



SECOND CITY THE CAMPAIGN

*Legend of the
Five Rings*





THE CAMPAIGN

WRITTEN BY: *Kevin Blake, Daniel Briscoe, Shawn Carman, Robert Denton, Robert Hobart, Dave Laderoute, Yoon Ha Lee, Maxime LeMaire, Seth Mason, Ryan Reese, Nancy Sauer*

EDITED BY: *Robert Hobart*

ART DIRECTOR: *Shawn Carman*

BOX ART: *Alayna Lemmer*

COVER DESIGN: *Robert Denton*

COVER ART: *Llyn Hunter*

LAYOUT: *Robert Denton*

ORIGINAL GRAPHIC DESIGN: *Edge Entertainment*

ARTISTS: *Steve Argyle, Drew Baker, Stefano Baldo, Stu Barnes, Noah Bradley, Sergio Camarena, Mike Capprotti, Carlos Cardenas, Anna Christenson, Brent Chumley, Conceptopolis, Ed Cox, Edwin David, Alex Drummond, Jason Engle, Edward Fetterman, Tony Foti, Richard Garcia, Gong Studios, Anthony Grabski, Raymond Guastadnes, Hector Herrera, Imaginary Friend Studios, Jeff Himmelman, Jon Hodgson, David Horne, Aurelien Hubert, Llyn Hunter, Lake Hurwitz, Hugh James, Veronica V. Jones, Wen Juinn, Jason Juta, Michael Kaluta, MuYoung Kim, Heather V. Kreiter, April Lee, Alayna Lemmer, Isaak Lien, Diego Gisbert Llorens, Asier Martinez Lopez, Patrick McEvoy, Aaron Miller, Daniel Moenster, Carlos NTC, Glen Osterberger, Ben Peck, Ramon Perez, Chris Pritchard, Marc Scheff, Erich Schreiner, Dan Scott, Steve Snyder, Oliver Specht, J. Edwin Stephens, Miss Tak, Albert Tavira, Isuardi Therianto, Luis Nunez de Castro Torres, Charles Urbach, Luis Vazquez, Franz Vohwinkel, Mario Wibisono, Matt Zeilinger*

TECHNIQUE CARD ARTISTS: *Michael Phillippi, Hector Herrera, Oliver Specht, Fares Maese, Conceptopolis, Jorge Matar, Edwin David, Thomas Denmark, April Lee, Britt Martin, Drew Baker, Matt Zeilinger, Carlos NCT, Anthony Grabski, Florian Stitz, Carlos Cardenas, Mario Wibisono, Glen Osterberger, Richard Garcia, Stu Barnes, Gemma Tegelaers, Wen Juinn, Jason Engle, Manuel Calderon, Jeff Hill, William O'Conner, Jonathan Hunt, Diego Gisbert Llorens*

STANCE CARD ARTIST: *Steve Argyle*

PRODUCTION MANAGER: *David Lepore*

SENIOR BRAND MANAGER: *Todd Rowland*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: *John Zinser*

HEAD PLAYTESTER: *Brian Bates*

PLAYTESTERS: *Team 1 (Dave Smith, Patrick Chen, Aien Elmi, Jason Kang, Ki Chang Kim, Roger Liang, Arthur Nguyen); Team 4 (Becca Hobart, Kevin Blake, Todd Stites, Daniel Briscoe); Team 6 (Timar Long, Erykah Fasset, Chad Kirby, Mike Brodu, Maxime Lemaire, Ray Rupp); Team 7 (Jason Shafer, Nathan Shafer, Matt Strout, Liza Strout, Joe White, Terry Moore, Eric Newlin); Team 8 (Edward Reynolds, Brebouillet Mathieu, David Whitney, Richard Whitney, Stuart Biggs, Robert Knight); Team 8b (Michael Hill, Shane Pheeny, Chaedy Ritherdon, Tarl Cowly); Team 8c (Thomas Atwood, Ryan Castilla, Henry Joiner, Brandon Woodmen); Team 17 (Tom Lewis, Jamie Kipp, Gavin O'Hearn, Shawn MacLean, John Taylor); Team 18 (Dave Laderoute, Mike Clark, Chris Talarico, Chris Masdea, Lee Vollum, Richard Hewitt, Bill Hrenchuck); Team 19 (Charles Caswell, Vincent Stantion, Eddie Sweeden, Chuck Sweeden, Justin Cross, Fox Whitworth); Team 20 (Matt Tyler, Timothy Hill, Stephen Mumford, Matthew Linksviler, Paul Casagrande, Robert Zapf); Team 21 (James Freeman-Harris, Sarah Koz, David Wright, James Mosingo); Team 22 (Scott Shepard, Dawn Dalton, Andrew Doud, Justin Davidson, Jon Huskey, Trista Lillis); Team 23 (James Wagner, Kevin Pason, Ryan Bataglia, Chris Foster, Jim Friedman, Jason Whiston, Phil Jenicek, Dan Sulin, Izzy Lombardi-Friedman); Team 24 (Tony Love, Cassandra Mullin, Brian Tieken, Kimberly Wajer-Scott, Phillip Scott, Nicholas Love, Jerry Fleenor, Patrick Williams)*

DEDICATIONS:

Rob would like to thank:

Our freelancers, for working hard under the deadline to make this project succeed. Special thanks to Maxime "Daigotsu Max" LeMaire, who stepped in to fill a hole and wrote three chapters in barely two weeks!

The playtesters, for their continued efforts to make L5R's mechanics the best!

My wife Rebecca, who finished the maps for this project despite the ultra-distracting presence of our newborn baby!

Shawn would like to thank:

Z, for putting it on the line and approving such an ambitious project. You're the best, boss!

Rob "Spooky" Denton, for stepping up and making the graphic design even better.

Max, for being a champ.

John Wick, Greg Stolze, Pat Kapera, and Rob Vaux, for giving us such a high standard of L5R boxed sets to compare ourselves against. We stand on the shoulders of giants.



WWW.L5R.COM

Table of Contents

Introduction5
Starting the Adventure7



Chapter One:
Trouble in Kosaten Province .9
Kosaten Shiro and Environs 9
Preventing the Revolt 15
The Lion Attack! 16
The Trail of Clues 17



Chapter Two:
Travel to the Colonies21
The Overland Route 21
The Sea Route 25



Chapter Three:
Kalani's Landing.....29
The Setting 30
General Investigations of
the Three Merchants..... 33
Solving Kappako's Problem 35
The Mine 37
The Smugglers 38
Exposing the Truth? 39



Chapter Four:
Journey's End Keep41
Journey's End Keep.....41
Investigating Ide Uchi44
The Gaijin Incidents 45



Chapter Five:
The Second City.....49
The Setting..... 50
Otomo Akio, Karo and Art Collector. 50
Rumors in Court 52
Otomo Akio Responds..... 68
Next Steps 70



Chapter Six:
A Murder at Shiro Hebi...73
The Setting:
Mirumoto Kokure's Province..... 73
Investigating the Murder 76
The Outcome:
Execution or Salvation? 78



Chapter Seven:
The Temple of Vishnu 81
Meeting With the Spider 81
Searching the Jungles 84



Chapter Eight:
Locating the Rakshasa....91
To the Vindhya94
Climax: The Great Ritual..... 95



**Appendix: An Ivory Kingdoms
Bestiary**.....98





Second Annual Campaign



TABLE OF CONTENTS



The Campaign



4

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

This book presents a full-length campaign for the Legend of the Five Rings RPG 4th Edition, using the setting and materials presented in the Second City box set. Through a chance encounter with an aged Scorpion magistrate, the player characters stumble onto the trail of a mysterious figure who seems to be hatching a subtle and elaborate plot. The trail will take the PCs to the Colonies in the former Ivory Kingdoms, where they must investigate their foe's schemes while dealing with the complex politics of the Second City and the physical and cultural challenges of a foreign land.

The villain of this story is Raniyah the Sly, a rakshasa from the Ivory Kingdoms who has been living within Rokugan for generations. At the beginning of the twelfth century she lived in Otosan Uchi itself, taking the guise of a tattooed man called Togashi Kenjin. When Otosan Uchi was destroyed by Daigotsu's assault a few decades later, Raniyah relocated elsewhere in the Empire, slipping between a dozen different human identities. During the invasion by Kali-Ma's Destroyer army in the late twelfth century, Raniyah chose to stay out of sight, preferring to keep her freedom of action rather than serve Kali-Ma as one of her brethren did. If the dark goddess had actually won and conquered Rokugan, there would be more than enough time to emerge from hiding and pledge

allegiance – until then she preferred to bide her time. Once Kali-Ma was defeated and the Rokugani discovered the goddess' Cult of Ruhmal had all but depopulated the Ivory Kingdoms, Raniyah realized she had an unprecedented opportunity... an opportunity related to the ancient history of her demonic race.

Raniyah is one of less than a dozen rakshasa left alive in the mortal world. This is because over a thousand years ago, the Ivory Kingdoms' god Vishnu the Protector, lord of life, imprisoned most of the rakshasa race, locking them away in a spiritual trap beyond the physical world. Only a few of the creatures, such as Raniyah and her cousin Adisbah the Cruel, managed to escape Vishnu's punishment and continue to roam the world. A millennium later, one of these escapees would serve as the commander of Kali-Ma's great Destroyer army for the invasion of Rokugan.

With all of the Ivory Kingdoms' gods dead and the Kingdoms themselves reduced to little more than an empty wilderness, the power of Vishnu's ancient seal is weakening. Raniyah realizes there is the distinct possibility her brethren can be freed. She has spent the last decade masquerading as a Crane samurai called Doji Chonitsu, using a web of alliances among mortals to slowly gather the powerful spiritual artifacts and divine substances she will need to have a chance at shattering Vishnu's ancient



seal. She has also gathered a small group of weak-willed mortal followers who she can use for human sacrifices when the time comes. Her scheme is drawing slowly but steadily closer to fruition, and if she should succeed, the world of mortal men will be afflicted by an unprecedented plague of malignant and nigh-invulnerable demons.

As the campaign begins, the only thing standing between Raniyah and her diabolical scheme is an aged Scorpion magistrate, Yogo Tanaka, a member of the secret kuroiban order. Tanaka has slowly pieced together enough evidence to suspect Raniyah's human guise, Doji Chonitsu, is engaged in some kind of sinister conspiracy. In the opening adventure of the campaign, the PCs will meet Yogo Tanaka and have the chance to learn something about his investigations prior to his untimely death. Once Tanaka is gone from mortal life, it will be up to the PCs to use his accumulated evidence and follow the path of the elusive "Doji Chonitsu" – a path which will lead them to the Colonies and eventually the Second City itself.

Structurally, this book is designed to allow the PCs considerable freedom in how they pursue their investigations once they realize Doji Chonitsu is up to no good. Many role-playing campaigns have a fairly linear structure in which the clues from one adventure lead to the next one in strict succession, but for Second City we've attempted to open things up a bit. For example, there are two different options for reaching the Colonies – by land via the Unicorn Clan's route, or by sea with the help of the Mantis Clan – and once there, the clues to Chonitsu's activities can lead the PCs in several different directions. They may find themselves ensnared in the complex politics of the Second City's court and contending with Chonitsu's chief political ally Otomo Akio, they may get involved in a mercantile clash in the settlement of Kalani's Landing, or they may end up seeking out clues among foreigners at the outer edges of the Colonies. If their actions draw negative political attention, they may wind up exiled to the jungles of the Colonial frontier, helping the Spider to explore the most dangerous corners of the land.

And all the while, Raniyah is advancing her plot, moving relentlessly toward the day when she can free her myriad rakshasa kin.



SKILLS AND DIE ROLLS

Every GM has a different approach to handling Skill Rolls and TNs. Some GMs prefer to call for frequent die rolls and to enforce mechanical requirements such as calling Raises for better results; other GMs prefer a looser, more free-form approach in which Skill Rolls are only occasionally needed. Likewise, some GMs try to be generous on which Skills are applicable to a given situation, while others prefer to be more strict in order to encourage the players to develop a full selection of Skills.

Accordingly, we have not listed specific Skills or TNs in this book. Instead we have offered suggestions of which Skills would be applicable, and modest guidance as to how difficult the TNs should be. This way, each GM can tailor the campaign to his or her specific style.

Starting the Adventure

This campaign begins within Rokugan, as the PCs stumble by chance onto the trail of 'Doji Chonitsu' and his plots. This allows the GM to start the player characters in a more familiar L5R environment before transitioning them to the exotic world of the Colonies and the Second City. However, there is no requirement to follow this structure – if the GM has already launched a game set within the Colonies, the opening adventure can be easily relocated into those lands, skipping the encounters set during the voyage from Rokugan, with the campaign playing out normally from there.

This campaign is designed to begin with player characters who are of low Status and limited experience, but who are not brand-new characters fresh out of the rulebook. As a basic guideline, the characters should have accumulated somewhere between 25 and 45 Experience Points before entering the campaign. It is of course up to the GM whether to accomplish this by running them through some prior adventures or to simply award them additional XP at the start of the campaign. Either approach can work, depending on the needs and preferences of the GM and players. Running a few simple adventures prior to starting the campaign can be a good way to get the characters to “gel” as a party, but it may also lead the players to assume they will be playing in a conventional L5R campaign, creating surprise (and perhaps unhappiness) when the action transitions to the Colonies.

The rest of this book is divided up into chapters so as to organize the campaign for the GM's use. These are arranged as follows:

Chapter One: Trouble in Kosaten Province presents the introductory adventure in which the PCs meet Yogo Tanaka and learn about the sinister activities of 'Doji Chonitsu.' It assumes the PCs already know each other and travel together, and have a motivation for visiting a troubled border province. There are many ways for the GM to arrange this, depending on the composition of the group. If the PCs all belong to one of the clans involved, they could be sent as mediators or investigators by another lord (or even a family daimyo) to look into the border tensions. They might also be Imperial Legionnaires, yoriki to a magistrate, or in any other relatively modest

authority role which would give them motivation and duty to investigate. Alternatively, the GM could have them in the area for a completely different reason, such as an impending festival or a visit to a specific PC's friend or relative. Regardless, once the PCs reach Kosaten Province the GM should be able to easily get them involved in the rising tensions and the investigations of Yogo Tanaka.

Chapter Two: Travel to the Colonies describes the challenges and dangers of a journey to the Colonies, allowing the PCs to take either the overland Ki-Rin's Path from the Unicorn lands or the sea-going path to the port of Kalani's Landing.

Chapter Three: Kalani's Landing takes place in the Colonies' largest port, where the PCs can look into some of Doji Chonitsu's merchant contacts, investigate a mysterious attack on a Crab merchant's jade mine, and perhaps find clues pointing to Chonitsu's larger plots and activities.

Chapter Four: Journey's End Keep is set in the terminus of the overland route from the Empire. Here too the PCs can look into more of Doji Chonitsu's mercantile allies and also gain clues pointing to a group of local natives who may have vital information.

Chapter Five: The Second City takes place in the capital of the Colonies, the Second City itself. This is the largest chapter in the book, plunging the PCs into a world of political intrigue in which their reputations and even their lives may be at risk. Success here can gain the PCs a vast amount of crucial information, but failure will see them exiled to the frontier with the Spider Clan.

Chapter Six: A Murder in Shiro Hebi sends the PCs to a secondary stronghold in the Colonies where they can seek out a group of gaijin who may know something about Doji Chonitsu – and who have been framed for the murder of a samurai.

Chapter Seven: The Temple of Vishnu allows the PCs to explore the frontier jungles of the Colonies – perhaps by their own choice, or perhaps while exiled to live among the Spider – and locate the one remaining temple to Vishnu the Protector, where they can gain the final clues they need to uncover and defeat Raniyah the Sly.

Finally, **Chapter Eight: Locating the Rakshasa** presents the climax of the campaign, as the PCs plunge deep into the unexplored Vindhya Mountains in search of Raniyah's lair.

The **Appendix** to this book presents an array of new creatures, animals and monsters native to the Colonies, for use in the L5R 4th Edition RPG.



TROUBLE IN KOSATEN PROVINCE

Kosaten Province is a Crane province located in their northern lands, next to their main border with the Lion Clan. Like most of the northern Crane provinces, it is a richly productive agricultural territory, with numerous villages surrounded by rice paddies and grain fields. The seat of power in the province is Kosaten Shiro, a major military fortress of the Daidoji family. Like most castles, it has a fairly large village (about 2,000 inhabitants) associated with it, and a well-maintained road leading south toward the coast and the major port towns of Kyuden Doji and Musume Mura.

The current lord of Kosaten Province is Daidoji Sokazaka, a man who eschews the traditional Daidoji militarism in favor of a love for art and beauty. The peace which has prevailed in this part of the Empire in recent years – in particular, the peace between Lion and Crane which has held since the time of the Four Winds – has given Sokazaka the freedom to indulge his artistic taste without worrying too much about his clan's military forces.

However, Sokazaka's indulgent life is about to turn badly against him. Tensions are rising on the border between Kosaten Province and the neighboring Lion province of Kaeru, ruled by a militant Matsu lord. Sokazaka has hurriedly raised taxes in order to prepare his previously neglected military forces, and this sudden imposition has generated outrage and growing resentment in the peasant class, raising the threat of a potential revolt. All this impending violence is in fact engineered by Raniyah the Sly, who intends to use an outbreak of war, peasant rebellion, or both to cover her theft of an ancient Ivory Kingdoms artifact from Sokazaka's court.

Kosaten Shiro and Environs

Kosaten Shiro is a large military castle located on a low hill, giving it an excellent view of the plains leading north to Lion lands. Like all Crane castles it is splendidly arrayed and quite beautiful, but an observant samurai can tell (perhaps assisted by a Battle / Perception roll) that it is also a well-designed military fortress. Below the hill is a large town housing roughly two thousand commoners. It boasts three inns: a large high-quality inn called the Golden Crane and two smaller, cheaper establishments catering to poorer clientele. There is also a geisha house called the Lucky Star, located on the main street facing the castle for maximum convenience of samurai clients. The town boasts a large temple to Bishamon, Fortune of Strength, along with several smaller shrines to other Fortunes. The town is not walled – the immediately adjacent castle is assumed to provide security against banditry – but bushi from the castle patrol the streets twice a day.

The south and east of the town are cultivated lands, covered in rice paddies and grain fields, with several smaller “satellite” villages visible on the horizon. There is also a nearby patch of woods, totaling several acres, which is carefully tended for timber and firewood. To the north and west, toward the Lion lands, the land is uncultivated and relatively open, studded by a few trees and patches of brush, interrupted only by a single road that snakes its way to the horizon.





LOCAL ATMOSPHERE AND TONE

Whenever the PCs arrive, they find the town seems to be outwardly prosperous – the buildings are in good repair, the rice paddies and grain fields are plentiful and healthy, and the shops and other businesses all seem to be doing well. However, the residents are oddly subdued and lacking in energy. The peasants have a sullen, slump-shouldered look to them and there is a distinct undercurrent of tension and nervous fear.

If the GM has arranged for the PCs to be here for a festival, this odd negative tone will be especially striking, and the PCs will notice that the preparations for the festival seem lackluster. Also, regardless of why they are here, if any of the PCs are Lion samurai there will be a notable anxiety expressed toward them by the commoners, while the resident Crane samurai will treat them with cool, distant politeness.

If the PCs seek rumors or otherwise try to find out why everyone is so uneasy and anxious – the GM can simply role-play such inquiries, or could require the PCs to roll Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness at a modest TN – they can learn there are many rumors of border clashes with the Lion troops in the neighboring province of Kaeru. The Daidoji have noticeably stepped up their vigilance; the local lord, Daidoji Sokazaka, has ordered *ashigaru* raised and has sharply increased taxes to fund the sudden defense efforts.

Other things the PCs can notice if they look around the area:

There are groups of peasants working in the open plains to the north, under samurai supervision. Most PCs will not be allowed near this mysterious work, but Crane PCs (and Imperials with Status 3.0 or better) can approach and learn that the peasants are busily repairing an array of traps, pits, and other defenses which have been allowed to lie fallow during the recent era of peace.

ALTERNATE SETTINGS

This adventure is set in Kosaten Shiro, a major Crane settlement located conveniently close to the border with the Lion. However, not all GMs may wish to depict a Crane-Lion conflict in their games. Some campaigns may already be set in another part of the Empire where the GM is more comfortable, or the GM may have established another clan conflict that will better fit the situation depicted here. Accordingly, we have deliberately designed this portion of the campaign to be fairly “generic” in terms of content and overall structure. The action can be relocated to almost any clan border area by changing a few names and descriptions, and the GM should feel free to do so.



Masons and carpenters are hard at work patching cracks and flaws in Kosaten Shiro’s outer defenses. PCs who examine the castle and roll a suitable skill (such as Engineering / Intelligence) can see that the castle’s defenses have been neglected, probably for several years.

Lord Sokazaka has forcibly impressed a significant number of peasants to serve as *ashigaru*. The PCs will be able to see groups of sullen-looking *ashigaru* drilling in the fields, and there is considerable gossip on the topic among the common folk. The combination of sharply increased taxes and the removal of a large number of peasant men from the workforce will make for a very difficult harvest, and everyone is deeply worried about that.

A NIGHT AT THE GOLDEN CRANE

Regardless of whether the PCs are official or unofficial visitors, they will most likely stay in the town’s main inn, the splendid Golden Crane, which caters to visiting samurai and the wealthier breed of commoner. (If all of the PCs are ronin, monks, or similarly penniless types, they obviously won’t stay at the Golden Crane – in this case the GM will need to adjust the structure of the adventure a bit to compensate.)

Due to the booming commerce in this normally-prosperous region, the Golden Crane is a very large two-story building with an attached bath-house, a walled garden, and a generously-sized stable. The common room is large and usually crowded with samurai visitors and traveling merchants. Local commoners are too poor to visit the Golden Crane, but samurai from Kosaten Shiro visit regularly in the evenings for food, drink, and conversation. The innkeeper, a cheerful portly commoner named Gofu, keeps a staff of four serving maids to deal with his abundant customers.





Whenever the PCs visit, the samurai in the common room will include several off-duty Crane samurai, a visiting Crab woman named Kuni Aya, and the key NPC, Scorpion magistrate (and *kuroiban*) Yogo Tanaka.

NPC #1: KUNI AYA

Kuni Aya is a thin, hard-faced young woman who wears her hair tied back in an uncomfortably tight maiden's foxtail. She dresses in a simple, practical kimono and always wears the unsettling kabuki makeup of the Kuni family, as well as a prominent jade pendant marking her as a member of the Witch-Hunter order. Aya is a very intense and somewhat angry young woman and takes her duties extremely seriously – some might say excessively so. She has just arrived in Kosaten Shiro, having heard rumors of peasant unrest. As a Witch-Hunter she is trained to look for sinister explanations behind such surface problems, and she is convinced the unrest in Kosaten Province is due to some sinister force such as a *maho* cult.

In particular, Aya has fixated on a local superstition, a cultural holdover from ancient times in which the villagers offer a small ritual blood sacrifice to appease the kami and ensure a good harvest. Aya is convinced this is a secret *maho* ritual and therefore proves the unhappiness among the peasants is actually a *maho*-fueled rebellion. Thus far the local Crane authorities have shown no interest in her theory (they've known about the ritual all their lives), and she will batten onto the PCs as newcomers who might be willing to support her investigation.

Aya comes across as extremely dedicated – to the point of being obsessive – but somewhat naïve; she believes most samurai don't recognize the “true threat” from *maho* and tends to embrace a paranoid conspiracy-theory view of the world. She is intelligent enough to recognize she can't run around accusing samurai, but still hopes to somehow gather enough evidence to make someone in authority listen to her. She will see the PCs as her chance to do this, telling them at length about the burgeoning *maho* cult in the province, the clear signs of an impending peasant revolt, and the need to persuade Lord Daidoji Sokazaka to take action.

NPC #2: YOGO TANAKA

Yogo Tanaka is an older man, probably at the age of retirement if not beyond, although he is cagey about admitting his actual age. He has a long thin salt-and-pepper goatee beard, which he often absently strokes with his left hand while he is talking or thinking. He is balding and has only enough hair left on his scalp for a very small samurai topknot at the back of his head. Tanaka wears a simple paper mask that covers the upper half of his face; he carries a wooden pipe and smokes thoughtfully in his idle moments, conveying an impression of wisdom.

Tanaka is actually a member of the *kuroiban*, the secretive Scorpion organization dedicated to hunting the forces of *maho*. Publicly, he does not admit to being a *kuroiban* but does wear a badge marking him as a clan magistrate. He has spent the last few years investigating Raniyah the rakshasa (in her primary guise as “Doji Chonitsu”), although he does not truly understand who or what she is, and suspects the creature is a Shadowlands

EXTRA NPCs AT THE INN

The GM may wish to add more NPCs to the Golden Crane's common room, both to liven up the inn and keep the two “plot hook” NPCs – Tanaka and Aya – from being too obvious. Herewith a few ideas for interesting personalities to be staying at the Golden Crane:

Togashi Shuji: An ageless Tattooed Man, smooth of skin but with eyes that have seen many experiences. He enjoys observing the world and the people in it, and watches everything with a delighted wonder undimmed by many years. Shuji speaks seldom, generally only when spoken to, and tends to be brief and cryptic.

Iuchi Kageki: A short, physically unimpressive man with a long goatee and drooping moustache. Kageki is friendly and outgoing, and is traveling the Empire to learn more about the magic of the other clans. He resents the Phoenix somewhat for the hostility they show to his “gaijin-influenced” magic, and is hoping for better results from the Crane.

Bayushi Hiei: Unremarkable of feature and wearing a simple wooden mempo (mask), this personable Scorpion is a good conversationalist and an excellent listener, ready to offer sympathy and advice to any who might want it. He has no ulterior motives here (other than the usual Scorpion habit of information-gathering) and PCs waiting for him to steal something or poison someone will be disappointed.



shapeshifting demon or a similar entity. He does know that “Chonitsu” has a connection to the Colonies (the former Ivory Kingdoms).

Tanaka carries a personal journal – adopted in imitation of the Kitsuki, who are famed for recording all of their investigations in journals – and writes in it whenever he is idle; it is likely the PCs' first sight of him will be of him writing in it.

Yogo Tanaka is looking for allies, but unlike Kuni Aya he is cautious about approaching anyone too readily – his previous experiences with “Doji Chonitsu” have made him wary almost to the point of paranoia. Instead he will initially approach the PCs in the manner of an engaging old gossip, asking them for the latest news from around the Empire and sharing, in return, the rumors loose in Kosaten Province. He claims to have no real business in the province and is simply there to “visit and relax,” although he expresses concern that his pleasant visit could be disrupted by a war. Tanaka is a skilled liar and is also quite good at using half-truths and evasions to lead others into assuming things he has not said, but he will try to avoid deceiving the PCs too blatantly since he is somewhat hopeful they might be potential allies. He will use his first meeting to sound out the PCs, trying to get a read on their personalities and intentions.



If the PCs mention Kuni Aya and her claims of mahocult activity, Tanaka will chuckle. “Well, this old man may not know very much about such things, but it seems to me that sudden high taxes may have more to do with this unrest than any quaint local superstitions.”

VISITING THE COURT

If the PCs are here on official business, they will be granted an audience in the court of Daidoji Sokazaka to conduct their task. If they are here for casual or personal reasons (such as attending a festival), they will still be expected to make a brief visit to the castle to present themselves to the local lord – the GM can have them roll Etiquette / Intelligence at a modest TN to remember this if the players are not aware of the custom.

Either way, they are permitted to visit the court within Kosaten Shiro. As one might expect for a court in a predominantly military castle, it is a relatively small one – the main chamber is about half the size of the court chambers in major political centers like Kyuden Doji. However, the PCs will notice there are a surprising number of courtiers in attendance, and the room displays an astonishing array of artwork – sculptures, paintings, displays of decorative weapons and armor, and so forth. The PCs can specifically notice (perhaps with the help of a Perception roll) that many of these artworks employ unusual or esoteric styles, and there are also several exotic-looking items which can be identified with a suitable Lore Skill as being gaijin curiosities, including a woven rug from Medinaat al-Salaam, a strange suit of armor from some distant land (actually Yodotai), and a fetish-like statue of an eight-armed man from the Ivory

Kingdoms (actually a statue of Vishnu the Protector, although it will require considerable knowledge of Ivory Kingdoms culture to know this).

NPC #3: LORD DAIDOJI SOKAZAKA

The lord of Kosaten Shiro is a slightly portly man in his late thirties with a ready (if somewhat vacuous) smile and a weak chin. He is friendly and outgoing, with a superficial charm that usually wins over his guests, but is often a bit “at sea” when confronting serious issues such as the current border crisis.

PCs who make a suitable Skill roll to learn more about Sokazaka – Courtier (Gossip) is an obvious choice – will discover he is a well-known patron of the arts, especially of adventurous and unconventional artists, as well as a collector of rare and foreign artwork. He tries to cultivate an image as being “daring” in order to draw attention in the larger social/political world of Rokugan. If any of the PCs are themselves artists, Sokazaka will make a point of speaking with them, asking about their work, and perhaps make inquiries about possibly sponsoring them in the future.

Aside from his interest in artists, however, Sokazaka will come across as distracted, anxious, and irritable. He is deeply uneasy about the brewing threat from the Lion and has developed something of a thin skin on the topic. If any of the PCs are Lion samurai, he will be notably cold and hostile toward them. Given the opportunity, he will angrily denounce the “aggression” and “intemperance” of the Lion, prompting a round of agreement and support from the other Crane in the court (including Doji Chonitsu, of course). Although Sokazaka talks boldly about the Lion,

he does not really believe there will be a war (nor does he have the skills to fight one), and sees his military preparations more in the nature of an elaborate effort at maintaining face and upholding appearances.

Sokazaka is vaguely aware there is unrest among the peasants over the high taxes and sudden military mobilization. However, he generally dismisses this as having little importance, and will wave away any suggestion of a potential peasant revolt. If the PCs present and support Kuni Aya’s claims, however, they can attempt to win him over with a suitable Courtier Technique or, lacking that, an appropriate Contested Social Skill Roll. Some of the other courtiers will speak out against Aya’s notions, but Doji Chonitsu will not (if the PCs think to ask). If they are successful, Sokazaka will agree to let Aya conduct a



“brief and limited investigation, so long as all proprieties are maintained.”

PCs who watch Sokazaka or speak with him for a significant amount of time can attempt to get a “read” on his personality. Preferably this should use Courtier Techniques, but if there are no Courtier PCs the GM can allow a Contested Roll of Investigation / Awareness against Sokazaka’s Etiquette / Willpower. Regardless, with a success the PCs realize Sokazaka is a weak-willed man who badly wants to be liked and admired, and consequently allows himself to be easily influenced by the men and women of his court. A very successful PC may be able to identify Doji Chonitsu as having a particularly strong influence, although the GM should be wary of making this overly obvious too quickly.

NPC #4: DOJI CHONITSU

The primary human guise of Raniyah the Sly is a handsome, elegant male Crane with long white hair and a smooth, cultured voice. He is always splendidly and perfectly attired and moves with precision and grace. Chonitsu comes across as charming and talkative to the point of being gossipy, but a PC who rolls Investigation / Awareness at a high TN (at least 25) may realize there is an underlying tone of deep arrogance and cold maliciousness to Chonitsu’s nature.

Chonitsu is friendly toward Crane PCs and PCs from other “civilized” clans like the Phoenix and Scorpion. Conversely, he is coolly hostile toward samurai from the more martial and aggressive clans (especially the Lion, of course – he will make a point of needling any Lion PCs in order to further reinforce the current hostilities). He will also flirt subtly with any attractive female PCs who are not Lion, trying to establish rapport for the future. (As an immortal being, Raniyah is very good at long-term planning, and likes to constantly develop new alliances and supporters.) He openly supports Daidoji Sokazaka’s belligerent stance toward the Lion, blaming the Lion Clan for the current tensions; he also supports Sokazaka’s stern attitude toward the peasant unrest.

The GM should try not to let Chonitsu be too “obvious” to the PCs initially. When they first meet him, he should come across as merely one of several prominent courtiers in Kosaten Shiro, all of whom support Sokazaka’s policies to a greater or lesser degree.

THE MYSTERIOUS SHRINE AND KUNI AYA’S INVESTIGATION

If the PCs arrange for Kuni Aya to get permission for an investigation, she will invite them to accompany her. They may also choose to look into things without permission, on their own or with her. Regardless, Aya will describe the sinister peasant ritual she has learned about: “Once per month, the villagers visit an ancient shrine in the woods and cut the palms of their hands, dropping blood on it. They bow and venerate the shrine as well. What proper religious ritual invokes blood? The next one is due to take place within a day. We cannot allow this travesty to continue!”

MEMBERS OF THE COURT

Aside from Sokazaka and Chonitsu, there are of course several other Crane present in the court and a few guests from other clans. The GM should feel free to round out the selection of NPCs with others of his own creation, but the following can serve as a starting point:

Daidoji Banjin, Clan Magistrate: This man has a stern face and hard, unfriendly eyes. He wears his hair in a strict samurai top-knot and is always perfectly dressed and precisely controlled, even when red with fury. Banjin is the local magistrate and regards the presence of Kuni Aya as an insult to himself and his lord – he will be the primary courtier to speak out against any PC appeal on Aya’s behalf. He supports his lord’s policies toward the Lion and the peasants completely. If the PCs do gain permission for Aya to investigate, Banjin will offer the absolute minimum cooperation which etiquette demands.

Kakita Geinin, Poet: A soft-spoken older man, in his early forties, who never raises his voice or loses face. He always speaks very carefully and precisely, without any interjections or hesitations. His features are undistinguished and he is short of stature. In general, he is an easy man to underestimate. In fact, Geinin is a famed Crane poet and playwright (Glory 5.8), and is here developing material for a play about the Lion Clan’s cruelty and lack of enlightenment. He is constantly accompanied by a quiet servant with a writing table and supplies, in case inspiration strikes. Needless to say, Geinin is very supportive of Sokazaka’s hard-line stance toward the Lion; his sheltered lifestyle makes him oblivious to the suffering of the peasants.

Doji Majime, Ambitious Courtier: This short but superficially handsome young man wears a perpetual smile and is perhaps a little too eager to make friends and curry favor. He is an ambitious courtier “on the make” and sees the ferment in Sokazaka’s court as an opportunity to gain allies and attention. Currently he publicly supports whatever Sokazaka says with regard to the Lion and the peasants, but he is capable of trimming his sails and can adjust his positions quickly if things go wrong. Majime is vaguely aware that Chonitsu is more influential than he should be, but has not drawn any serious inferences from this yet.

Yoritomo Zurui, Mantis Merchant: This deceptively heavy-set man usually wears a pleasant smile, but the perceptive will note the powerful muscles beneath his fat and the calculating glint in his dark, observant eyes. Zurui is here both to pursue commercial alliances with the Crane and to undercut rival merchants within that clan, although he is skilled enough to avoid speaking about trade in open court. He has no particular opinion on the Lion-Crane tensions (other than the general observation that war is bad for business), but he is concerned about the mounting tensions among the peasants, and worries that a revolt could be both a tragedy and a commercial disaster. Zurui has looked into the peasants’ concerns on his own and can be a potential ally (or at least an information source) for PCs trying to avert a revolt. He suspects Chonitsu is promoting the Lion-Crane conflict but has no idea why.





If the PCs ask any villagers about the shrine or the monthly ceremony that is performed there, they will offer the following tale: “Many years ago, when our village was new, we were cutting down many trees for firewood and construction. There were powerful spirits in the forest who grew angry at our use of the trees, and they sent wild animals and violent storms to torment us. Our village was nearly destroyed. But then a holy man came to visit us and spoke with the forest spirit. He did not return from the woods, but when we gathered our courage and sought for him, we found a stone shrine had appeared in front of the oldest tree in the woods. In front of the shrine were kanji scratched into the bare earth. Those of us who could read interpreted them. The holy man told us he had given up his life to placate the angry spirit, and so long as we remembered his sacrifice with small payments of our own blood, the forest spirit would be placated. So we have continued, from that day to this, as he bid.”

Although this ceremony does superficially seem to be *maho*-related (ritual spilling of blood, after all), in fact it is harmless, an ancient survival of the pure blood magic from the pre-Kami days. The story which the villagers tell about its origin is more-or-less true, although the original holy man merely made a sacrifice of blood rather than giving up his life. There are a number of things which point to this truth:

There is no sign of Shadowlands Taint anywhere in the village or the shrine. Kuni Aya is aware of this (she’s been testing with her jade amulet) but dismisses it, since she claims Bloodspeakers are known to have sinister spells which can conceal their Taint.

There is no invocation or chant associated with the sacrifice of blood. PCs who can roll Lore (Shadowlands) or Lore (Maho) at a suitable TN will know that *maho* always involves a chant which invokes the dark *kansen* (evil spirits) who feed on the blood. If the PCs have a *shugenja* among them, they can speak with the spirit in the shrine by casting *Commune* (Earth). Characters with innate abilities to speak with spirits can also use that talent here. The shrine spirit will confirm the benign nature of the ritual and explains it does not feed upon the blood – it merely recognizes it as a sign of “payment” for the villagers’ use of the forest. The spirit will be quite angry if the PCs suggest there is something wrong with the ceremony, perhaps unleashing a storm or a small earthquake. It will also do this if the ceremony itself is disrupted or halted.

Ultimately, Aya’s investigation is a red herring, and pursuing it too aggressively may actually work to discredit the PCs. If the PCs actively disrupt/halt the ceremony, or allow Aya to do so, the subsequent physical manifestations of the spirit’s wrath will further inflame the peasantry, driving them toward revolt.

VISITING THE LION?

One possible distraction/diversion that might take place here would be for the PCs to travel across the border to the Lion lands and try to find out why there is so much border tension, or possibly even to find a way to defuse the crisis.

The Lion province is ruled by Matsu Mugoi, a tall muscular samurai with a square unfriendly face, sporting a nasty scar on the right side of his neck which trails all the way up to the corner of his ear. Mugoi is a harsh man who seems always seething with barely-contained rage. If anyone asks about his scar, he mutters, “A Crane.”

Mugoi has been manipulated by Raniyah, who adopts a Lion guise when visiting his lands. The *rakshasa* has stoked his simmering resentment against the Crane to the boiling point, ensuring he will start a war regardless of the consequences. The PCs can certainly try their best to dissuade Mugoi, but he will likely be deaf to their pleas. The GM should feel free to expand this portion of the adventure, of course, especially if some of the PCs are Lion and want to make a sincere effort to figure out what is going on from their clan’s perspective.

Some of the PCs may think of trying to escalate matters further by going to Mugoi’s superiors – to the Matsu family *daimyo* or even to the Lion Clan Champion. In normal circumstances this should not be a viable strategy, since the campaign assumes the PCs start out as relatively low-Rank characters with limited political influence. However, it is possible the GM’s particular group of characters might have a viable chance at making an appeal to these authorities. In this case, the GM can opt to have the war erupt while the PCs are engaged in their appeal, thereby allowing Raniyah to pursue her plans.

TANAKA RECRUITS THE PCs

At some point, Yogo Tanaka should approach the PCs and try to recruit them as his allies and, if possible, as *yoriki* assisting his investigation into “Doji Chonitsu.” Ideally he will do this after the PCs have visited Daidoji Sokazaka’s court and gotten a chance to pick up on Chonitsu’s subtle but destructive influence. If possible, the GM should also try to establish the growing threat of a peasant uprising in the area.

Tanaka will approach the PCs at the inn – or in some other locale if it seems more appropriate to the GM – and sound them out over their reaction to the situation in Kosaten Province and the circumstances in Daidoji Sokazaka’s court. Hopefully he has already impressed the PCs as an intelligent and appealing man during their first meeting.

The goal of this scene should be for the PCs and Tanaka to agree there is a problem in Kosaten Province, whereupon he will enlist them as allies (and as *yoriki* if it is appropriate).

It should be noted that while Tanaka wants allies, he has become more than a little paranoid from his earlier interactions with Chonitsu. Thus, he will not directly tell

the PCs he suspects Chonitsu to be a Shadowlands creature, nor will he immediately reveal he is a kuroiban. Rather, he will simply try to persuade the PCs there are unwholesome influences pushing Kosaten Province toward violence, war, and revolt. He will be pleased if the PCs suspect Chonitsu; if they don't, however, he is not surprised. Either way, he explains he has conducted an extensive investigation of a "samurai of interest" who he believes is behind the problems in Kosaten Province and many other sinister activities as well. He will specifically mention this person has connections to the Colonies and travels there regularly.



Preventing the Revolt

Realistically, there is no chance the PCs can avert the looming Lion attack – after all, if it doesn't happen, the scenario can't really proceed into the main campaign. However, the PCs are not powerless – they do have the ability to prevent the peasant uprising, an event which otherwise will make things considerably worse for the inhabitants of Kosaten Province.

There are two obvious ways to avert the peasant revolt. The first and most direct is to convince Lord Sokazaka there is a serious threat of a peasant uprising and persuade him to either ease off on the pressures he has placed on the peasants or to re-allocate some of his troops to suppress any possible peasant unrest. The PCs will need to present a compelling case and use Social Skills and/or Courtier Techniques to overcome Sokazaka's resistance. In general, convincing him to increase security will be a lot easier than convincing him to lower taxes. Doji Chonitsu will speak against any PCs who advocate lenient policies (e.g. reducing taxes, releasing some of the ashigaru), but will be less forceful in opposing a re-allocation of forces since this serves his agenda of a Lion attack.

If the PCs do succeed, these measures can avert the revolt. However, some PCs may wish to take a different approach and try to speak with the peasants directly; this may be especially likely if some or all of the PCs are Mantis, Unicorn, Crab, ronin, or monks. Even PCs from traditionalist clans like the Crane or Phoenix may be willing to take this approach if their personalities or back-stories make them highly empathic toward the lower castes.

The headman of the town is Teinei, a tired-looking man in his fifties, although his bald head and sunken face make him look much older. He plays the simperingly-respectful

peasant to the hilt, trying to placate the PCs with deep bows, apologies, and platitudes. He insists there is no possibility of a revolt and sincerely (but falsely) promises to calm any hotheads among the common folk.

Better results can be had by asking around for information on who is most unhappy among the peasants. This sort of investigation can eventually lead the PCs to a man in his early forties named Futeki. Futeki is a carpenter, heavily muscled and tough, with a much more courageous and intense personality than Teinei. He is well-known and respected in the town, and his growing advocacy of action against Lord Sokazaka's unreasonable demands is a major factor in the impending revolt. If the PCs speak with him, he will be properly respectful but does not cower or curry favor. Convincing him to avoid revolt will be difficult (not least because he will never admit to a samurai that a revolt might be brewing) and should require skillful role-play as well as good Social Skill rolls. Futeki is largely immune to threats to himself, but appealing to his concern for his fellow peasants and the suffering they will endure through a revolt can break down his resistance.

Alternatively, ruthless PCs who identify Futeki as the focal point of the unrest can solve the problem by having him arrested or killed.

Finally, another alternative for the PCs to avert a revolt will be to speak with the local monks, who are closer to the common people than samurai. In particular, the large temple to Bishamon boasts a sizable contingent of monks who go out into the town to work alongside the peasants. The abbot, Tokai, is a calm and thoughtful man who speaks in a soft, gentle voice. He is probably in his forties at least, although his shaven head and serene face makes it difficult

The Lion Attack!

At some point, the Lion will indeed storm across the border and attack Kosaten Shiro. Since there is no specific schedule for when this occurs, the GM can trigger it whenever it works best for his particular story.

The first warning will come when a peasant begins beating violently on a small metal bell atop a wooden tower on the northern side of the town. Soon after, the outlying labor forces and Crane patrols will begin hurrying in from the northern fields, racing to join the defenses of the castle itself. The Lion army becomes visible within a quarter-hour after that, marching rapidly toward the castle and spreading out to encircle the town as well.

The Lion will besiege and assault the castle, battering down the poorly-maintained gates with an improvised ram, while also sweeping through the town for any enemy samurai or troops who may not have made it into the castle in time. PCs who flee the town immediately will be able to avoid the battle (and can even stay around to watch it from a distance), but otherwise they will find themselves swept up in the action and forced to participate in order to stay alive. Lion PCs, of course, will have their own moral questions to answer – does clan loyalty compel them to join an attack by a local lord, especially when they themselves are not involved in the quarrel?

The GM has a lot of flexibility in how to approach this sequence. A tough GM, or one running a gritty “anyone can die at any time” type of campaign, may wish to use the Mass Battle rules to resolve the PCs’ survival. However, GMs who are running a more story-oriented style of game, or who want to avoid the risk of character deaths this early, may wish to run the battle as a series of discrete scenes focusing on the PCs trying to avoid Lion attackers, protect local allies or innocent peasants, and simply stay alive.

Two key things need to happen during the Lion attack:

‘Doji Chonitsu’ takes advantage of the chaos of Lion troops storming the castle to enter the now-unguarded court chamber and steal the statue of Vishnu. The PCs should not be able to prevent this (otherwise there is no campaign!) but the GM should arrange opportunities for them to realize what has happened or even to glimpse Chonitsu fleeing the castle with the statue. If the GM feels the need to emphasize Chonitsu’s mystery and menace further, have the PCs catch sight of Chonitsu fleeing through an area with a squad of Lion troops – and when they follow, they find the Lion all dead, torn apart as though by wild animals.

Yogo Tanaka dies, leaving the PCs to carry on in his place. Although it may be tempting to have Tanaka be killed directly by Chonitsu, from a scenario standpoint a better choice will probably be for the PCs to encounter Tanaka while he is following Chonitsu away from the castle. The old Scorpion, clutching his journal to his chest, urges the PCs to join him, perhaps even tells them briefly what is going on (“Chonitsu has it! From the court chamber!”) – and then the group comes under a hail of Lion arrows. Several of the PCs are hit and Tanaka takes multiple hits, dying within a few moments.

to be sure. He is a proudly ascetic Taoist, wearing only a simple robe and going barefoot, and has a somewhat judgmental attitude toward samurai, who he sees as violent creatures ruled by their base passions. On the other hand, he is also an enlightened and peaceful man, and spends many hours of each day teaching the children of the town, working in the fields, and helping his acolytes to clean and maintain the temple.

Tokai always speaks quietly but with great firmness, and will not allow himself to be intimidated. He usually smiles, but gets a fierce expression when condemning a samurai’s cruelty or foolishness. If any PC is angry enough to directly threaten him, the abbot calmly remarks that his superior, the abbot of the Temple to the Kami in Toshi Ranbo (the Imperial capital) would undoubtedly be much troubled by Tokai’s death, and might feel compelled to mention it to his friend the Emperor’s advisor. “But no matter. By all means, samurai, kill me. I am certainly ready for my next life.” It will be the bold samurai indeed who proceeds with any violence against such a man.

Thus an appeal to Tokai based on force, authority, or pride will have little impact, but an appeal based on piety and the love of peace, or on compassion toward the common folk, will impress him greatly. If Tokai is favorable to the PCs, he will quietly lend his influence to persuading the peasants not to resort to violence, thereby averting the revolt.



Regardless of how Tanaka dies, the GM may want to allow a dramatic final moment or two in which he gasps out his true identity as one of the kuroiban, thrusts his journal at the PCs, and urges them to “find it, find it and kill it.” GMs who prefer a less melodramatic approach will have to rely on their players’ curiosity and sense of adventure to motivate them and keep them investigating. Obviously the old Scorpion’s journal is a key ingredient for this, and the physical handout included with this boxed set will allow players to interact with the journal directly as a “prop.”

AFTERMATH OF BATTLE

It is up to the GM whether the Lion ultimately capture Kosaten Shiro or are finally driven back by the desperate Crane defenders. From the standpoint of the rest of the campaign, either result works, so the GM should choose the outcome that best suits his own game. Likewise it is up to the GM whether or not Daidoji Sokazaka survives the battle. Regardless of the Crane lord’s specific fate, the GM should probably allow at least one prominent member of Kosaten Shiro’s court to live so as to spread word afterward that Sokazaka’s prized Ivory Kingdoms statue disappeared during the fighting. (If some of the PCs have contacts among the common folk, this information can instead be conveyed by servant gossip.)

Regardless, once the fighting is over it will become apparent that Doji Chonitsu managed to escape during the battle (several witnesses report seeing him fleeing the castle and the town) and his immediate whereabouts are unknown. If the PCs conduct a more detailed investigation, trying to trace his movements from Kosaten Shiro, they should eventually be able to track him to Kyuden Doji, where he boarded a ship bound for the Colonies.

The Trail of Clues

Hopefully, once the PCs have read Tanaka’s journal and reviewed all the events at Kosaten Shiro, they will feel properly motivated to follow ‘Doji Chonitsu’ to the Colonies and try to figure out what he is scheming. If they aren’t fully committed to this task, they clearly do not have enough adventuresome spirit, and the GM may need to drop a few more clues or request a couple of Lore Skill rolls to get the PCs motivated.

Regardless, once the PCs head for the Colonies, they should start looking into the background and connections of Doji Chonitsu. In fact, this will be vitally important for the further progress of the campaign because they will find it nigh-impossible to actually locate Chonitsu himself physically. Raniyah the Sly spends much of her time traveling around the Colonies in various false visages, emerging as ‘Chonitsu’ only when needed to maintain her web of contacts and allies. Most of her plan is actually being carried out by her various human agents and allies, and the PCs’ best chance of defeating her will be to track down those allies and learn the truth from them.

The main part of this campaign, comprising most of the remaining contents of this book, is based around two interlinked “trails” of clues which will lead the PCs to

PEASANT REVOLT?

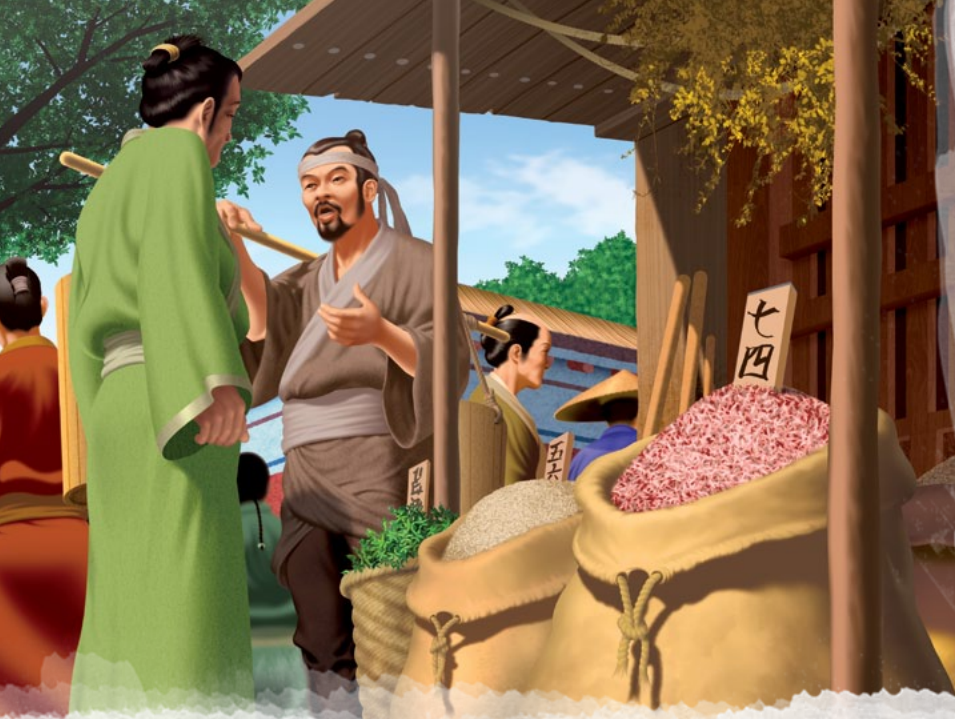
If a peasant revolt does take place, for maximum dramatic effect it should happen immediately before the Lion attack. Thus the Lion army will arrive to find the Crane defenses already severely disrupted by angry peasants rampaging through the town. This will allow plenty of opportunities for the GM to enhance the overall drama of the battle, as well as increasing the general level of chaos and thus making Chonitsu’s later escape easier to pull off.

The final fate of the peasants of Kosaten Province is left in the merciful hands of the GM.

the truth about Doji Chonitsu and his various allies. In order to continue the campaign, the PCs will have to dig up these trails of clues. There are a number of ways this can be done, but the most obvious is for the PCs to begin asking their various social contacts about Chonitsu and his activities. PCs who are magistrates or who have contacts with NPC magistrates may be able to call on the resources of the law to look into Chonitsu’s activities, while PCs who have connections among commoners or the criminal underworld (such as Yasuki, Scorpion, or Yoritomo characters) can likewise make inquiries among them – this route may be especially fruitful, in fact, since these groups will have a better awareness of the extent of Chonitsu’s contacts and activities. Likewise, PCs with mercantile associations (Yasuki, Daidoji Trading Council, etc) will be able to call on those contacts for more information about Chonitsu, who has many mercantile contacts of his own.

Depending on the players’ approach, the GM may wish to create role-playing scenes in which they can make their inquiries. However, if this is not overly interesting to the players, a more efficiency-minded GM can simply have the players roll appropriate Skills such as Investigation, Commerce (Merchant), Courtier (Gossip), or Intimidation to root out their clues. The PCs will need to find enough clues to carry them forward into the rest of the campaign, so the GM should not make it impossibly hard to find them. However, realism demands some player effort should still be required, since Yogo Tanaka, an old and experienced investigator, had great difficulty learning about Chonitsu. Of course, the rakhsasa’s plans are coming closer to fruition, so her activities are becoming more overt and easier to detect.





CLUE PATH #1: POLITICS

Chonitsu is known to have an influential friend among the high-ranking Imperial samurai in the Second City. The man is a collector of Ivory Kingdoms artwork, and Chonitsu has assisted him several times in acquiring rare and highly sought-after items.

The influential Imperial is named Otomo Akio. He is a mid-level figure in the court of the Second City, and while his focus on art limits his political power somewhat, he is nonetheless considered a rising star in the Ivory Court.

Although Chonitsu is known to have supplied Akio with several notable pieces, there are also some stories claiming that Akio has done the same favor for Chonitsu.

The two men meet regularly in the Second City and it is claimed that Chonitsu is the one who arranged Otomo Akio's invitation to the House of Sparrow's Song, the most elite geisha house in the city.

CLUE PATH #2: MERCHANTS AND GAJJIN

Chonitsu has a number of mercantile operations, and seems to show a particular interest in the collection and trade of rare substances like jade and crystal, as well as the art and relics of the now-defunct Ivory Kingdoms. He is believed to sponsor or support a couple of prominent merchant patrons in the Colonies who specialize in these markets. Although Chonitsu is known to usually travel to the Colonies by sea, he has been seen more than a few times in the settlement of Journey's End Keep on the northern edge of the Colonies, the terminus of the long overland route from the lands of the Unicorn. Supposedly he has shown considerable interest in both the surviving remnants of local gajjin folk in that area and in the more obscure foreigners from the Burning Sands who occasionally visit the settlement.

The two merchants are named Daidoji Iyashi and Ide Uchi. Iyashi is based out of the port town called Kalani's Landing on the southern coast of the Colonies, while Ide Uchi owns a caravan which is based out of Journey's End Keep.

Chonitsu's interests in jade and crystal have sometimes drawn enmity from Crab merchants who are eager to acquire jade for their clan's never-ending war with the Shadowlands. One particular merchant, Yasuki Kappako, is especially noted for his clashes with Daidoji Iyashi. Kappako is also based in Kalani's landing.

The PCs can also potentially learn that a Mantis merchant named Yoritomo Hokare has also sometimes gotten into mercantile tussles with both Daidoji Iyashi and Yasuki Kappako. (This would be an especially appropriate clue if the PCs are specifically looking into rivals/enemies of Chonitsu's interests.)



Listed below are the two main sets of leads the PCs can pick up about Chonitsu's allies and activities. Each of these incorporates a number of additional clues and details which the PCs can acquire if they investigate in more detail. The GM should make the secondary clues harder to find, requiring higher Skill rolls and/or better role-play to unearth, rewarding the PCs for greater effort. Some clues may only be available through certain routes of investigation, while others may be more "general" – the GM should use his judgment and try to reward PCs who take a more creative approach to their investigation.

TRAVEL PAPERS

The rest of this adventure assumes the PCs are functioning as Yogo Tanaka's yoriki and thus have the ability to write travel papers for themselves. This is important since the rest of the campaign involves extensive travel, first to the Colonies and then to many different locations within them. If the PCs do not have travel papers, it will be impossible for them to undertake most of the investigations and adventures which comprise the remainder of the campaign.

If the PCs did not sign on as Tanaka's yoriki, or if the GM does not like that gambit as a way of getting the adventure moving along, other plans may be needed. One option is for one of the PCs to already be a magistrate, or receive an appointment as one early in the campaign. Another choice is for an influential Ally of one (or more) of the PCs to arrange travel papers and other problem-smoothing assistance for them. This latter option can be especially useful if one or more of the PCs are Courtiers who have accumulated Allies, Blackmail, or similar resources. Allowing the PCs to be more pro-active in arranging their own travel can often be the better choice in any RPG campaign.



Some stories claim that Chonitsu has a particular interest in purchasing the semi-legendary Ashalan Crysteel, which can only be found in the Burning Sands, and that this is the reason for his association with Ide Uchi.

A Unicorn traveler claims to have seen Chonitsu get into a shouting match with a handful of local gaijin at Journey's End Keep. As a result, the Unicorn magistrates beat the gaijin and drove them out of the settlement. Chonitsu was disappointed – he wanted the gaijin killed for their insolence.

DAIDOJI SOKAZAKA, LORD OF KOSATEN SHIRO

| | | | | |
|------------|----------|-----------------|----------|------------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 2 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 3 |
| STAMINA: 3 | | INTELLIGENCE: 3 | | |
| Honor: 4.9 | | Status: 5.0 | | Glory: 3.7 |

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 2

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Commerce 2, Courtier 3, Defense 1, Etiquette 3, Investigation 2, Lore: Art 4, Lore: Theology 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 3

Advantages: Allies (several), Social Position (lord of Kosaten Shiro)

Disadvantages: Gullible

YOGO TANAKA, MAGISTRATE AND KUROIBAN

| | | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------|----------|-----------------|
| AIR: 2 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 4 |
| AWARENESS: 4 | | WILLPOWER: 4 | | INTELLIGENCE: 4 |
| PERCEPTION: 4 | | Honor: 4.1 | | Status: 4.0 |
| | | | | Glory: 2.1 |

School/Rank: Yogo Shugenja 4/Kuroiban Path

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation (Notice) 5, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Law 2, Lore: Maho 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Shugenja 4, Lore: Theology 3, Meditation 4, Sincerity (Lying) 3, Spellcraft 3, Temptation 2

Advantages: Crafty, Social Position (Clan Magistrate)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (elderly), Dark Secret (Kuroiban), Sworn Enemy (Raniyah the Sly)





土氣
炎
空
水



TRAVEL TO THE COLONIES

Since marching through the Shadowlands is not an option for even the most formidable party of PCs, there are two practical choices for traveling to the Colonies: they can travel overland via the Ki-Rin's Path, skirting the Shadowlands to the north and west, or they can travel by sea, sailing around the Sea of Shadows. Depending on the structure of a specific game, the GM may decide to restrict the party to only one of these routes, or allow the PCs to choose which route works for them.

The Overland Route

The Ki-Rin's Path departs Rokugan from Outsider Keep, on the western border of the Unicorn lands and the Empire itself. It traverses a series of passes in the southward extension of the Great Wall of the North Mountains, then descends into the empty and desolate lands known as the Western Wastes. This allows travelers to skirt the northern reaches of both the Shadowlands and the foul jungles that separate that vile land from the former Ivory Kingdoms. Once clear of the jungle, the route turns south and soon reaches Journey's End Keep. The entire trip normally takes 6 to 8 weeks, depending on season, weather, and events along the way.

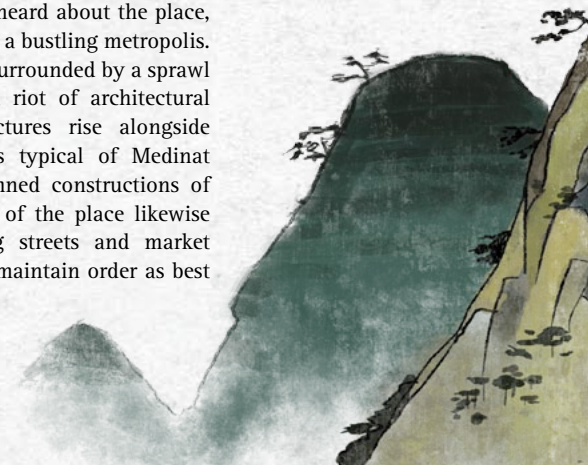
OUTSIDER KEEP

The Ki-Rin's Path begins at Outsider Keep, also known as Bugaisha. For much of its history this was a place of exile. The Unicorn Clan would send its dishonored samurai here to live out their lives in useful but obscure duty, guarding a key western approach to the Empire. The Keep watches

over the pass known as Kanashimi no Komochi, Sorrow's Path, also sometimes called the Exile's Road or the Path of Woe. It was through this pass that Shinjo originally led the Ki-Rin Clan from the Empire on their great journey of discovery.

Even in its days of relative obscurity, Outsider Keep was a haven for ronin and saw a great deal of traffic from the gaijin lands to the west. Merchants and traders from the Caliphate of Medinat al-Salaam in the Burning Sands, from other factions in that exotic city, and from even further places such as the Senpet and Yodotai Empires were frequent visitors to Outsider Keep. At times, a veritable city of tents would rise outside the walls as these foreign traders jostled for business during the daylight hours, which was the only time they were allowed within the Keep's walls.

Since the founding of the Second City and the expanded need for overland trade and communication with the Colonies, Outsider Keep has grown considerably in importance and is now well-known throughout Rokugan. Regardless of what they may have heard about the place, the PCs will find Outsider Keep to be a bustling metropolis. The original walled fortress is now surrounded by a sprawl of permanent buildings built in a riot of architectural styles; traditional Rokugani structures rise alongside flat-roofed, sand-colored buildings typical of Medinat al-Salaam and more ornate, columned constructions of obvious Senpet origin. The people of the place likewise mingle, especially in the twisting streets and market bazaars. Dour Unicorn magistrates maintain order as best





they can on behalf of the current lord of Outsider Keep, Shinjo Sukhbataar. As one can imagine, at such a cultural crossroads misunderstandings can quickly flare into open hostility.

While Outsider Keep itself is essentially just a way-stop on the journey to the Second City, GMs may wish to play up clash of cultures here as a way of making it clear to the PCs that they are leaving the safe and staid confines of the Empire. After all, they will encounter an even more intense mix of gaijin and Rokugani culture at Journey's End Keep on the far end of their trip. PCs who are of an adventurous nature or who are from the more "open-minded" clans such as the Mantis or Unicorn may have little difficulty with this, but more traditional samurai such as those from the Lion or Crane should find the whole thing quite unsettling. The gaijin visiting Outsider Keep have learned to be somewhat tolerant of Rokugani xenophobia, but GMs should still feel free to confront the PCs with clear instances of just how foreign these foreigners can be.

ARRANGING THE JOURNEY

The most important business for the PCs here will be arranging a trip to the Colonies. The Unicorn are likely to insist on guides and possibly military escorts accompanying any party of Rokugani undertaking the journey. Otherwise they might come to harm, which would reflect badly on the Unicorn given their mandate to maintain the overland route to the Colonies.

The easiest, safest and most efficient way to do this for all concerned is for the PCs to join an existing caravan that is making the journey. Unless the PCs can be very convincing (through role-playing, calling in favors or Allies, and/or the use of Skills such as Courtier or Temptation) this is most likely to be the "default" means of traveling overland. Caravans are subject to schedules related to commercial needs and practical realities, so it

may be necessary for the PCs to wait as much as several days or even a couple of weeks for departure. While safe, caravans are generally slow and are not particularly discreet.

A more flexible and discreet means of traveling would be with guides and escorts specially assigned to the PCs for the purpose of making the trip. This is a much less likely option, at least from the point of view of Shinjo Sukhbataar. Given the demands of maintaining security and order at Outsider Keep, operating and protecting caravans, and patrolling the route to the Second City, his resources are already stretched thin. Accordingly, a party of relatively minor PCs asking for precious manpower to be devoted to their own purposes will probably meet with a cool reception. To have any chance of persuading Sukhbataar to accommodate them, the PCs will either have to be well-connected (reflected in relatively high Status and/or Glory, or possessing Advantages such as Social Position or Sacrosanct) or make it worth Sukhbataar's while. He doesn't need money, so any "bribery" would have to take the form of political favors, or involve the use of more nefarious means such as Blackmail.

Alternatively, the PCs may wish to hire their own guides and escorts. There is no shortage of people who have made the trek between Outsider Keep and the Colonies, some of them many times. However, any who are Unicorn Clan will fall under the authority of Shinjo Sukhbataar and will not work for hire. That will most likely leave the PCs to choose between Rokugani heimin or gaijin, all of widely varying quality and reliability. (Some of these may be outright criminals, who will either take what they can from the PCs and then cut and run at the first opportunity, or even lead other criminals to attack the party.) If the PCs are fortunate, they may encounter a non-Unicorn Rokugani samurai or a ronin who has made the trip and is willing to serve as a guide (a clan samurai would most likely be a Dragon).

Finally, the PCs may wish to proceed without guides or escorts. This is the most discreet and flexible way to travel; it is also the most hazardous and is technically illegal. By Imperial decree, the Unicorn are responsible for the overland route and those traveling on it, so any Rokugani who undertakes the journey without the knowledge and consent of the Unicorn is flouting that clan's responsibility. The greater risk, however, is the journey itself. The Ki-Rin's Path is actually a number of possible paths that repeatedly diverge and converge; the specific route to be followed, especially through the Western Wastes, depends on the weather, the time of year, the likelihood of hazards such as floods and rock slides, and so on. Those unfamiliar with the route are likely to run afoul of such hazards or become lost. Some sections of the route are also plagued by bandits and other kinds of predators. If the PCs question travelers or pick up the rumors swirling around Outsider Keep, it should quickly become clear that the Ki-Rin's Path has a reputation for great danger, especially for those who are first-time travelers.

SHINJO SUKHBATAAR

LORD OF OUTSIDER KEEP

At one time, the title “Lord of Outsider Keep” would have been synonymous with social and political oblivion amongst the Unicorn. Now, however, it is a prestigious and influential position within the clan, a fact that the ambitious Shinjo Sukhbataar is happy to exploit – he dreams of one day attaining the position of Shinjo family daimyo. Thus, Sukhbataar will react poorly to anyone or anything that threatens to make him look bad. As noted earlier, he will expect any potential overland travelers to the Colonies to accede to his desire for them to accompany an organized caravan, if only because it is the safest and least disruptive option for him. Any other course chosen by the PCs is going to meet with Sukhbataar’s disapproval unless they take measures to somehow placate him. Note that Sukhbataar has an impressive network of informants among the people in and around Outsider Keep, so unless the PCs are extremely discreet he is likely to find out about any enquiries or plans they make.

SHINJO SUKHBATAAR, LORD OF OUTSIDER KEEP

AIR: 4 EARTH: 3 FIRE: 3 WATER: 3 VOID: 3

Honor: 2.0 Status: 5.0 Glory: 4.0

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 4

Skills: Calligraphy, Commerce 4, Courtier 4, Defense 4, Etiquette (Conversation) 4, Games 3, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 5, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: Law 3, Sincerity (Honesty) 3

Advantages: Allies (Various, spies throughout Outsider Keep area), Crafty, Way of the Land (Sorrow’s Path and Route to Second City)

Disadvantages: Driven (become Shinjo daimyo), Gaijin Name

KI-RIN’S PATH: THE JOURNEY

How the journey to the Colonies progresses is largely dependent on how much time and effort the GM wants to devote to it. If the GM wants the journey to pass quickly so as to move on to the rest of the campaign, it would be best to have the PCs accompany a caravan. Caravans are well-guarded and have several experienced guides, so they are unlikely to get lost or run afoul of hazards on the road. An attack by bandits or other enemies on a large well-escorted caravan is unlikely and will probably be easily repulsed. The journey should therefore be largely uneventful and the action will quickly and smoothly move from Outsider Keep in Rokugan to Journey’s End Keep in the Colonies.

If, on the other hand, the PCs are traveling with their own guides and escorts or completely on their own, trouble on the road is much more likely. The exact nature of that trouble depends on the stage of the journey in question. There are, in broad terms, three such stages:

A POTENTIAL GUIDE: TEMULIN

If the PCs wish to recruit their own guide to the Colonies, the GM may employ this ready-made NPC, Temulin, for that role. Alternatively, if the PCs accompany a caravan, Temulin can be the liaison or “handler” assigned to them.

Temulin is a female ronin and a rather dour young woman – probably of Unicorn ancestry, judging from her name and appearance. She is obviously well-acustomed to long travel under harsh conditions. Beyond that, it is up to the GM to decide if she is all she seems or if she has darker motives for assisting the PCs. For example, she could be in league with bandits in the Western Wastes, attempting to maneuver the party into a position where they are vulnerable to ambush. Alternatively, she could be one of Shinjo Sukhbataar’s agents trying to learn more about the PCs. She could even be an agent of Doji Chonitsu or a cultist follower of Raniyah in her true form. The only limits on her use are those which suit the GM.

TEMULIN

AIR: 4 EARTH: 3 FIRE: 3 WATER: 3 VOID: 3

Honor: 1.0 Status: 0.0 Glory: 1.0

School/Rank: Ronin, Insight Rank 2.

If a Technique is desired, the GM may give Temulin the Forest Killer Ronin path or the Rank 1 Shinjo Bushi technique (reflecting a clan ronin).

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 4, Horsemanship 4, Hunting (Survival, Tracking) 5, Investigation (Notice) 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 3, Stealth (Ambush, Sneaking) 4

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Crafty, Way of the Land (Ki-Rin’s Path)

Disadvantages: Gaijin Name, Social Disadvantage (Ronin)



SORROW’S PATH

The passage through the mountains can be treacherous, particularly in the spring when runoff from melting snow can cause floods and landslides. The high passes are generally impassable in winter. The safest times to travel are summer and early autumn. Hazards here are mostly natural, related to weather and geography. If the PCs have an experienced guide, or the equivalent of such a guide in Skills and Advantages (e.g. Hunting 3 or better, an appropriate Way of the Land, etc), they will be able to avoid the worst of such hazards. Traversing the mountain passes takes one to two weeks (a GM desiring a specific



number can roll 1k1 +10 for the total days), the variance due to minor mishaps, weather delays, detours around rockslides, and so on.

If the party has no guides and no relevant Skills or Advantages, the passage becomes longer (+1k1 days) and each character should make an Agility roll (TNs will be higher in the spring) or suffer serious injury from some incident such as a fall, being struck by falling rock, getting caught in a landslide, or similar misfortune. It is up to the Gm how serious to make this injury; in general, a PC reduced to Hurt will be able to recover on his own with modest medical attention, but a character reduced to Crippled or below will need extensive care and may not be able to move for several days. The PCs may wind up having to return to Outsider Keep for assistance.

THE WESTERN WASTES

Once the PCs emerge from the mountain passes of Sorrow's Path, they enter the Western Wastes. This is a bleak expanse of low barren hills rising from dry and desolate plains. The terrain is devoid of notable features or landmarks and appears drearily the same in all directions. Both plants and animals are scarce; plant life is limited to little more than yellow grass and tough, scrubby bushes,

while animal life consists of small rodents and the lone birds, snakes, and lizards that prey on them.

Natural hazards are rare in the Western Wastes, but the harsh environment itself is a threat. Without an adequate supply of food and fresh water the PCs will need well-honed survival skills (Hunting 4 or better, with the Survival Emphasis) or they will soon suffer ill effects from dehydration, malnutrition, and exposure. As a simple mechanical option, use the effects of "Fasting" on page 89 of the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, but the TN penalties begin to apply after only one day of fasting rather than two.

Because of the unending sameness of the terrain, navigation is difficult. Without an experienced guide or other equivalent means (such as the Absolute Direction Advantage and a reasonably accurate map of caravan routes through the Western Waste) the PCs will quickly become lost. Lost characters could potentially wind up wandering the Wastes indefinitely, with only a small chance (no more than 5%) of blundering into a caravan or other travelers before they die of dehydration or starvation.

Assuming the PCs do not get lost, passage of the Western Wastes will normally take 4 to 6 weeks (2k2 + 30 days if the GM wants to be exact).

PREDATORS AND BANDITS

Not all dangers in the Western Wastes are related to the environment. Foul creatures and vicious bandits stalk the desolate hills and ravines. As noted above, large well-protected caravans generally face little threat of direct attack, but smaller parties or those who stray too far from their caravans represent easier prey. Given the scarcity of animal life, large natural predators are rare in the Western Wastes, but some do exist, including mountain lions and small packs of wolves. Such creatures can be represented by the entries for Lion and Wolf on page 323 of the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook.

Even more rare are unnatural creatures such as ogres, goblins, or oni. It is possible to meet such creatures if they have wandered into the Wastes from the Shadowlands, but it would be quite unusual. Ghosts can be encountered on the Ki-Rin's Path, the result of human souls left here by tragic deaths on long journeys.

Bandits in the Western Wastes deserve special mention. Small, poorly-organized bandit gangs have sprung up in the Western Wastes from time to time, attracted by the lure of the caravans, but they tend to disperse – or die – just as quickly. These sorts of weak bandit groups could be represented by Rank 1 bushi generated from the Tengoku's Justice group on page 235 of the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, or by the "Simple Bandits" from page 206 of the L5R supplement *Enemies of the Empire*, with leaders represented by the "Experienced Bandit" on that same page. Regardless, all such low-level bandits will likely attack recklessly, with little regard for tactics, and flee at the first sign the battle is turning against them.

However, the Wastes have recently gained a reputation for occasional attacks by much larger groups of heavily-armed and well-organized bandits. These groups will attack even large caravans, usually by springing well-planned



ambushes. More striking is the make-up of these bandit gangs; travelers who have encountered them report they include men and women from many different lands, including Senpet, Yodotai, and Ra'Shari from the Burning Sands, Dahabi and other natives of Medinaat al-Salaam, Ivinda from the defunct Ivory Kingdoms, and the occasional Yobanjin from the High Steppes. There appear to be no Rokugani among their numbers, although some are equipped with arms and armor of Rokugani origin. Rumors abound as to the nature of these elusive bandits – some claim they are actually the ghosts or spirits of all who have died in the Western Wastes, while other tales claim they are members of a secretive criminal or religious sect, inhabitants of a fabulous hidden city deep in the Wastes, or scouts for some great gaijin host preparing an invasion of Rokugan. Regardless, they are clearly organized by some manner of powerful and intelligent leader.

If the PCs encounter these more organized bandits, they can be represented by the Forest Killers from page 234 of the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, although their Insight Rank should be higher. Likewise, if using the *Enemies of the Empire* supplement, the majority of these bandits should be “Experienced Bandits” led by one or more “Bandit Lords.” These bandits will fight with sophisticated tactics and great tenacity, retreating only when it seems best.

REACHING THE COLONIES

The Ki-Rin's Path leaves the Western Wastes on the northern edge of what was once the Ivory Kingdoms. The land begins to grow more fertile, with scrub giving way to healthier grasslands as the route progresses south. Hostile encounters on the road become less likely and the PCs may find themselves sharing the route with trade caravans coming to and from the Burning Sands cultures to the northwest. On the other hand, natural animals will become more common and predators correspondingly more frequent as well. The Wildlife Encounter Table on page 282 of the *Enemies of the Empire* supplement may be useful for GMs who wish to spice up this stage of the journey. The final portion of the Ki-Rin's Path normally takes about five days to traverse.

The trip comes to an end with arrival at Journey's End Keep, a location described in Chapter Four of this book.

The Sea Route

Officially, the sea route to the Colonies departs Rokugan from Dragon Guard City, a bustling Mantis holding and port located on the coast between the Phoenix lands to the north and the Crane lands to the south. However, the Mantis ships that undertake the ocean journey from Rokugan to the Colonies typically make landfall at several ports to the south, including the Tortoise holding of Kyuden Kasuga and the cities of Mura Sabishii Toshi in the Crane lands and Sunda Mizu Mura in the Crab lands. Accordingly, passage to the Colonies could be arranged in any of these locations.



Once they leave Rokugani waters, Mantis ships travel south and west, avoiding the Sea of Shadows by daring the open ocean. Once past the Sea of Shadows the route continues westward, passing south of the haunted jungle bordering the Shadowlands and eventually arriving at the Colonies. The journey takes anywhere from 3 to 5 weeks, depending on the weather and the time of year.

PORTS OF ORIGIN

Sea travel to the Colonies is normally conducted on a regular schedule. Convoys of ships routinely depart Dragon's Guard City, following a scheme devised by the Mantis; the Mantis Clan holds an Imperially-mandated responsibility for the sea route, and ships from other clans who wish to sail to the Colonies must do so under Mantis supervision. Convoys typically number about a dozen vessels, accompanied by several Mantis warships as escorts. However, because travel during the winter months is curtailed by the increased frequency of storms, early spring convoys tend to be larger – sometimes up to two dozen vessels. Cargo is carried at rates set by the Mantis, although official cargoes authorized by Imperial edict are of course carried freely as a matter of duty to the Throne. Likewise, passengers normally pay established rates unless they are traveling on official business on behalf of the Empire (although such Imperial travelers may be encouraged to offer an honorarium for passage in order to assist in defraying the material costs that are an unfortunate reality of sea travel).





Dragon's Guard City itself is a large, lively town crowding around a bustling port. As the official point of origin for the sea route to the Colonies, it has only grown in importance in recent years. Likewise, Kyuden Kasuga, Mura Sabishii Toshi, and Sunda Mizu Mura, as established ports-of-call for Colony-bound shipping, have grown considerably in the years since the Colonies were first established. Nonetheless, each port retains the character of its respective owning clan – cynical if good-natured manipulation among the Tortoise of Kyuden Kasuga; cultured but somewhat arrogant efficiency in Mura Sabishii Toshi, and dour practicality in Sunda Mizu Mura. However, regardless of their point of origin, the PCs will face similar choices: either go on a scheduled convoy, or hire or sail a ship of their own. Note that unlike the Unicorn with respect to the Ki-Rin's Path, the Mantis are much less concerned about minor samurai (like the PCs) choosing to dare the sea route by their own means. As far as the Mantis Clan is concerned, such fools do so solely at their own risk.

OPTIONS FOR TRAVEL

The most obvious choice for the PCs is to book passage on board a scheduled convoy. Much like the caravans of the Ki-Rin's Path, this is the easiest and safest option. Convoy navigation is in the capable hands of skilled Mantis mariners, many of whom have made the trip numerous times. Protection comes from both the sheer number of vessels, which provides mutual defense against seaborne threats, and from the military escorts provided by the Mantis. However, much as with the land caravans, the downside of convoy travel is inflexibility in scheduling. A convoy departing Dragon's Guard City is likely to put into at least one and perhaps all three of the southern ports listed above. It is also likely to initially journey eastward, making port in the Mantis Islands at Kyuden Gotei before turning west toward the Colonies. This means the first week or two of travel will occur in Rokugani's coastal waters. Furthermore, during the winter months when the sea route is subject to severe storms convoys are much less frequent; indeed, in some years there are no convoys at all between late autumn and late spring. Travel by convoy is also far from covert unless extraordinary measures are taken, such as gaining the cooperation of ships' masters and crews in maintaining secrecy.

A more flexible and discreet means of travel would be for the PCs to hire a ship to carry them to the Colonies. This is an easier prospect than hiring personal guides and escorts on the Ki-Rin's Path since there is no single access point to the sea route; any port on the Rokugani coast could potentially host a ship and crew willing to carry a party of samurai to the Colonies without intervening stops. However, such a journey will not be cheap and there is unlikely to be a waiver of costs for "official business." Moreover, a willing crew is not necessarily a capable or even a trustworthy one. The journey is long and fraught with difficulty; a vessel must be in superb condition, with a skilled crew and a competent master and navigator, or it will encounter serious and quite possibly fatal problems

along the way. It is up to the GM to decide if it suits his campaign for the PCs to be shipwrecked or otherwise lost at sea; if not, a ship hired by the PCs should probably be considered at least equal to the demands of the voyage. This does not necessarily mean it will be able to avoid the other hazards of the journey described in following sections.

If the PCs have among them the necessary Skills, it may be possible for them to operate their own vessel. However, a small vessel, suited for a crew of a half-dozen or so, will be at great risk on the journey simply because of the physical challenges of making such a long and arduous trip in such a small craft. Moreover, such a small vessel would be entirely unsuited to skirting the Sea of Shadows via the open ocean and would have no choice but to hug the coast of the Shadowlands; in most respects this is little different from attempting to traverse the Shadowlands proper. Thus, unless the GM wants to introduce a major Shadowlands sub-plot to the campaign, this is probably not a realistic option.

THE JOURNEY

Much as with the overland route, the specifics of a sea journey largely depend on how much time and effort the GM wants to invest in this part of the story. If the PCs book passage on an organized convoy, the voyage can potentially be quick and uneventful. Navigation is not an issue, and a large convoy with escorts is robust enough to ward off the threat of pirates and other seaborne dangers.

If, on the other hand, the PCs have booked their own passage on a single ship, or the GM simply wants the journey to be more eventful, the sea route offers its own share of hazards. There are three, broad stages to the voyage.

ROKUGANI COASTAL WATERS

This portion of the journey is likely to be relatively uneventful and to last roughly two to three weeks (1k1 + 10 days for GMs desiring an exact time). The coastal waters of the Empire and the trade routes to the Islands of Silk and Spice are well-patrolled by both the Mantis fleets and other Rokugani naval forces. Most encounters are likely to be with other Rokugani shipping, including fishing boats of many sizes and larger cargo vessels plying their way between ports. Many of the latter will belong to the Mantis, but the Crane, Crab, and Phoenix have sizeable fleets of their own, and there are also many vessels belonging to the Imperial families and the Minor Clans, to merchant cartels, or even to individual merchants and traders. There is a small chance of encounters with pirates, particularly along otherwise barren sections of coastline; such pirates are unlikely to attack a convoy, but will eagerly attack a single vessel or a convoy ship that has become separated from its fellows by weather or other problems.

A pirate gang will sail a small vessel such as a higaki-kaisen with a crew of half a dozen to a dozen men; they can be represented with Rank 1 Forest Killers from page 234 of the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, with a few Rank 2 individuals to represent their leaders. Alternatively, if

using the supplement *Enemies of the Empire*, a pirate crew of “Desperate Fishermen” led by one or more “Scourge of the Seas” NPCs from page 209 can be used. Rarely, a pirate gang may be large enough to use a kobune with a crew of 20 to 30 individuals. In any case, pirates always attack swiftly – preferably by surprise – and seek a quick easy victory in order to minimize their own losses while maximizing their spoils. In the face of stiff resistance, they will just as quickly retreat.

A greater risk than pirates in the coastal waters of Rokugan is the weather. While the winter months present the greatest threat of severe storms, sudden changes in weather are possible at any time of the year, and storms may last several days. In general, the effect of storms will be to slow the passage of ships – assume each day of stormy weather adds 1-3 days to the journey, depending on the severity. Again, unless a shipwreck fits the GM’s story purposes, it is suggested that no worse effects be incurred from storms.

THE OPEN OCEAN AND THE SEA OF SHADOW

The standard route of ships sailing to the Colonies is to swing far out to sea and skirt the outer edges of the Sea of Shadows. There are excellent reasons for this despite the considerable extra time it imposes. The Sea of Shadows is contaminated by the Taint of Jigoku, and its sea life is twisted into vile monstrosities, some larger than ships. Even the elements are corrupted, such that seawater can suddenly boil or freeze, storms howl with poisonous winds, and pitch-black clouds drop rains of steaming blood or razor-sharp shards of bone. Small wonder the Mantis convoys stay in the open ocean.

A course across the open sea is not without its own dangers, of course. The time to make the journey this way is anywhere from 15 to 25 days, and the vessels must remain on open waters out of sight of land for the entire time – a hazardous choice when sailing in any vessel, but even more so with Rokugani ships that are not well-suited to deep-water sailing. Skilled navigators (at least Sailing 4, with the Navigation Emphasis) are needed to avoid becoming lost on the open waters; a lost ship has little chance of making landfall before running out of water and food or being sunk by a storm. Even with a skilled navigator, mistakes and delays can happen, with each failed Skill Roll adding +1k1 days to the voyage. A severe failure may result in the ship making landfall in the Shadowlands or the haunted jungles beyond it.

The only alternative to skirting the Sea of Shadows is to pass through it. In theory, the Crab maintain a “safe lane” through these haunted waters, running parallel to and just within sight of the coast of the Shadowlands. In practice, this “safe lane” remains extremely dangerous, since even patrols by the iron- and jade-clad koutetsukan cannot guarantee safe passage. Even so, the “safe lane” is safe compared to the Sea of Shadows generally. A ship traversing the “safe lane” faces a roughly 25% chance of an attack by Shadowlands forces during its passage. In the rest of the Sea of Shadows, this increases to a minimum of 50%. With Crab pilots, a ship is essentially guaranteed to remain within the

“safe lane,” but without such pilots a Sailing (Navigation) / Intelligence roll against a tough TN (we suggest at least 25) is required to avoid wandering into the uncharted Sea of Shadows.

The Sea of Shadows is full of dangerous marine creatures, such as sea trolls (umibozu) and the dreaded Skull Tide, both described in *Enemies of the Empire*. PCs may also encounter Tainted ships commanded by Lost or undead crews, as well as random undead swimming through the corrupted waters. Some types of Oni also venture into the water. Ultimately, only the GM’s imagination can limit what sort of horrors may be found in the Sea of Shadows.

The only advantage to passing through the Sea of Shadows rather than avoiding it via the open ocean is the savings of time. The passage can be completed in 6 to 12 days, saving at least 10 days over the seaward route.

COLONIAL COASTAL WATERS

Once the PCs’ ship makes it to Colonial waters the journey will likely become an uneventful one, lasting another week to ten days. The coast of the Colonies will be visible, a tropical environment with lush jungles and white beaches, and Mantis patrols and merchant vessels will pass by regularly. There is, once more, a small chance of encounters with pirates, although they are even rarer here than in Rokugani waters. These pirates are likely to be a mixture of Ivinda (Ivory Kingdoms survivors) and Rokugani criminals, making for a rather odd assortment of foes.

Unless the PCs specifically ask for one of the other ports, their voyage will terminate at Kalani’s Landing, the primary port of the Colonies.





KALANI'S LANDING



28

Chapter Three

土氣炎空水



KALANI'S LANDING



This adventure deals with a clash between several different merchant patrons in the Colonial port of Kalani's Landing. The PCs will most likely be aware of these merchants through their investigations of Doji Chonitsu's activities and contacts in the Colonies; see the section "Connecting the PCs to the Plot" for more details of how to get them involved.

Yasuki Kappako is a ruthless merchant who serves the Crab Clan in Kalani's Landing, gathering wealth for his family and jade for the Crab armies. He has a fierce commercial rival within the city: Daidoji Iyashi, of the Daidoji Trading Council. Iyashi receives support and assistance from Raniyah the Sly, both in her own guise as Doji Chonitsu and through her carefully cultivated Second City ally, Otomo Akio. Raniyah needs large quantities of jade and crystal in order to help carry out her plan to free her fellow rakshasa, and Iyashi is one of her primary sources. However, Iyashi's aggressive acquisitions have led to a growing rivalry with Kappako, who seeks the same substances for his own clan and is increasingly resentful of Crane interference.

Recently, a prospector working for Yasuki Kappako discovered what appeared to be an Ivory Kingdoms jade mine in the jungle-shrouded hills outside the city. Presumably it had been abandoned when the Cult of the Destroyer overran the country. This discovery was a

potential huge source of both profit and strength for the Crab Clan, but unfortunately the news of its discovery leaked, and Daidoji Iyashi set out to sabotage Kappako and claim control of the mine. After several initial attempts to politically or financially maneuver Kappako off the mine failed, Iyashi decided to take a more direct (and dishonorable) route, hiring a group of ronin to pose as bandits and terrorize anyone working at the mine. With Kappako's laborers driven away by fear, it would be a simple matter to retrieve the jade with his own labor force.

Initially Iyashi's plan worked well. The false bandits he created drove away Kappako's laborers, and he began removing the jade from the mine and smuggling it out to Doji Chonitsu's agents. The influence of Chonitsu's ally Otomo Akio ensured the city magistrate would not interfere.

However, a complication lurks in the wings: an ambitious Mantis merchant named Yoritomo Hokare. Hokare knows Yasuki Kappako is in trouble and has offered to help him by arranging assistance from outside the area. In return, of course, Kappako will be indebted to him and will have to share the profits of the jade mine.



The Setting

The main action of this chapter takes place in Kalani's Landing, the principle Rokugani port on the southern coast of the Colonies. The great majority of the oceanic travel between the Empire and the Colonies goes through Kalani's Landing, so if the PCs come to the Colonies by sea they will almost certainly arrive here.

The Landing started as a small village built on a bay in the shadow of abandoned Ivory Kingdoms palaces atop the surrounding hills. The two largest hilltops outside the town still boast the decaying shells of such palaces, once the residences of kshatriya noble families. In the two decades since Rokugani settlement of the Colonies got underway, Kalani's Landing has grown substantially and is now a major town of over 5,000 people. The bulk of the settlement is located on the fertile coastal land that surrounds the bay, lining both banks of the Dai-Shinano river, which allows travel inland toward other settlements and (eventually) the Second City itself. In recent years as the town has continued to grow it has spread into the jungles and up the hills into the surrounding territory. The town was originally walled but has long since sprawled beyond those defenses; this part of the Colonies is peaceful

enough that there has been no pressure to build a new wall farther out (in contrast to the more dangerous regions deeper inland). In current times, the wall serves more as a dividing line between the core of Kalani's Landing – the port district and the major government structures – and the rest of the town.

Kalani's Landing is dominated by the Mantis and one of their samurai holds the office of local governor. The local magistrate is an Imperial, Miya Ichiko, whose career is sponsored by Otomo Akio in the Second City. Thus, in real terms she is controlled by Doji Chonitsu, allowing him to provide protection for his merchant allies.

CONNECTING THE PCs TO THE PLOT

There are several ways to get the PCs involved in this storyline, but the most obvious connections are of course Yoritomo Hokare and Yasuki Kappako, both of whom are potential allies (or at least co-belligerents) for the PCs. The PCs can potentially learn about both Hokare and Kappako on their own once they start investigating Daidoji Iyashi, the Crane merchant patron in this city who is associated with Chonitsu.





Yoritomo Hokare in particular is currently looking for capable samurai who can assist him in resolving Kappako's problems. If the PCs are actively investigating Doji Chonitsu's merchant associations, word of this will quickly get back to Hokare and he will begin considering whether to approach the PCs. If the PCs themselves seek him out, he will be delighted (since this shows them to be pro-active) and will happily meet with them. Otherwise, he will eventually send them a note requesting a meeting. The note mentions "mutual interest in certain individuals of the Crane Clan" and suggests a meeting to discuss "the potential of sharing our efforts." The PCs may be (rightly) suspicious of this approach, but if they investigate Hokare they will quickly learn he is a commercial rival to Doji Uchi.

Yasuki Kappako will not approach the PCs on his own – he is a more cautious man than Hokare – but will meet with them readily enough if they approach him.

MEETING WITH YORITOMO HOKARE

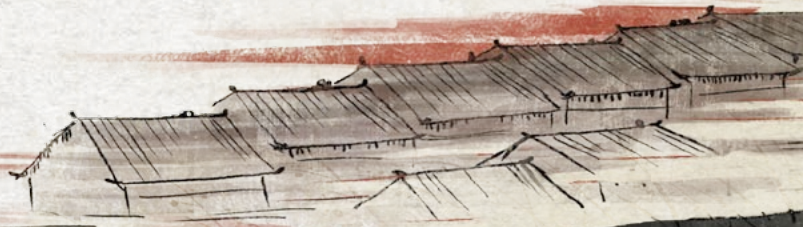
Yoritomo Hokare is a pudgy man in his thirties with thinning hair that barely manages to form a samurai topknot. He smiles a lot, though his eyes have a cool measuring quality that never changes. He is fond of rolling a pair of koku in his hand, creating a constant soft clinking sound.

Hokare will ask why the PCs are looking into Daidoji Iyashi. If they say anything about Doji Chonitsu, he is intrigued – he knows Chonitsu is an associate of Iyashi, but is not aware of how deep the connection goes. However, he does know the local magistrate, Miya Ichiko, seems to be favoring the Crane merchant and has blocked any attempt to investigate Kappako's situation. How much Hokare chooses to share with the PCs will depend on his assessment as to their usefulness, particularly whether they can help him deal with Kappako's problem (thereby both inflicting a defeat on the Crane and indebting Kappako to him). He is more direct and blunt in his manners than many samurai, an aspect of his Mantis nature, but he will still avoid saying anything too blatantly until he is sure he can trust the PCs. (Note, however, that from Hokare's viewpoint "trustworthy" PCs are just as likely to be easily manipulated dupes as they are to be intelligent and reliable.)

Hokare can potentially provide the PCs a considerable amount of information, depending on how much he trusts them and what questions they ask. He will always be cagey and will try to extract pledges of help in return for his knowledge. The following bullet-points summarize what he knows:

- Yasuki Kappako recently located an abandoned Ivory Kingdoms jade mine in the hills to the northwest of the town. He brought in workers to recover the jade for the Crab Clan, but the site came under attack by bandits. Several workers were killed and the rest fled, unwilling to work no matter how much they were paid. Kappako has no authority to forcibly impress workers, so his hands are tied.

- The mine came under attack a month ago. "My poor Yasuki friend is at his wits' end, I can tell you." Hokare does not know anything about the bandits himself, aside from their supposed ruthlessness and cruelty, but if the PCs express interest he can arrange for them to question some of the peasant laborers who fled the mine.
- Hokare can provide the PCs with a guide to the mine within a day if they wish to go there. He will not go himself – "I am no bushi to do battle with bandits" – and if the PCs seem to be a non-combative group he will do his best to warn them off of the danger.
- Hokare knows Daidoji Iyashi made several attempts to buy the mine from Kappako and even petitioned the governor of Kalani's Landing to have the land officially switched to his control.
- If the PCs ask for more information on Daidoji Iyashi, Hokare describes him as a "skilled patron of merchants" with significant wealth and, apparently, political influence. "I've heard he has friends in the Second City itself! Someone in the Imperial families, supposedly. Also some influential courtier named Doji Chonitsu, and a Unicorn called Ide Uchi, I believe. Of course, I have my own networks of friends – a man who specializes in a topic as distasteful as trade has no choice but to cultivate as many allies as possible."
- If the PCs ask Hokare for more information about Doji Chonitsu, he reports the Doji is "a rather influential merchant patron, from what I can tell, although no one really seems to know quite why he has so many allies." He affirms Chonitsu and Iyashi seem to share an interest in rare substances like jade and crystal. "Something to do with commercial rivalries with the Yasuki, I suppose."
- Some PCs may think to ask whether Iyashi is currently exporting any jade (e.g. jade that he might have gotten from Kappako's mine). Hokare raises his eyebrows. "An interesting question. Perhaps I should look into that." The answer, ultimately, is no.
- If the PCs ask why Hokare is trying to help Kappako (who after all is a rival merchant), he explains with a wry smile that such an exchange of favors would be greatly favorable to him and, through him, to the Mantis Clan. If some of the non-Mantis PCs seem troubled by this, his smile turns into a smirk: "I am sure most samurai prefer to operate in the more refined world of the courts, where exchanges of favors are always dealt with in the most pleasant and restrained manner, but in the world of trade such arrangements are necessary as well."





MEETING WITH YASUKI KAPPAKO

If the PCs decide at any time to visit Yasuki Kappako in person, they can locate his house in the town's dock district. From the outside it is a small and rather unimpressive structure, indeed little more than an oversized peasant dwelling, modified for the hot climate of the Colonies. A single servant waits outside, squatting under the eaves to avoid the hot sunlight, then jumps to his feet and ushers the PCs inside.

Inside, however, the small home is immaculate and pleasantly furnished. Yasuki Kappako greets the PCs personally and leads them back to a small and carefully maintained rock garden, where his single servant offers flavorful tea (it is Colonial tea, noticeably different from that of Rokugan) and rice cakes. Kappako is a skinny, sallow-faced man with narrow, piercing eyes. He is a bit of a chatterbox, using words to shroud and camouflage himself and his intentions, and gives the impression of a nervous, scatterbrained man; however, he is actually quite shrewd. He will sound out the PCs and their attitudes carefully, all the while rattling on about inconsequential matters, asking what they think of the town and of the Colonies, gossiping about current events in the Empire and the Second City, and so forth. "Welcome, welcome. Enjoy my humble hospitality... nothing much compared to a Crane or a Unicorn, and of course we can't match the luxuries of the Empire here in this remote land, but one does what one can."

Kappako is in a difficult position. He committed significant resources to locating and opening the old Ivory Kingdoms jade mine, as well as all of his remaining political strength to fend off Daidoji Iyoshi's attempts to take it from him through the courts. Now the bandits have made the mine untenable and he is in dire financial straits with no remaining favors to call in on his behalf.

If the PCs seem interested in helping, Kappako will be delighted, but also cautious – he wants to know why the PCs are here and what their motives are. Most likely they will be asking about Daidoji Iyashi and his connections to Doji Chonitsu; Kappako is perceptive enough to probably pick up on the fact that Chonitsu is the PCs' real point of interest, and he is perfectly willing to bargain information and connections in exchange for their help with his current problem. If the PCs want to visit the mine, Kappako will provide them with a guide. He may even go himself if the PCs seem sufficiently tough and martial in nature.

Daidoji Iyashi is his principle competitor in the Colonies in the field of locating and selling rare substances, especially jade and crystal. As far as Kappako knows, most of these rare goods are shipped back to the Empire, though he does not know positively that all of them are.

He is fairly sure Iyashi has political support within the Imperial families, since the local magistrate Miya Ichiko has refused to offer him any assistance with the bandit problem. His own political resources are too limited to oppose such power.

Kappako has heard of Doji Chonitsu as a prominent Crane courtier with connections to many merchant patrons in both the Colonies and in the Empire, including Daidoji Iyashi. He knows Chonitsu has a strong interest in Ivory Kingdoms relics and Ashalan crysteel, but does not know whether he has any direct interest in raw jade or crystal.

If the PCs are looking for other merchants, either those who have connections to Chonitsu in particular or those who might also be involved in the trade of rare substances or gaijin items, Kappako can name Ide Uchi, an influential merchant patron based in Journey's End Keep to the north.

The attack on the mine took place a month ago. He has not seen the bandits who raided the mines, but spoke extensively with the surviving peasant laborers. They described the bandits as four men and one woman, all well-equipped and skillful. Kappako does not see any logical reason for the bandits to have taken up residence near his jade mine, and therefore presumes they are acting on Iyashi's behalf.

Kappako knows Iyashi is not currently exporting any jade to the Empire. He believes the Crane is simply waiting until Kappako gives up on the mine before using it himself.

Yoritomo Hokare is a commercial rival but not a direct competitor in the rare substances market. Kappako is aware Hokare is looking for a chance to gain influence with him, and would much prefer to resolve his problems without indebting himself to the Mantis, but he is realistic enough to recognize it might be unavoidable.

If the PCs ask Kappako why he has not sought help from the Crab Clan's representatives in the Colonies, he will point out his clan is not known for having strong political influence. This is only part of the story, however, and if the PCs push him he will eventually admit he has already called in all the influence his family had available in the Colonies to block Iyashi's earlier attempts to take the mine away from him.

MEETING WITH DAIDOJI IYASHI

Some PCs may decide to take the bull by the horns and approach Daidoji Iyashi directly, especially if they haven't thought to look into any local rivals or enemies. They can easily find his residence on the Street of Golden Lanterns, a somewhat upscale neighborhood in the southwestern quarter of the town. The samurai residences here are large and pleasant, with low stone walls protecting the grounds and gardens from passing riff-raff; the inhabitants are drawn from the elite of Kalani's Landing, the wealthiest and most politically influential samurai in the region.

When the PCs arrive, servants will bring tea, sake, and rice cakes. After a significant delay, Iyashi will come in, apologizing smoothly for taking so long. He is a thin and perhaps slightly anxious-looking man, with a balding head and clean-shaven face. He wears a fine kimono of Crane blue in a very light weave designed to lessen the impact of the Colonies' hot climate. Like most successful Crane merchants, Iyashi is both shrewd and smooth-spoken, capable of being quite charming when he puts his mind to it.

It is highly unlikely Iyashi will reveal anything to the PCs voluntarily. He will politely deny any knowledge of Kappako's bandit troubles while freely admitting he went to considerable efforts earlier to try to get control of the mine. "I suppose I can see it as a karmic reward, these bandits plaguing my rival after all my own efforts came to naught."

Likewise Iyashi will not reveal anything about Doji Chonitsu, although he freely admits to being a friend and ally to the other Crane. "Chonitsu-sama is a man of great perspicacity and we have happily aided each other from time to time. Is this so unusual, two Crane assisting each other, that it has drawn your attention?" He claims to know nothing about Chonitsu's other associations and denies selling any jade or other valuables to Chonitsu, though he does mention that Chonitsu collects Ivory Kingdoms relics, "a market of which I myself know little."

Although the PCs may be able to figure out Iyashi is hiding information (especially if they have a Kitsuki in their ranks), they will have no way to prove it merely in conversation. Acquiring hard proof will most likely mean solving Yasuki Kappako's bandit problem.

General Investigations of the Three Merchants

Some PCs may decide to look further into the affairs of the three merchants (Iyashi, Kappako, and Hokare). The PCs can gain more information by asking around the town and especially among the merchant caste. This will likely entail some Skill rolls (Commerce, Investigation, or Intimidation could all apply depending on the approach the PCs take). Given the topic involved, bribery may be useful – the GM can justifiably award bonuses to the Skill rolls if the PCs spend money on bribes.

- It is common knowledge that Daidoji Iyashi and Yasuki Kappako are rivals in the market for rare and exotic substances such as gems, jade, and crystal. They buy and sell many conventional goods as well but this is their specialty. Both of them have sponsored exploratory missions into the less-settled lands of the Colonies to search for these rare substances. Ronin and laborers in their employ have been known to occasionally clash in tavern brawls. Yasuki Kappako is reputed as the more skillful of the two, but Iyashi is by far the richer and is rumored to have sponsors in the Second City.





- ❶ Yoritomo Hokare trades primarily in more conventional goods such as lumber and seafood, avoiding the more volatile rare-goods markets. His specialty is importing Rokugani goods that are not available in the Colonies, such as soy sauce.
- ❷ In recent weeks, many of Kappako's businesses have been under pressure – loans getting called in, deals going sour, and so forth. With so many resources sunk into his (inactive) mine, there is much quiet speculation as to which of his two rivals is responsible for this trouble.
- ❸ Some PCs may seek information on the local magistrate, Miya Ichiko. She is a former Herald who spent several years carrying messages across the Colonies, a dangerous duty and not particularly glorious. However, about two years ago she received an appointment to replace the retiring magistrate of Kalani's Landing. It is believed this was due to political sponsorship in the Second City. PCs who dig into this further can pick up rumors that her political patron is Otomo Akio.
- ❹ Smart PCs may think of asking whether Iyashi has recently begun exporting jade (e.g. wondering whether he is smuggling out the jade from Kappako's mine). Interestingly, the result appears to be negative. Even the local smugglers, if the PCs track them down (Mantis or Tortoise courtiers can probably do so readily enough), have not been making any shipments for Iyashi lately.
- ❺ Exceptionally clever PCs may think to ask whether any of the local smugglers are absent from the town, perhaps out on a mission. This inquiry can ascertain a smuggler named Gozu, a man well-known for the ugly scar that replaces most of his nose, and his team and wagons have been out of town for the last month – a time period corresponding to when the “bandits” chased Kappako's miners away from the mine.

SURVIVING MINE WORKERS

Both Hokare and Kappako can arrange interviews with the surviving mine workers, or the PCs can seek them out themselves with a few Investigation rolls (assuming they're willing to investigate among commoners, something many samurai eschew). The workers all describe a series of attacks by a group of five well-armed ronin – four men and one woman – who came out of the jungle. The bandits attacked, killed several workers, and chased the rest out of the mine. The workers tried to return the next day and were attacked again, so they gave up and fled back to Kalani's Landing.

The workers describe the ronin as carrying good quality weapons, including bows and spears. Their clothes were of reasonably good quality for ronin, and they didn't look desperate or starveling as bandits typically do. They were all Rokugani, not Invinda (Ivory Kingdoms natives).

MEETING WITH THE MAGISTRATE

The PCs may decide to meet with the town magistrate, Miya Ichiko, to try to learn why she refuses to help Yasuki Kappako. The magistrate's residence is a modest private home located near the center of the original town, within a couple of minutes' walk of the docks. A bushi from the local garrison is always on guard outside, and the front rooms of the residence are occupied during the day by her two yoriki – Yoritomo Hogai and a ronin named Choro. The PCs can speak with the yoriki easily enough, but if they want to meet Ichiko herself they will have to cool their heels for at least a day. Eventually, though, she will invite them to share tea with her in her garden.

Ichiko's garden is a small one, barely four paces on a side, located in the back of her residence. She waits for the PCs there, sitting cross-legged, her swords politely laid on the ground to her right. Ichiko is a sturdy muscular woman in her thirties, dressed in a businesslike hakama and gi. Her face is serious and roughened by weather – she served as a Herald in her younger days, carrying messages across the Colonies – and her hair is cropped almost painfully short, an adaptation to the cloying humid heat of the Colonies.

Ichiko is polite but not friendly, and will not admit anything improper to the PCs. If they ask about Kappako's bandit troubles, she blandly points out she has only two yoriki to uphold the law in the entire town, while the garrison is barely adequate to ensure the security of the town itself – she can hardly take a squadron off into the hills to protect the interests of a single merchant. Ichiko is lying, and perceptive PCs may be able to tell, but without evidence the only thing accusing her will accomplish is getting the PCs thrown out – or possible challenged to a duel, if they are high enough Status that she cannot simply shrug off their accusation.

Ichiko generally takes the view that “rivalries of commerce” are beneath her notice so long as no laws are being broken. Thus she claims to take no interest in the various clashes and maneuvers of Iyashi, Kappako, and Hokare. She dismisses the idea that Iyashi could be behind the attacks on Kappako's mine:





"Daidoji Iyashi is a respectable samurai. To suggest that he would engage in such activity is shameful. You should be fortunate I do not take this more seriously, since such a comment could easily be answered by a duel."

If the PCs ask about Doji Chonitsu, Ichiko will be puzzled. She vaguely knows of the man by reputation – "a courtier of some influence, I think" – but has never met him. However, if the PCs ask about Otomo Akio, she will instantly become more cautious in her answers. She will admit Akio is "a good friend" (he is her patron in the Colonies) and the man who got her this appointment as a magistrate, but will not share anything further and will sharply deny Akio has any influence over her policies or decisions.

MIYA ICHIKO, CORRUPT MAGISTRATE

| | | | | |
|--------------|----------|---------------|----------|------------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 3 | VOID: 3 |
| AWARENESS: 4 | | PERCEPTION: 4 | | |
| Honor: 4.2 | | Status: 4.5 | | Glory: 3.2 |

School/Rank: Miya Herald 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 3, Defense 2, Etiquette (Courtesy) 4, Horsemanship 3, Hunting (Survival, Trailblazing) 4, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Law 2, Lore: Heraldry 5, Lore: Theology 2, Sincerity 4

Advantages: Ally (Otomo Akio), Social Position (magistrate), Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Obligation (Otomo Akio)

THE MAGISTRATE'S YORIKI

Some PCs may try to bypass Ichiko (or investigate her) by speaking with one or both of her yoriki. Neither Hogai nor Choro will say much while they are on-duty; they refer all questions about Yasuki Kappako's problems to their superior. They are in and out of the office frequently, responding to crime reports from various parts of the town, so persistent PCs may be able to speak with them while they are traveling to and from the magistrate's residence. The PCs can also try to meet with them when they are off-duty; Hogai often spends his free time at a sake house called the Drunken Orochi, throwing dice and trading tales with fellow Mantis, while Choro spends his evenings training at a local dojo.

Choro is completely loyal to Ichiko, who has given him a secure and respected place in society by enlisting him as her yoriki. He will refuse to listen to even the suggestion that her behavior might be improper – indeed he will readily fight a duel rather than endure an insult to his patroness. Any attempt to bribe or bully him will likewise provoke a duel. Choro does his best not to actually know anything about Ichiko's sand-bagging of the investigation; in effect, he deliberately closes his eyes and avoids learning anything about the issue.

Yoritomo Hogai is all-business when he is on duty, but if the PCs track him down at the Drunken Orochi he is friendly, cheerful, and gregarious. He is fully aware that Ichiko has deliberately shut down the investigation into

the bandits at Kappako's mine, and believes she is doing so at the direction of her patron in the Second City, an influential Otomo courtier. Of course, he has no intention of testifying to any of this unless Ichiko is already in trouble from other sources. "My word against an Imperial and a magistrate? Yes, I'm sure that would go well for all of us. Ha! Let's have another drink."

CHORO, RONIN YORIKI

| | | | | |
|---|----------|-------------|----------|------------|
| AIR: 2 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 3 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | | STRENGTH: 3 | | |
| Honor: 5.3 | | Status: 0.0 | | Glory: 2.5 |
| <i>(functionally 2.0 when acting as yoriki)</i> | | | | |

School/Rank: Gaze of Sun Tao (Insight Rank 2)

Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier 1, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Law 1, Lore: Colonies 2, Meditation 3, Sincerity 2

Advantages: Ally (Miya Ichiko), Social Position (magistrate's yoriki)

Disadvantages: Idealistic

Solving Kappako's Problem

Whether or not the PCs are sympathetic to Yasuki Kappako's problem, they may well eventually decide to visit his mine if for no other reason than to try to interrogate the bandits. They will need a guide to reach the mine – both Hokare and Kappako can arrange this, or the PCs can hire one of the former mine workers on their own. One silver bu will be enough for the peasant to overcome his fear and lead the PCs there, so long as he is not required to stay and fight.

The mine is located about a half-day's walk into the jungle, in a large bowl-shaped depression on the upper side of a heavily forested hill. One of the ronin will always be on watch on the high side of the depression, keeping an eye out for any approaching danger. PCs who scout ahead with magic can easily detect the ronin before he (or she) can spot them, but if the PCs approach physically they will have to win a Contested Roll of Investigation / Perception against the ronin to spot him before he detects them. (Some GMs may prefer to use Hunting / Perception instead.) PCs who are trained as scouts (or shinobi) may decide to scout ahead for danger – such PCs must defeat the guard's Investigation / Perception with their Stealth / Agility to avoid detection.

The guard carries a bow and a signal arrow (humming-bulb arrow), which he will fire if he spots approaching danger. PCs who manage to detect and silence/eliminate the guard before he can fire the arrow will be able to approach the mine undetected – otherwise, the "bandits" will intercept the PCs before they can get within sight of the mine.



The five ronin comprise four men – Itto, Cheong, Bunta, and Koitsu – and one woman – Yasha. They are all reasonably experienced ronin in their twenties and thirties, with an array of scars to match their skills. The leader is Itto, a heavy-set but muscular and capable man of nearly forty years; Yasha, a woman with a long and somewhat plain face, is his lover. The other three were recruited by Itto to assist with this mission. All of them have fairly decent-quality light armor, swords, spears, and bows with a variety of arrows. Much of this equipment was supplied by Iyashi as part of their payment for this mission.

These ronin are neither fanatical nor suicidal. They are performing a job – admittedly a rather unpleasant job, but as wave-men they can't be too picky – and intend to live to get paid for it. If they spot the PCs, they will confront them in a strong position – such as from uphill with trees and boulders for shelter – and fire a “warning shot” to wound one of the PCs, followed up by a shout: “Get out of here, samurai, this is our place now!” Conversely, if the PCs manage to evade or disable the guard and catch the ronin by surprise at the mine, they will try to quickly rally, gather themselves, and confront the PCs with as much bellicosity and bluster as they can manage.

There are several possible ways for the PCs to deal with the bandits:

- ☉ **Combat/Death:** The simplest answer is to kill the bandits, either in combat or via ambush. This is likely to be the approach favored by highly honorable PCs as well as by more ruthless types like Crab and Spider. The ronin are brave and capable but ultimately have no intention of dying for Daidoji Iyashi – if the PCs are clearly winning decisively, the surviving ronin will try their best

to break off and flee. They will not voluntarily surrender but it will be quite possible to take some of them prisoner, either by wounding them so severely they cannot flee or by using magic, Grappling attacks, or similar methods to disable them non-lethally.

- ☉ **The Lovers:** It should be noted that Itto and Yasha are devoted to each other, and if either of them is killed, the other will fly into a rage of grief and fight to the death. However, this is also a weakness if the PCs spot it in time – a credible threat to one of the pair may be used to threaten/blackmail the other into reluctant cooperation. PCs, of course, may take this as a lesson in how love subverts the courage and loyalty of samurai.
- ☉ **Negotiation/Intimidation:** The PCs may try to persuade or threaten the ronin into abandoning or betraying their patron. This certainly has the potential to succeed, since the ronin are self-preserving types and are willing to switch sides if they can be persuaded it is in their best interest to do so. However, this should not be easy – the ronin know Daidoji Iyashi is a wealthy man himself and has connections to more powerful figures. The PCs will have to make strong and persuasive arguments, backed up by Social Skill Rolls and/or Courtier Techniques. Failed negotiations will probably result in the ronin dismissing further discussion and preparing for a fight.
- ☉ **Bribery:** The ronin are doing this for pay, and thus PCs who have a lot of money can try to buy their loyalty away from Iyashi. This will require a pretty substantial amount of money, since Iyashi pays well – as a baseline, the GM should assume the PCs will need to offer at least 5 koku per ronin to persuade them to change sides. The GM can allow this number to be modified by other factors, such as eloquent speeches (backed by Skill Rolls) or offers of less-tangible but still appealing rewards, such as political favors or a chance for long-term employment (the latter can be especially appealing since ronin normally live wholly without any kind of security in their lives).

At the GM's discretion, certain types of characters may have better luck at persuading the ronin to switch sides or accept a bribe. In particular, PCs who are obviously possessed of political influence (such as members of the Imperial families) should probably find it easier to overawe or bribe the ronin. Conversely, PCs who are obviously lacking in political skills or wealth should have a harder time of it. Finally, it may be noted that Itto is moderately religious, so a monk or shugenja should have a slightly easier time persuading him to change his loyalty.



CHEONG, BUNTA, YASHA, AND KOITSU, RONIN

| | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| AIR: 2 | EARTH: 2 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 2 |
| REFLEXES: 3 | AGILITY: 3 | STRENGTH: 3 | | |
| Honor: 2.0 | Status: 0.0 | Glory: 1.0 | Infamy: 2.3 | |

School/Rank: None (Insight Rank 1)
Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Hunting (Survival) 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 3, Spears 3, Stealth 2
Advantages: Cheong, Bunta, and Koitsu have Strength of the Earth. Yasha has Quick.
Disadvantages: Infamous (bandits), Social Disadvantage (ronin). Yasha has True Love (Itto)

ITTO, RONIN LEADER

| | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|---------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 3 | VOID: 3 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | AGILITY: 4 | | | |
| Honor: 2.0 | Status: 0.0 | Glory: 1.0 | Infamy: 3.4 | |

School/Rank: Forest Killers (Insight Rank 2)
Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 1, Hunting (Survival) 3, Intimidation 5, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Theology 2, Spears 3, Stealth 3
Advantages: Ally (Daidoji Iyashi), Quick, Strength of the Earth
Disadvantages: Infamous (bandit), Social Disadvantage (ronin), True Love (Yasha)

WHAT THE RONIN KNOW

The ronin have a fair amount of knowledge about the situation, which the PCs can extract either by questioning prisoners (captured ronin will try to bargain their information in exchange for being released) or by getting them to switch sides.

- Itto was hired by Daidoji Iyashi, with the specific task of recruiting a team of “bandits” who would drive everyone away from Yasuki Kappako’s mine and then protect it while Iyashi’s people extracted the jade. They received equipment, weapons, and three koku each for this task. (Itto got six koku, but aside from Yasha his comrades don’t know that.)
- A team of workers, identified as working for Iyashi, showed up a week later and started digging in the mine. The jade is collected periodically by a group of smugglers led by a man named Gozu. The next visit by Gozu and his men should be in a couple of days.
- The ronin still have most of the koku which Iyashi paid them (they haven’t gone back to civilization to spend it yet). The coins are of Crane Colonial mint.
- Iyashi has not visited the mine since the ronin took possession of it. However, when Gozu and his men made their first visit, they were accompanied by another Crane, a very handsome and cultured man with a pleasant voice. He called himself “Chonitsu” and claimed he was an associate of Iyashi. They haven’t seen him since.

The Mine

If and when the PCs finally get to see the mine, they find a gaping hole in the ground at the bottom of the depression in the hillside. The remnants of old Ivory Kingdoms construction surround the pit, marking the original mine structure; these have now been replaced by new Rokugani-style construction, complete with walkways of wooden ramps leading down the muddy red-brown slope of the depression to the edge of the pit. Several ladders descend into the pit itself.

Daidoji Iyashi has sent about two dozen laborers to work in the mine, and they have occupied the small encampment which was originally built by Kappako’s workers. This comprises several crude huts for sleeping and a larger building to store supplies and the extracted jade. Water is fetched from a stream in the valley below the hill. The ronin occupy two of the huts, keeping themselves apart from the “peasant filth” who are doing the work.

If the PCs arrive by surprise, the ronin will be sitting about idly (talking, tossing dice, eating, etc) while the laborers are hard at work in the mine. If the PCs confronted the ronin before reaching the mine, the laborers are out of the pit and standing by their encampment, nervously waiting to see what happens – they will likely try to flee when the PCs show up, though it will not be too difficult for trained samurai to chase down and capture at least a few of them.

The laborers know only that they were hired by Iyashi to do some mining for a few weeks. They spent a couple of weeks waiting idly in a camp in the woods before they were brought here (this was while Iyashi’s ronin were chasing away Kappako’s men). They have not been back to Kalani’s Landing since they were hired, and thus do not know about what happened to Kappako’s laborers or that they are working someone else’s mine. They can confirm that a group of commoners led by a man named Gozu comes to the camp every week or two with a wagon, which they use to haul away the jade. The first time they came, they were accompanied by a strange Crane, a very well-dressed and handsome man with a “beautiful voice.” Some of the laborers shiver involuntarily when they discuss this Crane; if questioned, they say something about the Crane disturbed them, though they cannot define just what it was.





The Smugglers

The PCs can catch Gozu's smugglers if they wait a couple of days at the mine site. Both the ronin and the laborers can confirm the next visit should be in a few days. Clever PCs may decide to stage an ambush or otherwise make sure they can capture the smugglers.

The smugglers comprise six men, led by Gozu himself – a portly commoner in his thirties, with a fantastically ugly scar creasing the center of his face and replacing most of his nose. They are accompanied by a large wagon drawn by a team of four horses. Confronted by the PCs, they will most likely either flee or surrender, depending on what seems likelier to keep them alive – they do carry an array of peasant weapons to protect themselves from the dangers of the Colonial jungle, but will not try to fight against armed samurai if they can avoid it.

Self-preservation is the first goal of Gozu and his men; they will do whatever they must to save their own skins. They will not admit to being smugglers, claiming they are “merchants” working for Daidoji Iyashi. They will readily explain Iyashi hired them to carry jade from his mine and deliver it to another Crane merchant to the north. They claim to have no idea this is actually Yasuki Kappako's mine. They freely admit the “other Crane merchant” accompanied them here on their first trip, and identify him as having called himself Doji Chonitsu.

The smugglers carry the jade two days to the north, to a way-station on the main north-south road (the Ki-Rin's Path) through the Colonies, where they rendezvous with a small merchant caravan which serves Chonitsu. The caravan is led by a commoner named Hinjo. (Chonitsu introduced them to Hinjo's caravan during their first trip, to make sure they would know what to do.) They receive payment each time. PCs can easily determine Gozu and his men are getting paid quite well for the relatively simple task of hauling goods from one remote part of the Colonies to the other, although not anywhere close to the actual value of the jade they are transporting.

If the PCs decide to follow the trail to the merchant Hinjo, see Chapter Eight for details.



Exposing the Truth?

Some PCs, especially those of a more idealistic character, will probably want to try to expose Daidoji Chonitsu and/or Miya Ichiko for their improper behavior or perhaps even have them arrested. This will be difficult because all of the testimony they have comes from commoners and ronin, whose word is worth less than that of proper clan samurai like Iyashi, let alone a magistrate like Miya Ichiko. At best, the PCs might be able to pressure Iyashi into fighting a duel to protest their accusations.

However, clever PCs may realize a direct confrontation is not the most optimal approach here. Instead, blackmail and threats may be much more effective. (If the PCs share their information with Kappako and/or Hokare, they will both advocate for the blackmail approach.) If the PCs try this gambit, they don't have to actually name their witnesses and can essentially bluff Iyashi and Ichiko with the implication of completely destroying their names and honor. This sort of approach will probably require the use of Skills such as Sincerity, Intimidation, and possibly Temptation; certain types of Courtier Techniques, especially those of the Scorpion, will be quite useful as well.

If the PCs can get these two NPCs to start telling the truth, whether through blackmail or some other method, they can reveal the following key information:

- Iyashi has been funneling jade and crystal to Doji Chonitsu for some time, in return for various political and financial favors. Recently Chonitsu began asking for these substances with much greater urgency, which prompted Iyashi to undertake his gambit against Kappako.
- Iyashi was initially reluctant to take such drastic action, since it might backfire on him badly. However, Chonitsu promised the local magistrate would not interfere, and he was as good as his word.
- Iyashi has known Chonitsu for several years and they have had a fruitful alliance. He does not really know what the Doji's true position in the Empire or the Colonies might be, but the man is clearly quite influential and has allies in many places. He suggests to the PCs that it would be unwise for them to make Chonitsu their enemy.
- He does not know what Chonitsu is doing with these substances, and oddly it has not really occurred to him to wonder about this before now. Chonitsu is so charming the topic simply never came up.
- Miya Ichiko knows nothing about Doji Chonitsu, but she will confess that her sponsor in the Second City, Otomo Akio, sent word she should not look into what was happening to Kappako's mine. She does not know why he ordered this, but given that her current station and success are entirely due to his sponsorship she felt she had no choice but to obey.

DAIDOJI IYASHI, CORRUPT MERCHANT

AIR: 3 EARTH: 2 FIRE: 3 WATER: 2 VOID: 3

AWARENESS: 4 WILLPOWER: 3 INTELLIGENCE: 4 PERCEPTION: 3

Honor: 3.9 Status: 3.0 Glory: 4.7

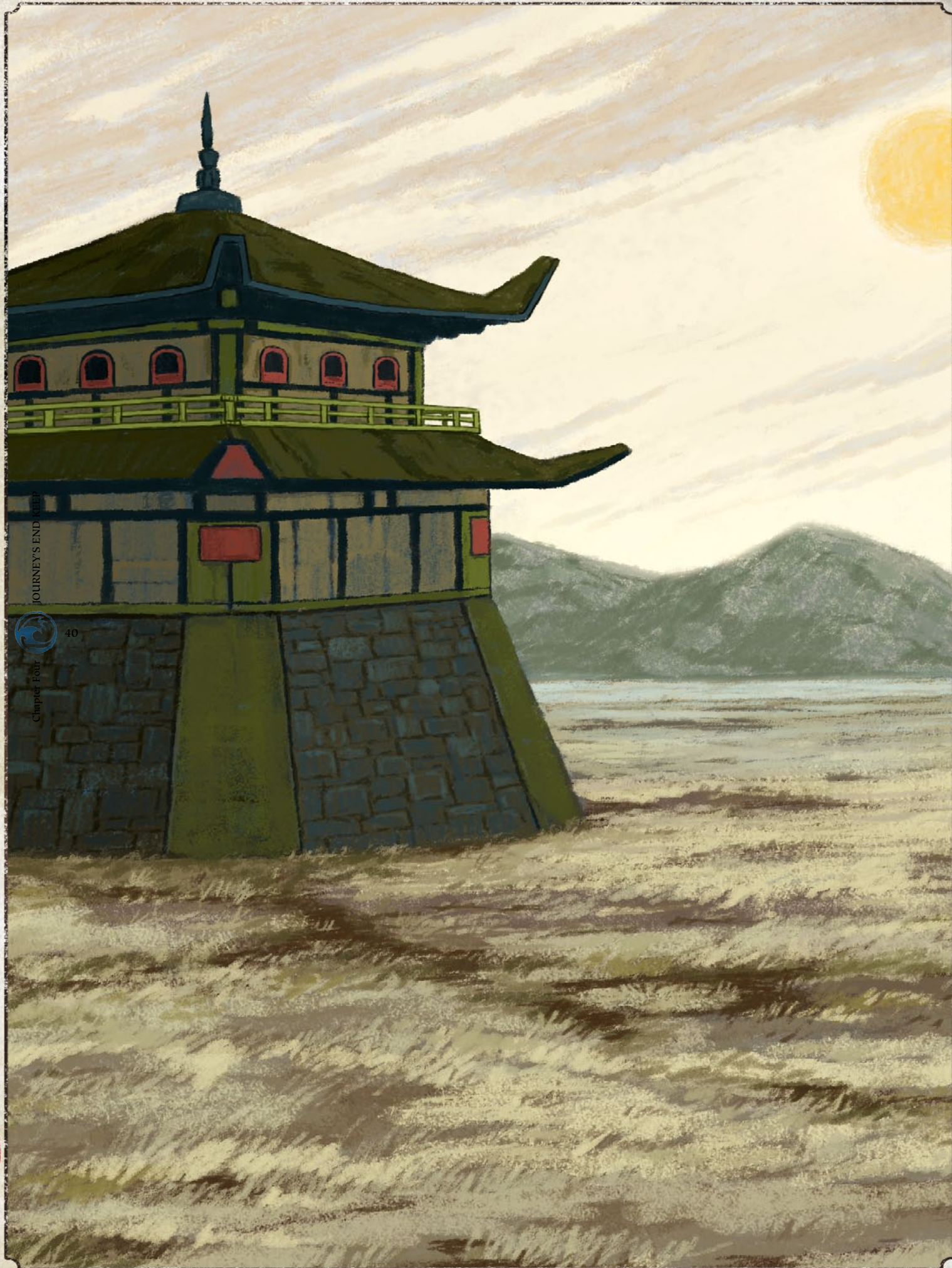
School/Rank: Doji Courtier 3/Daidoji Trading Council

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Commerce (Merchant) 5, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 2, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: Law 2, Lore: Theology 2, Sincerity 5

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Gentry, Social Position (Daidoji Trading Council), Wealth

Disadvantages: Dark Secrets (several), Sworn Enemies (several)





JOURNEY'S END WEB



40

Chapter Four

土氣炎空水



JOURNEY'S END KEEP

Ide Uchi is a wealthy and self-indulgent Unicorn merchant patron based in Journey's End Keep, the main Unicorn stronghold in the Colonies. He specializes in rare gaijin items from the Burning Sands, including the extraordinarily rare substance known as Ashalan Crysteel. Raniyah the Sly needs the esoteric spiritual powers of crysteel to help break the prison housing her fellow rakshasa, so her 'Doji Chonitsu' alias has been using Uchi to acquire a few crysteel items; in return, Chonitsu uses political contacts in the Second City to enhance Uchi's mercantile success.

However, Doji Chonitsu's most recent visit to Journey's End Keep had an unexpected result. Among the local commoners are a few Ivinda, survivors from the old Ivory Kingdoms population, living quietly alongside the Rokugani peasants who have been brought in to work the land. One of these natives, an old man named Gopti, is actually a guru – a monastic holy man – and he was able to see through Chonitsu's human guise and recognize the demonic creature within. The confrontation between Chonitsu and Gopti resulted in the old man and his family being exiled to a less-settled and more dangerous province to the south. If the PCs pick up on what happened, they may be able to follow Gopti and his family there and learn vital clues about the rakshasa and its plans.

The PCs will most likely be investigating here due to having researched the public connection between Doji Chonitsu and Ide Uchi (as described at the end of Chapter One). They may also have learned about Chonitsu's connections to Uchi at Kalani's Landing (in Chapter Three) or in the Second City (in Chapter Five).

Journey's End Keep

Journey's End Keep is the terminus point of the Ki-Rin's Path, the long caravan route which connects the Colonies to the lands of the Unicorn Clan via the Western Wastes. It rests on the edge of a jungle-choked plateau from which a long stretch of grass and scrub-plain slowly descends north. To the northwest is the true desert of the Burning Sands, which stains the horizon in that direction a smudgy yellow; to the northeast, the Ki-Rin's Path travels into the bleak emptiness of the Western Wastes.

Due to the proximity of the desert, the weather here tends to be hotter and drier than elsewhere in the Colonies; the summer is longer, monsoon shorter and less fertile, and drought is more frequent. The abandoned palaces and cities of the Ivory Kingdoms are fewer and more widely scattered in this region, but perversely the survivors among the native Ivinda population are somewhat more numerous – the Cult of the Destroyer reached this part of the land last, and thus was not able to wipe out the population quite as comprehensively as it did elsewhere. The PCs will notice a fair number of natives living at Journey's End Keep, and see a few curls of smoke rising from within the jungle, marking the locations of settlements.

Journey's End Keep itself is constructed in a mixture of Unicorn and Rokugani styles, with some influence from the native architecture. The ruler of the place is Moto Jafiq, a bold and adventurous man who believes the future of Rokugan is to have much more open relations with her neighbors;





accordingly, he has turned Journey's End Keep into a trade hub for commerce with the gaijin of the Burning Sands. His fortress sits atop a steep hill, affording it a view of both the plains to the north and the rivers and jungles to the south. Below the hill is very large enclosure, protected by a high wooden stockade and comprising several acres of space, where trade caravans (both Unicorn and gaijin) make camp. A sizable town has grown up outside this caravan park, spreading southward into the jungle and eventually reaching the banks of the Shinano River, from which riverine traffic connects to the Second City.

Crops here are a mixture of rice, legumes, and grains – the erratic weather makes it dangerous to rely too much on any one crop. There are also many gardens growing a mixture of Rokugani and native fruits and vegetables. Seafood is of course difficult to get here – the river produces only a limited amount of freshwater fish – so the Unicorn have quietly allowed the local peasants (whose ranks, as noted, include a fair sprinkling of Ivinda natives) to raise small herds of goats for their meat.

THE MARKETPLACE

At any given time the interior of the caravan park will boast dozens of tents, a mixture of Rokugani yurts and the white conical tents of gaijin traders from the Burning Sands. More exotic things may be seen as well, such as the colorful wagons of the Ra'Shari people (which resemble the wagons of gypsies from our own world) and a few conventional Rokugani silk tents for merchants from the south of the Colonies, come here to share in the lucrative trade with the gaijin.

In the center of the park is a bazaar where all of the merchants meet, trade, buy, and sell. White and purple cloth pavilions cover dozens of booths, and merchants circulate like leaves in the wind, money and goods changing hands in a welter of conversation in both Rokugani and various foreign tongues. To traditionalist PCs from the Empire this will be a very unsettling scene, as Rokugani and gaijin speak and trade together openly and to all appearances equally. The overwhelming presence of commerce and trade will likely also be offensive to any PCs who are not themselves dedicated to such matters. The Unicorn samurai here are accustomed to seeing this marketplace, and many of them wander through the aisles between the booths, looking over the exotic foreign wares and picking up trinkets. The PCs can do the same if

they wish, or stay away from such dubious activity and focus on their investigation. Either approach can work during this part of the adventure, although the GM will probably find it more entertaining if the PCs do visit the bazaar.

The gaijin here are primarily from Medinaat al-Salaam, the great city and trade hub that lies far to the north across the Burning Sands. They may be described as loosely "Aladdin/1,001 Nights" in appearance, and their skin tone varies widely, from light tan to dark brown. They wear loose-fitting robes of white cotton or silk, and cover their heads with scarves or burnouses; their women wear silken veils to shroud their features. Most of them carry short curved knives at their belts, but they have no other armament – it is their custom not to carry martial weapons while at a trade market. Unicorn merchants are also numerous in the marketplace, and most of them are fluent in Mekham (the language of Medinaat al-Salaam) to facilitate their trade. The other Rokugani merchants here are a mixture of Crane, Mantis, and Crab; the Crane and Crab usually place themselves at the edges of the bazaar where the "contamination" of gaijin influence is minimized.

Aside from these groups, there are a scattering of many other exotic types in the bazaar. The GM can introduce almost any kind of NPC, whether Rokugani or gaijin, to increase the appeal of Journey's End Keep or to entertain the players. One specific aspect of the market which should be mentioned, however, is the presence of the Ra'Shari, since there is the potential for the PCs to receive a prophecy from a Ra'Shari mystic.

The market is patrolled by pairs of Unicorn bushi armed with sasumata (man-catchers). They make sure the market remains safe and do not allow any disagreements or arguments between Rokugani and foreigners to escalate into open violence.

GAIJIN GOODS

If the PCs decide to explore the marketplace in search of interesting baubles, they will find scores of merchants eager to sell to them. The gaijin generally speak only a crude patois of Rokugani, and moreover those from Medinaat al-Salaam are great believers in the importance of bargaining and haggling when making a sale, all of which will probably be very unpleasant for most Rokugani PCs. (A PC who fails to haggle will of course end up paying far more than proper value for whatever they buy, as well as earning the contempt of the gaijin for their lack of bargaining skill.)

Nonetheless, the PCs can find a wide range of exotic goods here, including jewelry (earrings, necklaces, bracelets, etc), cotton cloth, beautiful woven rugs, spyglasses and magnifying glasses, metal lanterns, scissors, glass goblets, spices, strange fruits and vegetables, liquers made from fermented fruits or dates, furs from exotic animals, foreign weapons, and many other oddities. PCs can find almost anything that could conceivably be imported from the other cultures of the Burning Sands – most notably anything that would be appropriate for an “Arabian Nights” setting, but also including Roman-type goods from the Yodotai Empire, gypsy weaving and jewelry from the Ra’Shari, papyrus from the Senpet Empire, and so forth. One thing the PCs will not find, however, is Ivory Kingdoms art and goods – all the worthwhile items in this part of the Colonies have long since been snatched up by collectors.

Because the surviving native Ivinda population is higher in the territory of Journey’s End Keep than it is elsewhere, there is a good chance PCs visiting the market or the town will see elephants being used as beasts of burden, with native mahouts riding and controlling them. The PCs may even spot a few of the more daring local samurai enjoying rides on elegant howdahs while a native mahout dressed only in a loincloth guides the beast from atop its neck.

DRINKA THE SOOTHSAYER

If the PCs do choose to explore the marketplace, at some point they should encounter Drinka, a stooped old *Ra’Shari* woman wearing a multi-colored ankle-length skirt, a white long-sleeved blouse, and a red head-scarf. Large hoop earrings hang from her ears and cosmetics darken the skin around her eyes, but her hair is gray-white and her dark-tan face is deeply grooved. She normally sits on the back step of a *Ra’Shari* wagon, knitting and occasionally stirring the coals in a low-set copper brazier resting on the ground before her. However, whenever the PCs walk by, she suddenly rises to her feet, speaking in a thin quavering voice and clutching at them with desperate strength.

Drinka will grab at the sleeves of the PCs, speaking to them urgently in the *Ra’Shari* language. The PCs will probably react with at least irritation if not outright fury, but before violence can erupt a pair of Unicorn guards will arrive, gesturing with their *sasumata* and demanding peace be upheld. While this is happening, a much younger *Ra’Shari* woman emerges from the wagon and, after speaking with

Drinka for a few moments, addresses the guards and the PCs in broken, halting Rokugani. Her grandmother is a prophet, she explains, and senses something of great importance about the PCs. Will they not allow her to tell their fortune? Unfortunately this will require letting the old woman touch their hands, since she wishes to read their palms; the girl will swear her grandmother means no insult and begs the PCs to listen to her prophecy. “Great-mother never wrong. Never. Not about us or other peoples.”

It is up to the PCs how they react. It is of course perfectly legitimate for proper Rokugani samurai to dismiss this as nothing more than a distasteful gaijin spectacle, and the adventure will not be derailed if the PCs move on without listening to Drinka. However, if they do agree, they will get an atmospheric hint and warning as to what lies in front of them.

A translator will be needed to understand Drinka’s prophecy. Her granddaughter can perform this role (although she will be greatly alarmed at the idea of having to translate her revered grandmother’s prophecies) or the PCs can ask around and eventually find a Unicorn merchant who understands the *Ra’Shari* tongue.

“I see the great tiger arise from the jungle, and upon its face is the visage of your folk, the folk of the yellow skin and slanted eyes. The tiger dreams of its kin, locked away at the dawning of all time, locked away by one now dead. It dreams of the day when they shall spring forth to hunt once more, ravaging the world and drinking the blood of all men. Close, now, close is the day when the tigers will be free and the world shall become their hunting ground. The shadow of the tiger lies upon your spirits. Perhaps you are destined to stand against it, to hunt it in turn, or perhaps you are destined to be its prey. The signs are unclear. The signs are unclear.” Her prophecy finished, Drinka sighs and sags down, almost fainting; her granddaughter leads her carefully into the wagon.

Drinka does not know what her vision means and cannot explain it. Her granddaughter apologizes, explaining that Drinka is old and ill and has difficulty understanding her visions, but assures the PCs they are always true.



SUMAJII THE THIEF

If the PCs spend any time in either the marketplace or the town outside Journey's End Keep, they will run afoul of Sumajii, a skinny and dirty little boy from the native Ivinda population. Sumajii is a skillful sneak-thief and will target one of the PCs, attempting to steal his/her money (note that Rokugani normally carry their coins on a string inside their kimono sleeve or under their obi).

Technically, Sumajii's attempted theft is a Contested Roll of his Sleight-of-Hand / Agility against the PC's Investigation / Perception. However, for story purposes the GM may prefer to simply let the PCs spot the theft attempt. Caught with his hand in the wrong place, Sumajii attempts to flee, but the PCs can easily catch him (perhaps assisted by an Agility roll if the GM prefers – a missed attempt could lead to a chase through the bazaar, which could be an amusing diversion from more serious adventuring). Sumajii is much too small, frail, and spindly to break free of the PCs by force, but he will try to slide out of his tattered knee-length shirt and escape that way, perhaps leading to a second Agility roll or additional chasing. Alternatively Sumajii could be caught by the Unicorn guards, who recognize him as a recurring thief and will be delighted to finally get their hands on him.

Sumajii speaks a crude, disjointed patois of Rokugani, making it difficult to convey complex ideas, but he understands well enough what happens to someone who gets caught stealing from a samurai, and he will beg for his life in the most pathetic and sniveling manner, grubbing in the dust, trying to kiss the PCs' feet, showing his ribs to indicate how hungry he is, and so forth. Several of the merchants (Rokugani and gaijin), meanwhile, will recognize him as a thief who has been plaguing them, and the gaijin gather around trying to beat and kick him.

Sumajii is actually a member of Gopti's family, which was exiled a couple of months ago – he was left behind when the samurai swept up the rest of the family, and has no idea how to find his people again. It will be up to the PCs how to deal with him. If they hand him over to the Unicorn authorities, he will be hanged for thievery, an outcome which soft-hearted PCs may find unpalatable. If the PCs do spare Sumajii's life, he will throw himself at their feet, promising brokenly to be their servant for life and to do anything they want. The PCs can use Sumajii as a source of information about his family, as a translator (though he cannot read), or can even enlist him to steal something for them, although this will certainly cost them Honor.

Investigating Ide Uchi

The most likely reason for the PCs to explore the market or the town at Journey's End Keep is to search for Ide Uchi, the Unicorn merchant who is associated with Doji Chonitsu. Any investigation into Chonitsu's contacts and allies will come up with Ide Uchi's name. If the PCs seek more detailed information about Uchi once they arrive in Journey's End Keep, they can learn the following:

- Uchi's family runs a major Unicorn caravan based out of Journey's End Keep. It follows a route to Medinaat al-Salaam and back. He deals extensively in exotic goods from that remote and semi-mythical city.
- Uchi is rumored to be able to acquire the extraordinarily rare substance known as Ashalan Crysteel, crystal which is as hard and resilient as the finest forged Rokugani steel. Supposedly, it is this product which interests Doji Chonitsu.
- Ide Uchi himself lives in the town. His sons handle most of his business, including his booth in the marketplace.
- Uchi faced strong competition for several years from another Unicorn merchant patron, Ide Sadao. However, recently he seems to have won out against Sadao, apparently due to political sponsorship from the Second City.
- Supposedly Uchi has recently been complaining about the surviving Ivinda (Ivory Kingdoms gaijin) who still live in this area, claiming they are harassing his business and asking the local lord to deal with them harshly. The local clan magistrate, Shinjo Juntao, ordered some Ivinda exiled from Journey's End Keep in response to Uchi's complaints. No one is sure whether his complaints were actually true or merely the result of some personal grudge. (Clever PCs may be able to draw a connection between this and the rumor that Doji Chonitsu got into a confrontation with the local gaijin a few months ago.)

IDE UCHI'S SONS

If the PCs decide to search the marketplace for Ide Uchi, they will find a large booth manned by two portly young Unicorn men; these are Uchi's two youngest sons, Ide Iku and Ide Asagi, who handle his affairs in the market. They are friendly in a slightly greasy mercantile way. Asagi, the older of the two (in his mid-twenties) is developing a double-chin which he has a tendency to stroke whenever he is talking.

The two brothers do not know there is anything remotely dangerous about Doji Chonitsu, who they describe as "one of father's good friends and business associates"; they say he is a fine man and a credit to the Crane Clan. They freely admit Chonitsu is interested in crysteel and their father has managed to supply him with a couple pieces of it. They are only vaguely aware of the incident between Chonitsu and the local gaijin, but claim those same "uncouth locals" are the ones that have harassed their father more recently. "They have been exiled to the province to the south, but they keep sneaking back and giving us trouble!" If the PCs ask for details of what the Ivinda are doing, the brothers claim they have broken into their warehouse on a couple of occasions. They also pass on a rumor that the gaijin killed a samurai in the province to the south, and hold up this incident as proof that these particular Ivinda are very

bad fellows indeed. “The sooner our lords dispatch those criminals, the better – including for the other gaijin whose name is besmirched by these acts.”

If the PCs ask about Ide Uchi’s competitor Ide Sadao, the brothers cheerfully recount several stories of past commercial rivalries and quarrels. They know their father brought political pressure to bear against Sadao but do not know how he managed it, other than that he now has the support of an “influential Otomo” in the Second City.

VISITING IDE UCHI IN PERSON

If the PCs decide to meet with Ide Uchi himself, they can find his house easily enough. It is located in the wealthiest district of the town, and is a strange and memorable blend of Rokugani and Ivory Kingdoms architecture. The most notable influence from the local architecture is the presence of many elaborate wooden screens in place of the sliding paper windows favored by the Rokugani – the myriad holes in the screens allow air to flow through the building more easily, mitigating the suffocating heat of the Colonies’ summer season. Similarly, the large garden in front of the house contains many native plants and flowers and almost no Rokugani plants, nor is there a koi pond.

If the PCs request a visit, Uchi will invite them to attend him in the evening, explaining that his advancing age makes it difficult for him to stay active during the heat of the day. He is a very overweight man, an unusual problem for a samurai and one which the PCs will probably find off-putting. Uchi meets the PCs in a room with a high-arched ceiling (another gaijin design element) where he half-sits, half-sprawls on an array of pillows, dressed in a light silk yukata (bathrobe). He sips at a cup containing a strange fruit drink which he will offer to share with the PCs – it is made from mango fruit, and will probably strike the PCs as cloyingly sweet. Uchi sweats constantly and, despite the efforts of servants who fan incense through the room, the PCs pick up some of his body odor – including an odd spicy note, the result of his Colony-influenced diet.

Uchi will start out assuming the PCs are here due to business or commercial interests, and will be friendly, polite, and even a bit charming (in a fat-old-man sort of way) so long as he believes this to be the case. Once he realizes the PCs are engaged in some kind of investigation, he will become much more abrupt and unfriendly, fanning himself irritably with a large sandalwood fan and complaining of having a bad memory in his old age whenever he wants to avoid answering a question. Given the chance, he will look for an opportunity to take offense and have the PCs thrown out of his house. Until that happens, he will reluctantly share the following information:

- Uchi does not deny his friendship with Doji Chonitsu and claims the Crane is a “fine and honorable man” for whom he has been happy to acquire several crysteel items. He dismisses any suggestion there is anything untoward about Chonitsu, and shrugs off any accusations by the PCs as “absurd slanders.”

- If the PCs ask why he was so willing to help Chonitsu, he replies the Crane smoothed the way for many of his mercantile ventures and opened markets for him in the Second City itself. “He’s a highly influential man. I can’t imagine why you would harbor any questions toward his honor.”
- He claims the Ivinda gaijin harassing him are the same ones who were expelled from Journey’s End Keep for attacking and insulting Chonitsu. “Obviously, they know of my associations with my good Crane friend. Since he does not live here and I do, they are taking out their anger on me.” He claims they have confronted him in the streets (a lie) and have broken into his warehouse on two occasions (truth – they were trying to intercept crysteel items).
- If the PCs ask for details about the incident with Chonitsu and the Ivinda, Uchi shrugs. “I was not there, but I do not doubt my friend’s account. An old gaijin man confronted him in the marketplace, shouted at him, shoved him even! Chonitsu-san called for the guards, of course. Our lord’s magistrate was far too generous, merely exiling the old man and his family from Journey’s End Keep rather than executing them outright.”
- He has heard rumors these same Ivinda are now accused of murdering a samurai in the province to the south, the lands ruled by Mirumoto Kokure. He takes considerable relish in repeating the rumor. “You see? These gaijin cannot be trusted. Too many of them are still mad from that great disaster a generation ago.”
- If the PCs ask about his rivalry with Ide Sadao, he initially dismisses it as a “friendly rivalry” in which he has prevailed, thanks to his political contacts in the Second City. He will also use the existence of those contacts to try to intimidate the PCs if they are pressuring or threatening him: “I will have you know I enjoy the sponsorship of Otomo Akio, the trusted karo to the Chancellor of the Left himself!”

The Gaijin Incidents

The PCs may decide to look more into the incident between the Ivinda gaijin and Doji Chonitsu, or the subsequent incidents with Ide Uchi. They can question the local Unicorn guards easily enough, or arrange a meeting with the clan magistrate, Shinjo Juntao.

Shinjo Juntao is a mild-tempered, dedicated, warm-hearted man, in many ways a perfect example of the compassionate traditions of the Unicorn Clan. He serves Lord Moto Jafiq with complete dedication and does an excellent job of maintaining the peace in a province where there are unusual challenges created by the presence of so many gaijin merchants.



WHAT DID THE OLD MAN SAY?

Some PCs may decide they should try to learn what the old Ivinda man said to Doji Chonitsu. This will not be easy, but creative PCs should be able to figure out a way. With diligent effort the PCs can search out the specific guards who arrested the old man and ask them to recall the sounds he made – these could then be presented to a translator (perhaps even to Sumajii) for a rough guess at what the old man said. Similarly, the PCs could spend some time asking around the town to find commoners who happened to witness the incident and get an account of the old man's words from them. More creatively, a shugenja who Communes with the Air spirits might be able to get them to recall the unusual sounds which the old man made when he struck the man in blue.

It is highly unlikely that the PCs can get a literally accurate translation out of any of this, but with diligence and effort they should be able to pick up a few key words: "tiger," "demon," "cannibal," "liar," and "illusion." This should be enough to motivate the PCs to try to learn more about this gaijin.

From either Juntao, the guards, or the local gossip circuit the PCs can learn that the initial incident with Doji Chonitsu involved an elderly Ivinda man who lived in the town with his extended family. They had caused no trouble prior to this incident and indeed seemed quite glad to live under the protection of Rokugani law. However, on that occasion the old man suddenly walked up to Doji Chonitsu and began shrieking at him in his own tongue, then striking at the Crane with his gnarled fists. No one knows what he was saying – the guards on duty that day did not speak Ivindi. The rest of the old man's family ran up, pulled him away from Chonitsu, and prostrated themselves, begging for mercy. Shinjo Juntao reviewed the case and concluded the old man was probably mad; in keeping with Rokugani traditions of reverence for the elderly, and the principle of Compassion which has been central to the clan since its founding, he ordered the old man beaten, then had the family exiled from Journey's End Keep. It is believed they traveled south into the lightly-settled province that lies

between Journey's End and the Second City, a region ruled by a Dragon lord named Mirumoto Kokure.

The more recent incidents are all based largely on reports from Ide Uchi and thus far the guards have not been able to catch any of the gaijin in the act. Someone definitely broke into Uchi's warehouse on at least one occasion, but left no conclusive evidence behind. However, they have sent word to Lord Mirumoto Kokure to keep watch over the Ivinda in his lands.

Very recently, within the last week, Shinjo Juntao has heard a rumor that a gaijin is accused of murdering a samurai in Kokure's domain. He hopes this is not someone from the same family, since that would be a poor repayment for the mercy he showed them.

IDE UCHI'S WAREHOUSE

The PCs may be intrigued by the tale of gaijin breaking into Ide Uchi's warehouse. Naturally Uchi will not allow the PCs to investigate his warehouse, but Shinjo Juntao might let them do so under his authority if the PCs present a compelling reason or strike him as honorable and compassionate samurai. (Helping the boy Sumajii may play a key role here.) Alternatively the PCs can just investigate on their own and hope to avoid trouble with the authorities.

The warehouse is a large building constructed from heavy wooden beams, with a broad tile roof and a pair of huge wooden sliding doors. The main storage chamber is a vast open space two stories high, with a set of stairs that goes up one wall to a quartet of small rooms – offices and residences – behind a wooden balcony. Due to the warmer climate of the Colonies, the warehouse is stiflingly hot inside for two-thirds



of the year, and Uchi has learned to use it only to store goods that will not be harmed by the heat: cloth, lumber, dried foods such as rice and legumes, metal goods, and various luxury items such as sculpture, jewelry, and so forth (the latter usually stored inside wooden barrels or crates). The place is normally staffed by a couple of commoners who live in one of the upstairs rooms, keep the books on goods coming in and out, and do at least some work on keeping the warehouse clean. They carry tonfa to deal with unwelcome visitors. More recently, Uchi has also hired a ronin, a hugely fat man named Otchu, who carries a tetsubo and is constantly munching on rice balls. Otchu sits outside during the day, eating and watching the world go by, and sleeps in one of the upstairs rooms at night.

The workers were present for both break-ins. The first time, they were awakened by the gaijin trying to beat down the front door. The second time, the gaijin were sneakier – they slipped in through one of the windows of the second-floor rooms, then went down to the main floor and began breaking open the crates. Otchu was on the premises by that time (he was hired after the first attempted break-in) and he came down with his tetsubo and chased the gaijin around

until
t h e y
managed to
get the front doors open
and escape into the night.

Otchu can recount the story of the second break-in, although he will do so in a more gregarious and dramatic manner than the commoners. He snorts that the gaijin were “skinny little cowards.” Both witnesses can confirm the gaijin were Ivinda natives, but can offer no further identification or information about them – they don’t know for sure if these were the same gaijin who got exiled a couple months ago. Otchu may go so far as to crudely remark, “These foreigners all look alike to me. All smell alike too – bad.”





土氣炎空水





THE SECOND CITY



Otomo Akio is one of the more powerful courtiers in the Second City and, by extension, the Colonies. He is very much a product of his Imperial family – which is to say a cunning, manipulative, and ruthless politician, expert in identifying and intensifying existing political rivalries and resentments. He creates divisions and then steps in to play the peacemaker and conciliator, appearing to be a veritable rock of reason in the turbulent political seas that he himself created. As a result, Akio has quickly risen through the Second City bureaucracy and secured a senior position in the Governor’s Court, that of karo (executive assistant) to Otomo Takama, the Chancellor of the Left. Not yet thirty years old, Akio hopes to eventually succeed Takama to that lofty office, which would give him tremendous power over the Ivory Court and its agenda. He already exercises significant influence on the workings of the Court, so much so that lesser nobles have learned to speak with Akio if they wish an audience with the Chancellor or even the Governor. Getting on Akio’s bad side, on the other hand, ensures that audiences are unavailable or only possible at inconvenient times, petitions are misplaced, meeting times are abruptly changed, and so on. Whether Otomo Akio has designs on even higher station still, in the Second City or perhaps in Rokugan proper, is anyone’s guess. His ambition is obvious, though, and what is abundantly clear is that Akio will not tolerate interference in his power.

If Otomo Akio has any weakness at all, it is a pronounced fondness for the artwork, sculpture, jewelry, and other artifacts of what used to be the Ivory Kingdoms. A fascination with anything gaijin, particularly in a member of one of the Imperial families, would be normally be considered unseemly, perhaps even repugnant. But in the Colonies such attitudes are tolerated, especially in a powerful karo.

It was through Akio’s interest in gaijin artifacts that the rakshasa Raniyah the Sly approached him in her guise as Doji Chonitsu. Although the Otomo is beginning to suspect there is something sinister about Doji Chonitsu, the putative Crane continues to provide him with ever more breathtaking and valuable items, and seeks only a few favors and some of Akio’s lesser pieces of gaijin work in return. He is unaware as yet that these “lesser pieces” are vital to the rakshasa’s plan to awaken and free her kin, nor does he realize the “favors” are carefully calculated to further the rakshasa’s dark agenda.



TOO MUCH INTRIGUE?

In approaching this chapter, the GM should be aware it is focused primarily on political scheming and careful investigation; the situation is designed to challenge the PCs in ways that do not necessarily involve combat or physical exploits. However, not all players will enjoy a lengthy exercise in social interaction and intrigue. There are situations presented that can, at the GM's option, offer more martial role-playing opportunities, but they are not the main thrust of the chapter. The GM should gauge how well and for how long his players, both individually and collectively, will enjoy this sort of role-playing environment. The GM certainly has opportunities to move the action back and forth between this chapter and the others in order to vary the pace of the game; he should not feel compelled to run this entire chapter as one continuous block of story.



The Setting

The action in this chapter takes place primarily in the Second City and particularly in the Governor's Palace. Much of what happens will be focused on the various personalities in the Governor's Court. Whether the PCs come to the Colonies by the sea or via the Ki-Rin's Path, and whether or not they have already learned of the connection between Doji Chonitsu and Otomo Akio, they are likely to eventually end up visiting the Second City, since it is the epicenter of Colonial politics, commerce, and culture. Alternatively, if the GM has decided to start the campaign in the Colonies, with the PCs either being native-born or previously arrived from Rokugan, they will already be familiar with the Second City and may even live in or close to it. In any case, it shouldn't be difficult to arrange for the PCs to attend the Second City and get themselves immersed in its turbulent political landscape.

The Second City is detailed in Book One of this boxed set, and the GM should refer to that book for a comprehensive description of the setting as a whole. Both that volume and *Book Two: The People* will provide the GM with more than enough general and background information to be able to portray the Governor's Court in considerable detail.

THE GOVERNOR'S COURT

The best way to describe the Governor's Court is as a throng of courtiers and their various vassals and staff who meet on a regular basis, usually in elegant quarters, in the presence of senior officials such as the Chancellor of the Left or, more rarely, the Governor herself. Proceedings are staid and reserved, as is the Rokugani way, with much precise bowing, whispered discussions, the use of fans to hide expressions or convey specific meaning, and formal proclamations with accompanying expressions of surprise, delight or dismay (most of them feigned and simply designed for public effect). Things are rarely what they seem, with multiple meanings and intent layered onto every action and statement; in turn, every word and nuance of body language is scrutinized and analyzed, every utterance studied for a possible misstep, every opportunity for advantage seized and exploited. Court is every bit as much a battle as any field of clashing armies, except worse – on a battlefield, it is usually clear who one's enemies are, and failure brings only death. Failure in court can lead to shame, ridicule, and ruin of one's reputation, which are far worse fates than simple death to those who live by their words and their honor.

It is into this deceptively elegant quagmire of dealing, double-dealing, gossip, rumor, and innuendo that the PCs are thrust in this chapter, as they attempt to tease out the truth about Otomo Akio and his relationship with the enigmatic Doji Chonitsu. Success will greatly advance their quest to stop the threat posed by the rakshasa. Failure, on the other hand, will lead to death if the PCs are fortunate...or much worse, if they are not.

Otomo Akio, Karo and Art Collector

Otomo Akio is handsome man. He shows some of the slim elegance of a Crane, but toughened into a broader, more muscular physique. In fact, he has more Bayushi in his blood than Doji, thanks to a Scorpion grandmother, but prefers to accentuate his more distant Crane heritage in how he presents himself. He moves with the smooth grace of a skilled courtier and smiles constantly, all of which helps draw attention from his eyes, which are always mobile, flicking about and taking in every nuance of who and what surrounds him. Nothing about the man is ever out of place, unless he chooses it to be – in which case the wise person should wonder why.

Akio's reputation precedes him. Not quite thirty years old, he has nonetheless quickly risen to a position of great prominence. Only a year ago, he was appointed karo to the Chancellor of the Left. It was unheard of for someone so young to rise so rapidly, even in the sometimes-unsettling world of Governor Otomo Suikihime's court, and fans snapped and rose like a startled flock of colorful birds hiding a hundred variations on shock and dismay. In an instant Akio had gone from a good person to know to an essential person to know, while those who had already earned his disfavor groaned quietly in dismay. As for Akio himself – his smile never changed, not even a fraction.



MOTIVES FOR AN INVESTIGATION

If the PCs conducted research into Doji Chonitsu's activities in the Colonies, they should have already heard the name "Otomo Akio" as a prominent courtier and a collector of gaijin artifacts. Depending on where they started their investigations in the Colonies, they may also have come across some connections between Akio and events in outlying regions, such as his sponsorship of the magistrate Miya Ichiko and of the Unicorn merchant Ide Uchi. However, if they have begun their adventures in the Second City, or traveled directly to the Second City on arrival in the Colonies, they may not yet have much reason to be particularly interested in the prominent young Otomo. This may leave the GM wondering how to hook the PCs into this part of the plot. There are a couple of possible ways to deal with this problem:

- ☉ Do nothing, and simply allow the PCs to wander around the Second City without any particular attention fixed on Akio. Book One of this boxed set provides a wealth of information about the City, and it may be worthwhile to just allow the party some time to explore it and come to know the place. Raniyah the Sly will be continuing her scheming and nefarious dealings in the background, but as long as the players are content to investigate the City, there's no particular reason to accelerate the plot. When the GM judges that the action needs to move forward, he can hook the PCs into the plots at Kalani's Landing or Journey's End Keep in Chapters Three and Four respectively, and subsequently have the action return to Second City and Otomo Akio.
- ☉ Use the setting of the Second City and its Court more directly, focusing the players' attention on Otomo Akio immediately. Once they investigate him, this can lead them back to the other plotlines in Chapters Three and Four, or the later ones in Chapters Six and Seven.
- ☉ PCs who are recently arrived from mainland Rokugan. If Akio believes they may have news and information from the Empire not yet possessed by others, he will be keen to hear it, if only so he can exploit it before others can. Note that the longer the PCs have been in the Colonies, the less likely their news will be "fresh" and thus the less interested he will be.
- ☉ PCs who possess or have information about gaijin artifacts. They may have acquired such things on their own (especially if they came to the Colonies by means of the Ki-Rin's Path), or the GM can arrange for them to get such materials or information in order to provide a hook for them meet with Akio. Note that Akio is discerning and reasonably well-versed in the artifacts of the former Ivory Kingdoms; he will not be easily fooled and will be most displeased if he believes the PCs are wasting his time or, worse, attempting to dupe him.
- ☉ The PCs are brought to his attention for other reasons. This could include a report from Miya Ichiko, the magistrate from Kalani's Landing to whom he is a political patron, or reports from his agents in Journey's End Keep about PCs looking into gaijin artifacts or investigating Doji Chonitsu. If the PCs have been snooping around affairs Akio considers sensitive and this is reported to him, he will be eager to meet with them in order to find out their motives and what they know (or suspect).

MEETING WITH OTOMO AKIO

The PCs will have no difficulty seeing Otomo Akio; he is present in the Ivory Court virtually every day, kneeling at the right hand of Chancellor Otomo Takama, watching the proceedings with keen eyes, directing a scribe to take notes or occasionally taking personal notes of his own, and bowing and nodding to instructions from his superiors.

Actually meeting with Otomo Akio is another matter. In general, he has little interest and even less time for low-ranking clan samurai, and is likely to assign one of his underlings to attend to them. If, however, the PCs pique his interest, he will be willing to meet with them personally – albeit briefly. The following are the things most likely to arouse Akio's interest:

Irrespective of why he meets with the PCs, it will be in a place of his choosing, normally a private audience chamber he maintains near his own office in the Governor's Palace (he will not meet with the PCs in his residence within Faun-ti's Tower). The room will be small, discreet, and decorated with a mix of tasteful Rokugani artwork and more exotic Ivory Kingdoms items. He will generally avoid meetings of any substance elsewhere, preferring to always meet the PCs on his "home ground."





remnants of same, and performing all the menial tasks that keep the Court running. Once the PCs start actively seeking information (most likely aided with Courtier or Investigation rolls), the GM can provide them with an array of rumors that are both useful and distracting – see the sidebar “Other Clues and Rumors of Court” for material – requiring them to sift through and find what is helpful. However, the GM should be wary of overwhelming the players with too much information or too many distractions, lest the entire campaign become derailed.

The following pieces of information are the ones important to this chapter of the campaign; these are the clues the PCs need if they are to make progress against Otomo Akio. It is up to the GM how much effort and role-play (and how many Skill rolls or Courtier Technique

applications) to require before the PCs can locate these clues; the search for clues could easily take up an entire game session if so desired, and the GM should not feel compelled to point the PCs at all of these clues at once; the PCs could gradually become aware of them over time, or even overlook some of them completely. Each of the clues here points to an NPC who has information that will assist the PCs greatly, but none are absolutely essential to moving the plot forward.

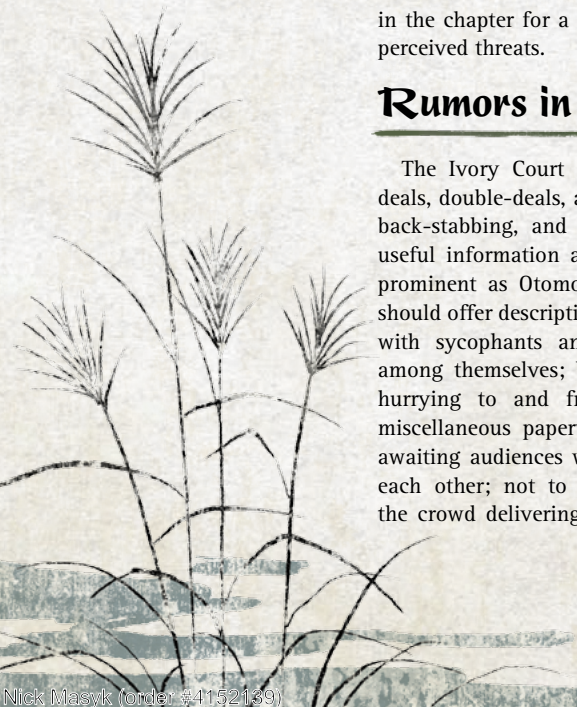
- Bayushi Toshiko, a relatively senior Scorpion courtier-ko, was recently snubbed by Otomo Akio. Akio made an announcement as to which members of the Court were invited to a formal dinner honoring the anniversary of the Governor’s ascension to rule of the Colonies, and while doing so he pronounced Toshiko’s name incorrectly. When he was discreetly corrected, Akio bowed his apology, but many believe the bow was insufficiently deep to be considered sincere.
- Ide Sadao, a low-ranking member of the Unicorn delegation, was recently seen leaving Akio’s meeting chamber with a look of barely-concealed fury on his face. Of course, Sadao is considered rather brash and uncouth by many of the “proper” members of Court, so such a failure to maintain his on is of no great surprise.
- Otomo Shigeo, an older but relatively minor member of the Otomo family’s delegation, abruptly excused himself during a proclamation being made in Court by Akio on behalf of the Chancellor of the Left. Apparently, he sent a message of apology immediately thereafter, explaining he has recently been ill and had no choice but to take his leave. Akio reportedly accepted the explanation with good grace and wished his cousin a speedy recovery. However, the PCs will hear rumors that Shigeo was being considered for the position of karo to the Chancellor before the post was suddenly given to Akio.

Akio’s demeanor in any meeting will be essentially the same: a calm and gracious host, mildly interested in whatever the PCs may have to say, but in no way informative or committal. He is the consummate politician and is quite capable of speaking for long periods without saying anything of substance. Akio will employ all of his considerable skill in attempting to discern what lies behind the PCs’ words without giving anything away of his own. He will not admit anything of significance, although he will freely say he is a friend to Doji Chonitsu (“Doji-san and I share an interest in the art of this new land”) and a patron to Miya Ichiko (“I do my best to look out for those honorable individuals whose service is worthy of reward”). He will not admit to anything involving politics, nor will he admit to his efforts to pressure the Spider into destroying all Ivory Kingdoms temples within the Colonies.

Unless the PCs are extremely cautious in any meeting with Akio, it is likely their questions and interests will cause him to mark them as potential enemies. See later in the chapter for a discussion of how Akio will react to perceived threats.

Rumors in Court

The Ivory Court is a complex, swirling dynamic of deals, double-deals, agreements, insults, gossip, toadying, back-stabbing, and innuendo. Needless to say, finding useful information about anyone, let alone someone as prominent as Otomo Akio, is difficult at best. The GM should offer descriptions of the Governor’s Palace bustling with sycophants and hangers-on chattering earnestly among themselves; bureaucrats and lesser functionaries hurrying to and fro carrying messages, letters, and miscellaneous paperwork; clan delegations seeking and awaiting audiences with important persons or even with each other; not to mention servants weaving through the crowd delivering food and drink, clearing away the



OTHER CLUES AND RUMORS IN COURT

This sidebar presents a mixture of clues and gossip the PCs can pick up in the Second City – either within the Ivory Court itself, or in less formal settings such as tea-rooms and geisha houses where people share stories over cups of sake. Some of these items are wholly unrelated to this campaign and are presented here simply as “fluff” to fill out the City’s courtly chit-chat and give a sense of life and greater purpose to the ongoing political scheming. Such items are dead-ends from the perspective of this campaign, but the GM could easily develop them into sub-plots or side-adventures, or even use them as concepts for later campaigns of his own. The Colonial setting is expansive enough for many adventures, after all!

In addition, some of these gossip items are actually clues to help connect the PCs to events in the other chapters of this book. These can be especially useful if the players chose to come to the Second City first instead of investigating at Kalani’s Landing or Journey’s End City.

A Mantis courtier is overheard mentioning the price of certain Rokugani commodities – especially Kaiu steel, which must be imported from Rokugan because iron ore in the Colonies isn’t suited to producing it – is expected to rise. The reason is related to a large shipment that was lost somewhere along the “safe lane” leading through the Sea of Shadows. The Mantis Clan, however, will insist publicly that no shipments have been lost.

There are rumors of a samurai murdered by one of the Ivinda natives in the province of Shiro Hebi, just to the north of the Second City. Supposedly the local lord, Mirumoto Kokure, has ordered all the Ivinda in his province killed in retaliation.

A pair of Scorpion courtiers are overheard discussing a recent attempt on the life of a senior member of their delegation, and speculating it is somehow related to a political scandal involving an affair between the spouses of two high-ranking clan members back in Rokugan. This is completely false; the two courtiers are, in fact, conducting a “social experiment” in how rumors propagate, and intend to track the progress of this one through the Court. At least, if they’re seriously challenged on it, that’s what they’ll claim...

A Dragon shugenja-ko named Tamori Tamanako recently departed the Second City to return to Rokugan for an arranged marriage. However, there are persistent rumors she recently bore a child from a secret affair. Somehow the matter was hushed up and the child sent away.

A Yasuki courtier is overheard telling a Mantis bushi that a shadowy figure was seen leaving a scroll outside the door of a certain Phoenix courtier’s bedchamber last night—or it may have been the night before. The next day, the Phoenix was visibly troubled, spoke very little, and retired from Court early. The shadowy figure was clad in dark robes, but the person who witnessed it was sure they caught a flash of blue – or it may have been green – as the figure turned away.

A Kakita maiden with a reputation as a skilled duelist was approached by an Otomo and asked if she would be willing to stand as the Otomo’s champion in the event of a duel... or so says a rumor the PCs will hear from several different sources, each time with slightly different details. It may have been a Daidoji instead of a Kakita, and it may have been a Miya or Seppun instead of an Otomo, and the duel may have been imminent rather than merely possible.

Supposedly the Unicorn at Journey’s End Keep are allowing greatly expanded trade with the gaijin of the Burning Sands, so much so that the Keep has become practically a foreign settlement. However, they are paying a price for this leniency, as many of the gaijin have been committing crimes. For example, supposedly a gaijin attacked a Crane courtier in the street, and a prominent Unicorn merchant named Ide Uchi has been robbed – twice! – by gaijin criminals.

A rumor is circulating that a prominent member of Court – apparently a senior member of either the Lion or Unicorn delegations – has secluded himself (or herself) from Court proceedings, without giving an indication as to why or when they intend to return. From here, the rumor spins into speculation, ranging from an unexpected pregnancy, to a sudden bout of serious illness, to a petulant fit of rage over some slight (real or imagined) from one of the the Chancellors, the Ivory Champion, or even the Governor herself.

The latest set of maps and reports of the frontier from the Imperial Explorers and the Spider Clan prompt a series of rumors about the surviving Ivinda natives supposedly having a great temple hidden somewhere in the jungle. Some rumors claim this alleged temple is a remnant of the Ivory Kingdoms civilization, while others suggest it is a hideout for the remaining members of the Cult of the Destroyer.

A prominent member of the Spider Clan is supposedly about to announce he is renouncing his clan, as well as Fu Leng and Daigotsu, and will be seeking redemption and “purification” among the Dragon as a monk. The Spider, it is said, are furious at this “betrayal” and seek nothing less than the death of this individual, who is, the story goes on, in hiding somewhere in the Second City or nearby.





- Doji Shumiko is Otomo Akio's own karo, and is known as a quick and clever young woman. However, she has lately been seen looking pensive and distracted. Further investigation reveals the young Doji has been seen attending the Shrine to Fukurokujin in the Temple District several times in the past few days, and one on occasion twice in the same day.

Following upon these rumors and bits of gossip will likely lead the PCs to attempt to speak further with Bayushi Toshiko, Ide Sadao, Otomo Shigeo, and Doji Shumiko. Each possible discussion is outlined in the following sections.

BAYUSHI TOSHIKO

Bayushi Toshiko is a handsome woman in her early thirties. She was born in Rokugan and came to the Colonies immediately after her gempukku, one of a group of young courtiers dispatched by the Scorpion to this new world in order to get and maintain an early grip on political power. She dresses in a non-traditional fashion for a Scorpion, eschewing the usual blacks and reds in favor of kimono of pale green, grey, or blue, usually embroidered with images of lush mountains or jungle flora. Her mask is simple and spare, with its only ornamentation a series of abstract shapes obviously designed to draw the viewer's eyes directly to hers. The PCs will find her gaze to be keen and searching, perhaps disconcertingly so. Toshiko is a consummate Bayushi courtier and therefore a dangerous political adversary; the fact that she is consistently

outmaneuvered in court by Otomo Akio should underscore his political acumen.

Akio seems to have turned their rivalry into something of a game, publicly goading Toshiko (by, for example, "incorrectly" speaking her name during a formal pronouncement) while privately working against her and her courtly interests. She has no idea why the Otomo has singled her out for his particular attention. The reason is actually quite straightforward: Akio does not like the Scorpion generally, considering them underhanded and responsible for much of the political unrest that has plagued the Empire throughout its history. Worse, they are still widely seen as the natural political counterbalance to the Crane – a position Akio believes should belong to his own family, the Otomo. If Akio had his way, the Scorpion would remain a minor force in the Colonies, allowing the Otomo to evolve into the political force they should be. The best he can otherwise do is work at undermining their attempts to further their own interests. Thus he chooses to disrupt and keep off-balance the woman he considers to be their most competent politician in the Colonies.

If Toshiko knew this, she would probably be flattered... to a point, anyway. As it is, she has come to despise Otomo Akio. However, she is a canny enough courtier that she doesn't let her feelings show; she simply rides out his numerous little outrages with bland grace. However, if an opportunity presents itself for her to humble Akio – even better, to ruin him utterly – she will not hesitate to capitalize on it. It would have to be a near-certain opportunity, however; Toshiko did not get to where she is by taking ill-considered risks.

If the PCs meet with Toshiko, they find her a charming hostess. However, she will be cool to any group that doesn't include at least one Scorpion; such a group will require time to build up her trust and even then will have to make her assistance worth her while in some fashion. (The only commodity that matters to her is information; material bribes will earn little from her but scorn.) She will warm more quickly to a group that includes Scorpion characters, particularly if they are known to her either personally or by reputation (e.g. having Status or Glory close to hers). In any case, Toshiko will not rush into a trusted relationship with anyone, and will certainly seek something of value in return for any information she provides—even if it is simply a promise of future favors.

Bayushi Toshiko can provide the following pieces of information, in ascending order of the level of trust required for her reveal them. The GM

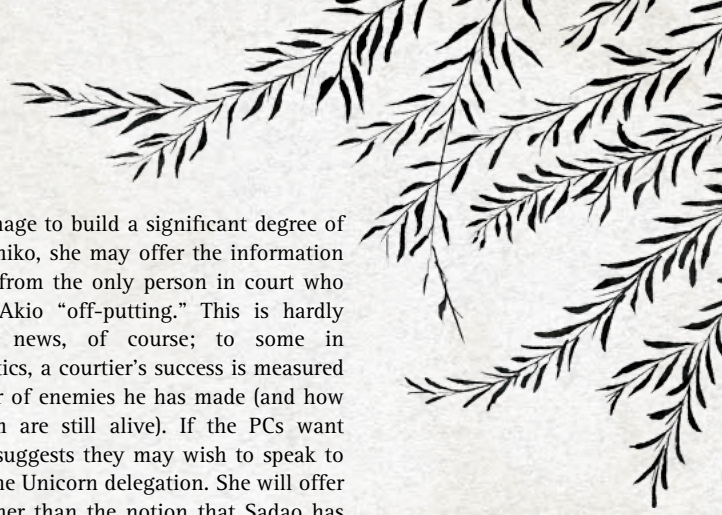


will have to judge whether the PCs have gained sufficient credibility with Toshiko for her to provide the next piece of information.

- Her initial small talk is just that – small talk. However, Toshiko will use the opportunity to discern the PC's motives and intentions, rolling her Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness, opposed by either Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit, as appropriate) / Awareness or perhaps Etiquette (Courtesy or Conversation, as appropriate) / Awareness. If the PCs prevail, Toshiko will accept their assertions at face value, but will remain wary. If Toshiko wins the contested roll, she will realize the PCs are seeking more than they are letting on. This won't necessarily put her off (she's quite used to hidden agendas), but it will make her even more cautious.
- If the PCs bring up the matter of Otomo Akio's difficult relationship with her, she won't deny it – it's actually common knowledge – but she will try to pass it off as just another facet of court life, attributing it to a tacit acknowledgement by Akio that the Scorpion are a political force to be reckoned with. She won't, however, rise to any baiting by the PCs regarding Akio, nor will she openly reveal her true hatred for him – she's too smart for that. If the PCs want to penetrate the veil she places over her feelings, they will need to make Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness rolls, contested by Toshiko's Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness. If they succeed, they will catch a brief glimpse of the venom behind her words when she speaks about Akio.
- Toshiko has no particular opinion on Akio's reputed fascination with gaijin artifacts. If pressed, she will acknowledge it as somewhat peculiar, but notes that the habits of many in the Colonies seem "peculiar" from a Rokugani point of view. During the course of the conversation, she may offhandedly offer there are others who share Akio's interest in gaijin trinkets, such as a Crane named Doji Chonitsu. It is up to the GM if he wants to provide a hard link between Akio and Chonitsu at this point, but if the PCs haven't yet made the connection, this is a good opportunity to give it to them. Toshiko doesn't know any details (although she does know that Akio himself has been breaking the law to smuggle his artifacts into the city – see below), but she can confirm that the two have met and have discussed at length the "barbaric bits of pottery" that seem to fascinate both of them. If the PCs seem greatly interested in this connection, they will pique her interest and prompt her to begin asking what they know about the matter. This may call for further Contested Social rolls. If the PCs at this point really do know something substantially problematic about the relationship between Akio and Chonitsu, and Toshiko senses that, she will press them even harder. She'd be thrilled to bring Otomo Akio down and won't pass up a potential opportunity to do so.

- If the PCs manage to build a significant degree of trust with Toshiko, she may offer the information that she's far from the only person in court who finds Otomo Akio "off-putting." This is hardly earth-shaking news, of course; to some in Rokugani politics, a courtier's success is measured by the number of enemies he has made (and how many of them are still alive). If the PCs want specifics, she suggests they may wish to speak to Ide Sadao of the Unicorn delegation. She will offer little detail other than the notion that Sadao has some issue with Akio related to "crass commerce" (said with a dismissive hand-wave). This is, in fact, true; Toshiko has attempted to learn more about Sadao's problems with Akio, but is completely put off by the gruff Unicorn, not to mention matters of commerce which she considers base and uncouth.
- She may also offer that some among the Otomo family itself have issues with Otomo Akio. However, she will have to have developed a solid base of trust in the PCs before she'll name Otomo Shigeo. What she knows is that Shigeo despises Akio as much as she does, if not more, and it is a hatred born of resentment and thwarted ambition. She has no interest in Shigeo beyond his usefulness as a tool against Akio; frankly, she believes Shigeo is a buffoon, who probably deserved to be passed over in favor of more capable people. If she can use him to strike at Akio, and it happens to bring Shigeo to final ruin in the process, she won't lose any sleep over it. And if the PCs appear, to her, as a way to further manipulate Shigeo, while allowing her to stay at arm's length...so much the better.
- Finally, Toshiko has one truly devastating piece of information: she knows that Seppun Toriko, the Mistress of the Gates, has on several occasions allowed Otomo Akio's gaijin artworks to pass through the gates of the Imperial District without proper inspection. This is a very valuable piece of information which Toshiko has been holding for several months, waiting for an opportune time to use it – the PCs will have to truly impress her for her to share it with them.

The bottom line is that Toshiko will appear to be a gracious paragon of courtly charm, and a potentially powerful ally to the PCs, but she is first and foremost a cunning and ruthless Scorpion courtier. She will not hesitate to manipulate the PCs, use them to further her own and her clan's interests, take whatever she can from them, and leave them owing her favors – and most of all she will not put herself out for them or expose herself to any significant risk on their behalf. If she believes turning on the PCs will be to her advantage, she won't hesitate a heartbeat in doing so.





BAYUSHI TOSHIKO, SKILLED COURTIER

| | | | | |
|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|---------------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 2 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 3 |
| AWARENESS: 4 | | WILLPOWER: 3 | | PERCEPTION: 3 |
| Honor: 3.0 | | Status: 3.5 | | Glory: 5.6 |

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 4

Skills: Acting 3, Artisan: Poetry 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Courtier (Rhetoric, Manipulation) 6, Defense 1, Etiquette (Conversation, Courtesy) 6, Games: Letters 3, Games: Sadane 3, Investigation (Interrogation) 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: Theology 3, Meditation 2, Perform: Oratory 4, Perform: Storytelling 3, Sincerity (Honesty, Deceit) 5, Temptation 5

Advantages: Allies (many), Blackmail (many), Crafty, Social Position (prominent courtier)

IDE SADAO

Ide Sadao is short, squat man, with leathery weatherbeaten skin, a scruffy beard, and a drooping “Fu Manchu” moustache. He lumbers about on bandy legs bowed from a life in the saddle, and when he smiles, he grins, exposing a gleaming tooth of gold. He is every bit the uncouth barbarian many proper Rokugani believe the Unicorn to be; in fact, some of this image is clearly played up for effect. Ide Sadao is actually a clever and resourceful man, well-versed in Rokugani political etiquette, which is why he knows just how far he can bend the conventions without entirely breaking them. He is a wealthy merchant patron and caravan owner, a veteran of more than a dozen crossings of the Ki-Rin’s Path to Rokugan.

It is Sadao’s commercial interests which lie at the heart of his problems with Otomo Akio. For reasons he has yet to fathom, Akio has endorsed Sadao’s fiercest rival, Ide Uchi, in the trade of gaijin and other goods through Journey’s End Keep (see Chapter Four for more details). Sadao has found himself effectively shut out of the lucrative trade with the Burning Sands. Moreover, because this has left him essentially idle in the Second City, the head of the Unicorn delegation to the Ivory Court has seen fit to appoint Sadao to a relatively minor court position. It’s bad enough that the adventurous Ide now finds himself relegated to tedious bureaucratic duties, but he has to perform them daily under the lofty gaze of Otomo Akio, the very man he blames for his predicament in the first place!

In short, Ide Sadao is not a happy man. However, he does a good job of hiding his frustration and resentment behind a veneer of gruff congeniality. He is actually a reasonably skilled courtier – Sadao long ago learned the same people skills that serve so well in court are just as

applicable to the mercantile world – but usually conceals this by playing up his persona as a coarse, crude, and sometimes outright rude “outsider.” While this makes Sadao colorful and definitely unforgettable, it also leads others to underestimate him or take him for granted – errors in judgment which he is only too happy to exploit.

The PCs will find that in the Ivory Court (or close to the Governor’s Palace in general) Sadao is brashly genial but also entirely uncommittal. He doesn’t especially like politicians and certainly doesn’t like being around them, so he will tend to be evasive and abrupt. Nor is he the sort to chat to over tea. If they persist in trying to engage him in this sort of setting, the PCs will have to make a Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll against a high TN to persuade Sadao to have a substantive meeting with them. Even then, he will prove less than gracious and will not provide any information beyond a few basics, as follows:

- ☉ Sadao makes no secret of the fact that he doesn’t like being “stuck” in the Ivory Court. He considers himself an adventurer, a trader and if circumstances demand a warrior, not a politician. If the PCs explore this, they will learn Sadao has made numerous trips to and from Rokugan via the Ki-Rin’s Path and in the past has taken a trade caravan into the Burning Sands as far as the fabled city of Medinaat al-Salaam. He clearly wants out of his courtly duties so he can go back to Journey’s End Keep and resume his “rightful place” as an explorer and trader. (If he’s asked about the sea route to Rokugan, he’ll scoff and snap a comment about “wasting time wafting across an endless expanse of water and boredom.”)
- ☉ If the PCs mention Ide Uchi (most likely due to having already played through the events of Chapter Four), a dark scowl will cross Sadao’s face, but other than acknowledging Uchi as a “business rival” he won’t elaborate. He will have a similar reaction regarding Otomo Akio but will say even less.
- ☉ On the other hand, if the PC’s bring up the events of Chapter Three (the issues in and around Kalani’s Landing), Sadao will offer a blank shrug. He has heard of some of the individuals involved, but knows nothing about the situation and cares even less. His interests clearly lie north of the Second City.

If the PCs really want to communicate with Ide Sadao, they will need to meet with him in the sort of surroundings he prefers – the dim anonymity of a sake house or noodle shop will do fine, as long as it’s well away from the Palace, so the various establishments of that sort in the Merchant and Artisan Districts will do well. If the PCs do some digging, however – perhaps by surreptitiously following Sadao in the evening after he leaves the Ivory Court, or by rolling Investigation or Courtier (Gossip) against a fairly high TN – they can learn that Sadao frequents a geisha house on the Artisan District’s Licensed Quarter: the House of Radiant Fog. If the PCs choose to meet with him there, they can potentially find him at his most communicative.

THE HOUSE OF RADIANT FOG

Although it is depicted here for the specific purpose of giving the PCs a less formal venue in which to meet Ide Sadao, the House of Radiant Fog can be used for many other purposes as the GM sees fit – meetings with other NPCs, an informal base of operations for the PCs, or simply a locale for some light-hearted roleplaying (which is especially valuable in a campaign that may otherwise be full of unrelenting tension and menace).

The House of Radiant Fog is a large two-story wooden building, set back from the street. It is fronted by a small courtyard with a lush garden of native plants, including a single large date palm that predates the Second City's construction, as well as leafy ferns, broad-leaved succulents, and a riot of flowering shrubs and vines. The flagstone path from the gate to the front door winds an S-turn through the foliage, making it impossible to see the door from the street. The place is otherwise unremarkable, with no signs or markers to advertise it other than a large paper lantern hanging over the gate; the lantern has the kanji for "fog" stenciled onto it.

The front of the House is essentially a restaurant, offering a mix of traditional Rokugani food and a few native dishes based on fish, vegetables, and fruit. The sake and tea are supplemented by a native liquor called

taadi, made from fermented palm sugar. Quality of both food and drink are middling – decent, but not exceptional by any means. The front of the House of Radiant Fog is typically busy, but there are several discreet tables tucked into the back and separated by teak screens, offering a reasonable amount of privacy for groups of up to six.

If the PCs want to get deeper into the House, they will have to consult with the matron (also called the "mama-san"), a dour older woman named Satoka (Wise Flower). Satoka generally hovers about the front room, keeping an eye out for customers, trouble, or both. If she is approached about the services of geisha, she will take such customers to a private room in the back of the house, on either the first or second floor. While there is no fee for this, Satoka expects the samurai to offer a gift of some sort (*koku* are fine) to "honor the House." The rooms are rather plain, but discreet and private, with wooden walls stout enough to prevent all but the most determined eavesdropping. The geisha themselves are charming young women, skilled in serving food and drink and in various sorts of performance, including singing, playing musical instruments, and dancing.





GEISHA OF THE HOUSE OF RADIANT FOG

Geisha are first and foremost entertainers, devoted to providing samurai with companionship and relaxation. Geisha occupy a unique place in the social order; they are hinin, non-persons, and yet are treated with courtesy and respect by most samurai. They provide a vital service by giving tightly-wound samurai a means of regaining their humanity and venting pent-up emotions without the embarrassment of doing so in the presence of an actual person. They also can become a “safe” object of romance for passionate samurai, since keeping a concubine does not carry the same social disapproval as a romance with a fellow samurai.

Geisha traditionally have simple, playful names that are easy for their customers to remember. GMs who wish to give the population of the House of Radiant Fog some character and depth can use the following list of names:

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Ichimitsu</i> | First (or Best) Light |
| <i>Ichisumi</i> | Most Refined |
| <i>Koito</i> | Little Thread |
| <i>Koyuki</i> | Little Snow |
| <i>Miu</i> | Little Feather |
| <i>Teruha</i> | Shining Leaf |



MEETING IDE SADAO AT THE HOUSE OF RADIANT FOG

Since the whole point of geisha and the companionship they provide is based on privacy and discretion, the PCs will have to be similarly discreet about how they go about finding Ide Sadao. The GM may wish to facilitate this by allowing the PCs to catch a glimpse of him through a door as it closes, or hear his voice from inside a room. In any case, the PCs may then attempt to engage Sadao in conversation. The GM should emphasize this is highly irregular; generally, a samurai in a geisha house is considered by unspoken etiquette to be “off-limits” for official business with respect to everyone but his lord. A smart approach would be to have a message delivered to Sadao that they will be waiting for him in the front of the House, or in another room. If they simply knock on his door and interrupt, however, Sadao is unlikely to be well-disposed to them and will certainly expect an apology for their rudeness.

Assuming the PCs are ultimately able to sit down with Sadao – in the House of Radiant Fog or somewhere similar – under more-or-less amicable circumstances, they will find him relaxed and readily approachable. As a result, he has significantly more information he can share:

- Given the chance, Sadao will bemoan his lot in life, stuck in the stuffy confines of the Ivory Court when he truly wishes to be traveling the open road and feeling – as he rather poetically puts it – “the night wind” on his face. He hastens to add that he is not disloyal and will do as his lord commands. Nonetheless, his heart is clearly that of a wanderer. If the PCs ask him why he isn’t journeying or exploring, his face will darken and he will mutter, “the Fortunes have decreed otherwise for me...and by Fortunes, I really mean certain men who are best left unnamed.”
- If he is pressed on this issue, Sadao will finally offer up the name of Ide Uchi, his rival in Journey’s End Keep. The PCs will also begin to learn that Sadao is motivated by more than simple wanderlust; he is also interested in profiting from his travels. (Indeed, his interest in this is such that a proper samurai would probably find unseemly – Sadao often sounds not unlike a money-grubbing Yasuki or Yoritomo.) It soon becomes clear that Sadao is most bitter at being shut out of a very lucrative trade in foreign goods from the Burning Sands – not because Ide Uchi is the better businessman or more canny merchant, oh no, but because he has the unfair advantage of patronage from high places, right here in the Second City.
- Sadao won’t hesitate to name Doji Chonitsu as part of that slippery knot of patronage that grants Ide Uchi trade opportunities “too good for the likes of him.” However, he becomes more reticent if asked who else is involved, and will initially try to avoid naming Otomo Akio. Sadao knows Akio is a cunning and ruthless politician and is wary of crossing him. If the PCs have managed to give Sadao any sense that they aren’t playing straight with him or are just too eager to get information, he may get spooked. It wouldn’t be beyond Akio, after all, to plant agents to ferret out those who might be his enemies. The GM will have to play this carefully, and if the PCs have made Sadao nervous they’ll have to work hard to get any more out of him. Fortunately, Sadao is desperate for any opportunity to break free of his current situation.
- Ultimately, the PCs will have to earn Sadao’s trust to get him to name Otomo Akio or to acknowledge a connection between Akio and Doji Chonitsu. This is ultimately up to the GM’s judgment, but in general if the PCs are meeting Sadao in the comfortable surroundings of the House of Radiant Fog, if he has been put at ease (such as with sake and good food), if they have said or at least intimated that they are prepared to assist him in disentangling himself from the politics of the Second City, and most of all if they haven’t given him reason to distrust them, he will eventually be forthcoming. Sadao hasn’t been a merchant patron as long as he has without making connections. He has learned Doji Chonitsu is an associate of Otomo Akio, and that Akio is behind Ide Uchi’s rise to fortune at his expense. He isn’t sure why the Otomo has chosen



to favor Uchi and doesn't really care. He simply wants in on the action – or, more to the point, he wants Uchi out of the action so he can take it over.

- If the PCs continue questioning Sadao about Akio and Chonitsu, he can offer two other pieces of information they may find useful. First, although Doji Chonitsu is (as far as Sadao knows) Akio's political junior, the relationship reported back to him portrays them more as equals. Certainly Chonitsu wields much more influence with Akio than one would expect from a mere merchant patron. Second, Akio apparently has something Chonitsu wants. Sadao isn't sure what it is, other than it is some item (or items) of Ivory Kingdoms origin. It would appear Chonitsu is expending considerable effort on Akio's behalf, presumably as part of a deal to obtain whatever it is he is seeking from the Otomo. Sadao knows nothing more than this, but would be extremely interested in learning more details, if only as a way of insinuating himself into the Akio-Chonitsu-Uchi triangle and gaining leverage over some or all of them.

IDE SADAO, CUNNING MERCHANT

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 3 | VOID: 2 |
| AWARENESS: 4 | | INTELLIGENCE: 3 | | |
| Honor: 4.2 | Status: 2.5 | Glory: 3.8 | Infamy: 2.1 | |

School/Rank: Ide Diplomat 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Commerce (Merchant) 5, Courtier 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 5, Hunting (Survival) 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Burning Sands 4, Lore: Law 2, Lore: Theology 2, Medicine 3, Sincerity 3

Advantages: Servants, Way of the Land (Ki-Rin's Path), Wealth

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation, Compulsion (geisha, sake), Sworn Enemy (Ide Uchi)

OTOMO SHIGEO

Otomo Shigeo is short balding man in his forties who stands and walks with a perpetual hunch, as though he's always carrying a tiresome burden. His face tries to maintain the bland affability of a practiced courtier, but his eyes are a touch too hard, his thin mouth a little too quick to switch from empty smile to pinched frown. A whiff of sourness leaks around the edges of his blank charm, like a plate of food that looks appetizing at first but is clearly about to go bad. Shigeo is a man whose unhappiness is profound, and he has been that way for a long time – indeed, for what amounts to all of his life.

and personal way. He blames Akio for stealing from him his final and greatest chance to vindicate a career of undeserved failure and lost opportunities. A lifetime of thwarted ambition has been distilled to a bitterness so concentrated it is like acid, and it eats away at Shigeo, hollowing him out beneath his detached mask of courtly dignity. Shigeo is an explosion of outrage, perhaps even of violence, just waiting to happen.

If the PCs approach Shigeo, their first impression will be that of just another relatively minor courtier of limited skill and ambition. Even without Social Skill rolls, however, this initial impression will quickly give way to that of a man who is deeply angry about something, trying hard to suppress it and not quite succeeding. Any attempts to probe further will encounter little to no resistance, and the GM may even wish to award bonuses to PCs using Skills or Techniques against Shigeo; for example, a Bayushi Courtier using "Secrets are Birthmarks" could receive a Free Raise when attempting to glean information from Shigeo about his true feelings or motives. Shigeo isn't entirely an open book, but it takes little effort to discern that his anger and bitterness are particularly focused on Otomo Akio. However, while he's a relatively poor courtier, he isn't truly stupid; he'll refrain from openly saying anything especially incriminating or insulting about Akio. For example, he will not say anything like, "Otomo Akio stole the karo position that was mine by right," but he will certainly say things like "Otomo Akio's shadow looms large over this court," or "I am honored to follow my esteemed cousin Otomo Akio as he rises to greatness" in a tone of acidic hatred.

The question for the PCs, of course, is what to do with this information. It should not be difficult to manipulate Shigeo into overtly turning against Akio and speaking out against his cousin. However, aside from getting Shigeo shamed and forced to commit seppuku, this will probably



OTHER APPROACHES TO THE NPCs

Throughout this chapter, it is assumed the PCs are likely to approach the various NPC personalities — Bayushi Toshiko, Ide Sadao, Otomo Shigeo, and Doji Shumiko — in a diplomatic and rather “soft” way, using social persuasion to uncover what they know. However, not all interpersonal relationships are so amicable, and some PCs may be tempted to try other approaches. Perhaps such methods better fit their characters’ personalities, or perhaps they believe they are facing a time constraint and don’t have the luxury of using the “soft approach.” A Yoritomo Courtier may be inclined to use bluster and intimidation, a Yasuki may prefer bribery, a Bayushi may want to dig up some dirt for blackmail purposes. The GM shouldn’t feel bound to restrict the players to any particular approach; this is colonial Rokugan, after all, and dirty underhanded politics are as much a part of the setting as persuasive chats over tea. The following points may be useful if the PCs choose a less diplomatic approach to each of these NPCs.

Bayushi Toshiko – As a skilled Scorpion courtier, Toshiko is a tough nut to crack. She comes from the clan that is essentially synonymous with dirty politics, and would not be where she is if she wasn’t good at burying the skeletons of her past rather than just hiding them in the proverbial closet. She is also resistant to threats or violence, since she knows she has the backing of the Scorpion Clan against anyone foolish enough to resort to such methods. The PCs will probably have to deal her in the way she prefers if they are to get anywhere.

Ide Sadao – The gruff Ide is far from morally pristine and has underlying motives the PCs should be able to exploit. He is greedy by nature, so he is probably open to bribery. That said, he is a wily merchant, so while he may have his price it will be steep. If the GM wants to dangle a hook for potential blackmail, assume Sadao has begun a romance with one of the geisha in the House of Radiant Fog; perhaps she is even carrying or has born his child. While this is far from rare in Rokugan, it would still be an embarrassment in court and the last thing Sadao wants while trying to escape the drudgery of that self-same court. Mechanically, the Intimidation Skill would be the most relevant here.

Otomo Shigeo – The hapless Otomo presents a different problem: he has committed so many well-known gaffes and blunders it’s hard to imagine anything that would further embarrass the man. However, Shigeo’s vices include envy and lust – not for carnal or physical rewards, but for validation, for recognition of the talents and abilities he believes he actually possesses. Ruthless PCs should have little trouble manipulating the man and offering him the things he wants, even if they have no way of making good on what they promise. This would most likely involve the use of the Temptation Skill. Another approach would be the use of Intimidation against the weak-willed Shigeo. The PCs should beware, however, of pushing Shigeo too far and causing him to lapse into irrational actions.

Doji Shumiko – The young Doji will be immune to bribery, and attempts to intimidate her are likely to end with her taking insult and challenging the would-be intimidator to a duel (through a champion, of course—probably a Kakita kenshinzen). But she is also a young woman, so attempts to sway her through romance (via the Temptation (Seduction) Skill, perhaps backed up by Advantages such as Dangerous Beauty or Benten’s Blessing) may be fruitful. The GM may require such a suitor to use Sincerity (Deceit) to convince her of the “truth” of his feelings for her. An infatuated Shumiko may become open to suggestions for assistance as long as they are not too obvious or egregious. How to subsequently disengage from the relationship without dire consequences is another problem, of course. A heartbroken courtier can cause considerable damage to her foes...

Otomo Shigeo is actually a relatively recent immigrant to the Colonies, arriving from mainland Rokugan only three years ago. At one time or another he has been appointed to almost every court in the Empire, which on the face of it sounds like an impressive record. However, each appointment has been a step downward from the last. An initial station as a novice diplomat in the Imperial Court of Toshi Ranbo led to ever more menial assignments, ending with a posting as a minor bureaucrat supporting the small Imperial delegation to the Tortoise Clan. But even that ignominious posting wasn’t the end; Shigeo’s next appointment was a “promotion” to become a junior Otomo delegate in the Second City.

The simple fact is that Otomo Shigeo is incompetent – enough so that he threatens to harm the standing of the Otomo in important places, but not so much as to require seppuku. Worse, he fails to recognize his own incompetence – he is probably too incompetent to do so – and more importantly, neither do his influential parents. His masters among the Otomo have therefore chosen to deal with Shigeo in the time-honored custom of pretending to promote him so as to move him as far away as possible and make him someone else’s problem.

Otomo Shigeo’s bitterness already ran deep when he first set foot on Colonial soil. He believed himself a victim, forever kept down by the ambitions of others. His transfer to the Colonies was nothing more than an elaborate form of exile. He was stunned, therefore, when he was appointed karo to the head of the Otomo delegation in the Second City. This was a seemingly prestigious appointment, and Shigeo had no idea this was simply a way of keeping him under close scrutiny. When the position of karo to the Chancellor of the Left came open, Shigeo somehow managed to convince himself it was the next logical step for him; his superiors had finally begun to recognize and appreciate his talents. And then out of nowhere came his cousin Otomo Akio, a relatively minor courtier with nowhere near his own clout. Shigeo could feel the weight of Akio’s foot pressing him down as his cousin stepped into the position of Chancellor’s karo, the position that should have been his – and his bitterness was back, magnified like the sun through a gajjin spy-glass and focused squarely on Otomo Akio.

Unlike Bayushi Toshiko, who detests Otomo Akio as a political rival, or Ide Sadao, who despises him for meddling in his business affairs, Shigeo hates Akio in a very visceral

accomplish little. If the PCs are wise they will attempt to pump Shigeo for more information about Akio. He actually possesses some important information, although he isn't aware of its significance. This is because Shigeo benefits from a character flaw of Akio's that isn't unusual in ambitious men of high station: Akio has so little regard for Shigeo that he takes him entirely for granted. He thinks of Shigeo as little more than a scribe if he thinks about him at all, and has thus let slip things he would never reveal to someone he respected. Thus if the PCs probe what Shigeo knows, they may uncover some or all of the following, at the GM's discretion:

- Otomo Akio has frequent dealings with the Crane delegation, more than with any other clan or family. Shigeo doesn't know this is because Doji Chonitsu has manipulated him into dealing closely with the Crane. Chonitsu has done this both to solidify his own relationship with Akio and to be able to blunt any political moves the Crane make that might disrupt the rakshasa's secret plans.
- Conversely, Akio works actively against the Scorpion in every possible way. Shigeo has gleaned, from conversations between Akio and the Otomo delegation head, that Akio despises the Scorpion, ostensibly because the Clan of Secrets represents the most serious threat among all clans to the standing and interests of the Otomo. Again, although Shigeo doesn't know this, this is Chonitsu's work; he has taken the natural Otomo distrust of the Scorpion and carefully focused and magnified it. He is using Akio to keep the Scorpion off-balance and thus neutralize what he sees as one of the more serious threats to his plans.
- Shigeo has seen Akio in Doji Chonitsu's company; in fact, Chonitsu has attended several meetings involving Akio. He has noted that Akio tends to listen to Chonitsu closely on those occasions when the Doji offers to speak, and typically gives great weight to whatever Chonitsu has offered to the discussion. Shigeo was present, for example, when Chonitsu suggested in a meeting involving both the Otomo and the Crane that Akio would benefit from taking Doji Shumiko on as his own karo. Such a decision would naturally belong solely to the head of the Crane delegation, but once the suggestion was planted, all present seemed to quickly agree. (It is, unfortunately, typical of Otomo Shigeo that he has failed to attach any significance to the relationship between Akio and Chonitsu. Instead, he tried to emulate Chonitsu's approach during a meeting, openly offering a suggestion about a petition about to go before the Chancellor; Akio casually dismissed Shigeo's comment, humiliating him before many important members of the Court.)

OTOMO SHIGEO AS LOOSE CANNON

The PCs must be careful in dealing with Otomo Shigeo. If they say the wrong thing they may raise suspicions in the volatile Otomo's mind, perhaps even causing him to "connect the dots" in a way that suggests something is amiss in Otomo Akio's behavior. Since Shigeo is desperately anxious to strike back at his hated cousin in any possible way, this may prompt him to rash and probably disastrous action.

If the GM wants to throw a serious curveball at the PCs, he could have Otomo Shigeo speak out against Akio, either through clumsily planted rumors or even openly in court, accusing Akio of being corrupt, of unduly favoring the Crane, or of working against the Scorpion. Of course, the word of a minor and rather contemptible courtier is nothing against that of someone like Otomo Akio, so Shigeo may turn to others to support his case. The Crane and Scorpion, of course, will want nothing to do with the man, and no one else is likely to take his side – which leaves only the PCs. Thus if the GM really wants to put the PCs on the spot, he could have the desperate Shigeo turn and point to them as backing his case. This leaves the PCs with two options: they can disavow Shigeo and leave him to his fate (probably a forced public apology to Akio, followed by seppuku), or they can try to support him. Cutting him loose is the smarter choice, albeit a ruthless one, but over-bold and/or soft-hearted PCs may try to support Shigeo's accusations. In fact, if the PCs have accumulated hard evidence or useful testimony during other parts of this campaign, information that actually implicates Akio in dishonorable affairs, they may choose this moment to show their hand. (If so, the action should move to the section "Next Steps" at the end of this chapter.) However, if the PCs aren't able to quickly put forward a strong case, they will be in serious trouble.





Akio could demand, and the Governor would likely grant, a demand for them to recant their accusations and commit seppuku right along with Shigeo. This is a harsh outcome and one that likely ends the campaign in failure (for these PCs, anyway), but Rokugani politics can be harsh and unforgiving.

Alternatively, Akio could demand satisfaction through a duel between his appointed champion and that of the PCs. Normally Akio will be unlikely to go this route, since it carries the possibility of failure and offers him no particular benefit in return. But if it suits the GM's story, he should feel free to have a smug if somewhat rash Otomo Akio decide the theatrics of a duel better suit his purposes. Akio's champion, Seppun Hoitsu, is detailed at the end of this chapter. He is a deadly duelist as designed, but the GM should feel free to modify him so he presents a proper challenge to whatever PC will be engaging in the duel. In any case, the outcome of the duel will be the same – if the PCs' champion loses, they are bound to offer their seppuku. If their champion wins, however, they have turned the tables on Akio and the action once more advances to "Next Steps" at the end of the chapter.

Finally, Akio may choose to have the PCs exiled from the Second City. In the Colonies, exile normally takes the form of banishment into the jungles with the Spider Clan. This fate, which is generally viewed as a particularly vile, humiliating, and protracted form of death sentence, is detailed in Chapter Seven. If the GM does not want a failed action by the PCs to result in their deaths, this is the best option, since it allows the possibility for the PCs to continue their quest to save the Colonies from Raniyah the Sly.

OTOMO SHIGEO AS USEFUL ALLY

If the PCs are careful in their handling of Otomo Shigeo, none of the dire circumstances described in the previous section need come to pass. If they are able to win Shigeo's trust – which won't be hard if they seem sincerely interested in pursuing some sort of investigation of Otomo Akio – without setting him off, they will find him an eager and willing ally. He is well positioned to ferret out additional information about Akio, benefiting from having access to meetings and court activities as the Otomo head's karo. He also has the advantage of still being largely beneath Otomo Akio's notice and concern. If they are able to coax Shigeo into this role, he can provide them with the following information and assistance:

- ☉ Otomo Akio meets regularly with the head of the Otomo delegation, seeking support for a variety of political matters and offering various support of his own in return. At the end of the latest meeting, right before they were to adjourn, Akio said, "Oh, yes... one other matter," and went on to ask the Otomo head for an additional favor. It involved obtaining assistance in dissuading the Ivory Champion from redirecting Magistrates from the region around the Second City southward to Kalani's Landing. When asked for details, Akio explained the Ivory Champion had heard reports suggesting that a trade dispute in the city was threatening to spiral into criminality; Akio suggested these reports were exaggerated and said he personally knew the Magistrate in Kalani's Landing, one Miya Ichiko. She had already assured him the whole affair was overblown and easily handled by the resources at her disposal. Akio expressed worry that the Ivory Champion was being fed false information, perhaps as a larger plot to deplete the law enforcement capability in and around the Second City. This bit of information can serve two purposes – to draw the attention of the PCs to Kalani's Landing and the trade conflict in Chapter Three if they are not already aware of it; and to demonstrate the extent to which Akio is involved in manipulating events around that trade conflict.

☉ Shigeo knows Akio has lately had several meetings with the Spider Clan delegation. This is unusual because Akio, like many of the traditionalist Otomo, abhors the Spider and tries to have as little to do with them as possible. In fact, the Spider had to reschedule a conflicted meeting with the Otomo delegation head in order to attend an "urgent" meeting with Otomo Akio. The Otomo head directed Shigeo to draft a suitably outraged letter over the slight, but was actually clearly relieved to not have to endure the unpleasantness of a meeting with the Spider.



- At the GM's option, Shigeo may know about Seppun Toriko and her family's obligation to Otomo Akio. He does not know Toriko has been allowing Akio to bring gaijin artifacts into the Imperial District without inspections – if he learned this it might well push him into rash action – but he can be another way to push the PCs to investigate Toriko.

OTOMO SHIGEO, EMBITTERED IMPERIAL

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| AIR: 2 | EARTH: 2 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 2 |
| AWARENESS: 3 | | WILLPOWER: 3 | | PERCEPTION: 3 |
| Honor: 3.6 | Status: 3.0 | Glory: 2.2 | Infamy: 2.6 | |

School/Rank: Otomo Courtier 2

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 2, Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 4, Etiquette (Courtesy) 3, Intimidation (Control) 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 2, Sincerity 3, Temptation 2

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (inept), Contrary, Jealousy (Otomo Akio)

DOJI SHUMIKO

Doji Shumiko is a prim young woman just a few years past her gempukku. She is everything one would expect from a young Crane: demure and unobtrusive, impeccable in her appearance and manners. Her eyes are quick and bright, showing her intelligence, and she is charming, graceful, and precise – the ideal, almost archetypical Doji courtier in the making. She would be perfect in the role of an apprentice politician, holding the position of a minor diplomat or court functionary under the supervision of a seasoned mentor. Why, then, has she been appointed to the relatively demanding and independent position of karo to Otomo Akio, himself the karo to the Chancellor of the Left?

Well out of Akio's earshot, the rumormongers spin their speculative tales. The most popular view is that Akio is charmed by the young Doji, seeking to have her close as he evaluates her worth as a lover or even a potential spouse. Others suggest her parents have exercised influence behind the scenes, seeking to have their daughter elevated quickly to a position of influence even if it risks earning her rivals among those left behind. In any case, the girl is where she is, and finds herself close to the focus of the most convoluted and high-stakes Ivory Court politics. She seems to be acquitting herself well, but the strain of adapting to such a demanding and relatively senior position is starting to show on her young face.

The PCs may have learned from Otomo Shigeo that elevating the young Shumiko to the position of Akio's karo was Doji Chonitsu's idea, and that it received—rather oddly—almost no dissent from anyone involved. If they haven't learned this from Otomo Shigeo, they may choose to investigate another way, perhaps by speaking to members of the Crane delegation. The Crane can be

just as much a pit of political vipers as the Scorpion (although they are far less menacing about it), so the PCs will be challenged to role-play well and use their Courtier, Etiquette and other Social Skills to glean anything of use. Having a Crane PC in the party will definitely be an advantage here. If they are successful, they will learn essentially the same thing Shigeo could have offered above – Shumiko being Akio's karo was Doji Chonitsu's idea.

If the PCs attempt to speak to Doji Shumiko, they will encounter some obstacles that don't apply to the older courtiers described previously. First, Shumiko knows she occupies a sensitive position in court, so she will be reluctant to speak with anyone about her superior. Moreover, Otomo Akio has instructed her to reject any formal meetings he hasn't approved. If the PCs attempt to meet with her informally – for instance, encountering her by chance in the gardens of the Governor's Palace, or making sure they are at the Shrine of Fukurokujin when she visits it next – not only will she be reticent, but another issue will arise: as a young unmarried girl, it is considered quite improper for her to meet with any male without a chaperon present. This obviously won't apply to female PCs, but they will still have their work cut out for them trying to get her talk about anything beyond simply niceties.

No matter what approach they use, if the PCs do manage to get Shumiko to open up, she will initially offer little information – and nothing about Otomo Akio's business matters in court, which she considers strictly confidential. What she does offer, however, will probably be of considerable interest to the PCs:





- ❶ It will be clear that she takes her duties as Otomo Akio's karo very seriously, including protecting the confidentiality of information she overhears and records on his behalf. Moreover, the job takes up essentially all of her time, leaving her with little opportunity for leisure (not that she considers that important) or even visiting with her family. The only other individual she sees with any regularity is Doji Chonitsu.
- ❷ Shumiko believes Doji Chonitsu is infatuated with her and is attempting to become her suitor. She is flattered by the attention and finds the man extremely charming. However, the formal arrangement of suitors and subsequent negotiation of marriage is a complex matter to which she has turned little thought. She is certain her clan will determine what is best for her. In the meantime, she continues to see Doji Chonitsu from time to time, sharing pleasant conversation over tea or dinner – properly chaperoned, of course.
- ❸ Shumiko of course knows nothing whatsoever about Chonitsu's true nature, nor is she aware the rakshasa is manipulating her, charming her to subtly reveal what it wants to know about Otomo Akio. In this way it is using Shumiko to keep tabs on Akio even when it cannot be present in its "Doji Chonitsu" guise.
- ❹ If the PCs are able to get Shumiko to reveal this much, they may also be able to get her reveal an additional fact: Chonitsu is very interested in something he believes Otomo Akio has in his extensive private collection of Ivory Kingdoms

artifacts – specifically, a single gaijin missile, a crossbow bolt. She knows Chonitsu is also a collector of gaijin artifacts, and thus accepts his claim that he is curious if Akio in fact has this item but is hesitant to bring it up himself, since if he does Akio will know he is interested in it, making the price go up. As a favor, he has asked Shumiko to determine if the item is in Akio's collection in his residence at Faun-ti's Tower. She has, and it is, but she has not yet met with Chonitsu to inform him of this.

It is possible the PCs will be able to get Shumiko to become more actively cooperative. A romantic seduction would be one way to accomplish this, as outlined in the sidebar "Other Approaches to the NPCs" earlier in this chapter. Barring that, another way would be to convince Shumiko that she is serving a dishonorable lord – such

as by revealing some of Akio's improper activities, like stifling the investigation in Kalani's Landing. This would probably require good role-playing and a suitable Social Skill Roll to persuade her of their truthfulness. Another variant on the same theme would be to convince her that Doji Chonitsu is a sinister individual or perhaps even a Shadowlands creature – this would again require skillful persuasion and high-TN Skill rolls, since the PCs are offering a rather improbable tale. (On the other hand, Shumiko is a very sincere and pious young woman, so PCs who display similar traits will have an advantage in winning her over – especially in the contrast they make with Akio and Chonitsu.) If the PCs do manage to gain more information from Shumiko, she can share the following additional clues:

- ❶ Shumiko is aware that many of the gaijin items in Akio's residence are the sort which would normally require extensive inspections before being allowed into the Imperial District. She has always assumed Akio arranged for such inspections but has no knowledge as to whether they have actually been done.
- ❷ She knows Akio sponsored the former herald Miya Ichiko to be Magistrate of Kalani's Landing. She also knows he arranged for Ide Uchi to gain the advantage over his rival Ide Sadao in the Burning Sands trade. She assumes these are normal activities for building political alliances and networks of favors.
- ❸ Shumiko knows Akio has had several recent meetings with the Spider Clan, but did not attend those meetings personally. She finds it somewhat disturbing that an Imperial of Akio's importance would meet privately with the Spider but has assumed he had suitable reasons.

DOJI SHUMIKO, KARO TO OTOMO AKIO

AIR: 2 EARTH: 2 FIRE: 2 WATER: 2 VOID: 3
AWARENESS: 3 INTELLIGENCE: 3 PERCEPTION: 3
Honor: 5.3 Status: 3.0 Glory: 3.4

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 2

Skills: Artisan: Ikebana 1, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Rhetoric) 3, Etiquette (Courtesy) 3, Games: Letters 2, Investigation 2, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 2, Lore: Theology 2, Meditation 2, Perform: Dance 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 3

Advantages: Bente's Blessing, Social Position (karo to Otomo Akio)

Disadvantages: Small

SEPPUN TORIKO

Although there are no rumors which point directly to Seppun Toriko, the PCs may be able to learn about her from Bayushi Toshiko or Doji Shumiko; at the GM's option, Otomo Shigeo might also know something about her.

Seppun Toriko, the Mistress of the Gates, is described in *Chapter One: The Imperial District* in Book One of this boxed set. She is an honorable woman but her family is under an obligation to Otomo Akio, and he has used this to force her into allowing his gaijin artifacts through the gates without prior inspections. If the PCs speak with Toriko, her honorable and dutiful nature will be easily apparent, but PCs who make a suitable Social Skill Roll (Courtier or Investigation would both be appropriate) may be able to sense the underlying conflict within her soul. Convincing Toriko to speak the truth about Akio's activities will not be easy, since she feels herself caught between her duty to her family and the demands of Bushido; the GM must adjudicate whether the PCs are making effective appeals, but in general the best approach will be to invoke the requirements of Honor. She is, after all, helping Akio to break the law and is thus behaving dishonorably herself, the source of her emotional torment.

Toriko's testimony is not intrinsically devastating enough to completely ruin Otomo Akio, but it can potentially be a very serious problem for him, and can also serve as a method of blackmail against him.

THE SPIDER CLAN

The PCs will most likely learn about Otomo Akio's meetings with the Spider Clan from the various pieces of information and accusations provided by the NPCs listed above. They may also be able to find out simply by seeking out gossip about Akio and/or the Spider Clan in the Second City. On the surface, these meetings may not seem overly unusual; the Spider Clan may be viewed with caution, suspicion, or even barely-veiled hostility by the delegates from the other clans, but they are officially considered to be legitimate inhabitants of the Colonies, and it falls within Akio's purview as karo to the Chancellor of the Left to ensure that issues and petitions brought forward by the Spider are given due consideration in the scheduling of audiences and court activities. In fact, from time to time

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSSBOW BOLT

The crossbow bolt in Akio's collection is a very specific and special item: it was blessed by the priests of Vishnu, and thus is potentially extremely deadly to rakshasa. The nature of the blessing prevents a rakshasa from even coming in contact with the weapon. It represents a serious threat to the creature's plans. Thus, if Shumiko later confirms the item's location to Doji Chonitsu (most likely while the PCs are off investigating somewhere else), the rakshasa will arrange to have it stolen and disposed of by ronin hirelings – potentially creating a new avenue of investigation for the PCs if they have not yet resolved the campaign by that time.

Barring that, the PCs may or may not recognize the significance of the bolt, depending on to what extent they have completed other sections of the campaign, so what they do with the information about it is up to them. At the very least, they will know Doji Chonitsu is for some reason interested in this particular artifact.



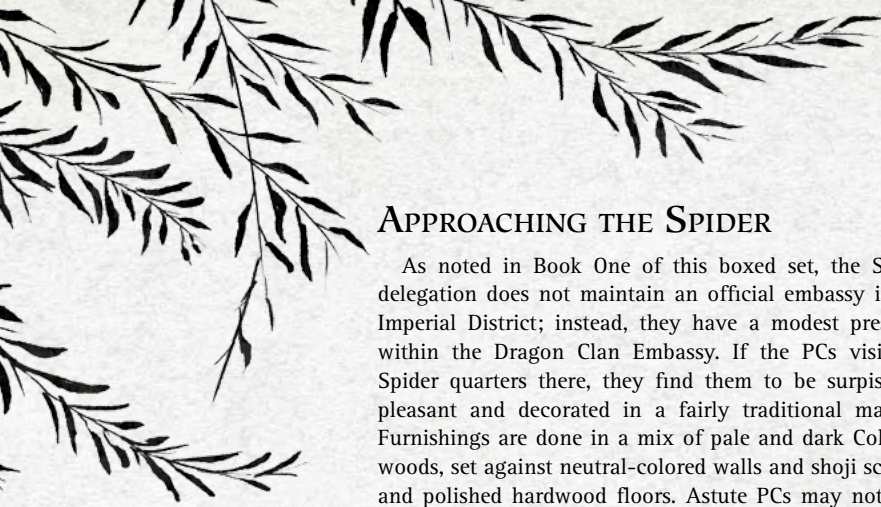
he meets with all of the various Great Clan delegations. If the PCs haven't learned about Akio's strong distaste for the Spider, the most they are likely to determine is that Akio meets somewhat less frequently with the Spider than he does with other delegations.

However, if the PCs have met with Akio or looked into his reputation with care, they may have learned he despises the Spider and has a history of trying to avoid meeting with them if at all possible. This makes a series of meetings in recent days seem noteworthy. The PCs could also learn that not only has Akio been meeting with the Spider more frequently but is doing so with more-than-usual good grace, arranging gifts, dinners, meetings over tea, and so forth.

There are several ways the PCs could attempt to investigate this. They could attempt to glean more information from the general assembly of Ivory Court delegates. This is, however, simply likely to result in a series of conflicting rumors, as well as alerting others that the PCs are interested in Akio's dealings with the Spider. Alternatively, they may attempt a more direct approach, attempting to obtain information from Akio's karo Doji Shumiko. This is also likely to be a dead-end, however. As noted previously, Akio has deliberately kept Shumiko in the dark about his dealings with the Spider, so she has no useful information to share beyond the fact that the meetings have taken place.

This leaves the PCs with essentially two options: approach the Spider directly and try to get information from them, or else attempt to spy on the interactions between Akio and the Spider.





APPROACHING THE SPIDER

As noted in Book One of this boxed set, the Spider delegation does not maintain an official embassy in the Imperial District; instead, they have a modest presence within the Dragon Clan Embassy. If the PCs visit the Spider quarters there, they find them to be surprisingly pleasant and decorated in a fairly traditional manner. Furnishings are done in a mix of pale and dark Colonial woods, set against neutral-colored walls and shoji screens and polished hardwood floors. Astute PCs may note the only colors are black, white, and shades of grey, aside from a few vibrant splashes of red on wall-hangings and sumi-e ink drawings. They will be met by a minor Spider functionary who wears the mon of the clan in such a discreet way that it is barely noticeable. Eventually, if the PCs do not give insult, they will be shown in to another monochrome sitting room where they meet with Susumu Minoru, the head of the Spider Clan delegation in the absence of its Champion, Daigotsu Kanpeki. (Kanpeki spends most of his time in the jungles with his conquerors, and his personal residence in the Peasant District is not open to minor visitors like the PCs in any event.)

Over pungent black tea, Minoru offers the PCs cordial greetings and expresses polite false regret that Daigotsu Kanpeki-sama himself could not greet them. He is away attending to the “ongoing labors of the Spider as they seek to win control of the Colonial wilderness in the glorious name of the Empress.” He will engage in dutiful but precisely appropriate small-talk, then enquire as to what the Spider have done to deserve the honor of receiving a visit from such esteemed guests as the PCs.

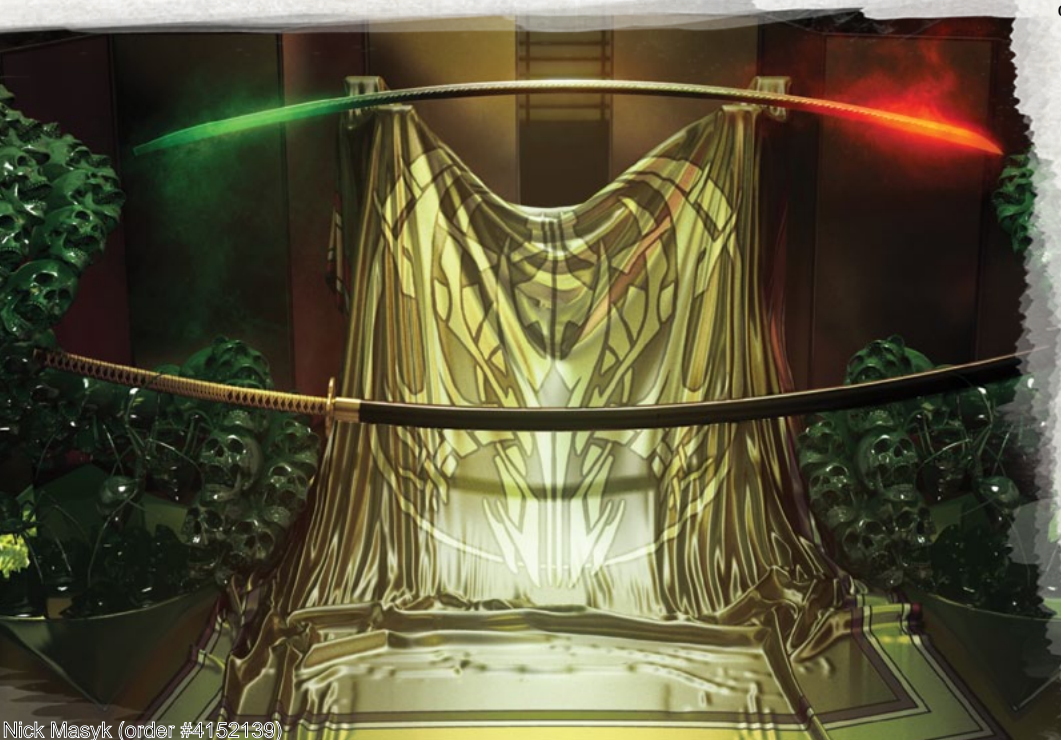
The PCs find Susumu Minoru a charming and gracious host, impeccably versed in the correct customs and traditions of Rokugani etiquette. His manner and dress are flawless and his smile effusive and disarming, even if it doesn't quite always reach his eyes. He is a reasonably skilled politician, so the PCs will have their work cut out for them obtaining information about what has transpired between him and Otomo Akio. Still, the PCs may well be

able to get Minoru to open up somewhat, either through good role-play, lucky die-rolls, or by offering arguments for why he should help them. This is not as difficult as it may seem: Minoru is well aware Otomo Akio actually despises the Spider and is wondering exactly why the Otomo has lately become such a “friend” of the clan, not to mention making the peculiar requests he has. Moreover, disrupting the smooth function of the Governor's Ivory Court and causing consternation and confusion among its members fits with the long-term Spider agenda of undermining the Empire's institutions. If Minoru senses Otomo Akio has somehow left himself politically vulnerable, especially if that vulnerability can be exploited at arm's length through the hapless PCs, he will not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity.

- ☉ Otomo Akio has, indeed, been in direct contact with the Spider lately. Minoru notes he is proving to be a “true friend” to the Spider Clan. Most of what he wanted to discuss were simply mundane matters of court. Minoru won't hesitate to subtly emphasize the word “most” if the GM is having him attempt to draw the PCs in.
- ☉ If the PCs manage to get Minoru to open up further (or if the GM simply chooses to have him do so), he will reveal Akio has taken to discussing the employment of Spider forces in the wilderness regions of the Colonies. In particular, he is interested if they have found any lost or abandoned temples or similar types of structures from the Ivory Kingdoms. Minoru has heard that Akio is a collector of Ivory Kingdoms artifacts, and muses this might be “one reason” he is interested in old temples. Again, if he is trying to keep the PCs hooked, he will coyly put an emphasis on this being only “one” reason for Akio's interest.
- ☉ If the PCs are able to press further or, again, Minoru is trying to string them along, he will eventually reveal Akio has made an “interesting” request of the Spider: that any such temple, shrine, or similar structure be destroyed. Moreover, any native Ivin-da found in the area are to be killed. Akio justified the request by noting such temples could house remnants of the Destroyer Cult. This is not an unreasonable concern, although an astute PC may enquire as to why such a request would come from the karo to the Chancellor of the Left rather than from the Governor or the Ivory Champion. Minoru has no answer to this, other than noting he has no reason to question “such an esteemed officer of the Ivory Court as Otomo Akio-sama.”

SPYING ON OTOMO AKIO

There are a number of reasons why the PCs might choose to begin spying on Otomo Akio, although his interactions with the Spider are the most obvious motive. Spying may be an especially appealing options to players who are running characters built around themes of reconnaissance or espionage – the various Scout schools, the Shosuro Infiltrators and Shosuro Actors, and so forth. And any



character who is willing to forsake honor in favor of using the Stealth and Acting Skills for improper purposes may likewise view spying as a alternative to more conventional investigations. Alternatively, players may have characters who don't need to use covert means to get near to Otomo Akio and gather information. For example, a character from the Spider Clan could legitimately be in the Spider quarters at the Dragon embassy while Akio is there, and then take advantage of that to eavesdrop.

The GM shouldn't discourage characters from attempting such subterfuge; spying and espionage are, after all, well represented in the L5R setting. That doesn't mean it should be easy, however. Otomo Akio is an experienced courtier, used to engaging in sensitive conversations while prying ears may be nearby. The reader may note that while Akio has not been specifically given a bodyguard, it would in fact be entirely reasonable for a person of Akio's stature to have a yojimbo nearby, at least while traveling away from the Governor's Palace or his residence. The GM can use Seppun Hoitsu, the potential dueling champion mentioned earlier, for this role. Thus any Skill Rolls made to spy on Akio would be opposed by both his own Skill Rolls and those of Hoitsu as well. In the case of the Spider ambassadorial quarters, any would-be spy is further going to have to contend with the Dragon and Spider guards as well as potential warning systems such as squeaking floorboards called "nightingale floors" and possibly even magical wards.

If the would-be spy avoids detection, though, the GM can allow him or her to gain a great variety of information. Spying on Akio's meetings with the Spider would yield all of the information that could be provided by Susumu Minoru above. Spying on Akio during other activities could yield a host of other clues, as follows:

- The spy could witness meetings between Akio and Seppun Toriko, the Mistress of the Gates, in which she allows gaijin artifacts into the Imperial District without inspections.
- The spy could learn about Akio's support for Ide Uchi, his sponsorship of Miya Ichiko, or his intereference in the events in Kalani's Landing.
- An exceptionally bold spy could break into Otomo Akio's personal quarters in Faun-ti's Tower. This would allow a chance to steal the notorious blessed crossbow bolt, as well as the opportunity to look through Akio's personal belongings and correspondence. Clues reinforcing all of Akio's questionable dealings could be found in this way.
- At the GM's discretion, a spy could even potentially witness a meeting between Akio and the elusive Doji Chonitsu.

The GM should be careful to ensure what a spy learns is something that could realistically be seen or overheard; a spy is not a mind-reader, after all. If a spy is detected, there is the potential for a chase scene, with the spy using Skills such as Athletics and Stealth to evade capture. Factors such as the familiarity of the area, the extent to which the spy has prepared for escape, and the time of day will come into play – obviously it is easier to escape in the shadows of night than under the blazing sunlight of a Colonial noon. If the spy is recognized or worse, apprehended, he

THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE SPIDER CLAN

In the years after its founding, the Spider Clan was an implacable foe of the Empire. Created by the Dark Lord Daigotsu, the Spider worked covertly, seeking to undermine Rokugan from within as infiltrators; later, after the ascension of Empress Iweko I, they fought openly against Imperial authority. Their leader Daigotsu was determined to seize control of Rokugan on behalf of his then infant son Kanpeki. At the end of the Destroyer War, however, Daigotsu ascended to become the new ruler of Jigoku. He struck a bargain with the Empress, whereby the Spider would be recognized as a Great Clan of the Empire in exchange for a withdrawal of certain evil influences from Rokugan — most notably the involuntary contamination of its people by the Taint of Jigoku. The agreement has endured to the present day era depicted in the Second City box set.

It is important for the GM to ensure that encounters with the Spider such as the one in this chapter do not become contaminated by "metagaming." The players likely know Daigotsu's son Kanpeki still plots to take the Throne and control the Empire, the Spider harbor agents of the insidious Shadow Dragon, and the Spider in general are hardly the paragons of loyalty to the Empire that they profess to be. However, their characters would almost certainly know none of this. From their perspective, the Spider have apparently been loyal Imperial subjects, working diligently to fulfill the duties given to them by the Empress and, here in the Colonies, the Governor. It would be appropriate for their characters to be wary and suspicious (particularly if they are from the more traditional clans, such as the Lion, Crane, and Phoenix) but behaving with anything other than good grace and etiquette would be considered as insulting to the Spider as it would be to any other Great Clan.

This does not mean the Spider aren't dangerous. Spider such as Susumu Minoru would have no qualms about seizing on a slight or insult in order to embarrass or discomfit a clan PC; in an extreme case, the satisfaction of a duel would be a fine outcome. The threats from the Spider here in the Second City, however, will only be political and social in nature. The PCs would know, for instance, it is no longer possible to be involuntarily Tainted, so consuming food and drink offered by the Spider offers no threat of the Taint. Moreover, the Spider themselves are seeking to present a "proper" public face to Rokugan, so there are few Tainted Spider in the Second City – almost all of them are far away, laboring in the jungles.

Some GMs may wish to have the PCs meet with Daigotsu Kanpeki himself, rather than Susumu Minoru. Kanpeki is a far more imposing individual than Minoru and should be portrayed as such, but for the purposes of this campaign he can provide the same information to the PCs as Minoru, in essentially the same way.



faces a dire fate. Spying is a highly dishonorable activity and a captured spy is certainly going to be imprisoned, probably tortured to determine who may have employed him and what he overheard, and then executed. This fate should come as no surprise to the player; the risk is, after all, implicit in being a spy in the first place. However, the GM could also use this situation as another opportunity to have one or more of the implicated PCs exiled to join the Spider on the frontier.

Some spells, such as the Rank 2 Air Spell “Secrets on the Wind,” allow a shugenja to remotely eavesdrop on conversations. This may strike the PCs as an “easy” and relatively risk free means of obtaining information. Certainly, a GM may allow a PC to obtain some information this way, but when such methods are overused they risk overturning any sense of challenge for the PCs. In point of fact, while the majority of the Second City is not protected against such spells, the most important places – such as the various Great Clan embassies and the Governor’s Palace – are warded against improper uses of the kami. It is in fact common knowledge that powerful wards are employed in such places to prevent things such as magical spying. Accordingly, a PC attempting to use such methods against warded locations should face much high Spell Casting TNs – at least +20 to +30 for clan embassies and most of the Governor’s Palace, with especially important locations such as private meeting rooms having even higher TNs. Failure could potentially alert the authorities, release bound kami to find, track, or even attack the

transgressor, or even unleash magical backlashes against the offending shugenja. Such is the price of meddling with Imperial protections!

Otomo Akio Responds

At some point Otomo Akio is quite likely to become aware the PCs are digging into his affairs. He has numerous contacts not only in the Governor’s Court and among the clan delegations but also throughout the Second City and even beyond. The section on “Otomo Shigeo as a Loose Cannon” offers some guidance as to how Otomo Akio may react if he becomes aware of the PCs’ snooping. Note, however, that section presumes the PCs have made or are implicated in specific accusations against Akio. If he knows only they been making enquiries about him, his reaction is going to be more subdued. Initially, he is likely to simply send word through their own clan delegations to mind their own business. A man of Otomo Akio’s stature tends to attract both detractors and admirers, and both can be equally annoying. It is up to the PCs how they respond to this, mindful of the fact that if they keep poking about anyway they may also face the ire of their clan’s lord in the Colonies.

If the PCs are magistrates or yoriki, or are known to be recent arrivals from Rokugan, Akio is likely to become more interested in their interest in him. In this case, he will invite the PCs to meet with him, dispatching such an invitation through his karo Doji Shumiko. Such a meeting





will unfold as described in the earlier section entitled “*Meeting With Otomo Akio*”: he will be a charming and gracious but somewhat detached host, while trying to learn why the PCs are nosing about in his affairs and what they have learned (or think they’ve learned). If the GM wishes to add a mechanical element to such a conversation, he can require the PCs to make Etiquette (Conversation) / Awareness or Sincerity / Awareness rolls to blunt or deflect Akio’s probing questions. Success means they’ve convinced Akio they intend no harm, whereupon he will lose interest in them and simply suggest they pursue other interests. Failure, however, means Akio is alerted to the fact the PCs know (or think they know) something potentially incriminating or harmful about him. He will certainly try to have them put under surveillance and may even take harsher action (see below).

In either case, if the PCs have been warned off or convinced Akio they are of no consequence and then continue digging into his affairs anyway, he will eventually become aware of it once again and will take stronger action.

STRONGER ACTION BY OTOMO AKIO

One of Akio’s first choices will be to have the PCs placed under surveillance. Two or three agents will begin to tail the PCs, deploying themselves to keep as many of them under watch as possible. These agents are freelance ronin, hired through an intermediary for such purposes. They will seek to avoid detection and report back information on the PCs activities; if they are detected, they will attempt to flee. They are brave but not fanatical, and are armed only with knives; a cornered agent has at least some chance (assume roughly 30%) of surrendering if they reach the Injured Wound Rank or worse. If they are taken alive they can identify their sponsor, someone they simply call the “Boss,” but tracking down this person and learning who hired him will be an exercise in frustration; it is up to the GM whether or not to allow the PCs to follow the trail all the way back to Otomo Akio.

If Akio becomes convinced the PCs are a growing problem for him – most likely because surveillance reports indicate they are delving ever more deeply into his affairs – he will try to get rid of them. In this case his first plan will be to try to disgrace the PCs and have them exiled to the border of the Colonies with the Spider Clan. The information from his spies may allow him to do this, but more likely he will have to try to maneuver them into some kind of public incident in court that will ruin their reputations. The exact form of such a political attack will vary greatly depending on the identity and nature of the PCs themselves, so the GM will have to adjudicate any such efforts, but obvious avenues of attack will include secret romances, Dark Secrets, and characters who suffer from Disadvantages like Brash.

If disgrace is not an option, Akio may resort to assassination. This allows the GM an opportunity for some combat action in the midst of what is otherwise a very social-oriented political setting. However, the GM must decide to what extent he wants the PCs to actually be harmed by assassins sent after them. The lethality of the default combat system in L5R means if the assassins are effective, one or more PCs could be critically wounded or killed with little opportunity to respond. Of course, one could argue the PCs should be expecting trouble and prepare for it.

In any case, Akio will send a squad of ronin assassins (a number of them equal to one less than the number of PCs is a good starting point) to attack the PCs. They are armed with ninja-to and knives, and will generally choose to strike when the PCs are at their most vulnerable: asleep, drunk, or otherwise off-guard. The assassins will not, however, attack the PCs within the confines of the Governor’s Palace or a clan embassy. GMs should feel free to adjust the number of assassins, their mechanical statistics, and the circumstances of attack according to how much of a challenge is desired. Since the assassins are ronin and not fanatics, they will attempt to flee when reduced to the Injured Wound Rank; however, unlike the spies they will fight to the death if cornered, since they know their fate can only be execution.

OTOMO AKIO’S AGENTS

| | | | | |
|-------------|------------|-------------|---------------|---------|
| AIR: 2 | EARTH: 2 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 2 |
| REFLEXES: 3 | AGILITY: 3 | | PERCEPTION: 3 | |
| Honor: 1.5 | | Status: 0.0 | Glory: 1.0 | |

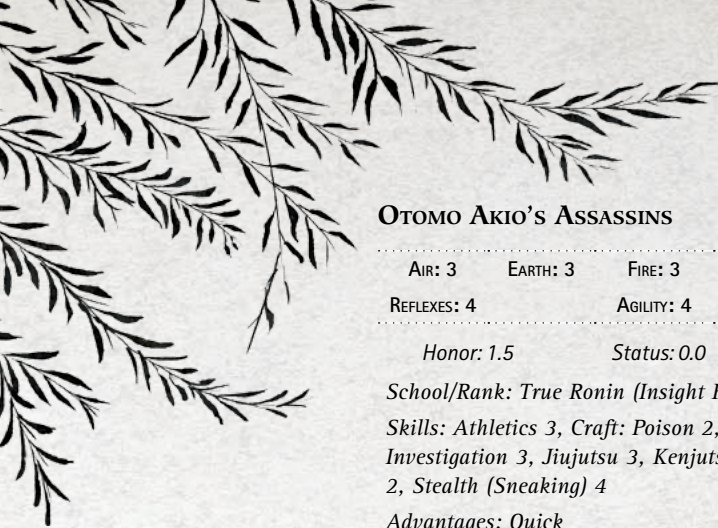
School/Rank: True Ronin (Insight Rank 1)

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 2, Knives 3, Stealth (Sneaking) 4

Advantages: Crafty

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (ronin)





OTOMO AKIO'S ASSASSINS

| | | | | |
|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|------------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 3 | VOID: 3 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | | AGILITY: 4 | | |
| Honor: 1.5 | | Status: 0.0 | | Glory: 1.0 |

School/Rank: True Ronin (Insight Rank 4)

Skills: Athletics 3, Craft: Poison 2, Defense 4, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Knives 5, Spears 2, Stealth (Sneaking) 4

Advantages: Quick

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (ronin)

Next Steps

At this point, the PCs should have collected a considerable amount of information on Otomo Akio, which may or may not include his close relationship with Doji Chonitsu. In itself, a friendship or political/business relationship based on a mutual interest in Ivory Kingdoms artifacts isn't particularly damning. Moreover, the other facts they may have accumulated – for example, Akio's meddling through the magistrate Miya Ichiko in the trade dispute between Yasuki Kappako and Daidoji Iyashi, his mis-use of influence to get his artifacts into the Imperial District without inspection, his manipulation of trade at Journey's End Keep involving Ide Uchi and Ide Sadao, or his insistence that the Spider locate and destroy any Ivory Kingdoms temples they find in the jungle – are not individually all that damning. However, the totality of all this information should lead the PCs to conclude that Akio is under Chonitsu's influence and is working on the Doji's behalf in many ways. The question now is, so what?

The critical piece of information, of course, is that Doji Chonitsu is actually the rakshasa Raniyah the Sly. No one in the city, including Otomo Akio, knows this, and while Akio is many things he is not overtly a traitor to the Empire. If he knew the truth about Chonitsu, he would be horror-struck. This leads to one possibility for the PCs' next step: challenging Akio with the truth – or at least something close to the truth – about Chonitsu. It is possible the PCs have actually learned what Chonitsu really is, most likely in Chapter Six, but even without that they have probably realized from Yogo Tanaka's journal that Chonitsu is some manner of inhuman entity. However, the PCs will have to be extremely wary of how they approach Akio with their accusations. Claiming his friend and ally Doji Chonitsu is a shapeshifting monster or a gaijin "tiger demon" on the word of a dead Scorpion and a few Ivinda natives is probably going to backfire badly; Akio is likely to dismiss such an accusation and then, in order to prevent any further trouble from the meddling PCs, have them exiled from the Second City. They will be sent to spend their remaining days laboring in the wilderness with the Spider Clan – whereupon the action moves to Chapter Seven.

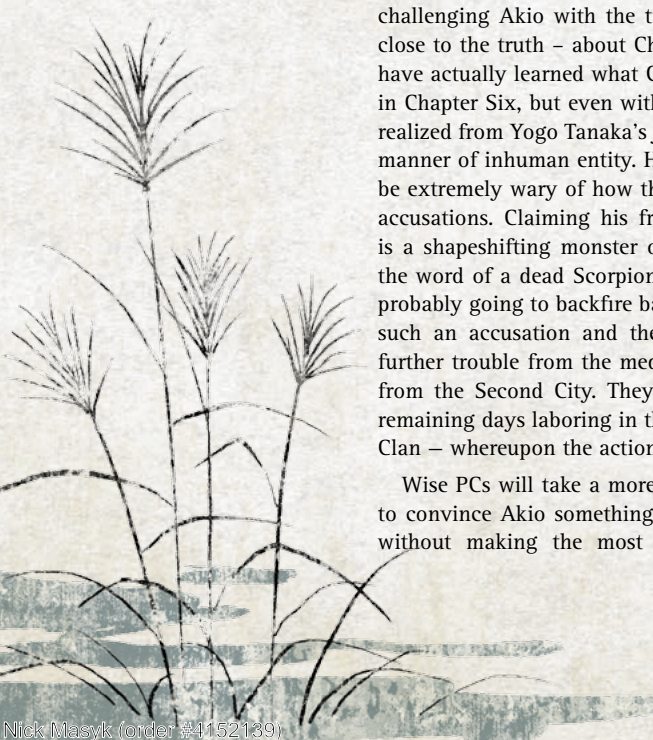
Wise PCs will take a more restrained approach and try to convince Akio something is amiss with Doji Chonitsu without making the most extreme accusations. There

is actually a good basis for them to do so, since the totality of Chonitsu's actions is more than a little odd. This approach can be especially effective if the PCs have already investigated some of the events in other chapters and thus can present Akio with evidence that Chonitsu is doing some extremely questionable things – smuggling jade, using a blackmailed Tamori to murder another samurai and frame harmless Ivinda natives for it, using Shumiko to snoop after Akio's gaijin crossbow bolt, and so forth. In the face of such evidence, eloquently presented, Otomo Akio will become somewhat more cooperative. This will open a window of opportunity in which the PCs can potentially convince him to forsake Chonitsu – the GM may wish to call for a Contested Social Roll here, with Akio's final attitude riding on the outcome. If the PCs ultimately can't win him over, Akio will decide this is a problem he can do without and, again, have the PCs exiled to the Spider.

The more ruthless sorts of PCs may decide to take a more aggressive approach to Akio and try to apply pressure to him. Their best tool in this regard is Seppun Toriko, the Mistress of the Gates, whose testimony can potentially prove Akio has been subverting Imperial law in order to bring his gaijin artifacts into the city. Miya Ichiko's testimony that she was ordered to subvert justice in Kalani's Landing is also a fairly damning incident. Skillful PCs can potentially use these discoveries to blackmail Akio into cooperation, especially if they know about both of them. This will gain Akio's involuntary assistance, but also makes him a bitter and permanent enemy who will do whatever he can to destroy them.

If Akio does finally cooperate, he can share the following information:

- Doji Chonitsu has helped him on many occasions to locate rare and spectacular Ivory Kingdoms artifacts he could not find anywhere else. On a couple of occasions he asked Akio to return the favor by locating items for him, which Akio was more than happy to do. If asked to describe the items he acquired for Chonitsu, he describes them as both being statues of the same native god, "a man with four arms." PCs can potentially identify this being as Vishnu the Protector if they acquire the proper information or speak with a knowledgeable native.
- Akio admits to supporting Ide Uchi in Journey's End Keep at Doji Chonitsu's urging. He does not know why, although he believes it has something to do with Chonitsu's general interest in gaijin artifacts.
- Doji Chonitsu also asked him to use Miya Ichiko to cover for Daidoji Iyashi in Kalani's Landing. Chonitsu asked for the intervention as a personal favor and explained it as a "matter of commerce" whose details were beneath Akio's concern.
- It is at Chonitsu's urging that Akio has been pressuring the Spider to destroy any Ivory Kingdoms temples they might find in the jungle. Chonitsu was attacked by an Ivinda native in Journey's End Keep, and has told Akio he believes the attacker





was actually a member of the Cult of the Destroyer. Chonitsu claims the Cult still has bases within the jungle that need to be rooted out and destroyed, and Akio is happy to cooperate. For that matter, Akio has heard the rumors of an Ivinda murdering a samurai near Shiro Hebi, and takes them as further proof that he is right to urge the Spider to stronger action.

- Akio knows Chonitsu is a merchant patron and can identify a commoner named Hinjo as his principle merchant – it is Hinjo who has delivered the various artifacts which Chonitsu located for Akio. Akio has a vague understanding that Hinjo runs a caravan through the Colonies, between Kalani's Landing and Journey's End Keep.
- Akio knows there is an item in his collection of gaijin artifacts that Chonitsu wants, but does not know what it is. "He can be cagey when he wishes," Akio says with a smile.

At the GM's option, if Akio has become an ally (or at least been forced into cooperation), Raniyah could return to the Second City and kill him, then flee with the PCs in hot pursuit. This gives this part of the story better closure, and can also be a useful development if the PCs are having trouble figuring out where to find Raniyah's lair. If this seems like the best option, the GM shouldn't hesitate to say Otomo Akio's story is now done.

THE CROSSBOW BOLT IN OTOMO AKIO'S RESIDENCE

Irrespective of any information he might supply, Otomo Akio can potentially provide the PCs with his blessed crossbow bolt. He will normally not be willing to part with one of his much-loved Ivory Kingdoms artifacts, but if the PCs have convinced him Chonitsu is a supernatural threat, he will reluctantly do so. PCs who are blackmailing Akio can force him to hand over the item, of course.

On first inspection the crossbow bolt appears to be a simple, plain projectile for an Ivory Kingdoms crossbow. The shaft is actually made from intertwined pieces of exotic wood, and it is carved with the symbols of Vishnu. The head is made of iron and is inlaid with ivory and silver. As noted in Chapter Eight, such missiles may or may not have retained the actual potency of Vishnu's blessing which makes them lethal to a rakshasa, but Raniyah the Sly does not know whether the weapon is still potent or not, and thus was anxious to dispose of it.

OPTION: PUBLIC ACCUSATION

Not all PCs will wish to convince Akio of the error of his ways – some of them will want to destroy his public reputation and position. The evidence they can find within the Second City – Akio's meddling in matters of law and trade, his evasion of restrictions on gaijin artifacts – is enough to embarrass him badly in court, though probably not enough to completely destroy him. If the PCs present a well role-played public accusation, backed up by testimony from Miya Ichiko and Seppun Toriko, they will force Akio to publicly answer their charges, probably resulting in a Contested Social Roll against Akio – the

obvious Skill choices here would be Courtier (Rhetoric) or Sincerity (Honesty or Deceit). A successful roll results in Akio being deeply humiliated and probably stripped of his office as karo; however, a failed roll means Akio prevails, the PCs are disgraced, and they probably wind up exiled to live among the Spider Clan.

If the PCs have defeated Raniyah the Sly, they could potentially return to the Second City to condemn Akio as the agent/dupe of a gaijin demon. This will again entail a Contested Social Roll, but the stakes are higher – if Akio fails, he is utterly ruined and must immediately commit seppuku. This will open a power vacuum in the Ivory Court, providing a hook for future politically-oriented gaming.

On the other hand, victorious PCs could decide to keep the truth to themselves, giving them future leverage against Akio. They could even quietly notify him that the matter has been dealt with. In this manner they could gain either a powerful ally or a highly-placed pawn (depending on their approach), which again opens up new gaming opportunities for the future. There is also the possibility that someone else eventually discerns the truth, which could put both Otomo Akio and the PCs in a difficult spot for having covered up such a menacing scandal.

OTOMO AKIO, IMPERIAL

| | | | | |
|---|----------|-------------|----------|------------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 2 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 3 |
| AWARENESS: 4 WILLPOWER: 3 INTELLIGENCE: 3 PERCEPTION: 3 | | | | |
| Honor: 3.4 | | Status: 4.0 | | Glory: 7.3 |

School/Rank: Otomo Courtier 3

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 6, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Courtesy) 6, Games: Sadane 3, Intimidation (Control) 4, Investigation 2, Lore: Ivory Kingdoms Art 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: Law 2, Meditation 2, Sincerity (Honesty, Lying) 5, Temptation 4

Advantages: Allies (many), Gentry, Servants, Social Position (karo to the Chancellor of the Left), Wealthy

Disadvantages: Compulsion (collect gaijin artifacts), Sworn Enemies (many)

SEPPUN HOITSU, DUELIST AND YOJIMBO

| | | | | |
|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|------------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 4 | WATER: 3 | VOID: 4 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | | STRENGTH: 4 | | |
| Honor: 6.0 | | Status: 2.0 | | Glory: 3.8 |

School/Rank: Seppun Bodyguard 4

Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 6, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Bushido 3, Meditation 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 3

Advantages: Combat Reflexes

of her conflicted feelings—and Toturi survived, ultimately leading the counterattack to retake the capital from the Scorpion.) With Yaruma, the Scorpion decided there was simply too much danger that he might recognize something was amiss and



AN IMPERIAL SHIRO HEBI



72

Chapter Six

土気炎空水



A MURDER AT SHIRO HEBI

If the PCs investigated at Journey's End Keep, they should hopefully have realized the Ivinda gaijin who confronted Doji Chonitsu there may know something important, and if they managed a fragmentary translation of the old man's words, they will have an even stronger incentive to find him. However, the available information about him is initially quite slim – most likely they just know that the magistrate Shinjo Juntao exiled a gaijin family from Journey's End Keep to the south, to a province ruled from Shiro Hebi. They may also suspect that some of these gaijin may have been sneaking back to the Keep to harass Ide Uchi.

The rumor that gaijin in Shiro Hebi killed a samurai is available in both Journey's End Keep and in the Second City, and may provide a “hook” for the PCs whether or not they recognize the connection to the gaijin in Journey's End Keep.

Regardless, this is an important chapter, since it allows the PCs to make contact with the native guru, Gopti, and thereby finally start to learn what sort of enemy they are really facing. If the PCs seem to be missing the clues that would lead them here, the GM should feel free to add more hints to encourage them.

The Setting: Mirumoto Kokure's Province

The lands between the Second City and Journey's End Keep are only lightly settled by Rokugani, who have established a few key villages along the Shinano River and the associated roads, centered around a pair of small castles. The seat of power in this loosely-organized province is Shiro Hebi, home of the local daimyo, Mirumoto Kokure. Appointed ten years ago by the previous governor of the Colonies, Kokure is an ambitious and rather harsh man who found the ascetic and self-denying lifestyle of the Dragon lands in Rokugan unsuited to his temperament – he came to the Colonies seeking something more in tune with his nature, and has enjoyed considerable success.

Shiro Hebi lies roughly two days' travel by river from both the Second City and Journey's End Keep, and about three times that by land. All of the major settlements in this region are located on the riverside, at road crossings close to the river, or at the two castles in the province – Kokure's seat at Shiro Hebi and a smaller, supporting castle a few miles downstream called Shiro Chigiri. The





local population is primarily Rokugani immigrants but contains a fair sprinkling of Ivinda natives who are trying to survive by adapting themselves to the demands of their new rulers. The coastal towns each have a small riverside dock, which tends to get rather crowded whenever more than one boat shows up – at the village by Shiro Hebi, a large number of laborers are busy constructing a second dock to serve the growth in river traffic.

Shiro Hebi itself is a small four-story castle built atop a low hill, the highest ground available near the riverside. It is primarily of wood construction, although the lowest level is made from stone. The upper floors have unusually large arched windows, an adaptation to the weather conditions in the Colonies.

Between the castle and the river is the town, surrounded by a wooden stockade wall and housing roughly a thousand people. In contrast to the more secure lands to the south and east, here in the less settled portions of the Colonies the town is kept fully within the walls, with only the farmlands themselves outside. The Dragon garrison actively patrols the fringes of the surrounding jungle, keeping a sharp eye out for bandits, gaijin holdouts, and dangerous animals (of which there are many in the Colonies, especially tigers). At the edge of the jungle treeline, about a mile from the town, is a smaller cluster of buildings that appears to be a barracks, a stable, and a few other supporting structures. Banners of the Spider Clan flutter above them. This is the headquarters for a Spider squadron which is exploring the jungles to the west; the men and women there keep their distance from the rest of the settlement, although a few of them come into town when they are off-duty to drink or carouse. The Dragon keep a careful eye on them, as per their mandate in the Colonies.

THE GAIJIN PRISONERS

Whenever the PCs arrive at the town, the guards at the town gates will check their travel papers and ask their business in Shiro Hebi. If the PCs mention gaijin or the rumors of a samurai murder, the guards smirk and say, “Lord Kokure-sama is about to solve that problem. Go to the castle gate if you wish to see.”

Outside the front gate of Shiro Hebi, about a dozen Ivinda are being held prisoner inside a large iron cage, watched over by a bored castle guard. They are all adults, probably between their twenties and forties, although the PCs will find it difficult to estimate their exact ages due to their foreign appearance. The prisoners are exhausted, dirty, and disheveled, with expressions comprised for the most part of blank despair. It is evident that many of them have undergone rigorous interrogation – which in the Rokugani context means torture. The exception to their general bleak aspect is one much older man, with an egg-bald head and a long gray-white beard, dressed in nothing more than a cotton loincloth. This worthy is seated cross-legged in the back corner of the cage, in a pose of meditation, his eyes closed and his hands resting palm-up on his knees. He is Gopti, the guru, and the patriarch of the family.

Several of the younger family members speak Rokugani to some extent, but they will not normally volunteer conversation unless the PCs speak to them first. However, if the boy Sumajii (from Chapter Four) is accompanying the PCs, a sudden commotion erupts among the natives as they rush to the edge of the cage, crying out and sobbing, reaching through the bars to touch their missing child. The guard will react with alarm to this incident and will start trying to beat the prisoners’ limbs back into the cage with the butt of his spear.

The prisoners for the most part believe they are doomed (although the sudden recovery of their one surviving child will give some of them a renewed sense of hope). Given the chance they will beg and plead with the PCs, insisting “old Gopti” is innocent of killing the samurai he is supposed to have killed. They do freely admit Gopti assailed a samurai in blue clothing at Journey’s End Keep two months ago, resulting in their being exiled. Old Gopti said the man was actually a tiger-demon, a rakshasa, though he had no way to expose the creature. Two of the younger family members can also be persuaded to admit they tried to break into the warehouse in Journey’s End Keep; the old



man said the tiger-demon was getting powerful artifacts from that merchant, and they were trying to stop them. (They do not know what the artifacts were, other than “things of power.”)

If the PCs show serious interest in the prisoners’ claims about a rakshasa, the old guru will finally begin to pay attention. He cracks one eye open and regards the PCs in the manner of an ancient raptor observing some impudent mice. Finally he opens both eyes and begins to speak.

It is possible by this time that the PCs have decided to start learning Ivindi, the language of the Ivory Kingdoms, but if not the other family members (and Sumajii if he is here) can offer a rough translation. Old Gopti will explain the following:

- The man in blue clothing is a rakshasa, a “tiger that walks,” a demon that can take many forms and commits all manner of evil deeds. Long ago his kind were sealed away by Vishnu the Protector, but a few managed to escape Vishnu’s gaze and still walk the land. They are evil in every way: malignant, treacherous, cruel, and tyrannical. They can take the form of any man or woman, but in their true shape they are tigers which walk upon two legs.
- The old man saw the tiger-demon leave the house of a wealthy man dressed in purple. The man in purple gave the demon a bundle containing an item of mighty power, so strong that Gopti could sense it from many yards away. To put such a thing in the hands of a rakshasa is the greatest possible folly.
- If the PCs ask for more information about rakshasa, Gopti sighs. Most of the ancient texts have been lost, he says, but some of his order – he calls himself a “guru” – are said to still survive in the jungle and they may have some of the old scrolls and writings.
- If the PCs ask how he knew the man was a rakshasa, Gopy replies that while the deceptions of rakshasa are powerful, those of pure spirit can sometimes see the demon hiding behind the false eyes of its human shape. The priests of Vishnu once had other ways of exposing the creatures, artifacts that could pierce their illusions, but such things were lost when the Destroyers came.
- If the PCs share any of their information about Doji Chonitsu’s activities – e.g. his acquisition and theft of various Ivory Kingdoms artworks and relics, his collecting of jade, crystal, and crysteel – old Gopti becomes agitated. The demon is plotting something, he mutters, something terrible. He urges the PCs to free him from this cage so he can seek out his surviving brethren in the jungle and learn what can be done to stop the creature.

VISITING LORD KOKURE

Much as in the earlier sections of the adventure, the PCs are obligated to make a courtesy call on the local lord. In this case, however, they may also have concrete reasons to try to speak with Mirumoto Kokure, in order to learn about the recent incidents with the gaijin – and perhaps to seek mercy for Gopti and his family.

The audience chamber of Shiro Hebi is relatively small and plain, as one might expect in a modest castle. It is on the second floor and thus does not benefit from the large windows on the upper floors, meaning it will probably be stiflingly hot (unless the campaign is taking place during the winter season). Mirumoto Kokure is a muscular shaven-headed man with a short stature and a square, blunt face. He wears a simple loose yukata and leggings, looking more like someone dressed for the dojo than a lord – another adaptation to the local climate.

Lord Mirumoto Kokure is not a very nice man, being ambitious and disrespectful of his clan’s traditional beliefs. However, unlike many of the other troublesome NPCs the PCs have dealt with up to this point, he is not actually an agent of Doji Chonitsu – he is simply a harsh and not-especially-honorable man who Chonitsu is indirectly using to dispose of the inconvenient guru and his family.

Kokure will be brief but maintains the minimal requirements of courtesy until and unless the PCs mention Gopti and the other gaijin. At that point his face darkens and he begins to speak more forcefully. “I have shown great toleration for these gaijin remnants, allowing them to live in my villages and serve alongside my own peasants. This is how they repay me! One of my samurai lies dead, his murder seen by a samurai witness, and these gaijin scum still dare to plead innocence! No, I will hear no more on this. The gaijin is guilty, his family is guilty of protecting his crime, and they will be hanged tomorrow.”

Kokure will cut the audience short once the PCs broach this topic. However, if the PCs politely request further information on the incident (perhaps assisted by a Social Skill Roll, such as Courtier or Sincerity) he will reluctantly agree to let them speak with his magistrate, Mirumoto Retsu.

THE MAGISTRATE: MIRUMOTO RETSU

Mirumoto Retsu resides in the town, in a modest house located right outside of the castle. He is an older man with a salt-and-pepper goatee and a heavy limp from an injury endured during youthful experiences in the War of Dark Fire. He is assisted by a young samurai dressed in a light, loose-fitting kimono in a mixture of black and dark blue – the colors of the Spider Clan, as PCs can determine with a Lore: Heraldry roll. This fellow is Daigotsu Zurui, and functions both as Retsu’s yoriki and as his liaison with the Spider garrison.





If the PCs ask for information on the recent murder, Retsu explains that one of the local off-duty Dragon soldiers, Mirumoto Bakane, was killed in the narrow street behind the local inn, the Inn of the Brass Fan. The crime was initially reported by a commoner messenger, but when Retsu and Zurui arrived, they met the samurai witness: a woman named Tamori Tamanako, a shugenja passing through the city on the way north from the Second City. She said she saw an old gaijin man with a bald head and a long beard (Gopti) stab Bakane in the back with a knife. Sure enough, the samurai lay dead in the side-street with a knife of Ivory Kingdoms design sunk hilt-deep into his back.

The description clearly matched Gopti (who has been a known figure in the town since his arrival two months ago) and they went promptly to arrest and question him. His family resisted, with violence, so ultimately they were all arrested as well. Confession has not been forthcoming, despite rigorous questioning, but given that they are not only commoners but also gaijin, Lord Mirumoto Kokure has chosen to waive the normal requirement for a confession to close out the investigation and has ordered them hanged.

If the PCs ask for more information about the dead man (Mirumoto Bakane), Retsu says he is a soldier in the local garrison who was apparently visiting the inn to drink sake during his off-duty hours. Retsu does not approve of such frivolity (he is a bit of an ascetic) but understands many young men feel the need for such things. Bakane has already been cremated and his belongings sent to his family; if the PCs ask about these, Retsu frowns but then turns to Zurui, who calmly lists them off: a daisho set, a chop, a string of coins (clearly the motive was not robbery), and a personal sake cup.

They do not know why Bakane was in the side-street, and given the clear-cut nature of the crime they did not see any need to ask.

If the PCs ask about the witness, Retsu says that as far as he knows Tamori Tamanako is still in town, staying at the Inn of the Brass Fan – they ordered her to remain until the investigation is concluded, although they have not actually needed to bring her back to repeat her testimony. They assume she is still here but have not actively looked for her in the last couple of days.

If the PCs ask about the murder weapon, the magistrates do still have it. It is a short dagger with an odd triangular blade and a horizontal handle mounted between two irregular metal posts: a kukri, although the PCs will not recognize it as such and will simply see it as a gaijin item. A suitable Lore skill (or asking the right people) can confirm this type of knife is native to the Ivory Kingdoms and is specifically designed for killing – it is a weapon, not a tool. There are no other physical clues to be gained from the blade, but a shugenja PC may be able to learn more by Communing with the Earth spirits in the metal. Since this is a gaijin device the spirits within it are deeply asleep – it is suggested the GM require at least two Raises to awaken them enough to hear the shugenja's questions. Regardless, once awakened the spirits can say the knife was carried by

a “woman” in a “green robe” who stabbed it into another man – the victim.

GMs should remember that magical evidence is inadmissible. However, it can at least provide a clue as to the true culprit: Tamori Tamanako.

Investigating the Murder

If the PCs are going to save Gopti and his family from execution (and use them to continue the pursuit of Doji Chonitsu) they will have to prove his innocence on their own – the magistrate sees no purpose in further pursuing a case that is clearly “solved.” Of course, not all PCs may be willing to put themselves on the line for gaijin, no matter how important those gaijin might be to the problem of Doji Chonitsu. However, the rest of this section will assume the PCs are indeed pursuing an investigation; they have one day to pull it off, before Gopti and the rest of his family are executed.

If the PCs go to the side-street by the Inn of the Brass Fan, it is a rather unpleasant place – grubby and dark, with a large wooden barrel where the employees of the Inn dump refuse, trash, and garbage to be collected every morning by the city's eta. There is one physical clue which can be found here if the PCs search the alley-way thoroughly and make a suitably difficult Investigation Skill roll. (The spell *By the Light of the Moon* could also work here.) This is a crumpled, tattered piece of rice paper with a few kanji written on it in charcoal. The paper is damp and the charcoal smudged, but if the PCs can puzzle it out (probably a Perception roll, perhaps supplemented with the Calligraphy skill) they see it reads, “Meet me in the alley in an hour.” The writing style is feminine.

A shugenja can learn more by Communing with the spirits here, though (again) this information will not be legally usable. There are Earth spirits in the alley which can say the dead man came here alone, waited for a little while, then was stabbed by a woman who wore green robes. There are of course Air spirits in abundance, but they are transient so the PC will have to call four Raises to get an Air spirit that was here when the attack took place. With a success, the spirit describes a “woman in robes the color of leaves” who came into the side-street “wrapped in air” and stabbed the man in the back. Any shugenja who hears this description can make a Spellcraft or Lore: Shugenja roll to realize the woman was using Air magic to conceal herself.

THE INN EMPLOYEES

The PCs may well think of going inside to question the innkeeper and his servants. They did not witness the crime itself, of course – their first knowledge of the murder was when the magistrates showed up outside. They remember Mirumoto Bakane coming in that evening to drink, and also remember Tamori Tamanako, who arrived the day before and is still staying at the inn. They will not initially say anything about the evening of the murder other than that Bakane spent the evening drinking and left around midnight, but if the PCs question them carefully (and use

Social Skill Rolls to tell when they may be shading the truth), the following information can be extracted:

- Bakane spent some time speaking (and sharing drinks) with Tamori Tamanako. The serving-maids at the inn are pretty clear she was flirting with him; the innkeeper refrains from speculation.
- If the PCs ask, Tamanako left the common room about an hour before Bakane did. Oddly she did not go upstairs to her room, but instead went out onto the street. “Perhaps she was planning to meet the honored Mirumoto-sama elsewhere?” the maids speculate.
- The inn workers confirm that none of them found the body or knew about the murder; their first warning was when the magistrates arrived.

SOLVING THE MYSTERY

The villain in this piece is Tamori Tamanako, who has been blackmailed by Raniyah the Sly into murdering Bakane and pinning the blame on Gopti. If the PCs meet with her, they find she is a fairly attractive shugenja-ko in her mid-twenties, unmarried, with a tense and brittle air. She will repeat the same story she told the magistrates: she went out for a walk after dinner (she claims she needed to clear her head after drinking so much sake). She insists there was no impropriety about her evening with Bakane: “We merely talked and shared drinks, in full view of the entire common room. No different than any other two samurai talking over sake.” She walked for a while and returned around midnight. By chance she looked into the alley and saw, by the moonlight, the old gaijin man stabbing Bakane in the back with his strange knife. She screamed and he fled; then she flagged down a commoner and sent him for the magistrates. “I do not have the power of the kami to heal injury, or perhaps I could have saved him.”

- PCs who successfully test her veracity with Investigation rolls or Courtier Techniques will be able to sense she is lying about most of the story, especially the crime itself, but she will firmly insist she is truthful and may even threaten a duel if the PCs are too aggressive. (She is a Tamori yamabushi and carries her own swords.)
- If the PCs try to figure out her motives, they will realize she is greatly emotionally burdened but is keeping it under control.
- If the PCs ask why she happened to be traveling through here, she says she is on her way north to Journey’s End Keep to join a caravan heading for the Empire; her family has arranged a marriage for her with a Unicorn back in Rokugan. She has spent the last four years as part of the Dragon embassy in the Second City.

- PCs may wish to look further into Tamanako’s background or find out if there are any rumors about her. Unfortunately, because she has spent the last four years in the Second City, the only place where the PCs can get that sort of information would be in the gossip circuit of that city. A sidebar in Chapter Five discussing gossip in the Ivory Court includes the rumor associated with Tamori Tamanako, but if the PCs failed to pick up that rumor, the GM may wish to save some time by letting them make a Skill Roll to remember gossip about Tamanako (perhaps by rolling Courtier / Intelligence, for example). In this case, the PCs can recall hearing a story that Tamanako had borne a child from a secret affair, but the matter was somehow hushed up.

If the PCs found the scrap of paper in the alley, they have concrete evidence that can link Tamanako to the murder. The paper and ink match the writing paper and writing kit in her room at the inn, and the writing style and brush-strokes match hers. If the PCs confront Tamanako with the note, they can potentially break her down and force a confession; however, this will not be easy, and she will try to laugh off or dismiss their accusations, perhaps even demanding a duel against them. Breaking her down should require both effective role-play and a successful Contested Social Roll and/or the use of Courtier Techniques. Alternatively, a PC who beats her in a duel to first blood could thereby shatter her spirit and lead her to confess.

If she does break down, Tamanako’s brittle façade suddenly collapses and she begins weeping uncontrollably, eventually confessing the truth in a dull and exhausted voice. She admits she murdered Bakane and falsely testified against Gopti, framing him for the crime. Presumably the PCs will ask her why (and where she got the kukri dagger); she will say she was given the dagger and told to carry





out the frame-up by a hooded man who reminded her of obligations she had in the Second City.

These obligations are, in fact, to Doji Chonitsu, who protected her from the consequences of her out-of-wedlock child (the result of an ill-considered love affair). The PCs will probably have to pressure her some more to get her to admit to this and to name Chonitsu as the one who originally covered up her terrible indiscretion. It should be noted that Tamanako is only Status 1, and her word will thus not be sufficient to accuse Chonitsu directly.

TAMORI TAMANAKO, MORALLY COMPROMISED SHUGENJA-KO

AIR: 3 EARTH: 4 FIRE: 3 WATER: 3 VOID: 3

Honor: 2.7 Status: 1.0 Glory: 1.5 Infamy: 1.0

School/Rank: Tamori Shugenja 4

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 2, Craft: Alchemy 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Shugenja 3, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 4, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft 4

Disadvantages: Dark Secrets (illegitimate child, murderer), Obligation (Doji Chonitsu)

The Outcome: Execution or Salvation?

In order to save Gopti and his family, the PCs will have to force Tamori Tamanako into confession. This will most likely require them to find the note in the alleyway, although skillful and clever PCs might be able to trick or intimidate her into confessing without that clue. Regardless, if they present her confession to the magistrate, Mirumoto Retsu will (somewhat reluctantly) agree he must accept her confession and call off the execution of Gopti and his family. However, he will still order the family beaten for resisting arrest.

If the PCs cannot get a confession from Tamanako (either because they did not find the note or because they are unable to break her down), they will not be able to legally prevent the execution of Gopti. They can still plead for mercy on Gopti's family, on the grounds that they were not involved in the murder and are really guilty of nothing more than resisting arrest – if this option is undertaken with sufficient dedication and eloquence, the GM can allow the PCs to make some Social Skill Rolls to try to win over the magistrate and/or the daimyo. With success, the family members are spared from death, though they are still beaten severely as punishment for resisting arrest. They watch tearfully as old Gopti is taken out and hanged.

If the PCs are ultimately unable to save Gopti, he will try to speak with them one more time before he is executed. He tells them to go into the jungle and find his brothers, his fellow guru, who may still have some of the ancient wisdom on how to deal with the terror of the rakshasa. Otherwise something terrible will happen, bringing doom

on the land as bad as the rise of the Destroyers – perhaps worse.

If the PCs manage to save Gopti's family, some of them will be willing to accompany the PCs on such a quest, to serve as translators (they cannot really work as "guides" since they do not know where Gopti's fellow guru live, other than a general impression of "somewhere in the western jungles"). They will be even more willing to do this if the PCs saved Sumajii. Conversely, if the family is executed, the PCs will have to either rely on Sumajii for translation, recruit a translator from the local population, or learn to speak Ivindi themselves.

If Gopti is saved, on the other hand, the PCs have more options. The old guru will speak with the PCs at further length about rakshasa and the threat from them. In addition to reiterating the information he may have shared with them earlier while he was imprisoned, he will offer the following:

- ☉ Rakshasa are not only shapeshifters but are also cunning sorcerers and masters of illusion and deception. You can never be sure whether the man or woman you speak to is a mortal or a rakshasa. However, those of noble soul or who have walked the path of the guru, purifying the body and spirit for many years, can sometimes see the evil tiger-spirit looking out of the eyes of its false form, and smell the bloodlust in its heart. This is how he saw the "man in blue" was a rakshasa.
- ☉ In ancient times, the wise men of the Ivory Kingdoms knew a great many secrets about the rakshasa demons and their ancient wars with Vishnu the Protector. Alas, with the passage of centuries much of that knowledge was lost, and almost all that remained was destroyed when the Cult of Kali tore the kingdom apart. Most of the guru died in those years. After the Dark Daughter finally perished, the surviving guru met and discussed what they should do. Some of them proposed to travel back into the jungle and seek out one of the temples of Vishnu, hoping to live there and save as much knowledge as possible. Others, Gopti among them, chose to remain among the other survivors of their people, helping them to deal with the world left behind by the death of their country.
- ☉ Gopti does not know exactly where his brethren ended up, or even if they are alive. But he does know several of the order's ancient temples were located in the jungles to the west, including a great temple to Vishnu, and this is where he believes any search should take place.

If Gopti survived, he can also serve one other role in the campaign: at the GM's option, he can potentially teach his martial and spiritual techniques – the Sainika Fighter School – to a PC who he considers a worthy successor. Of course, this should only be allowed if the PC in question is an open-minded sort who has role-played a sincere interest in the ways of the Ivory Kingdoms. Needless to say, characters of this sort should be rare even within the Colonies.

PLOT OPTION: THE DOOMSEEKER

The Doomseekers are an ancient gaijin order that appears to have originated within the Senpet Empire as a response to the emergence there of the khadi – evil sorcerers who remove their own hearts in order to make themselves immortal. The Order takes as its purpose and motto to “bring death to the deathless,” and while its primary goal has always been the destruction of the khadi, it has also pursued other immortal terrors such as rakshasa. Ironically, it was actually a rakshasa – Adisbah the Cruel – who brought information on the Doomseeker Order to Rokugan in the early twelfth century, where Iuchi Karasu became the first of the Unicorn Clan Doomseekers.

If the GM wishes to add some additional depth to this campaign, he can introduce the character of Suwat the Doomseeker, a man from the Senpet Empire who has followed hints of an immortal demon back to the Ivory Kingdoms. Suwat is a short, swarthy man with dark eyes and straight black hair; aside from the lack of a curve to his eyes, he can usually fit in fairly well among Rokugani, and dresses in a peasant kimono and a wide-brimmed straw hat to help him avoid notice. He wears a strange golden amulet on a chain underneath his kimono, marking him as a member of the Doomseeker Order. Suwat speaks several languages, including Rokugani, but has a noticeable accent; combined with his lack of official travel papers, this has led him to associate mainly with commoners, avoiding interactions with samurai as much as possible.

Suwat will be very hesitant about approaching the PCs directly, since they are samurai. However, his pursuit of Raniyah the Sly will lead him into the same investigative paths as them, and it is likely over time he will realize the PCs are potential allies. Whether he ultimately speaks to the PCs or not is up to the GM; in general, Suwat functions as a “backup plan” for GMs whose players are unable to find key information to advance the plot.

Suwat is not hugely knowledgeable about rakshasa – he is from the Senpet Empire, after all – but he does know they are demonic immortal shapeshifters, extremely intelligent and dangerous, and quite difficult to unmask. Through his extensive discussions with commoners, he has picked up rumors that some of the Ivory Kingdoms priesthood are still alive and in hiding at a temple within the deep jungles of the Colonies. He knows these holy men supposedly preserved a great deal of information about rakshasa, and hopes to eventually seek them out and ask to share in their secrets. Thus, if the PCs fail to pick up on Gopti’s information or the clues in the Second City pointing at a temple in the jungle, Suwat can serve as a “plot rickshaw” to send the PCs in search of the Temple of Vishnu.

At the GM’s option, Suwat can also be a vehicle for introducing the Doomseeker Technique into the campaign, since he is willing to teach his secrets to anyone who seems worthy of carrying them on.

Mechanically, the version of Suwat presented here is not a spellcasting shugenja, though he is still considered to have “spell slots” for the purpose of using the Doomseeker Technique. GMs who wish to present Suwat as a sahir – a gaijin spellcaster – may opt to give him one of the Ronin Shugenja Schools from the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire*. Alternatively, a GM may also choose to use one of the Sahir Schools from the Burning Sands web update PDF (located on the L5R website at www.l5r.com).

SUWAT THE DOOMSEEKER, GAIJIN ALLY

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 2 |
| WILLPOWER: 4 | | INTELLIGENCE: 4 | PERCEPTION: 3 | |
| Honor: N/A | Status: 0.0 | Glory: 0.2 | Infamy: 1.5 | |

School/Rank: None/Doomseeker Technique (Insight Rank 4)

Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 2, Hunting (Survival, Tracking) 4, Investigation 5, Knives 3, Lore: Burning Sands 5, Lore: Khadi 3, Lore: Rokugan 2, Sincerity 4, Staves 3.

Advantages: Bland, Forbidden Knowledge (khadi)

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (gaijin)





土氣炎空水



THE TEMPLE OF VISHNU

There are three possible ways for the PCs to learn about the Temple of Vishnu maintained by guru Gopti's brethren in the deep jungles to the west. The first and most straightforward is for the PCs to meet Gopti and his family at Shiro Hebi. The second is in Chapter Five in the Second City, where the PCs may come across Doji Chonitsu's efforts (via Otomo Akio) to manipulate the Spider Clan into finding and destroying the surviving Ivory Kingdoms temples in the jungle. Finally, the PCs may meet the Doomseeker Suwat and win his trust, in which case he can set them on the path to the guru refugees and their temple.

Some intelligent PCs may think of asking the Spider whether they know of such a temple, since they are tasked with exploring the deep jungles of the Colonies. The Spider have not yet found an inhabited temple (though they have located several abandoned and ruined ones), but they do say they have encountered a fair number of scattered natives in the western jungles and some of them have spoken of a great temple somewhere that remains unspoiled. Much of the area is still unexplored so it is entirely possible these rumors are true.

In order to safely explore the western jungles and seek out the Temple of Vishnu, the PCs will most likely need the cooperation of the Spider Clan. The Spider are responsible for exploring the "barbaric" regions of the former Ivory Kingdoms under their new Imperial charter as a Great Clan, and are supposed to destroy whatever threats may lie within so as to render them safe for the Rokugani to inhabit. PCs who travel into the jungle will be entering the domain of the Spider Clan and may be opening themselves up to attack if they encounter the

Spider in remote locations; wise PCs will instead approach the Spider beforehand. If necessary the GM should let the PCs make an appropriate Skill Roll (most likely some form of Lore) to be aware of the general situation regarding the Colonies and the Spider.

It is also possible for the PCs to wind up in the company of the Spider for another reason: if they completely fail in their efforts against Otomo Akio in the Second City (see Chapter Five), the Otomo may well retaliate by having the PCs exiled to duty alongside the Spider, hoping thereby to permanently remove them from any ability to influence events in the Second City or elsewhere. However, once the PCs are exiled they will also have the potential of persuading the Spider of the threat from the rakshasa and perhaps even getting them to seek out the Temple of Vishnu. (If the PCs have not gained any clues as to the possible existence of the guru order and the temple, this would be the time to introduce Suwat the Doomseeker as a "clue rickshaw" to guide the PCs back into a potentially successful story path.)

Meeting With the Spider

If the PCs are seeking out the Temple on their own initiative, they will most likely need to meet with the Spider to gain cooperation and assistance. The easiest place to do this is at the Shiro Hebi garrison, but there are many other such small Spider garrisons located along the edge of the explored territory in the Colonies, so the GM can potentially get the PCs into communication with the





Spider almost anywhere. The PCs could also approach the Spider in the Second City, especially if they already met with them during their investigations into Otomo Akio.

The various Spider border garrisons have a certain similarity: all of them are stark, almost ascetic military barracks, supplemented with various basic necessities such as storage, dojo, bathouses, and offices. Each of them has a small shrine to Daigotsu – the Spider do not flaunt their worship of the Dark Kami, but they do not hide it either. Many of the Spider garrisons are associated with a small peasant village which provides them with food, crafts, and other necessities, but those located near a larger settlement (such as the garrison near Shiro Hebi) instead rely on the adjacent community for such needs. Many of the Spider garrisons are placed near Dragon Clan settlements in order to facilitate the Dragon Clan's responsibility of watching over the Spider; those which are too remote for this are instead visited periodically by inspection patrols of Dragon samurai and tattooed men.

In general, the Spider garrisons tend to keep to themselves. They are silent, hard-faced men and women who dress in the drab dark blue, gray, and black colors of their clan. (Individual Spider samurai, of course, will show much greater range in their personalities, especially if the PCs get to know them personally.) The Spider know their status as a "Great Clan" is not really accepted by the

rest of the Empire and that they are still regarded with deep suspicion by many samurai, especially the Crab and Scorpion. It should be noted that many of these Spider samurai are Tainted (though not Lost) – the Spider's Tainted elements were exiled from the Empire two decades ago when they were recognized as a clan. PCs who visit the Spider in their garrisons will have the unsettling experience of noticing evidence of Taint on many of them – sunken eyes, pallid skin, patchy hair, and so forth.

If the PCs approach the garrison at Shiro Hebi (the most likely choice, given its convenient proximity to the PCs' meeting with Gopti), they will meet with the commander, Daigotsu Kobara, a tough-looking older man with several ugly scars on his face and arms. He listens quietly to the PCs and then tells them: "Our duties within the jungles are dangerous, and we cannot afford to be weighed down by those who cannot protect themselves." He glowers at any unimpressive-looking PCs such as courtiers with clear contempt. "Our duty is to seek out and destroy any threats to the Empire – we have no time to be searching for some half-mythical band of gaijin priests. Why should we divert valuable resources to such a task?" PCs who go to other Spider garrisons will most likely encounter a similar response there, although if any of the PCs are Spider Clan samurai themselves they will meet with a much more positive response.





The PCs can try to pressure the Spider into accepting them by citing political connections (if they have any), or they can reveal what they know about the rakshasa and argue the Spider should be willing to assist them in confronting a threat to the Empire (after all, a rakshasa commanded the Destroyer army that invaded Rokugan a generation ago, and the Spider fought alongside the rest of the Empire against that threat). As a last resort, the PCs can simply try to be persuasive, perhaps with promises of future favors. Naturally, all of these approaches should be backed up by a suitable Social Skill roll, and Courtier Techniques can be quite helpful as well.

ON DUTY WITH THE SPIDER

If the PCs were disgraced in Chapter Five, Otomo Akio will have them punished by getting them assigned to the Spider on the frontier. This will obviously be a major loss of face for the PCs, as well as a dangerous assignment in itself.

In this case, the PCs are sent to a minor garrison far out on the border of the settled zone. It is home to an oversize squadron of Spider troops, commanded by a thin hard-faced woman named Daigotsu Kumiko. She is a harsh, demanding commander and will show open contempt for any PCs who have been assigned to her command – after all, they have been disgraced and politically ruined. She assigns the PCs to a patrol squad commanded by Kazuo, a Tainted monk from the Order of Venom. Kazuo maintains discipline in his squad through force, and will not hesitate to physically abuse any PCs who earn his ire. (Fighting back is not tolerated, but a formal challenge for control of the squadron would be acceptable – the Spider respect strength and generally hold the view that a commander must be powerful enough to justify his command. However, such a challenge will be to the death, so the PCs had best be sure of themselves before launching on this course.)

The PCs will have to live in the garrison barracks alongside the Spider bushi, many of whom are Tainted – a highly unpleasant prospect, even in the post-Destroyer War environment where Taint no longer spreads to those in the vicinity. The PCs will also see the Spider making prayers to Daigotsu at the small shrine outside the barracks. Needless to say, the Spider will not tolerate insults to their revered Dark Kami, and they will either challenge offensive PCs or simply trap them in a dark alley and beat them bloody with clubs.

The PCs will be required to accompany the Spider patrols into the jungle, where they must face the assorted threats and dangers associated with the duty of slowly “clearing” the jungle for Rokugani settlement. Patrols typically last several days, with the Spider living off travel rations (rice balls, dried fish, etc) and camping outdoors at night. Nighttime in the jungles of the Ivory Kingdoms are eerie, with strange noises echoing through the darkness and a bloated moon barely shedding any light through the tangle of tropical vegetation overhead. Nor is it free of danger – venomous and constrictor snakes may slither into a night-time camp, drawn by the body heat of sleeping samurai, and bandits roaming the jungles may try for a late-night ambush.

GETTING STALLED?

If the PCs fail to win the assistance of the Spider, there is the potential for the campaign to ‘stall out’ as the PCs are effectively blocked from searching for the Temple of Vishnu. This is obviously a problem, since the PCs are unlikely to be able to defeat Raniyah without the information they can find at the Temple. Herewith a number of suggestions for ways the GM can deal with this problem:

Allow the PCs to make multiple attempts to win over the Spider, let them try again at different garrisons, or encourage them to negotiate directly with Susumu Minoru in the Second City.

Let the PCs call in political favors or Allies to get permission to explore the jungle on their own without Spider accompaniment.

The PCs can simply set out on their own without permission and try to avoid the Spider patrols, or try to smooth-talk their way past the patrols if they encounter them. This could make for some interesting encounters as the PCs employ Stealth and evasion techniques to avoid Spider troops, or conduct tense quick-talking negotiations with them in the event of an encounter.

The second and third options will make the explorations themselves more dangerous, especially if none of the PCs have good ranks in Hunting – the jungles of the Ivory Kingdoms are not a safe place.

Suwat the Doomseeker has decent ranks in the Hunting Skill and thus could potentially serve as a guide for the PCs if they lack the Skills or nerve to go into the jungle on their own. Alternatively, if the PCs have one or more of *guru* Gopti’s family along as translators, they could serve in this capacity as well.



KAZUO, PATROL LEADER AND TAINTED MONK

| | | | | |
|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 4 | FIRE: 3 | WATER: 3 | VOID: 3 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | AGILITY: 4 | | STRENGTH: 4 | |
| Honor: 1.6 | | Status: 3.0 | Glory: 2.6 | Infamy: 3.0 |

Taint Rank: 3.2

School/Rank: Order of the Spider Monk 4

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 1, Heavy Weapons (Bisento) 5, Hunting 4, Investigation 2, Jiu-jitsu 5, Knives 3, Lore: Ivory Kingdoms 3, Lore: Theology 4, Medicine 3, Meditation 5, Sincerity 2, Spears 3, Stealth 4

Advantages: Languages (Ivindi), Social Position (patrol commander), Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Bad Fortune (Shadowlands Taint)

Searching the Jungles

Once the PCs are in the jungle, they will likely have to spend many days or weeks, perhaps even a couple of months, searching for the Temple of Vishnu. If the PCs are still acting as free agents (presumably with Spider escorts), they will be able to search as they please and will thus likely take less time to find the Temple; if they are stuck on punitive duty with the Spider, it will take much longer.

As a general rule, for each week the PCs spend exploring the jungles, allow them to make a Hunting roll (most likely with the Perception Trait) to find evidence of the Temple of Vishnu – e.g. signs of human habitation, glimpses of woodsmoke in the distance, and so forth. Two or more successive weekly rolls might be needed to focus in on this evidence and track down the Temple. In general, the longer and more difficult the GM wants the search to be, the higher the TNs should be and the more successive rolls should be required to succeed. If the PCs are stuck on punitive patrol duty, the TNs should be significantly higher since the PCs can only search as a side-effect of their normal duties.

Obviously, exploring the deep jungles of the Ivory Kingdoms is not in any way a safe occupation. The GM can inflict a host of different challenging encounters on the PCs during this part of the campaign. (How many, how frequent, and what sort of encounters should depend on the tastes of individual GMs and the preferences of their players. Some players may enjoy having a few combat encounters to liven up their game, while others will be impatient with such distractions.) As a baseline, the GM

should consider one to three encounters for each week the PCs spend exploring the jungle.

Following are suggestions for a variety of challenges the PCs can face while in the jungle:

- **Swamp.** The PCs and their companions must traverse a swamp, wading through knee-deep or waist-deep water. During this venture the PCs may come under attack by dangerous marsh-dwelling wildlife such as crocodiles or constrictor snakes.
- **Poisonous Snake.** The jungles of the Ivory Kingdoms contain several varieties of venomous snakes, some of which are extremely deadly. A snake may ambush a random PC or NPC, potentially requiring emergency medical treatment (or magic) to escape death by snakebite.
- **Constrictor Snake.** Constrictors are less common than venomous snakes, but potentially much more dangerous, since they view humans as prey. The GM may wish to use the dangerous Bonedrinker snake from the Appendix for one of these encounters.
- **Cultist Remnants.** There are still a few small pockets of the Cult of the Destroyer roaming through the jungles, looking for the chance to take vengeance for the defeat of their dark goddess. The PCs might be ambushed by such a group, or (conversely) the PCs might find the tracks of a cult group and have the chance to hunt them down and destroy them. The latter option is especially appropriate if the PCs are on punitive duty with the Spider. Mechanically, cultists are Rank One Ronin with no techniques – the GM may opt to use the “Simple Bandit” template from page 206 of *Enemies of the Empire* as a shortcut.

● **Rogue Elephant.** The Ivory Kingdoms is home to a species of medium-large elephants. Prior to the rise of the Destroyer Cult, most of these were domesticated and used by the natives as beasts of burden, but the death of most of the population resulted in many elephants going feral. An angry bull elephant is a very aggressive animal, able to run faster than a man, and likely responds to injury with rage and aggression rather than retreat.

● **Native Village.** There are still a few small villages of the Ivory Kingdoms’ native people, the Ivinda, scattered through the deep jungles. These are typically “composite” villages formed by small groups of survivors who managed to come



together, often under the leadership of a few kshatriya-caste warriors. The villagers will be fearful and somewhat hostile toward Rokugani, especially if there are Spider present – the Spider Clan’s general policy is to treat such villages as potential threats and force their inhabitants to return to the settled areas to live under Rokugani authority. How the PCs react to such a situation can pose an interesting moral quandary for them. If the PCs are trying to avoid violence, a non-threatening approach can avert danger – especially if the PCs have Gopti or some of his family with them.

- **Native Bandits.** Not all of the surviving natives want to live in peace. The PCs may encounter a group of Ivinda who are surviving through violence and theft, preying on the edges of the Rokugani-settled areas. This could lead to an ambush, or the PCs could wind up following the trail of bandits who have already raided the border, setting up a possible chase and/or counter-ambush. The bandits know the jungle well and thus could be a serious challenge. This could be an especially interesting encounter if the PCs are on punitive assignment with the Spider; what happens if the Spider patrol gets wiped out in a bandit fight, leaving the PCs on their own? Do they return and report, or do they take the opportunity to strike out on their own? Mechanically, these opponents can be represented with the mixture of “Simple Bandits” and “Experienced Bandits” from *Enemies of the Empire*; for a real challenge, put the PCs up against a few surviving kshatriya, using the Kshatriya Warrior School presented in the Appendix of Book Two: The People.
- **Tiger Attack.** Real (non-rakshasa) tigers are often man-eaters and are quite aggressive toward anything in their territory. They are also good at staging ambushes or sneak attacks – for example, a hungry tiger may stalk a patrol for hours, then try to snatch away one victim when he becomes briefly separated from the rest.
- **Wandering Golem.** The Ivory Kingdoms civilization included a number of ancient magical constructs, golems, the secret of whose manufacture has been lost to time. A handful of these creations still exist, wandering randomly through the jungles. Game mechanics for golems are found in the Appendix.
- **Destroyer.** Not quite all of the Destroyer demons were slain at the end of Kali-ma’s invasion twenty years ago – a few of them scattered into the wilderness, where they remain. A GM who wants to give the PCs a truly alarming challenge can have them encounter one (or more) of these entities. Their mechanics are presented in the Appendix.

SPIDER PERSONALITIES

If the GM wishes to create more depth in the depiction of the Spider Clan, the best way to do so is to create a greater variety of NPCs for the players to meet and interact with while they are living and patrolling alongside the Spider. The following NPCs can serve as a starting point or inspiration for GMs who wish to take this route:

Daigotsu Buso: A large man with a broad belly, muscular shoulders, and a pronounced limp. Buso started life as a ronin with a clubfoot and consequently grew up in an environment of prejudice and contempt. In his late teens he joined the Spider Clan and found acceptance there, especially since he had learned to fight despite his handicap. Buso normally has an exuberant and even slightly playful personality, making him an enjoyable man to be around, a good conversationalist with a subversive sense of humor. However, he also has a darker side, a sense of grievance and anger that comes out if he is ever mocked or insulted.

Tauku: This man is a monk of the Order of the Spider and normally dresses in the full-body garments and head-wrappings of his order, showing only a narrow strip of his face to the outside world. He is very self-controlled and calm, polite to anyone who approaches him, but with a tense anger lurking beneath the surface. He is always completely self-controlled until he goes into combat, whereupon he suddenly erupts in terrifying bloodthirsty fury. Ironically, Tauku is also a bit of a scholar and theologian, and will freely and openly discuss and debate the Spider Clan’s religious and philosophical views (e.g. the code of Shourido, worship of Daigotsu) during his off-duty hours.

Daigotsu Kizu: A raffish and rather charming man in his twenties, with a smooth tongue and a gleaming smile. Kizu is not Tainted; he is the son of a well-intentioned ronin who joined the Spider Clan during the Race for the Throne a quarter-century ago. Kizu is outspoken and cheerful and has a way with the peasant ladies – most border towns the PCs may visit contain one of Kizu’s women, more than one of them with an illegitimate child. Despite his playboy nature Kizu is not wholly without a sense of responsibility, and usually gives money to his lady-loves whenever he passes through.





THE TEMPLE OF VISHNU

Eventually, if the PCs make a steady effort and manage to avoid getting killed by bandits, snakes, Destroyers, or other jungle threats, they should be able to locate the Temple of Vishnu. (If they don't, they will face a much harder time trying to ultimately prevail against Raniyah the Sly.)

The Temple is located in a hillside clearing deep within a rugged region of the jungle, above a narrow river (more of an overgrown stream) that winds through the landscape. There are about a hundred natives living here, some in the Temple itself and some in newly constructed huts around it. Some of the surrounding land has been cleared for the raising of crops, primarily vegetables although there is a single rice paddy in the bottomland near the river. Eighteen of the inhabitants are brahmin priests and guru, wise men and women who have gathered here to try to preserve what remains of the Ivory Kingdoms' mystical knowledge and religion. The rest are ordinary folk, including women and children, who have drifted here over the last twenty years, seeking a place where they can still live in a manner resembling their old culture. All of the adults carry weapons for self-defense, but none of them are trained warriors and none of the old kshatriya warrior-nobility caste live here.

The Temple itself is constructed very differently from Rokugani architecture. It is made entirely of stone, the ground floor boasting several high archways between narrow pillars, while vaguely onion-like domes rise from the upper floors above. The entire front of the building is covered with detailed carvings and bas-reliefs depicting the gods and legends of the Ivory Kingdoms; most prominent

among these is Vishnu the Protector, who is positioned directly above the main entry arch. He resembles a tall and handsome man with four arms; a conical headdress surmounts his handsome face.

The Temple and its carvings have clearly suffered heavy damage in the past – the Cult of the Destroyer vandalized it and then tried to burn it down – but it has since undergone substantial repairs, giving it a somewhat half-completed look.

The initial reaction of the Temple residents will be fear and hostility, but since the PCs are armed samurai (and are quite likely accompanied by armed Spider samurai as well), they will not try to immediately initiate violence. If the PCs have a translator, they will be able to ease the initial tensions fairly quickly; naturally, this will work even better if the PCs have been able to bring along guru Gopti himself. If Gopti is present, he will quickly win over the inhabitants of the Temple and full cooperation will be forthcoming within less than an hour. However, if Gopti is dead, the PCs will have to convince the Temple residents to cooperate on their own – a task that will be especially difficult if the PCs are operating with the Spider and have none of the native population traveling with them. In general, this will entail convincing role-play and Social Skill rolls (most likely Sincerity or perhaps Courtier), but the PCs' potential success will also be impacted by their approach and by how they communicate:

- If the PCs have brought along members of Gopti's family as translators, this can either help or hurt depending on whether the family views the PCs as good or bad people. (Most likely the PCs will be viewed positively if they made sincere efforts to save the family, but it is possible the PCs came across as cruel or unfeeling.)
- If the PCs specifically say they are threatened by a rakshasa and seek information on such creatures, the locals will be more favorable.
- If the PCs uniformly come across as regarding the Ivinda with contempt or disgust, this will make it harder to win their cooperation. Conversely, if the PCs come across as generally showing respect and compassion toward the gaijin, they will find cooperation much easier to elicit.
- If the PCs are operating under the authority of the Spider, they will generally have a harder time with this encounter since they will have to convince both the Spider and the natives not to resort to violence.

THE LORE OF THE TEMPLE

Once the PCs gain access to the Temple, they will be allowed to speak with the priests and potentially even to peruse the scrolls and documents – many of them quite ancient and fragmentary – within the Temple’s inner chambers. Translation will probably be necessary (unless one or more PCs has learned to read Ivindi). This can be done through a member of Gopti’s family, through some other NPC who speaks the language (many of the Spider do), or through one of two local priests who speak (very) fragmentary Rokugani.

Regardless, once the PCs gain access, they can learn the following information:

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE IVORY KINGDOMS’ RELIGION AND BELIEFS

Vishnu the Protector was one of the greatest of the gods of the Ivory Kingdoms. He was associated with light, power, and wisdom, and was the supreme master of past and present. He guarded the world against the power of asura (demons), rakshasa, and other such evil entities. His closest association among the other gods was Indra, the God of War, with whom he allied to do battle with evil.

The priests always speak of their gods in the past tense. If the PCs ask about this, or simply inquire as to whether the power of Vishnu can be invoked against the rakshasa, the priests explain – with clear evidence of grief – that Vishnu and the other gods of the Ivory Kingdoms perished when the Cult of the Destroyer overran the land two decades ago. “All of the gods perished before the onslaught of Kali-Ma, for she drew on the power of countless human sacrifices in her name. Vishnu fought bravely and well, but he fell with all the others.”

The priests have gathered all the remaining sacred writings and holy artifacts they could find here in this temple, in the hope that in some future cycle of time the gods may be reborn and their religion restored. However, they know their efforts have saved only a tiny fraction of the whole. Many of their sacred artifacts are now held by the Rokugani, who see them as nothing more than artistic curiosities.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON RAKSHASA

The rakshasa are said to have been particularly wicked humans in previous incarnations, transformed into demons to punish them for their sins. In the ancient days, when rakshasa roamed freely through the land, they were notorious for disrupting religious rituals, desecrating graves, harassing priests, possessing humans, and similar atrocities. They feed on human flesh.

Rakshasa are shapechangers, illusionists, and sorcerers. Some tales claim they had the power to fly, to vanish into thin air, and to change their size at will. Only those of pure spirit could see through their illusions and identify them for what they are.

In the early days of the Ivory Kingdoms, the rakshasa were very numerous and wrought terrible suffering on the people.





The people prayed to the gods for succor, and finally Vishnu the Protector intervened. He hunted down the rakshasa and began to seal them away in a great prison. The rakshasa fled from Vishnu, hiding wherever they could, but only a few of them – the most cunning and the swiftest – managed to escape. All the rest were imprisoned.

Rakshasa are demonic entities and thus extremely difficult to kill. Their bodies will reform from any normal injury. Ivory can harm them, as can crystal; some of the priests believe the Rokugani substance called jade can hurt them as well. However, the tales seem uncertain as to whether these things can actually truly kill a rakshasa. Likewise, there are stories of the ancient race from the Burning Sands, the so-called Ashalan, killing rakshasa with their strange crysteel weapons. However, the documents claim the one true way to kill a rakshasa is to shoot it with a missile which has been blessed and consecrated with the power of Vishnu the Protector.

DECIPHERING RANIYAH'S PLOT

Wise PCs will reveal all they know about 'Doji Chonitsu,' including his efforts to systematically collect jade, crystal, crysteel weapons, and ancient Ivory Kingdoms artifacts. The priests and holy men in the Temple will be horrified if they learn this. They conclude there can be only one reason for the rakshasa to be collecting so many items and substances of spiritual power: he is hoping to break Vishnu's prison and free the rest of the rakshasa race, hundreds or perhaps thousands of immortal shapeshifting demons. It would be a scourge of evil worse than even the Cult of the Destroyer.

The priests fear the rakshasa must be getting close to success, given how long it has been working on its schemes and how fiercely it tried to eliminate guru Gopti after he recognized it.

If the rakshasa is plotting to set its brethren free, how would it do this? The priests explain their ancient writings speak of the rakshasa being imprisoned behind "the rainbow wall," supposedly a waterfall which fell

from a mountainside to cover the seal created by Vishnu. Looking through the documents in the Temple can deduce a probable location for this place: a side-branch of the Shinano River that emerges from a jungle-shrouded mountainous zone to the west, a place which the old Ivory Kingdoms referred to as the Vindhya Mountains. Any native of the land can potentially guide the PCs to this place, although it will take many days of travel.

A more important question than “where,” however, is “how can we stop it?” The priests will explain the difficulty of killing a rakshasa if they have not already done so, and remark that in better days they would have summoned kshatriya warriors and equipped them with arrows and crossbow bolts blessed by the power of Vishnu. But Vishnu is now dead, and the priests can no longer invoke his power. The temple does retain a number of old missile weapons, but no one knows whether they were blessed or whether those blessings still carry power today. The priests are quite willing to let the PCs take all of the weapons, and will offer prayers and well-wishes for their efforts, but ultimately the PCs will have to go into action without assurance of success.

A MAGICAL GIFT

If the PCs have greatly impressed the priests of the Temple, and if they saved the life of Gopti, eventually one extremely old and fragile priest will emerge from an inner room and, with trembling fingers, present the PCs with a unique artifact: a small mirror of polished metal, set in a frame of exotic woods carved into a likeness of Vishnu holding the mirror in outstretched arms. This is the Mirror of Vishnu’s Truth, and it has a special power – it reveals things exactly as they really are, insofar as they are known to the followers of Vishnu. In other words, the mirror has no power to pierce an illusion woven by a Rokugani shugenja or to reveal a deception perpetrated by a Burning Sands sahir, but it will reveal the true nature of a rakshasa or a Destroyer cultist.

FIGURING IT OUT ON THEIR OWN

The baseline assumption of this campaign is that the PCs will eventually locate the last functioning temple of Vishnu, there learning about the rakshasa race and, more importantly, realizing what Raniyah/Doji Chonitsu is plotting and where he is planning to release his brethren. However, not all PCs may be able to follow the trail of clues to the Temple of Vishnu, or they may find it but not fully realize what they have learned. Or, conversely, the GM may simply wish to make the campaign slightly less “linear” and offer the PCs multiple options for learning the truth.

In this case, the best option is to let the PCs learn more by conducting research into the history, religion, and superstitions of the Ivory Kingdoms. The Second City contains countless documents, artworks, and other resources scrounged from the ruins of the now-defunct Kingdoms, and PCs who have a scholarly temperament can potentially learn huge amounts by studying these – an activity that might potentially require Intelligence rolls to represent the research effort. The PCs might also be able to seek out other Rokugani scholars within the Second City who specialize in these topics – studying gaijin lore in this way would be considered highly dubious in the Empire, but is much less controversial among those living in the Colonies.

Depending on the GM’s preference, the PCs might be able to learn about the history and nature of rakshasa, about Vishnu’s imprisonment of the race in ancient times, about their spiritual and magical vulnerabilities, or even deduce Raniyah/Doji Chonitsu’s plan from the accumulated evidence. The PCs could also research the location of the ancient rakshasa prison (the “rainbow wall” in the Vindhya Mountains region), or scrounge up an ancient Ivory Kingdoms arrow or crossbow bolt which was reputedly blessed by Vishnu. (Otomo Akio’s extensive collection of gaijin artifacts includes just such a weapon, of course.)





LOCATING THE RAKSHASA



90

Chapter Eight

土氣炎空水



LOCATING THE RAKSHASA

Ultimately, the PCs' goal is to locate the lair of Raniyah the Sly and prevent her from breaking Vishnu's seal and releasing the rest of the rakshasa race. There are several different routes the PCs can take to try to find and reach Raniyah's lair. The simplest of these is to locate the Temple of Vishnu in the deep jungles, where the PCs can gain important clues to where the tiger-demon's lair is most likely to be found. A second choice is to follow Doji Chonitsu's merchant, Hinjo, who can be found via Gozu's smugglers in Kalani's Landing, via the direct trade route in Journey's End Keep, or simply by asking around about Chonitsu's mercantile activities. Finally, a third option – as discussed in the sidebar in Chapter Seven – is for the PCs to conduct their own research into the Ivory Kingdoms' legends of rakshasa; this can be done most fruitfully in the Second City itself, where the greatest quantities of relics and writings from the defunct gaijin may be found.

How easy or difficult the GM wants to make this part of the campaign should depend in part on how long he wants the campaign to run and hence how quickly he wants the PCs to ultimately track down Raniyah the Sly in her lair. The nearby sidebar "Slowing Things Down" allows some additional options for making the PCs work harder and investigate further before reaching the climax of the campaign.

TRACKING DOWN CHONITSU'S MERCHANTS: THE GOZU ROUTE

If the PCs manage to capture Gozu's smugglers in Chapter Three and learn where they are passing their jade off to Chonitsu's men, they may well decide to seek out that location and try to follow the trail of clues farther along. In fact it would be foolish for the PCs not to do so, given what they know at that point.

The waystation where Gozu rendezvouses with Chonitsu's merchants lies two days' travel north of Kalani's Landing, on the main road that traverses the southern Colonies from the Landing to the trade hub of Twin Forks City and from there north to the Second City itself. The waystation is a wooden stockade built across the road, which passes through large gates on each side. Travelers are allowed through the gates into a large courtyard, where the waystation guards check their travel papers and, if necessary, search them and their belongings. Waystations exist in the Empire as well, of course, but on the highly civilized roads of Rokugan they are generally little more than glorified offices; in the wild and hazardous Colonies, where samurai are spread thinly and law-breaking is more common, this more martial approach is required.



SLOWING THINGS DOWN

It is theoretically possible for the PCs to find their way to Raniyah's lair in the Vindhya fairly quickly if they follow the trail of Hinjo the merchant from either Kalani's Landing or Journey's End Keep. There are a number of ways for the GM to throw spokes into the PCs' wheels and force them to explore the other adventure paths before they reach the finale. In fact, if the PCs have not yet figured out what Raniyah really is, the GM may well want to make quite sure they don't stumble into the final battle with no weapons and no idea what to do.

REMOTE SURVEILLANCE. The GM can allow Raniyah to conduct magical surveillance on her cult followers, either through her own sorcerous abilities (who knows what strange powers a gaijin tiger-demon might have?) or through the amulets which mark them as her followers. If the PCs manage to capture some of the merchants and use them as guides to her lair, she will have them killed – this could be a magical effect, such as the amulet suddenly burning its way into its wearer's body, or Raniyah herself could show up and conduct a surprise ambush or late-night assassination.

MENTAL CONTROL. Perhaps Raniyah has a direct link to the very minds of her cultist followers, and when she senses some of them are leading enemies to her lair, she erases their memories. The PCs are left deep in the jungle with a group of commoners who don't remember how or why they got there.

A BARRIER. Perhaps Raniyah has created a magical barrier around her lair, or – better yet – perhaps the ancient protection of Vishnu the Protector still is partially effective. Certain ancient relics of the Ivory Kingdoms are needed to penetrate this barrier, which is part of why Raniyah has been hunting these so assiduously. She has one now and uses it to pass her followers in and out of the area; when the merchants lead the PCs to her lair, she won't let them in and thus the PCs will be stuck until they can acquire such a relic themselves. In this case, the obvious place for the PCs to do so is from the Temple of Vishnu in Chapter Seven.

DEFEAT. Finally, GMs interested in a more story-oriented dramatic approach to the campaign may choose to allow the PCs to locate Raniyah in her lair, only to be decisively defeated because they lack the knowledge and resources to fight her effectively. The PCs are forced to flee for their lives; perhaps even one or two of them are killed. This will hopefully leave the PCs highly motivated to continue on their quest and to learn more about rakshasa any way they can.

Chonitsu chose this particular waystation deliberately, of course; the commander is one of his allies. Hida Dokumarū is an inveterate gambler who has gotten deeply into debt on more than one occasion; Chonitsu has managed to retrieve him from such troubles, and Dokumarū is duly grateful. He turns a blind eye to the various transactions which happen here, and the waystation functions as a major point for Chonitsu to transfer his various substances and rarities to where they are ultimately needed – the Vindhya Mountains, deep in the jungle.

If the PCs spoke with Gozu, they will have a description of who is supposed to meet him at the waystation: a merchant named Hinjo and his caravan. PCs who wish to wait at the waystation itself will likely attract unfriendly attention from Hida Dokumarū, who accuses them of disrupting the operations under his responsibility and demands to know why they are loitering here. Unless the PCs can cite some higher authority, present a believable reason why they should stay here (claiming to be investigating Doji Chonitsu will not be helpful here, obviously), or find a lever to manipulate Dokumarū (Scorpion courtiers might be able to do this), they will likely wind up being expelled from the waystation.

Wise PCs will either come up with a good cover story to explain their presence, or lurk in the jungle nearby so as to avoid Dokumarū's attention. If they have shugenja, they may be able to come up with ways to conceal themselves with magic.

Hinjo's caravan will arrive at the waystation three days after the PCs ambush Gozu's smugglers, so if the PCs wait too long they will miss it – it won't be back for almost four weeks. If the PCs do manage to locate the caravan, it consists of a dozen wagons bearing the Doji mon; each wagon has three peasant/merchant drovers aboard, and the caravan is guarded by a quartet of ronin riding on ponies.

TRACKING DOWN CHONITSU'S MERCHANTS: JOURNEY'S END KEEP

If the PCs are investigating at Journey's End Keep, they should be able to figure out fairly easily that Ide Uchi is selling crysteel items to Doji Chonitsu. Uchi and his family will not readily share any detailed information on their trade with Chonitsu, of course, but the PCs have other options. They can ask around the other merchants in the city, perhaps with the help of a few Commerce or Investigation rolls, to determine how often Chonitsu's merchants arrive to trade – the answer being roughly once every four weeks. The PCs can also potentially learn this by questioning the local garrison or the magistrate, Shinjo Juntao, about traffic in and out of the city.

If the PCs wait around for Chonitsu's caravan, it will arrive after ten days. It will essentially be the same as the caravan the PCs can encounter via the southern waystation; however, if the PCs have not yet investigated the situation in Kalani's Landing, there will be six fewer drovers in the caravan as they are off delivering jade to Raniyah's lair in the Vindhya.

WHAT THE PCs CAN LEARN FROM CHONITSU'S MERCHANTS

Most of the people in Chonitsu's merchant caravan are quite ordinary and undistinguished folk with no dark secrets. However, Hinjo and six of the drovers are dedicated cultist followers of Raniyah the Sly, and it is they who know the route to Raniyah's lair deep within the jungle. Each of them wears a small golden amulet under their clothes – it resembles a stylized tiger's head, mouth agape with fangs. Naturally, the cultists will lie to the PCs, deny any knowledge of smuggling or of mysterious shipments of jade or crysteel, and above all deny any



sinister purposes – while also citing the protection of their influential patron, Doji Chonitsu. If the PCs confront them at the waystation, they will call on Hida Dokumaru's garrison for protection against over-aggressive samurai, while at Journey's End Keep they will call for help from the local magistrate, Shinjo Juntao.

Clever PCs may think of speaking separately with the ronin, who are simple swords-for-hire with no particular loyalty to Hinjo or Doji Chonitsu. The ronin can confirm that some of the drovers on the caravan sometimes leave and carry bundles of goods into the jungle; when the caravan returns four or so weeks later, they are waiting to rejoin it. The ronin find this a bit puzzling but don't see any need to question it too closely and thus endanger their secure jobs as caravan guards. Their basic assumption is that this is another leg of a smuggling route that also includes Gozu and his men.

Ultimately, if the PCs want to follow the merchants to Raniyah's lair in the Vindhya, they have two options:

- **Covert Surveillance.** The PCs can track the merchants covertly and then follow the drovers when they break off from the road and head into the jungle. This will probably require some use of the Stealth skill, or perhaps Hunting if the PCs

are holding back and following the trail without keeping the drovers in sight. Magical spells and abilities will also be helpful here, especially illusion magic that can conceal the PCs while they trail their prey.

- **Interrogation.** If the PCs manage to identify the cultists, they can take a more ruthless approach and try to break them down through threats, intensive questioning, or even torture. This will not be an easy approach since the cultists are essentially brainwashed followers of Raniyah – mere physical threats are unlikely to have much impact. PCs who focus more on spiritual threats (“your soul is doomed to Jigoku for serving this demon!”) may be able to gain some success with the drovers, though not with Hinjo himself. Sufficient physical pain can ultimately break down any of the cultists, but obviously a PC who engages in torture personally is dishonoring himself and should suffer significant Honor loss and Infamy gain – smart PCs will try to find a way of enlisting an experienced hinin torturer, perhaps by citing their status as yoriki to gain cooperation from a local magistrate who has a torturer on staff.



To the Vindhya

The Vindhya Mountains are an extremely rugged semi-mountainous region of the Ivory Kingdoms that divides the eastern and western halves of the old kingdom. It lies beyond the Frontier zone which is being explored and settled by the Rokugani, and for the most part not even the Spider patrols have penetrated its depths. The ruins of Ivory Kingdoms towns and castles are scattered throughout this territory, rapidly crumbling as the aggressive jungle reclaims and consumes them. Travel through this region is slow and difficult, traversing rugged slopes and following the crumbling remains of roads and trails that have not been maintained in two decades.

PCs who traverse the Vindhya will need supplies for two or three weeks, or else they will be forced to hunt and scrounge for food – this can be represented with Hunting rolls, with the PCs taking Raises to generate more food per roll. It should be noted that traditionalist PCs will likely balk at the thought of eating wild game, but if the choice is between that or starvation they may be forced to compromise their principles.

If the GM wishes to make the journey more challenging, there are a host of potential encounters and obstacles that the PCs could meet while traversing the Vindhya. The encounters listed earlier (in Chapter Seven) can be used here as well, and the rugged environment of the Vindhya can also pose physical obstacles for the PCs:

- ❁ **River.** Many streams and rivers, narrow but usually deep and fierce, run through the valleys in between the forested demi-mountains of the Vindhya. Traversing these by swimming can be difficult (suggesting an Athletics roll at TN 20 or higher), although magic may allow the PCs to bypass the problem. Alternatively, the PCs could use Craft skills to build a raft or boat, or fell a tree to create a temporary bridge. Rivers in the Colonies are, of course, home to crocodiles and snakes...
- ❁ **Rockfall/Landslide.** This is a particular risk during monsoon season, when torrential rainfall results in sudden mudslides and similar threats. The PCs might need Perception rolls to notice the danger in time, or Strength rolls to avoid getting swept away or buried.
- ❁ **Mountain Climbing.** Although the Vindhya are not true mountains in the sense of Rokugani mountain ranges like the Spine of the World, there are still plenty of areas where progress will require the PCs to make their way up or down very steep and rugged slopes – especially if they are not directly following Doji Chonitsu's merchants and are simply trying to locate the "rainbow falls." Climbing will require Athletics / Strength rolls, with damaging or possibly even fatal falls as the price for failure; a wise GM will allow falling PCs chances to mitigate the disaster with additional Skill or Trait rolls (e.g. a Reflexes roll to catch the edge before falling, for example).



THE RAINBOW FALLS

Eventually, the PCs should find the legendary “rainbow falls,” either by following Doji Chonitsu’s cultists or by seeking the location on their own.

The PCs pass through a saddle between two forested hills and find themselves looking across a valley at a nearly-sheer rockface, half-covered in greenery from smaller trees and vines that are clinging to any purchase they can find on its slope. Diving down from the top of the pseudo-cliff is a waterfall that thins out into a diaphanous sheet of water-vapor as it descends toward the bottom; during much of the day, from early morning to mid-afternoon, sunlight hits the waterfall and creates a perpetual coruscating rainbow effect. At the bottom of the waterfall, the PCs can see a large pool that feeds into one of the many small but vigorous rivers traversing the narrow valleys of the Vindhya region. The cliff-face to either side of the waterfall and pool is carved in the ancient bas-relief style of the Ivory Kingdoms, and in the small clearing to one side of the pool is what appears to be the shattered ruins of a large statue.

This is the site of Vishnu’s ancient victory over the rakshasa, and his triumph was recorded by priests who carved images into the cliff-face and erected a massive statue to Vishnu himself. However, the remote location of the site meant it was all but forgotten even during the heyday of the Ivory Kingdoms, and the carvings and statue gradually wore down. When Raniyah the Sly came here twenty years ago, she vindictively smashed the crumbling statue and vandalized the remaining carvings. Now she makes her lair here, sallying forth to gather her materials and make her plans, awaiting the day when she can finally break Vishnu’s seal and release her brethren.

The PCs may suspect there is a cave behind the waterfall, but there is not. Instead, the waterfall screens a perfectly flat and circular section of rock, into which is inscribed a mandala with an array of words and religious symbols of the Ivory Kingdoms. This is the seal that holds the rakshasa race at bay, as the PCs can determine by translating the wording.

Raniyah’s supplies and gear, including her vast accumulation of jade, crystal, and ancient artifacts, are stored in several crude buildings hidden underneath the forest canopy to either side of the waterfall. These buildings also house her loyal cultists when they visit, and include simple sleeping facilities, storerooms with rice and dried beans, and a few other basic necessities. Whether any of the cultists are present when the PCs arrive is left to the discretion of the GM.

HOW MANY OBSTACLES?

In a traditional fantasy RPG campaign, a scenario like this – in which the PCs are exploring a dangerous wilderness in search of a key location – means a host of physical challenges, violent encounters with dangerous creatures, and so forth. However, in a story-driven game like L5R, these sorts of extra dangers can easily cross over the line from exciting to gratuitous or even tedious. Accordingly, we have not specifically listed any suggestion as to how often these encounters should take place. Each GM will have a feel for how many of these sorts of problems his group would enjoy confronting, and thus each GM should tailor the challenges of the Vindhya to the needs of his group.



Climax: The Great Ritual

The GM can, of course, simply have the PCs confront Raniyah here in a straightforward throw-down fight. (If the PCs have come here too soon or without proper knowledge and preparation, this may actually be the best option, the battle concluding with the PCs fleeing for their lives.) However, from a storytelling point of view it will be far more dramatic and interesting if the PCs arrive just as Raniyah is beginning her long-prepared ritual to break down the barrier and release her people.





In this case, Raniyah will have created a huge circular mandala pattern in the clearing, constructed from pieces of jade and crystal, with Ivory Kingdoms artifacts and crysteel items placed at key locations throughout the pattern. Raniyah dances around the mandala, followed by several of her most loyal cultists, and as the pattern begins to glow with spiritual power she begins sacrificing the cultists, slitting their throats and spilling their blood into the mandala. With each sacrifice the mandala glows brighter and brighter, and as the final victims perish, arcs of energy begin to fly between the mandala and the ancient seal behind the waterfall.

Obviously, the PCs will try to intervene before things get that far. Once a fight gets underway, Raniyah will initially try to continue her ritual while contemptuously ignoring the PCs (she is confident they cannot hurt her). Those of her cultists who are not directly involved in the ritual will try to fight the PCs, although they will probably not be able to do more than serve as delaying sword-fodder.

Raniyah's attitude will change quickly if the PCs reveal the capability to do serious harm to her or potentially kill her. At that point she will break off the ritual – it can always be re-started later, and a cruel GM may even choose to let it be “paused” for a time without losing the effort already put into it – and unleash her full power on the PCs.

Fighting a rakshasa is a nightmare. In the canonical L5R timeline of the Destroyer War, the rakshasa who commands the Destroyer army repeatedly defeats and kills some of the most powerful samurai in the Empire. Although the PCs should be fairly experienced and effective individuals by the time they reach this climactic battle, they are still going to be overmatched by Raniyah. Her full mechanical abilities are described in the “Rakshasa” entry in the Appendix. She can move far faster than mere humans, turns invisible as a Free Action, and delivers agonizing venom through her claws and fangs. She can likewise shapeshift as a Free Action and her cruel nature means she will use this ability to trick, confuse, and hurt the PCs – for example, turning into a character's True Love right before he strikes at her, or taking a PC's form and leaving them unsure who is the rakshasa and who is real. On top of that, most physical and magical attacks have no effect on her – she is essentially an evil spirit given flesh, and her body reforms near-instantly from most injuries, no matter how severe. If she is grappled, she simply shapeshifts out of it, slipping through the grapple like smoke.

There are, however, a few ways in which the PCs can cause her meaningful harm. Jade, ivory, and crystal weapons (and spells with the Jade or Crystal keywords) can cause damage that takes her considerably longer to heal; there is a remote chance this could actually kill her, and regardless such weapons will give her pause and can buy the PCs time to figure out something else or to disrupt the ritual mandala. Crysteel weapons can not only inflict real injuries but their injuries cannot be healed; there are a total of four crysteel weapons (two sword-like blades, one large dagger, and one vaguely axe-shaped cleaving weapon) scattered around the mandala. They are Ashalan weapons and are not familiar to Rokugani, but PCs could potentially use similar Rokugani Skills (e.g. kenjutsu, knives, heavy weapons) and wield them with a suitable TN penalty.

At the GM's option, extremely powerful spells (Mastery Level 5 or 6) which are not tagged Jade or Crystal could potentially also inflict damage that can be healed but is potentially lethal. However, if the PCs have shugenja capable of casting such spells they are very much an above-average group and Raniyah should probably be made more formidable in return.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a missile (arrow or crossbow bolt) blessed by the power of Vishnu can inflict a lethal blow to a rakshasa. The PCs could potentially have found such a missile in the Temple of Vishnu in Chapter Seven, or in the collection of Otomo Akio in Chapter Five. If they researched the question of rakshasa vulnerability on their own, they may have been able to scrounge up such a missile elsewhere.

Because Vishnu died along with the rest of the Ivory Kingdoms' gods two decades ago, the power of his blessings has begun to fade. The GM should secretly decide whether any particular missile still carries Vishnu's power (there is no way for the PCs to find out, since the blessing of an Ivory Kingdoms god is not something which Rokugani magic can identify or detect. The PCs will thus have to find out whether the blessings are intact in the heat of combat, frantically shooting or hurling them at a seemingly unstoppable opponent.

CULTISTS OF RANIYAH

| | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|------------|---------|
| AIR: 2 | EARTH: 3 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 2 | VOID: 1 |
| REFLEXES: 3 | AGILITY: 3 | | | |
| Honor: 0.0 | | Status: 0.0 | Glory: 1.0 | |
| School/Rank: Commoner (Insight Rank 1) | | | | |
| Skills: Athletics 2, Commerce 3, Courtier 1, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, Knives 3, Lore: Raniyah Cult 3, Spears 2, Staves 3 | | | | |
| Advantages: Ally (Raniyah the Sly/Doji Chonitsu) | | | | |
| Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (commoner) | | | | |







APPENDIX: AN IVORY KINGDOMS BESTIARY



The Colonies are a vast land, larger even than Rokugan, and teeming with life. There are a variety of animals there, both mundane and supernatural, that can pose a significant threat to those who call the region home. Among the mundane animals commonly found in the Colonies and for which previous mechanics exist (either in the Legend of the Five Rings RPG Core Rulebook or the sourcebook *Enemies of the Empire*) are apes, bats, boars, cats, crocodiles, dogs, elephants, falcons, goats, hares, monkeys, oxen, snakes, tigers, Unicorn riding horses, and wolves.

The following section provides descriptions and game mechanics for some of more unusual and in some cases otherworldly creatures found in the Colonies.

BEHEMOTH

The creatures the Mantis have chosen to call Behemoths are thankfully incredibly rare, and it is possible there is actually but a single creature responsible for the handful of sightings since the clan began operating within the Colonies. The physical appearance of the Behemoth is something of a mystery, since looking at it causes madness in those who see it – an affliction which can become permanent for those exposed to the beast for too long. It was a single Behemoth that caused a months-long separation of the Mantis expedition to the Colonies from the mainland Empire, since no ships could get past its hunting waters to return. Some scholars have hypothesized the beast might have a migration pattern that allowed the Mantis passage initially but then cut them off shortly thereafter, while others believe the creatures might be from the Sea of Shadows and were deliberately isolating the Mantis in hopes of seeing them destroyed.

It is believed the Behemoth in question was slain via an incredibly dangerous tactic employed by Moshi Kalani, commander of the first Mantis expedition, but there is no way to know for certain if the beast is in fact dead. Regardless, concern over the possible appearance of additional Behemoths is one of the primary reasons the

Mantis established the twin watchtowers that oversee the southern coastline.

AIR: 3 EARTH: 8 FIRE: 3 WATER: 7
AGILITY: 5

Initiative: 2k1 Attack: Bite 6k5 (Complex)
Damage: Bite 7k7 Armor TN: 25
Reduction: 8 Wounds: 100: +5; 200: +10; 300: Dead.

Special Abilities:

- ☉ *Aquatic: Behemoths cannot leave the ocean which is their home.*
- ☉ *Huge*
- ☉ *Madness: Any intelligent creature that looks upon the Behemoth's horrible physical form must make a successful Willpower Roll at TN 35 or go temporarily insane, losing all control of their actions and reverting to an animal-like state. This roll may be made every five Rounds, with a successful roll allowing the creature to regain control, but if three consecutive rolls are failed the condition becomes permanent.*
- ☉ *Swallow Whole: If a Behemoth hits a human-sized or smaller target with a successful Bite attack, it may attempt to swallow its prey whole. The two make a Contested Strength roll. If the Behemoth wins, the creature is swallowed; otherwise the creature breaks free. Creatures that are swallowed whole suffer 3k3 Wounds during the Reactions Stage of each Round. They can attempt to escape the beast's stomach; this is a Complex Action, requiring a roll of Athletics (Climbing) / Strength at TN 25 to force their way free of the creature's massive gullet. Cutting one's way free requires a Small or Medium weapon (Large weapons cannot be used in the confined space), inflicting a minimum of 25 Wounds to create a hole large enough to escape. On the plus side, the Behemoth does not have Reduction on the inside of its stomach.*

BONEDRINKER

The serpents called Bonedrinkers are at least a familiar threat to the samurai of the Colonies, since they are similar to the various types of constricting serpents present in the Empire and its island holdings. The primary difference between the Bonedrinkers and more familiar forms of constricting snakes is size; an immature Bonedrinker is the size of the largest recorded constrictor ever found in the Mantis Isles. Bonedrinkers appear to be significantly more intelligent than common animals as well, and are capable of using rather advanced tactics (by the standards of animals, at least) to ambush and capture their prey.

AIR: 2 EARTH: 4 FIRE: 2 WATER: 4

AGILITY: 3

Initiative: 5k3

Damage: Bite 4k2,
Grapple 6k3

Reduction: 0

Skills: Jiujutsu 4, Stealth 4

Special Abilities:

- Huge
- Squeeze: When using a Grappling attack, a Bonedrinker will always choose to inflict damage while it controls the Grapple (which it rolls 9k4 to control). A victim who suffers Grappling damage for a number of consecutive Rounds equal to its Stamina will begin to suffocate, resulting in an additional 2k2 Wounds per Round thereafter.

Attack: Bite 5k4 (Complex),
Grapple 8k4 (Complex)

Armor TN: 25

Wounds: 32: +5; 64: +10; 96: Dead





DESTROYERS

The name Destroyers is something of a misnomer, but given the experiences of the Great Clans during the Destroyer War a generation ago, the misunderstanding is certainly understandable. During that conflict, the Great Clans faced an almost limitless legion of metallic monstrosities created by the Cult of Ruhmal for the purpose of universal conquest. A much smaller subset of the invasion, generally perceived to be the more elite forces of the enemy, were large bipedal beast-men who bore a striking resemblance to various mundane creatures such as elephants and tigers (although there were many other forms documented during the war). It is these creatures who are described here. Since the conclusion of the war and the death of the demon goddess Kali-Ma, whatever malevolent force drove these creatures to war has faded, and they have returned to a more animal-like state. Small numbers of these man-beast creatures can be found in the Colonies, typically in the wildest and most dangerous regions.

Destroyers are large creatures, typically two to three times larger than a normal warrior and larger even than the ogres of the Shadowlands. They are enormously physically powerful, but do not actively seek conflict with humans. Indeed, the creatures seem to prefer to avoid humans altogether, perhaps as a vestigial instinct from a previous existence as mundane animals. When cornered or provoked, however, they are incredibly dangerous and can devastate entire squadrons of samurai.

AIR: 2 EARTH: 4 FIRE: 1 WATER: 4
REFLEXES: 3 AGILITY: 3

Trait Bonuses: *Tiger Destroyers gain one additional rank in Reflexes and two ranks in Agility. Elephant Destroyers gain one additional rank in Strength and two in Stamina.*

Initiative: 4k3 (elephant), *Attack:* Bite 5k5 (Complex),
6k5 (tiger) *Claw* 8k5 (Complex, tiger only),
Gore 6k3 (Complex, elephant only)

Damage: Bite 4k4, *Armor TN:* 20 (tiger), 25 (elephant)
Claw 5k4, *Gore* 6k6

Reduction: 3 (tiger), *Wounds:* 35: +0; 70: +2; 105: +4;
6 (elephant) 140: Dead

Skills: Jiu-jutsu 3, *Stealth* 4 (tiger only)

Special Abilities:

- ☉ Fear 2
- ☉ Huge

GOLEMS

Golems are not living creatures, but rather artificial creations that predate the fall of the Ivory Kingdoms – and perhaps predate the Kingdoms themselves. They are in many respects similar to Earth-based entities created through powerful magic in Rokugan, such as the legendary Army of Clay that accompanied the Four Winds into the Shadowlands. The golems found in the Ivory Kingdoms are powerfully enchanted statues that are capable of animation and obedience to those who hold the secrets of their creation. The samurai of the Colonies have discovered these surviving in various ruins throughout the region as well as a few active ones wandering the jungles; it is theorized the cultists who laid waste to the land lacked the power to destroy them. A small number of Rokugani scholars, primarily Mantis and Phoenix, have carefully researched and experimented to discover a means of controlling these creations, with occasional success. The secrets of their creation remain elusive, however.

AIR: 1 EARTH: 9 FIRE: 1 WATER: 2
REFLEXES: 2 AGILITY: 2 STRENGTH: 8

Initiative: 2k2 *Attack:* Unarmed 5k2 (Complex),
Weapon 6k2 (Complex)

Damage: Unarmed 8k2, *Armor TN:* 25
Weapon 10k3

Reduction: 10 *Wounds:* 50: +1; 100: +3; 150: +5;
200 Destroyed

Skills: One appropriate *Weapon Skill* at 5

Special Abilities:

- ☉ Huge
- ☉ *Ritual of Animation:* Upon completion, golems usually fall into an inactive state, and can only become active after a special ritual that animates them. The *Ritual of Animation* is the equivalent of a *Mastery 3 Earth* spell, and can only be cast by those familiar with it. When a golem becomes active, it normally remains active for a number of hours equal to the caster's *Earth Ring* (although there have been instances of golems remaining there for much longer). A golem will follow any orders given to it by the ritual caster, up to and including taking action that will lead to its destruction, and sometimes also carry out long-term commands such as attacking intruders.
- ☉ *Stone Weapon:* Most golems were created with a large stone weapon, the equivalent of a *tetsubo* or *scimitar*. These weapons are far too large and heavy for any human to use, and their tremendous weight allows them to ignore 3 points of *Reduction* in their targets.

GREAT DEATH

The nightmarish catastrophe known as the Great Death has been sighted only a handful of times by Mantis ships in the deeper regions of the sea, engaging in the most long-range of the clan's naval sorties. Most of what is known about the entity was recovered from partially destroyed texts the clan scouts have found in various ruins throughout the Colonies, but enough has been discovered to confirm the worst fears of the Mantis sailors who have lain eyes on the thing. It was considered by the people of the Ivory Kingdoms to be a manifestation of divine evil, a malicious and unstoppable force created in the mortal realm for an unknown malignant purpose.

The Great Death appears to be a remnant of the massive sea creatures the people of the Ivory Kingdoms called "whales," but larger by orders of magnitude than the largest living specimen ever seen by mortal eyes. If the Great Death ever had flesh attached to its bones, that flesh has long since been eroded away by the sea, and all that remains are the bones themselves. The bones that make up the Great Death are harder than any steel that has yet been

discovered. While no samurai have yet fought the creature, records of disastrous conflicts with the Ivory Kingdoms navy indicate most weapons simply shattered on the beast's skeleton. Moreover, the vast strength of the beast is clearly supernatural and may be effectively limitless. One recovered account (whose veracity is a matter of debate among Mantis scholars) suggests that on one occasion the fury of the Great Death allowed the beast to literally shatter an entire island by swimming through it, its bones shearing through soil, bedrock and ocean floor.

In addition to the sheer physical threat posed by the Great Death, its supernatural abilities are significant as well. The entity appears to feel relentless hunger despite its skeletal form, and any creatures it consumes are frequently returned to a semblance of life as undead monstrosities in their own right. Mercifully, this is rare since only creatures of significant size even attract the beast's attention in the first place, and the effects of this curse appear to be short-lived, so these lesser undead usually perish after a few weeks.





| | | | |
|--------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| AIR: 2 | EARTH: 20 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 6 |
| | | | STRENGTH: 15 |

Initiative: 2k1 Attack: Bite 8k4 (Complex), Ram 8k6 (Complex)

Damage: Bite 10k10, Ram 15k10 Armor TN: 30

Reduction: 20 Wounds: 500: +5; 1,000: Dead

Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 2

Special Abilities:

- ☉ Fear 6
- ☉ Huge
- ☉ Resurrect: Creatures swallowed by the Great Death almost invariably die, and most are resurrected as undead. Typically they become skeletal creatures similar to zombies or revenants (as described in the L5R RPG Core Rulebook) but occasionally they exhibit greater powers.
- ☉ Swallow Whole: If the Great Death hits with a successful Bite attack, it may attempt to swallow its prey whole (assuming the prey survives the bite). The two make a Contested Strength roll. If the Great Death wins, the creature is swallowed. Swallowed creatures suffer 5k5 Wounds per Round during the Reactions Stage.
- ☉ Unearthly Power: The unknown supernatural power that animates the Great Death allows it to have Earth and Strength higher than the normal limit of 10.

NAGAH

The Naga race as a whole and their accursed kin known as the *Naar Teban* are both found in the pages of the L5R 4th Edition sourcebook *Enemies of the Empire*. The feral abominations found within the former Ivory Kingdoms, however, are an entirely new form of Naga with which the Rokugani have no experience. These creatures are sometimes referred to as *Nagah*, the term by which they

were known in Ivindi, the language of the Ivory Kingdoms. They are a constant threat for those who venture too far beyond the established frontier of explored territory in the Colonies.

Although nothing is known of the Nagah's culture (assuming such even exists and that they are not simply feral monstrosities), they do seem to have a connection to the Naga race, and when the entity called the Dark Naga appears in the Empire it is able to control the Nagah despite the vast distance between the Colonies and the Empire. There are a few investigators who even suspect Nagah were somehow responsible for the murder of the first Imperial Governor at the Dark Naga's behest.

| | | | | |
|-------------|------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 4 | FIRE: 1 | WATER: 4 | AKASHA: 1 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | AGILITY: 5 | | | |

Caste: 0.0

Infamy: 3.3

School/Rank: None

Skills: Athletics (Climbing, Swimming) 6, Hunting (Survival) 5, Jiu-jitsu 6, Stealth (Ambush, Sneaking) 7

Advantages: Prehensile Tail, Strength of the Earth (2 levels), Way of the Land (Colonies)

Disadvantages: Compulsion (kill humans), Wrath of the Kami (Air)

Special Abilities:

- ☉ Camouflage: A Nagah's coloration and body blend in perfectly with the canopy of trees in which they often hide. Nagah gain one Free Raise on all Stealth rolls made in the jungle.
- ☉ Natural Attacks: A Nagah may make claw attacks as a Simple Action (attack 6k5, damage 5k4), or a bite attack as a Complex Action (attack 5k5, damage 4k4).
- ☉ Swift 2

RAKSHASA

The rakshasa are a race of semi-immortal demonic entities whose true forms resemble bipedal tigers with human-like hands and a dark and sinister light of intelligence in their eyes. According to the beliefs of the Ivory Kingdoms, rakshasa are said to have been particularly wicked humans in previous incarnations, transformed into demons by the gods to punish them for their sins. In the ancient days, when rakshasa roamed freely through the land, they were notorious for disrupting religious rituals, desecrating graves, harassing priests, possessing beings, and similar. The people prayed to the gods for succor, and finally Vishnu the Protector intervened. He hunted down the rakshasa and began to seal them away in a great prison. The rakshasa fled from Vishnu, hiding wherever they could, but only a few of them – the most cunning and the swiftest – managed to escape. All the rest were imprisoned.

Rakshasa are shapechangers, illusionists, and sorcerers. They feed on human flesh. Some tales claim they had the power to fly, to vanish into



thin air, and to change their size at will. Since they are demonic entities rather than normal living beings, they are extremely difficult to kill. Their bodies will reform from any normal injury. Jade or crystal can harm them, as can magic which calls on the essence of either of those substances, although the tales seem uncertain as to whether these things can actually truly kill a rakshasa. Likewise, there are stories of the ancient race from the Burning Sands, the so-called Ashalan, killing rakshasa with their strange crysteel weapons. However, the legends of the Ivory Kingdoms claim there are only two true ways to harm or kill a rakshasa: strike it down with weapons of ivory which has been blessed and consecrated with the power of Vishnu the Protector, or shoot it with a missile (typically an arrow or a crossbow bolt) which has been similarly blessed and consecrated.

Rakshasa are cunning and sadistic creatures with cruel senses of humor; they are also known as schemers, sometimes developing plots and plans that last for centuries. Although they prefer to operate on their own, they sometimes serve more powerful masters – either out of fear or due to shared goals. They are treacherous followers, being utterly selfish, and have been known to betray their masters when it suits them.

AIR: 5 EARTH: 6 FIRE: 5 WATER: 5
REFLEXES: 6 INTELLIGENCE: 7 PERCEPTION: 6

Initiative: 10k6

Attack: Claws 10k5 (Simple),
Bite 10k5 (Complex), or
weapon (Simple)

Damage: Claws 7k2, Bite
8k3, or by weapon

Armor TN: 40

Reduction: 5 (0 against
weapons blessed by Vishnu)

Wounds: 80: +5; 160: +10;
240: Dead

Skills: Acting 6, Athletics 5, Battle 5, Courtier 5, Defense 6, Etiquette 3, Investigation 6, Sincerity (Deceit) 8, any three Lore Skills at 5, any three High Skills at 5, any three Weapon Skills at 5

Special Abilities:

- ☉ **Invisibility:** A rakshasa can turn invisible as a Free Action and likewise can reappear as a Free Action. It becomes visible again automatically when it attacks.
- ☉ **Poison:** The claws and fangs of a rakshasa are poisonous, delivering an agonizing venom. Those struck by its Claw or Bite attacks are afflicted with terrible pain that shoots through their limbs and bodies. They suffer a +20 TN penalty to all actions for the next hour; a Stamina roll at TN 25 can reduce this to a +10 TN penalty. Multiple poisonings do not “stack” the TN penalties, but do extend the duration for one hour each time.
- ☉ **Regeneration:** A rakshasa which takes actual damage (from an attack type that does not instantaneously heal) will heal 25 Wounds during

UNMASKING A RAKSHASA

Although the shapeshifting powers of the rakshasa are outwardly perfect, the underlying malignant bloodlust of the creatures sometimes “leaks” through their outward deception and supposedly can be detected by those of a pure nature. To simulate this, the GM can allow any PC with a high Honor (Honor 6.0 or better) or a high level of spiritual harmony (represented by a Void Ring of 4 or higher) a chance to sense the true nature of a concealed rakshasa. The character makes a Contested Roll of his Willpower against the rakshasa’s Awareness. With a success, he detects a malignant and terrible spirit lurking beneath the rakshasa’s mundane exterior.

It should be noted that this is not a deliberate action that a character can undertake voluntarily – it is, rather, a spontaneous reaction to the presence of the rakshasa. Thus it is entirely at the GM’s discretion as to whether the character can make this roll or not, even if he “qualifies” to do so.



the Reactions stage of each Round; in order to kill it, it must be injured so severely that it cannot heal itself to positive Wounds at the end of the Round. Damage from crysteel weapons and from weapons of blessed ivory cannot be healed.

- ☉ **Shapeshifting:** A rakshasa can change its shape any number of times per Round as a Free Action. It can take any human form and any animal or monstrous form that is reasonably close to human in size and mass. It can imitate any human it has seen, although it cannot match their voice.
- ☉ **Sorcery:** A rakshasa can cast Air and Fire spells as though it is a Rank 4 shugenja with no Affinity or Deficiency.
- ☉ **Superior Invulnerability:** A rakshasa is effectively immune to all mundane attacks and to all spells that do not have the Jade or Crystal property; he heals all damage from such attacks instantaneously. It takes normal damage from jade, crystal, blessed ivory, crysteel, or obsidian, and from spells that have the Jade or Crystal keywords.
- ☉ **Swift 5**
- ☉ **Unique Vulnerability:** If a rakshasa is hit by a missile weapon which has been blessed and consecrated by Vishnu the Protector, it must make a Willpower Roll against the total damage from the missile or die instantly. Regardless, it cannot regenerate the damage from this weapon.





RED HUNGER

Like the Great Death that haunts the ocean, the Red Hunger is a blessedly unique creature that appears to lair somewhere within the unknown lands along the western edge of the Colonies. The beast is a serpent of almost unimaginable dimensions, capable of consuming elephants in a single bite. Humans are of such small size they are hardly worth the beast's attention, but the Red Hunger seems to enjoy consuming them regardless, and perhaps takes some sort of malicious joy in the fear and death it causes.

The origins of the Red Hunger are better understood than those of the Great Death, due to an almost complete text recovered from a tomb found near the ruins of the Ivory Palace. According to the beliefs of the Ivory Kingdoms, the Red Hunger was once an inhabitant of the divine realm. There were few entities the serpent could prey on in that realm, and it was a greedy, deceitful scavenger that constantly burned from an internal hunger it could never quench, eventually turning red in color. When the mortal world was born, the snake slipped away into the new world in search of easier prey. It devastated entire villages until the gods gave their followers the tools needed to defeat and imprison the beast. The Red Hunger has spent most of its existence imprisoned, escaping a handful of times throughout the Ivory Kingdoms' existence. It was not until the Kingdoms were destroyed that it gained true freedom, and since that time it has gorged itself repeatedly on the creatures and people of the Colonies. Fortunately, the beast seems to spend much of its time hunting in the enigmatic lands beyond the western boundaries of the Colonies.

| | | | |
|--|------------|--|----------|
| AIR: 3 | EARTH: 8 | FIRE: 2 | WATER: 8 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | AGILITY: 5 | | |
| Initiative: 4k1 | | Attack: Bite 10k5 (Complex), Grapple 10k8 (Complex) | |
| Damage: Bite 8k8, Constrict 10k8 | | Armor TN: 30 | |
| Reduction: 8 | | Wounds: 200: +5; 300: +10; 400: +15; 600: +20; 800: Dead | |
| Skills: Jiujutsu 7, Stealth 3 | | | |
| Special Abilities: | | | |
| ☉ Fear 4 | | | |
| ☉ Huge | | | |
| ☉ Squeeze: When using a Grappling attack, the Red Hunger will always choose to inflict damage while it controls the Grapple (which it rolls 12k10 to control). A victim who suffers Grappling damage for a number of consecutive Rounds equal to its Stamina will begin to suffocate, suffering an additional 2k2 Wounds in the Reactions Stage of each Round. | | | |
| ☉ Swallow Whole: If the Red Hunger hits with a successful Bite attack, it may attempt to swallow its prey whole. The two make a Contested Strength roll. If the Red Hunger wins, the creature is swallowed. Swallowed creatures suffer 5k5 Wounds per Round during the Reactions Stage. Swallowed creatures may attempt to escape either by climbing out of the beast's throat (an Athletics (Climbing) / Strength Roll at TN 25, followed by a Strength roll at TN 30 to fight clear of the mouth) or by hacking out of the beast's stomach with a weapon (requiring a total of 50 wounds inflicted). | | | |



SHOJO

The creatures called shojo are strange, enigmatic spirits native to the sea and areas along the coastline of the Ivory Kingdoms. They are at least mildly hostile to anyone who is not native to the land, although the reason for this is not well understood. The beasts are intelligent in their own way, able to communicate with humans without great difficulty – although very few choose to do so. Due to their hostility and reticence, most of what is known about the shojo comes from the small community of surviving Ivory Kingdoms natives and from a single shojo that happily engages with the Mantis, an entity known as En'you. En'you possesses two characteristics at least partially representative of the shojo as a whole.

The first is a gift for prophecy, which includes not only foreseeing events of great importance but also very minor events and events at great distances. In the first days of the Mantis occupation, individual samurai would speak to En'you to gain information concerning their families back in the Emerald Empire.

The second characteristic is an unquenchable thirst for alcohol of any kind. The Mantis forged their bond with the spirit through gifts of sake and other such beverages. In the case of En'you, it appears intoxication greatly enhances its gift for prophecy. It is likely other shojo desire alcohol as well, but it is not known whether or not it will have the same effect on their divination abilities.

AIR: 3 EARTH: 3 FIRE: 2 WATER: 4

AWARENESS: 4 INTELLIGENCE: 3

Initiative: 3k3 Attack: Unarmed 4k2 (Complex)

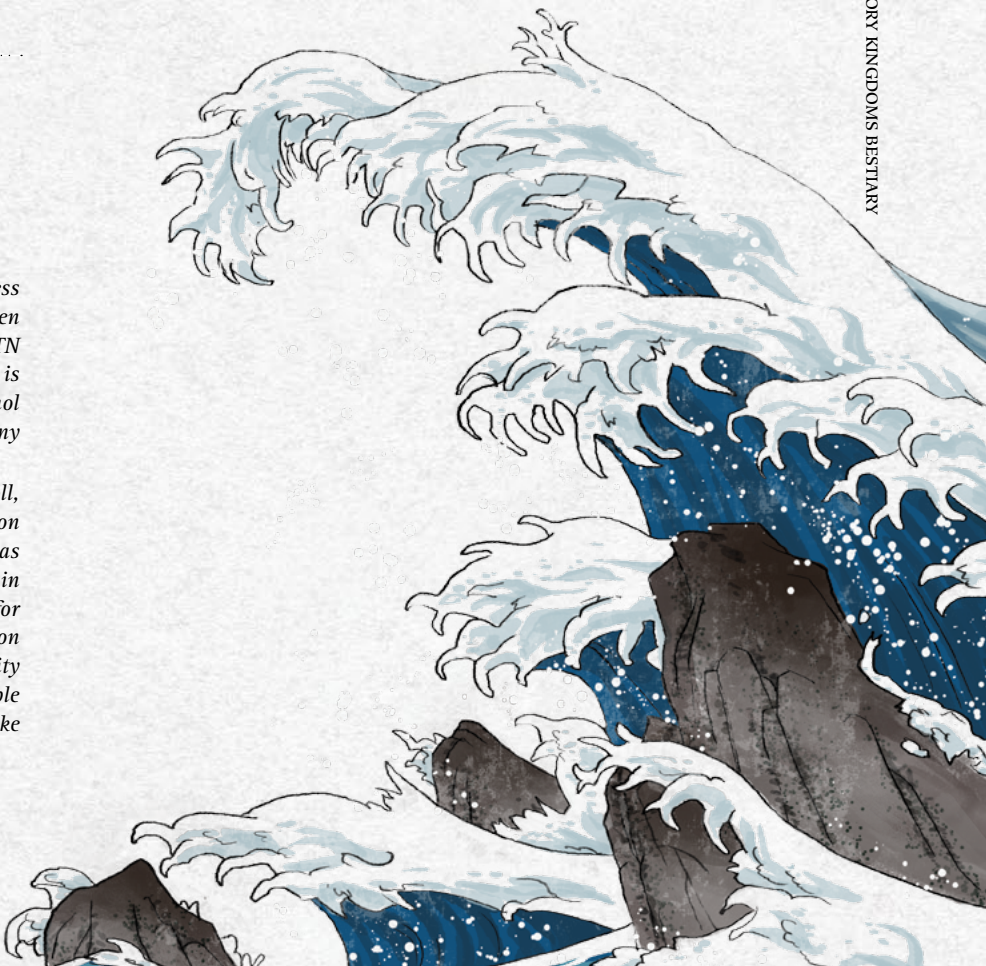
Damage: Unarmed 4k4 Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 4 Wounds: 20: +0; 40: +2; 60: +4;
80: Dead

Skills: Divination 4, Jiujutsu (Wrestling) 2

Special Abilities:

- ☉ **Alcoholism:** All shojo have an inherent weakness for any sort of alcoholic beverage, and when offered one they must make a Willpower roll at TN 25 to resist agreeing to the requests of whoever is offering the alcohol. Each bottle's worth of alcohol (or the equivalent) a shojo imbibes increases any attempt at a Divination Skill Roll by +1k0.
- ☉ **Prophecy:** Shojo may make a Divination Skill Roll, but instead of receiving the normal information for such a roll, they instead gain information as described for the Lesser Prophecy Advantage in the L5R RPG Core Rulebook. The difficulty for this roll is determined by the GM, depending on the distance from the subject and the specificity of the attempted divination, but shojo are capable of almost limitless acts of prophecy if they make exceptionally high Skill Rolls.
- ☉ **Spirit**







SECOND CITY THE CAMPAIGN



WWW.L5R.COM

LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS and all related marks are ™
and © Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc., All rights reserved.