given more than a single rank of Glory for any individual battle; some tremendous, world-affecting battles may allow for advancement in as much as two full ranks. After all, a samurai who does not also learn humility and patience is not worth commending.

Example: O-okami the ronin is fighting under Lord Togashi against an army of Crab. In the first Turn of battle, the young bushi declares that he will be heavily engaged, in the thickest part of the fighting. The GM announces that Yokuni's superior tactics are giving his army the advantage in this Battle Turn, so the result will be found in the fourth column (Winning, Heavy Engagement). The sum of O-okami's Water + Battle + die roll is a 9, so he looks up on the table to see how things went for him. O-okami discovers that he takes 3 dice of Wounds, but gains 3 Glory points.

Wounds Taken and Glory Gained During Current Battle Round

Your army is:

You are in this part of the fighting:

	Reserves		Engaged		Heavily Engaged	
	Winning Even	Losing	Disengaged Reserves	Disengaged Reserves	Engaged	Engaged
1-3	2 dice of Wounds 0 Glory Points	5 dice of Wounds 0 Glory Points	4 dice of Wounds 1 Glory Point	4 dice of Wounds 2 Glory Points	5 dice of Wounds 3 Glory Points	6 dice of Wounds 4 Glory Points Duel
4-6	2 dice of Wounds 0 Glory Points	2 dice of Wounds 1 Glory Point	3 dice of Wounds 1 Glory Point	4 dice of Wounds 2 Glory Points	4 dice of Wounds 4 Glory Points Duel	5 dice of Wounds 5 Glory Points
7-9	1 die of Wounds 1 Glory Point	2 dice of Wounds 1 Glory Point	2 dice of Wounds 2 Glory Points	3 dice of Wounds 3 Glory Points	4 dice of Wounds 4 Glory Points Duel	4 dice of Wound 5 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity
10-11	1 die of Wounds 1 Glory Point	2 dice of Wounds 1 Glory Point Duel	2 dice of Wounds 2 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity	3 dice of Wounds 3 Glory Points Duel	3 dice of Wounds 5 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity	4 dice of Wounds 6 Glory Points Duel
12-14	0 dice of Wounds 1 Glory Point Duel	1 die of Wounds 1 Glory Point Duel	2 dice of Wounds 2 Glory Points	2 dice of Wounds 4 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity	3 dice of Wounds 5 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity	3 dice of Wounds 6 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity
15-17	0 dice of Wounds 2 Glory Points	1 die of Wounds 2 Glory Points	1 die of Wounds 3 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity	2 dice of Wounds 4 Glory Points	2 dice of Wounds 6 Glory Points Duel	3 dice of Wounds 8 Glory Points Duel
18+	0 dice of Wounds 2 Glory Points Duel	0 dice of Wounds 3 Glory Points	1 die of Wounds 4 Glory Points Duel	2 dice of Wounds 5 Glory Points	2 dice of Wounds 7 Glory Points Duel	2 dice of Wounds 10 Glory Points Heroic Opportunity

Modifiers:

Bushi, not wearing armor: +1 die of Wounds
 Bushi, wearing heavy armor: -1 die of Wounds
 All Shugenja: -1 die of Wounds

Roll one die.
 Add the result to your Water+ Battle, and find that number in this column. Read across.



Duels and Heroic Opportunities

Sometimes, a character will run into another important samurai or a creature of note during the midst of the fighting. Other times, the character will have the opportunity to create a dramatic shift in the course of the battle or storyline. These situations occur when the Battle Table indicates a "Duel" or "Heroic Opportunity." In these situations, the GM and player will probably have to roleplay the scene in more detail (often at the skirmish level), but it may result in great amounts of Glory for the character.

Duels

Characters who roll a "Duel" on the Battle Chart have encountered a hero of the opposing army and must face him in single combat.

Handle the encounter as a Skirmish. Since not all duels in a battle are iaijutsu duels, a test of might or a duel with Naginata could also suffice. Another Battle Turn does not occur until one of these samurai falters (is killed or knocked unconscious).

Refusing the duel is an act of cowardice, and while a battle is a chaotic event, someone may see the refusal, thus setting up the character for all sorts of mischief in the future.

List of Heroic Opportunities

This is a list of some heroic opportunities to use in any Battle. The GM is encouraged to make a specialized list for each battle, thus making each battle unique. The GM can use an opportunity more than once, if he wishes.

Pick Up the Banner

You see the banner carrier fall to arrow shot. You have the opportunity to carry the army's banner during the battle, bringing an additional 1 Glory Point each Battle Turn. All Actions the character takes during the battle are at -1 die.

Protect the General

You suddenly come across the army's general who has lost his personal guard. The general commands you to stand at his side and protect him from attack. You must follow him wherever he goes (some generals are more courageous than others), but you gain an

additional Glory Point every Battle Turn. Direct this PC's level of Engagement for the rest of the battle.

Attack the Archers

Suddenly, your character sees a path that leads directly to the reserves of the opposing army. You have an opportunity to attack the archers, thus making an opportunity for the reinforcements to charge. This can give the PC's army a strong advantage in future Battle Turns if he can fight his way to the opposing archers.

Attack the Shugenja

A break opens in the battle and your character has the opportunity to attack the reserves. The shugenja suddenly stop their battle rituals as you charge into their ranks! A successful attack on the opposing shugenja, while dangerous (they will begin directing their attacks at the character), can be key to victory.

"Hold This Ground!"

Your leader tells you to hold the line! You must remain in your current Engagement, but if you make a successful Water + Battle Roll, your troops hold their position, and you gain additional Glory. Roll on the following table for the PC.

Reserves & Disengaged: N/A

Engaged: TN = 20; +2 Glory

Heavily Engaged: TN = 30; +4 Glory

Break the Line

You get the command to charge the front line! Next Battle Turn, subtract 2 from the PC's roll, but add 2 Glory to the result.

A Clear Shot

The front lines break and you have a clear shot at the commander of the opposing army with a Ranged Attack! The TN of the shot depends on the commander (typically TN 30). A successful hit is worth 3 Glory, but will likely only wound and not kill the commander.

Draw the Line

You've been commanded to try and draw the opposing army's front line further away from their reserves. Next Battle Turn, the PC will be Heavily Engaged, but also gains an additional 2 Glory.

Save a Wounded Comrade

In the midst of battle, you notice a kinsman has fallen! You have the opportunity to save him if you wish, but you will be considered Heavily Engaged for the next 2 Battle Turns if you do. The PC gains an additional 2 Glory for each Battle Turn during which he pulls his



ally to the reserves (and the ally may wish to bestow gifts in return for his life!).

Save a Wounded Opponent

Between breaths you notice a wounded enemy. He calls out to you to help him. If you ignore him, you lose no Honor or Glory (he is acting cowardly, after all), but if you aid him, he is morally obliged to you. What do you do? Use the same rules for Save a Wounded Comrade above.

Take the Enemy Banner

Between the blood and carnage you spot the standard bearer of the opposing army. You have the opportunity to take the enemy's banner! You must kill the bearer in combat to take it. If you take it, you must try to get it back to your reserves. The PC may only move one step closer to Reserves each Battle Turn, and the increased attention means that his roll is reduced by 4. He gains 3 additional Glory each turn, and a bonus of 5 Glory after reaching the reserves.

Take a Unit

In the chaos and alarum that surround you, you suddenly notice that you are the highest ranking samurai in your unit! You have command of a single unit of 3-5 samurai. Add an additional 1 Glory for every Battle Turn this samurai remains in the battle.

The Strength of My Ancestors

The heat of battle has possessed you! You have an additional 3 Void points to spend until the end of this battle.

Shugenja's Gift

One of the shugenja of your army has targeted you with a spell. You, as GM, may decide which spell it is; alternately, just consider one of the PC's Traits or Skills to be 1 Rank higher until the end of this battle.

Avoid Fate

The Fortunes are watching you. Ignore all Wounds this Battle Turn.

Be Prepared to Dig Two Graves

You see a samurai from the enemy's army cut down one of your kinsmen. You may spend the rest of this battle looking for that samurai. At the end of each Turn, you may chose to move horizontally or vertically on the above chart to an entry that has a Duel (to meet that samurai).





Advanced Use of the Battle Table

Rolling on the Battle Table is a good method of determining a character's status in the mist of mass combat, but characters in charge of an army may wish to use slightly more complex rules to determine the tides of battle. When the opposed roll is made at the beginning of the Battle Turn, the following variables can modify the opposed Battle Roll.

Numbers

If one side is larger than the other, that general gains a +5 to his opposed battle roll for every multiple by which he outnumbers the enemy.

Terrain

The GM can rule that any sort of difficult terrain imposes difficulties on an army not prepared to deal with it, giving a bonus to the opposing general on the opposed battle roll. For example, the general of an army on higher ground always gains a +5 bonus. Generally, it is up to the GM whether either side gets a bonus from terrain. In a swamp, for example, it's very likely that neither side gets a bonus, as both sides are at an equal disadvantage. An army of infantry confronting cavalry in a narrow pass, on the other hand, has gained a decided advantage against their opponent. An army fighting on terrain it knows very well may also get this advantage if they exploit that knowledge well. An army defending from a fortified position gains a bonus of at least +5 (for hastily constructed fortifications), and possibly much, much more. At the extreme, troops defending the Carpenter Wall fight with a +80 against troops attacking from the Shadowlands.

Training

An army composed of trained bushi will have an advantage over those less organized. If an army has greater organization, a clear chain of command, or more formal combat training, its general gains a +10 to his battle roll. Generally, in a battle between two Great Clan armies, this variable does not come into question – even armies largely composed of peasant levies usually have enough bushi officers to keep the troops organized.

Equipment

Compare the average equipment of the troops. If one side clearly has better equipment, its general gains a +5 to his battle roll. If one side has a supreme advantage on the other (lots of shugenja, heavy

armor, and katana vs. peasants with sharp sticks) the GM can assign a greater bonus.

Magic

If one army has access to powerful magic that its opponents cannot match (including maho or Shadowlands monsters), that army's general gains a +10 to his roll.

Tactics

At the beginning of each round, each general should decide what tactics they will attempt against their opponents. If one general's tactics are well-suited against the opponent's, the GM can assign an appropriate bonus. This is a vague statement of the bonus situation, but intentionally so, as there is no end to the possible strategies a general may attempt. A few examples: setting pikemen against a cavalry charge, throwing up a shield wall against an arrow storm, and sending saboteurs to destroy enemy siege weapons. The GM should assign a bonus according to creativity and effectiveness.

Morale

If an army wins two consecutive opposed rolls, or wins one roll by more than twice the total of the opposing general's roll, that army begins to gain momentum and the opposing forces begin to become demoralized. On the next battle roll, the winning general gains a bonus equal to the difference of the previous roll's results, divided by five (round down).

Example: Matsu Gohei commands 2000 heavy infantry against Asahina Dorai's army of 1000 Cranes – mostly peasants with shugenja officers. The Cranes have fortified themselves in a forest as they await Gohei's attack. The Asahina provide spells and magical artifacts for their troops while Gohei's scouts probe the outer regions of the forest.

The GM rules that Dorai gains a +5 bonus for magic. Dorai gains an additional +5 for terrain, and +10 for the hasty fortifications his men have constructed. Dorai gains a total bonus of +15. Gohei's army gains +5 due to their numbers, and +5 for equipment. When strategies are announced, the Crane decide to dig in while their shugenja prepare defensive spells. The Lion surround the forest and set it ablaze. The GM gives the ruthless Gohei an additional +10 for tactics. This gives Gohei a total of +20.

An opposed Water + Perception roll is made. Dorai's total result is a mere 32. Gohei spends Void, has a little luck, and ends up with a whopping 65! Not only is Gohei winning, but next round he'll gain an additional morale bonus: 65 minus 32 is 33, one-fifth of which (rounded down) is 6, so his morale bonus is +6.



Character Option Compilation – Skills

<i>Name of Skill</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Acting	PG 89	High	Disguise – Simp/Cont Skill/AWR (TN opponent's PER x 5 or roll)
Advanced Medicine	Phoenix	High	Heal patient (2x normal rate) – Skill/PER (TN 15); ID poisons – Skill/PER (TN 20), Poison or Lore: Poison Skill required; limited use
Animal Husbandry	Unicorn	High	None
Appraisal	PG 96 / Crane	Merchant	None
Armorer	PG 93, 96	Bugei	None
Artisan *	PG 90 / Crane	High	Various applications, by type (Acrobatics, Jester, Origami, Storytelling, Dancing, Music, Painting, Ikebana, Noh/Kabuki, Poetry)
Astrology	PG 90 / Crane	High	Divination – Skill/INT (TN 15), general idea of the future
Astronomy	Naga	High	None
Atemi **	Shinsei	High	(Monks) Stop Bleeding – Skill/INT (TN 20), Self-Defense – TN +20
Athletics	PG 93, 96	Bugei/Merchant	Various physical applications – Skill/Physical Traits
Autopsy	PG 96	Low	Determine Cause of Death – Skill/INT (TN per GM); requires appropriate Lore Skill to be conclusive
Bard	PG 90	High	None
Battle	PG 93	Bugei	Battle Table (GM's Guide, p. 239) – Skill/Water and seek result
Bojutsu (S)	PG 93 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu – bo, jo) Attack – Skill/AGL
Bujutsu *	PG 93 / Lion	Bugei	Choose a Weapon Skill – Bojutsu (Bo Stick), Chisaijutsu (War Fan), Horse Archery, Jujutsu (Hand-to-Hand), Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu (Archery), Nofujutsu (Peasant Weapons), Subojutsu (Tetsubo), Tantojutsu (Knife), Umayarijutsu (Lance), Yarijutsu (Naginata), Yomanri (Unicorn and Naga Archery), or Ninjutsu (Ninja Weapons); see under each Skill for special abilities and weapons that can be used (all at the Weapon Skill Rank)
Calligraphy	PG 90	High	None
Chisaijutsu (S)	PG 93 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu – tessen, tonfa) Attack – Skill/AGL; see also War Fan (for special abilities)
Cipher	Phoenix	High	Encoding – Skill/INT (by GM); Decoding – Skill/INT (vs. GM total)
Climbing	PG 96	Low	None
Commerce	PG 96	Merchant	None
Conceal	Naga	Bugei	Conceal Item – Skill/AWR, which becomes TN to spot it later
Conversation	Minor Clans	High	None
Courtier	PG 90	High	None
Craft *	PG 96	Merchant	See under specializations for special abilities
Craft: Mizugusuri	Dragon	Merchant	Mix Elixir – Skill/INT (see the Appendix of <i>Way of the Dragon</i>)
Craft: Tattooing	PG 96 / Dragon	Merchant	Tattooing – Skill/AGL, raises allow elaborate/complicated tattoos
Dance *	PG 90	High	None
Defense	PG 93	Bugei	Cannot take Full Defense option without this Skill
Diplomacy	WK:KK	High	Resolve Disputes – Skill/WIL (TN target WIL x 5)
Divination	Shinsei	High	Glimpse of Future – Skill/Void (TN per GM)
Engineering	PG 96 / Crab	Merchant	None
Escape	Shinsei	Low	Escape Bonds – Skill/AGL (TN 10–45, per GM)

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<i>Name of Skill</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Etiquette	PG 90	High	None
Evasion	Shinsei	Low	Hide in Plain Sight - Skill/REF (TN hunter's AWR x 5)
Explosives	PG 93 / Scorpion	Bugei	None
Falconry	PG 91 / WC:KS	High	Bird Training - Cont Skill/AWR (TN bird's INT), and two months
Fasting	Shinsei	High	May go w/o food for STA in days; each day thereafter - Skill/WIL (TN 10 x total days fasted) or must eat
Fletchery	Minor Clans	Merchant	None
Forgery	PG 97	Low	Forge Item - Skill/AGL (by GM); Notice Fake - PER (vs. GM total)
Gambling	PG 97	Low	Notice Cheating - Cont Skill/AWR (TN target Skill/PER)
Go	PG 91	High	None
Goblin Culture	Crab	Low	None
Gossip	WK:KK	Low	Hunt Rumors - Skill/AWR (TN 15) and 1 day in court; Spread Rumors - Skill/AWR (TN [target Glory - PC Glory] x 5) or per GM) and 1 day in court
Heraldry	PG 91	High	Know by Mon - Simp Skill/PER (TN 20)
Herbalism	PG 96	Merchant	None
Hisomu	Wolf	Low	Urban Stealth - Cont Skill/AWR (TN hunter's Investigation/AWR)
History	PG 91	High	None
Horse Archery (S)	PG 93 / Unicorn	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - dai-kyu, yumi) Attack - Skill/AGL
Horsemanship	PG 91	High	None
Hunting	PG 91	High	None
Iaijutsu	PG 94	Bugei	Know Opponent's Abilities During Duel - Cont Skill/AWR (TN 10); "Fast Draw" Sword Combat - Skill/AGL (TN per opponent)
Ichi-Miru **	Dragon	High	(Kitsuki) None
Instruction	Wolf	High	Teach Technique - Skill/AWR (TN 40 - [Student's INT x 5], min. 15)
Intimidation	PG 94 / Crab	Bugei	None
Investigation	PG 91	High	None
Jiujutsu (S)	PG 93, 94 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - mizu-do, kaze-do) Attack - Skill/AGL
Kagaku **	Dragon	High	(Agasha/Kitsuki) Forge Kagaku Item - Skill/INT (see the Appendix of <i>Way of the Dragon</i>)
Kemari	WK:KK	Bugei	Play Kemari - Skill/REF or Athletics/REF (1 Raise); TN per GM
Kenjutsu (S)	PG 93, 94	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - katana, no-dachi, wakizashi) Attack - Skill/AGL
Know the School	Shinsei	Bugei	Gain Free Raises equal to Rank in Skill vs. opponents of chosen School; TN to be Hit by opponents of chosen School is +5
Kokyu **	Shinsei	High	(Monks) Reroll for failed poison, fear, or mind-affecting check - may spend Void point to use Skill/Void (TN failed roll + 10) to avoid
Kuenai	Wolf	Low	Lowly etiquette; dishonorable for samurai
Kyujutsu (S)	PG 93, 95 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - dai-kyu, yumi) Attack - Skill/AGL
Law	PG 91	High	None
Locksmith	PG 96	Merchant	Create Lock - Skill/AGL; Pick Lock - Skill/AGL (TN first total)
Lore *	PG 91	High	None; see under specializations for special abilities
Lore: Maho-Tsukai (S)	PG 95 / Crab	Low/Bugei	(Bugei for Witch Hunters/Low for all others)
Manipulation	PG 91 / Crane	High	Conversation with target required
Medicine	PG 91	High	None

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Name of Skill	References	Rank	Special Mechanics
Meditation	PG 92	High	Regain One Spent Void Point - Skill/VOID (TN 20)
Mimic	PG 97 / Scorpion	Low	Avoid Notice - Skill/AWR (TN target PER x 5)
Mining	Minor Clans	Merchant	None
Moksha **	Naga	N/A	(Naga only) Traits may not be increased beyond 5 without this Skill
Mountaineer	PG 92 / Dragon	High/Low	(High for Samurai/Low for heimin/hinin); use STR for short-term climbing and STA for long-term climbing
Music *	PG 92	High	Play Instrument - Skill/AGL or AWR (whichever is lower); can play one instrument per Rank
Naga Language	Naga	High	Naga start with this Skill at Rank 3 (does not add to Discipline); Rokugani must pay twice normal cost to learn this Skill
Nazodo **	Dragon	High	Acts as Investigation for logic, riddles, and puzzles
Ninjutsu (S)	PG 93, 97 / Scorpion		Low (Specialization of Bujutsu - ninja-to, shuriken, blowgun, nage-teppo, tetsubishi, han-kyu) Attack - Skill/AGL; gain one tool/Rank
Nofujutsu (S)	PG 93, 97 / Lion	Low	(Specialization of Bujutsu - jitte, kama, nunchaku, sai) Attack - Skill/AGL
Obeiesaseru ***	WC:KS	Bugei	(Seppun, Otomo, Miya) Cont. Skill/WIL (TN target WIL) or freeze in tracks for one round; requires token of Imperial authority
Omens	WK:KK	High	None
Oratory/Rhetoric	PG 92 / Crane	High	Voice Advantage grants one Free Raise using Oratory
Origami	PG 92 / Crab	High	None
Painting	PG 92	High	None
Pearl Carving	Naga	High	Naga may Regain One Akasha - Skill/VOID (TN per GM); 30 min.
Political Maneuvering	Crane	High	(Crane only) Command Other - Skill/INT (TN target AWR x 5); if successful, target must do as commanded or lose one Honor; cannot be used vs. those of higher Honor Rank
Poetry	PG 92	High	None
Poison	PG 97 / Scorp	Low	None for Scorpion / Others use <i>Honor's Veil</i> , p. 37
Puppeteering	WK:KK	High	Professionals are Rank 3 or higher
Ratling Speech	Crab	Low	Lose one Honor if used outside Nezumi presence
Research	PG 92	High	None; supersedes previous versions of Research
Rokugani Language	Naga	High	Rokugani start with Rank 3 in this Skill (does not add to Insight); Naga must pay twice normal cost to learn this Skill
Sadane	WK:KK	High	Play Sadane - Skill/AWR (TN target AWR x 5 or per GM)
Seduction	PG 97	Low	Seduce Other - Cont Skill/AWR (TN target AWR x5)
Sensei	Shinsei	High	Teach - Skill/INT + Student's INT (TN Rank of Skill or School Technique x 10); may not teach Skills / Techniques above own Rank
Shintao	PG 92	High	No Traits over five without Rank 3 Shintao
Siege	PG 95 / Crab	Bugei	None
Sincerity	PG 92	High	None
Sleight of Hand	PG 97 / Scorpion	Low	None
Specialized Weapon	PG 95	Bugei	Adds Skill to final die roll using one weapon only
Spell Research	PG 92	High	Research Spell - Skill/Ring of Spell (TN Mastery Level x 10); see page 97 and PG page 183 for details about Spell Research

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<i>Name of Skill</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Spellcraft ***	Phoenix	High	(Shugenja only) Sway kami - Skill/INT (TN 20); Know/ID Spells (cast up to one hour/Rank before) - Skill/INT (TN 25)
Stealth	PG 97	Low	Hide/Move Silently - Cont Skill/AGL (TN target PER x 5 or roll)
Subujutsu (S)	PG 93 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - die tsuchi, tetsubo) Attack - Skill/AGL
Tantojutsu (S)	PG 93 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - aiguchi, tanto, kama) Attack - Skill/AGL
Tea Ceremony	PG 92	High	Regain One Void - Skill/Void (TN per GM); requires thirty minutes
Theology	PG 93	High	None
Torture	PG 97	Low	Extract Info - Cont Skill/AWR (TN target [STA - Wounds] x 5)
Traps	PG 97 / Crab	Merchant/Low	(Merchant Skill for Kaiu)
Tropical Fish	WK:KK	High	None
Tsangusari ***	Crane	High	(Asahina shugenja only) Create Fetish - Skill/Fire (TN 15); also requires variable time, proper location, and the Astrology Skill
Umayarijutsu (S)	PG 93 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - lance) Attack - Skill/AGL
Yarijutsu (S)	PG 93 / Lion	Bugei	(Specialization of Bujutsu - mai chong, nagamaki, naginata, yari, nage-yari, sasumata, sodegarami) Attack - Skill/AGL; required to learn Boar Techniques
War Fan (S)	PG 93, 95	Bugei	(Specialization of Bojutsu) Attack - Skill/AGL; Pass Signals - Skill/AGL (TN per GM); Read Signals - Skill/INT (TN per GM)
Weaponsmith	PG 95, 96	B/M	None
Wrestling	PG 95	Bugei	Throw Opponent - Cont Skill/STR (TN target STR); target makes Skill/STA roll (TN thrower's STR x 5) or is stunned for next Turn
Yomanri (S) ***	PG 93, 95 / Unic	Bugei	(Unicorn and Naga only, Specialization of Bujutsu) Attack - Skill/AGL, requires Full Attack; may aim up to Skill Rank (or 1/2 Rank vs. moving targets) in Turns, each granting 1 Free Raise
Zanji ***	Shinsei	High	(Monks only) Area Awareness - Skill/Void (TN 15) and five minutes sense all sentient life within 20 feet per current Void point

Character Option Compilation – Advantages

<i>Name of Advantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Abomination ***	Naga	5	(Naga only) Roll on abomination table for effect and additional cost
Absolute Direction	PG 98	1	None
Acute Smell ***	Naga	3	(Naga) Roll (but don't keep) 2 extra dice for smell-based PER tests
Aligned to the Elements	Phoenix	6	TN to use opposed Elements are +5 and -5, respectively
Allies	PG 98	Variable	2 points per Minor Ally, 4 points per Major Ally
Ambidextrous	PG 98	3 / 2 (Dragon)	Without this Advantage, all TNs are +10 when using off-hand
Amphibious ***	Naga	3 / 2 (Chameleon)	(Naga only) If discovered, reduces Caste Rank by one
Balance ***	PG 98 / Lion	4	(No Matsu) Ignore all modifiers to Honor rolls; during Iaijutsu duels, may Raise up to (Void+2) times
Benten's Blessing	PG 98	3 / 2 (Crane)	Keep one additional die when persuading (two if target is attracted)
Blackmail	PG 98	Variable	Info or evidence about target whose Glory Rank equals the cost (Scorpions pay one less point for this Advantage, minimum one)
Bland	PG 98 / Phoenix	2	TN to recognize the PC is +10
<i>Name of Advantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>

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Blissful Betrothal	WK:KK	3	May purchase one of the following Advantages for 2 less CP: Ear of the Emperor, Gentry, Kharmic Tie (with betrothed only), Social Position, True Friend (with betrothed only), Wealth; benefits gained after wedding
Blood of Osano-Wo	PG 98 / Crab	5	Cannot be harmed by weather; always succeed with related STA checks; TN of weather Spells cast against the PC is +10
Bloodlines ***	Lion	5	(Kitsu) Keep 2 additional dice when dealing with ancestors; ancestors cost only half normal
Brink of Enlightenment **	Shinsei	10	(Monks only) Start with +1 Void; TN to deceive PC is +15
Cadence **	Crane	3	(Crane) None
Chosen by Oracles	PG 99 / Phoenix	5	None
Clan Background **	Shinsei	1	(Non-Clan Characters) Choose Clan - may purchase their options
Clear Thinker	PG 99	2	TN to confuse the PC is +10
Combat Reflexes	PG 99 / Lion	6	PC may "swap places" with next highest Initiative
Correspondence	WK:KK	1	Correspondent is chosen from within PC's clan
Crab Hands **	PG 99 / Crab	4	(Crab) Rank 1 with all weapon Skills (Rank 1 must still be purchased before Rank 2 may be achieved)
Crafty	PG 99 / Scorpion	5	Rank 1 in all Low Skills (Rank 1 must still be purchased before Rank 2 may be achieved)
Dangerous Beauty	Scorpion	2 / 1 (Scorpion)	Roll (but don't keep) 3 additional dice when using Seduction
Daredevil	PG 99 / Phoenix	4	When performing incredible feat, GM rolls die: even number adds +10 to PC's total roll
Darling of the Court	WK:KK	4	For Six Months - Glory is 2 Ranks higher and may gain sycophant as Minor Ally for 2 Experience Points
Death Trance	PG 99	3 / 2 (Lion)	Automatic success with all Fear rolls
Different School	PG 99	3	Learned in different clan's school; may only be taken once
Ear of the Emperor	PG 99 / Scorpion	5	Treated as if Glory is 1 or 2 Ranks higher (GM's call)
Elemental Attunement	Dragon	1	Detect Magic - AWR in dice (TN per GM)
Elemental Convergence	Phoenix	6 **	(Ishiken) May use 1 Void Spell Void/day in excess of available Spells
Elemental Harmony	Shinsei	5	Purchase for each Element; that Ring is +1 for kiho ML only
Favor Tables	Crane	Variable	Roll up to three times on chosen Favor Table (table determines cost)
Fertile **	Naga	4	(Naga only) Starting Caste Rank is one higher; protected by warrior Naga; may not be purchased by Constrictors
Forbidden Knowledge **	Phoenix	1-10	(Phoenix) Modified "Inheritance" of occult nature
Gaijin Gear **	Unicorn	2	(Unicorn) Gain one piece of gaijin gear (limit 1)
Gentry	PG 100 / WC:KS	Variable	Details and operation of estate determine Advantage cost
Great Destiny	PG 101	4	If killed, instead end at 1 Wound (Out), once per story
Great Potential	WK:KK	3 / 8 / 10	Choose one Bugei Skill (3 points), other Skill (8 points), or element for Spellcasting (10 points), which can be Raised any number of times (and in excess of Void); may only be purchased once
Hands of Stone ***	PG 101 / Crab	5	(Large Advantage) Keep (but don't roll) two dice of Hand-to-Hand damage instead of one
Heart of Vengeance	PG 101 / Scorp	3	Keep (but don't roll) one extra die vs. clan of choice; gain 2-point Sworn Enemy from clan of choice (but not the points for it)

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<i>Name of Advantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Heartless	PG 101 / Scorp	2	TN to sway PC is +10; may not also have Insensitive Disadvantage
Higher Purpose	PG 101	2	Gain one extra EP each session the purpose is furthered (GM's call)
Inheritance	PG 101	Variable	Gain ancestral item (GM determines cost)
Immune to Fear **	Naga	3	(Naga only) Ignore Fear Effects
Imperial Spouse	WC:KS	2	None
Innate Ability	RPG	3	One spell can be cast w/o scroll; Free Raise if scroll used in addition
Inner Gift	PG 101 / Crane	6	Animal speech, empathy, precognition, or psychometry
Irreproachable	PG 102 / Unic	Variable	TN to Seduce/Bribe the PC is +5/Advantage Rank (up to Starting WIL); may not also have Greed or Lechery Disadvantages
Ishiken-do **	Phoenix	5	(Isawa) Cannot be Void mage without this Advantage
Kaiu Sword	Crab	5	Gain 3k3 katana of fine quality; if others touch it, lose 1 Honor; if misplaced, permanently lose 2 Ranks of Honor
Kakita Blade	Crane	8/4	Gain Kakita Blade; roll and keep one additional die when attacking and may re-roll a single damage die during any Iaijutsu duel
Kharmic Tie	PG 102	1-5	Roll (but don't keep) Advantage Rank in dice to protect tie
Large	PG 102	3 / 2 (Crab)	TNs are +5 in social situations; TNs are -5 for melee, HTH, and damage; may not also have Small Disadvantage
Leadership	PG 102 / Lion	7 / 4 (Lion)	If Skill is Rank 3 or higher, all followers performing the Skill in unison temporarily gain 1 additional Rank with that Skill
Luck	PG 102	3 / 6 / 9	Reroll a Skill check once per session per Advantage Rank
Magic Resistance	PG 102	2 / 4 / 6	TN of spells used against PC is +5 per Advantage Rank
Meek	WK:KK	5 / 2 (Miya)	Roll (but don't keep) 1 additional die when negotiating
Multiple Schools	PG 102 / Crane	6 Exp. Points	Bushi schools only; old School Rank frozen; PC learns Techniques of new school per usual character development rules
Musha Shugyo	Wolf	4	Warrior pilgrimage; may only be taken by Clan Ronin
Noble Birth **	Dragon	3	(Monks) None
Patron **	Crane	1-5	(Artisans) Patron influence determined by Advantage Rank
Patron	Wolf	Variable	Ronin patron; gain Glory points equal to patron's Glory Rank when duty is completed; patron's Glory Rank determines Advantage cost
Pearl Jiva **	Naga	5 / Rank	(Naga only) Destroy pearl to produce 50-yard ranged attack; resolves as Archery attack using AGL; Pearl Rank determines damage; start with one Rank 1 pearl
Perceived Honor	LoF	2 / 4 / 6	Honor considered by others to be one Rank higher or lower per Advantage Rank; Perceived Honor rises and falls with true Honor; no effect upon mechanics (such as Honor tests); must be maintained in public
Perfect Balance	RPG	2	Add one die to all balancing rolls
Personal Mon	Wolf	1	After 10 missions, gain 1 Free Raise social rolls with employer
Precise Memory	PG 102 / Crane	3	Remember Intricacies - INT roll (TN 20)
Prehensile Tail **	Naga	2	(Naga only) Tail defaults as fifth limb
Provincial Hero	Wolf	4	May always gain employment for room and board
Quick	PG 103	5	Roll (but don't keep) one additional die for initiative
Quick Healer	PG 103	1	Heal as if STA is one Rank higher
Ratling Ally	Crab	4 / 2 (Crab) / 1	GM may enforce bad reputation (and reduce Advantage cost to 1)
Read Lips	PG 103	2	Read Lips - PER roll (TN per GM)

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<i>Name of Advantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Sacrosanct **	WK:KK	10	(Honor Rank 3 or higher) Opponents lose 5 Honor per Wound Level they inflict upon PC, and lose 1 Glory Rank for killing the PC or knocking him out
Sage	Shinsei	2	Roll and keep one additional die with all Lore and History rolls
Sensei	PG 103	1-5	Sensei's School Rank equal to Advantage Rank
Servant	PG 103	Variable	Servant quality determines Advantage cost
Shinsei's Servant	Shinsei	10	(GM Approval Required) Start with 15 additional points for Skills
Silent	Wolf	3	Roll (but don't keep) one additional die when using Stealth
Social Position	PG 104	5 / Rank	Starting Glory increased by Advantage Rank
Standing Invitation	WK:KK	2 / 1 (Imperials)	May bring up to six others to Winter Court each year
Storm Legion	Minor Clans	4	Will never be betrayed by Mantis; Mantis must spent a Void point to lie to PC; treated as if Glory is one Rank higher by Mantis; gain one Rank in Gentry Advantage; may not also have Different Schools, Multiple Schools, Black Sheep, or reduce starting Glory
Strength of the Earth	PG 104	2 / 4 / 8	Wound Level penalty decreased by 5 per Advantage Rank
Student to Water	Shinsei	5	Battle Table rolls may be adjusted by 3 points (up/down); may not be used if in Reserves
Tactician	PG 104 / Lion	5 / 3 (Lion)/Rank	Battle Table rolls may be adjusted by 3 points (up/down) per Advantage Rank (may not be used if in Reserves); starting Glory increased by 1 per Advantage Rank
True Friend	PG 104	Variable	Friend's influence and devotion determine Advantage cost
Tutor	Shinsei	1-5	Gain one student per Advantage Rank
Venom **	Naga	7 / Rank	(Naga only) Choose Type - Acid, Blinding Mist, Blood Thickener, Consuming Flame, Contact Poison, Nerve Toxin; Attack - HTH/AGL (TN target TN to be Hit), requires two Raises unless in close quarters; damage is determined by Disadvantage Rank and associated Ring; special effects
Voice	PG 104	2	Free Raise when speaking
Way of the Land	PG 104	2 / 1 (Unicorn)	Never get lost and know best routes through home (or chosen) area
Wealthy	PG 105 / Crane	1-10	Gain 4 additional starting koku per Advantage Rank (maximum 10)
Xenophobic **	Naga	3	(Naga only) Roll (but don't keep) one additional die when attacking other race (except damage); roll one fewer die during social interactions with other Naga

Character Option Compilation – Disadvantages

<i>Name of Disadvantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Abomination **	Naga	5	(Naga only) Roll on abomination table for effect
Adopted Blood	PG 105 / Unicorn	Variable	Must gain 5 extra Glory to obtain new Glory Rank/Disadvantage Rank; each new Glory Rank reduces Disadvantage Rank by 1
Antisocial	PG 105 / Lion	2 / 4	2 Points - Keep one less die using social Skills; 4 Points - Keep two less dice using social Skills
Ascetic	PG 105 / Dragon	3	Limited starting outfit; Glory of no import

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<i>Name of Disadvantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Bad Fortune	PG 106	1	Roll on table (PG 106) or GMs call for effect
Bad Health	PG 106	3	Wound Ranks figured as if STA is 1 less; STA must be 2 or higher
Bad Reputation	PG 106	2	One die added when others roll to recognize the PC; bad reaction
Bad Sight	Naga		Roll two fewer dice for all sight-based PER tests
Benten's Curse	PG 106	2	TN to be cordial, persuasive, or use Etiquette is +10
Bitter Betrothal	WK:KK	3	Details of hated spouse defined by GM
Black Sheep	PG 106	5	School Rank frozen at 1; may not be taken by Ronin
Bounty	Wolf	Variable	Offense, bounty, and TN to be spotted determine Disadvantage cost
Brash	PG 106	2	Avoid reacting when insulted - Honor roll (TN 20)
Broken Daisho	Wolf	3 / 5 / 8	Wakizashi broken (3 points) or Katana broken (5 points), or both
Can't Lie	PG 106	3	Always fails when attempting to lie
Cast Out	Shinsei	3 / 6 / 9	Size of temple opposed to PC determines Disadvantage cost
Colorblind	Crane	1	None
Compulsion	PG 107	2-4	Avoid Compulsion - Honor roll (TN 15 / 20 / 25)
Contrary	PG 107 / Phoenix	3	Avoid acting under duress - WIL roll (TN 5-20)
Coward	PG 107 / Lion	Varies	All TNs increased when facing Shadowlands or higher Glory
Cruel**	PG 107 / WC:KS	3	(Otomo) May not spend last Void Point; may not raise Void Ring above lowest Ring; AWR is -1 for all social checks; Honor is one full Rank lower during Honor Tests
Curse of Kami	N1KS	10	Spells take twice as long to cast; TN to cast Spells is +10
Dark Fate	Wolf	3	If killed, instead end at 1 Wound (Out), once per story
Dark Secret	PG 107	5	If discovered, this is replaced with a lifelong Obligation
Deathseeker**	Lion	7	(Deathseeker) Must die in combat for the Lion Clan; start with 0 Glory; may not gain Glory; may not also have Black Sheep
Dependent	PG 107	1-3	Age of dependent determines Disadvantage cost
Disbeliever	Shinsei	3	None
Dishonored	PG 107 / Lion	5	Start with 0 Glory; may not spend Experience until Glory Rank 1 gained; then, may only buy 3 Skill Ranks, 1 Ring Rank, or 1 Trait Rank (total) per adventure; ronin may not purchase; may not also have Social Disadvantage
Doubt	WK:KK	4	Choose a Skill - every use requires two Raises, which do not improve its use, but count toward the maximum number of Raises possible; may only be overcome by increasing the Skill to 5 and using it in some spectacular or honorable manner
Driven	PG 107	3	None
Enlightened Madness**	Dragon	2 / 4 / 6	(Ise zumi) When using tattoo - WIL (TN 15 / 20 / 25) or lose control
Enlightened Madness**	Phoenix	1 / 3 / 6	(Phoenix shugenja) When using chosen element - WIL roll (TN 20) or lose control
Epilepsy	PG 108 / Crane	4 / 5 (Crane)	When under stress - WIL roll (TN 15) to resist seizure; thereafter, WIL roll (TN 20) each turn to end seizure
Fascination	PG 108 / Crane	1	None
Forced Retirement	Shinsei	2 / 4	Clan ignores PC politely (2 points) or completely (4 points)
Forgotten	Phoenix	4	Cannot be a shugenja or use magical items
Forgotten Training	Wolf	7	Remember Rank Technique - WIL (TN 10 +5 per Rank above 1)
Forsaken	PG 108 / Lion	2 / 3 (Lion)	May not purchase ancestors; may not also have Haunted

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<i>Name of Disadvantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Frail Mind	PG 108	3	Opponents gain 2 Free Raises when rolling against PC's WIL
Gaijin Name**	Unicorn	1	(Unicorn) Roll 1 less die during all social with non-Unicorn / gaijin
Gossip	Shinsei	5	Avoid revealing secret - WIL (TN 5 x highest Glory in presence)
Greedy	PG 108 / Unicorn	Variable	Opponents gain 1 Free Raise when bribing PC; PC may not make Honor rolls to resist bribery attempts
Gullible	PG 108	3	TN to convince the PC of anything (with a Sincerity/AWR roll) is 5
Haunted	PG 108	1-3	Frequency of Ancestor's appearance determines Disadvantage cost; may not also have Forsaken Disadvantage
Hantei Blood	Otosan Uchi	5 / 10	(Requires GM Approval) Related to Imperial Line; if Rank 2 Advantage is known, the PC is treated as if Glory is 2 Ranks higher
Heimin	Wolf	8	High Skills cost double; TN for social Skills is +5; starting Glory 0; incl. Social Disadvantage: Ronin, may only be bought by True Ronin (Bushu) Rank 0 - No School techniques or Attribute bonus; may only purchase three School Skills; Experience worth twice normal for purchasing School Skills (to Rank 1) and School Attribute bonus; thereafter, gain School technique and 5 Experience Points
Hohei**	WK:KK	6	
Hostage	WK:KK	3	No new School Ranks with clan; Different Schools and Multiple Schools cost two less
Idealistic	PG 108 / Lion	2 / 3 (Lion)	When Honor is lost, one additional Honor point is lost; when five or more Honor is gained at once, one additional Honor point is gained
Insensitive	PG 109	2	Must spend one Void Point to risk oneself for another
Jealousy	PG 109 / Phoe	1 / 2 (Phoenix)	Skill, ability, or person chosen, which PC must always try to beat
Junshin**	Scorpion	3	(Scorpion) School Rank frozen at 1; may not be taken by Ronin
Kitsune Taboos	Minor Clans	1-3	Effects determined by chosen taboo
Lame	PG 109	3	TN for all AGL rolls (and use of legs) is +10
Lechery	PG 109 / Unic	1-4	Opponents gain 1 Free Raise/Disadvantage Rank when seducing the PC; PC may not make Honor rolls to resist seduction attempts
Lost Love	PG 109	2	TNs are +5 when lost love is mentioned until 1 Void point is spent
Low Pain Threshold	PG 109	5	Wound penalty is +5 at second Wound Level and above
Meddler	PG 109	2	TN for Courtier and Etiquette rolls is +10
Missing Eye	PG 109 / CoB	3	TN for PER rolls and Attacks is +5; TN for archery is +10 up to 50' and +15 beyond 50'
Missing Limb	PG 109	3	TN for physical tests requiring the missing limb is +10
Momoku	PG 109 / Phoe	8	Cannot use Void Points
Moto Curse**	Unicorn	0	(Required for all Moto) None
Nemesis**	PG 109 / Scorp	+2	(Sworn Enemy) Cannot use Void Points vs. Sworn Enemy
Never Sat on a Horse	Unicorn	1	Falls off of horse during combat / chaos
Obligation	PG 109	2 / 4	If refused, lose 2 full Honor Ranks (for Rank 1 Obligation) and gain Black Sheep (for Rank 2 Obligation); all effects are cumulative
Obtuse	WK:KK	1	Must Raise twice for each Raise effect in court; TN to ridicule or manipulate PC is +5; all Skills except Hunting, Investigation, Lore, Medicine, and Mountaineering cost double
Outcast**	Minor Clans	Variable	(Badger or Ronin only) None
Overconfident	PG 110 / Unic	2	To Retreat - Battle/PER (TN 30) may not also have Great Destiny
Permanent Wound	PG 110	5	Start each day at +3 Wound Level, with +0 Wound Level filled

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<i>Name of Disadvantage</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Special Mechanics</i>
Phobia	PG 110	Variable	When fear is faced, all TNs are at +5/Disadvantage Rank
Proud	Lion	1	None
Refused by Clan	Minor Clans	2	Keep one less die with social Skills when dealing with clan
Refused by Family	Minor Clans	1	Keep one less die with social Skills when dealing with family
Shadowlands Taint	Crab	1-5	Gains Taint effects by Disadvantage Rank
Small	PG 110	2	Movement is figured as if Water Ring is one less; roll one fewer damage dice with tetsubo and die tsuchi; may not also have Large
Social Disadvantage	PG 110	3 / Rank	Starting Glory Rank is reduced by 1 per Disadvantage Rank; all Ronin have at least one Social Disadvantage Rank
Soft-Hearted	PG 110	2	To take a human life - WIL roll (TN 20); if PC kills someone, all TNs are +10 for one full day, and expiation is required
Spoiled	PG 110 / WC:KS	3	Resist object of desire - Honor roll (TN 15)
Sworn Enemy	PG 110	2-5	Sworn Enemy's School Rank is 1 + Disadvantage Rank
Touch of the Void	Shinsei	2	One additional Void point each day; when Void spent, all within five feet roll WIL (TN PC's Void x 5) or become disoriented
True Love	PG 110	3	Must spend Void point to choose duty over love; if love's favor is ever lost, then no Void Points can be spent until it is regained
Unhygienic	Wolf	2	No benefit from Free Raises using WIL
Unluck	PG 110	3 / 6/ 9	GM may force one reroll per story per Disadvantage rank
Vanity	PG 110	1	None
Watersnake**	Naga	4	(Naga only) Must return to water every 24 hours or be immersed completely for 1 full hour each day; otherwise - all TNs are +5
Weakness	PG 110	5 / Rank	1 starting Trait lowered to 1 (minimum 1) per Disadvantage Rank
Wrath of the Kami	Shinsei	3 / Element	Spells of the chosen Element cast vs. PC gain one Free Raise
Yogo Curse***	Phoenix	3	(All Asako roll); 15 or higher - PC will betray his most loved
Yogo Curse***	Scorpion	0	(All Scorpion roll); 15 or higher - PC will betray his most loved

Notes for Character Option Compilation

Skill: In all cases, the term "Skill" refers to the subject of the entry it is found in.

Ranks: In all cases, the terms "Skill Rank", "Advantage Rank", and "Disadvantage Rank" refer to subject of the entry they are found in.

Clan Name: When a reference is noted as "Unicorn" or "Naga", the actual book referenced is its "The Way of..." sourcebook.

Abbreviations: The following abbreviations are used throughout this compilation:

* This Skill, Advantage, or Disadvantage must be further defined by choosing a specialization.

AGL	Agility (Trait)	ID	short for "identity"	REF	Reflexes (Trait)
AWR	Awareness (Trait)	INT	Intelligence (Trait)	Simp	Simple (roll)
CoB	<i>Code of Bushido</i>	LoF	<i>Legacy of the Forge</i>	STA	Stamina (Trait)
Cont	Contested (roll)	ML	Mastery Level	WIL	Willpower (Trait)
CP	Character Points	PER	Perception (Trait)	WK:KK	<i>Winter Court: Kyuden Kakita</i>
EP	Experience Points	PG	<i>Player's Guide</i>	WK:KS	<i>Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun</i>

** This Skill, Advantage, or Disadvantage may only be acquired by those of the specified Clan or group (per the Location and Mechanics column).

(S) This Skill is a specialization of another Skill. All special abilities are listed with the specialization rather than the parent Skill.

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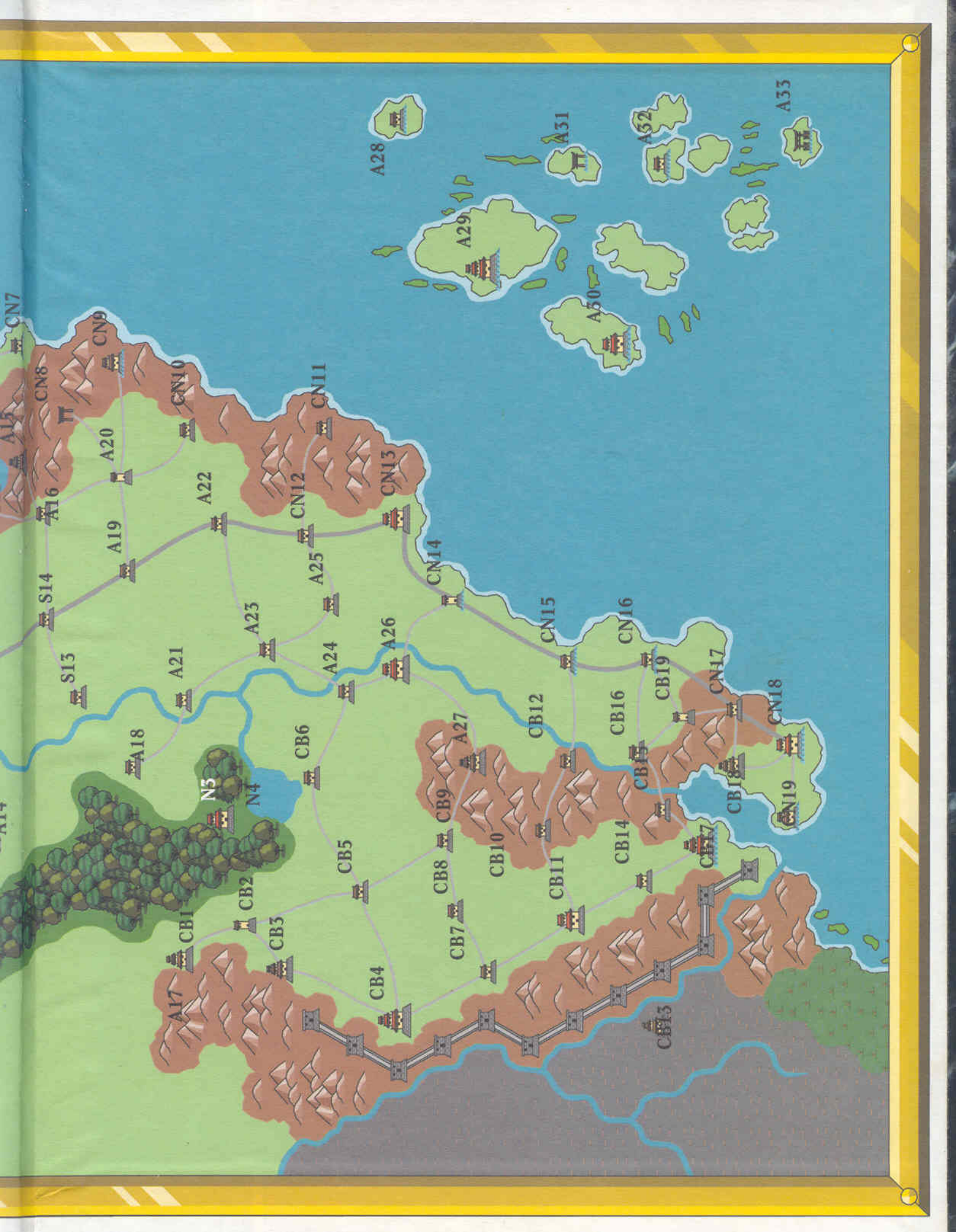
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Legend of the Five Rings

Second Edition

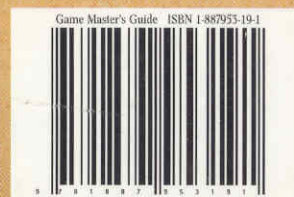
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