THE GREAT CLANS

Legend of the Five Rings

The Great Clans

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Dedication:

To every one of you who have fought for your Clan, be it with dice, cards, miniatures, disks, charity, internet forums, email, and more, this book is for you.

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Introduction

The winter wind is like a knife whipping through the streets of the Imperial City, but Seppun Katsura does not seem to notice. Others walking along the street are far more insulated against the cold, wrapped in thick cloaks and straw coats, but Katsura wears little more than one would expect on a man attending court and seems to suffer no ill effects whatsoever.

Miya Nisho shivers uncontrollably and wraps her cloak tighter around her, but she does not speak. After several blocks Katsura glances at her. "Are you uncomfortable?"

"No, my lord," she says, trying and failing to keep the chattering of her teeth from being audible.

Katsura smiles very slightly and huffs out a breath. "If you are to oversee your family's affairs in the city for the winter, young lady, I suspect you will need to be more assertive. We can turn back. I forget how the cold bothers others, but it helps me to think."

"I am well, my lord," Nishio insists. "Of what did you wish to speak?"

"Where to begin?" Katsura's tone hints at dejection. "The Empire suffers from more crises than we can name at present, and the Imperial families have yet to take definitive action. We must do so immediately, to send a strong message to the clans and the people of Rokugan that we have not taken our oaths to the Empress and to them lightly."

"That is welcome news, my lord," Nishio says, "but which crisis do you wish to address?"

"That is the question, I think," Katsura answers. "There are wars in the north and south, fighting in the heart of the Empire as undead appear at random and ravage poorly defended targets, cultural famine among many of the clans, literal famine among others, and..." He stops and glances about cautiously, then continues in a lower voice. "If I may be frank, I begin to suspect some of those who serve the Empress at the highest levels of power may be... mad. The Emerald Champion, for one." He thinks for a moment. "Possibly the Treasurer as well."

"What would you have us do?" Nishio asks. "We cannot address all of these concerns. The Great Clans combined can scarcely address them all. We must select one and find some means of demonstrating the power and reach of the Imperial families."

"Yes! I knew that I liked you for a reason, young lady. Now, the question is, what vassal is available to us? The Fortunes know our resources are stretched quite thin already."

There is the sound of a clearing throat, and both samurai look back to see Seppun Tanizaki, Nishio's yojimbo. "If you will forgive me lords," he says with a smile, "I believe I know someone who can help you."

Welcome to *The Great Clans*, the third sourcebook for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game, 4th Edition! Our first two supplements, *Enemies of the Empire* and *Emerald Empire*, expanded greatly on the material in the core rulebook, offering opponents (and/or allies) for characters to face in the game and new material on the Empire itself, respectively. Now it is time to discuss the Great Clans of Rokugan in much more depth and detail.

Each chapter examines one of the Great Clans in extensive detail, describing the clan's history, customs, families, and greatest heroes, and greatly expanding on the clan's available game mechanics. New Schools, Paths, Kata, Ancestors, and everything else imaginable are contained within for your enjoyment.

A Note About Timeline Neutrality

As many of you no doubt already know, one of the major goals for the fourth edition of the L5R RPG is to ensure timeline neutrality. We undertook this to ensure the maximum amount of material in each and every book we provide for you can be used in every campaign imaginable. So far the response has been very favorable. In the chapters of this book, however, you may find that we are sometimes a bit less neutral than we have been in the past. Specifically, each clan's chapter contains an extensive account of the major historical events for that clan, as well as a selection of major figures from throughout the clan's history.

Does this mean the RPG will begin clinging more closely to the current L5R storyline? Absolutely not. However, we do intend to continue to support all eras of play and all play styles, and sometimes that means we will include things that may be of use to others but not to your game in particular. Don't take it personally. We still love all of you!

Truthfully, there are plenty of ways to use the material in this book even if you are taking your campaign in the strangest and most divergent direction possible. Perhaps you have no use for the current lords of the Spider Clan, but we'll wager that in whatever era you're using, there's probably at least one incredibly powerful maho-tsukai who could use some stats. Just put your thumb over the name of the NPC and voila! An instantly relevant stat-bloc for your campaign's use. The same trick works just as well for a fourth century Lion Clan Champion and a seventh century Master of Fire, so please accept these humble offerings with our disclaimer that you are free and encouraged to use them in any manner you see fit.

We hope you enjoy *The Great Clans*!

Chapter One

The Crab Clan

Hida Roku stares at the yellowish-brown dust at his feet and frowns. What had his instructors said? Did the tracks get deeper when the creature was running or when it was walking? How could he tell how many of them there were? Tension makes his stomach knot and his thoughts skitter through his head, chasing each other fruitlessly. He cannot remember, cannot remember. There might be a hundred of them right over the next hill.

Calm down, Roku thinks, breathing deeply, finding his center in the strength of Earth. You know two things for certain, he tells himself. They are goblins, and you are going to kill them.

Some sort of winged creature flies high above, invisible in the dull stone-gray clouds, and lets out a piercing shriek that lasts almost a minute. Roku crouches beneath a small stone overhang, peering out now and then to make certain the creature hasn't come closer. His brothers would probably have stepped out and shouted defiantly at the flying thing... and they would probably also have died, Roku thinks. He knows better. The thing is at least a mile up, but he can make out a vague shape through the clouds, see how huge it is. Anything that size in the Shadowlands is not to be taunted by a child who hasn't yet completed his gempukku.

For that matter, anything that size would probably be more than a match for any Crab samurai.

Roku waits patiently. After a few minutes, the thing flies away to the south, out of sight. He waits another five minutes, counting his pulse, before he ventures out from beneath the cramped stone outcropping. The young Crab stretches to get his blood flowing again, then turns his attention back to the yellowish dust in front of his sandals.

The tracks are getting deeper and more distinct. Roku nods to himself, fairly certain he is getting closer to his quarry, and slows his steps to reduce any noise. In the Shadowlands stealth is as vital to survival as jade, armor, or a good tetsubo. A Crane or a Lion would probably call me dishonorable, he thinks, remembering the words of his senior sensei, old Hida Hiroku. "All those honorable samurai would wet themselves in terror if they ever saw an ogre, or even a goblin most likely! Not to mention what they might do at the sight of an actual oni. Aside from filling their loincloths. So pay them no mind. Let them talk about how we are dishonorable, let them whisper behind their fans about how crude and tasteless we are, let them sleep safely behind the wall we Crab built with our blood."

Roku frowns absently and moves forward, using the jagged stones that jut out of the ground as cover. He hears the goblins before he sees them—not a difficult task, for they are suddenly shrieking with fury and terror.

An ogre has come across the same small band of goblins. Roku grimaces as the massive creature snatches up a squalling, struggling goblin and rips it to pieces, stuffing each wriggling chunk into its tusked maw and chewing with monstrous relish. The other goblins hurl themselves at it, stabbing and clubbing, but their blows seem to do nothing to its hairy brown hide.

The young Crab leans back against the stone and takes a deep breath, then bites off a cough as the dusty yellow air tries to choke him. Hiroku-sensei's words echo in his ears: "The Shadowlands is not just a landscape. It is your enemy, and it wants to kill you. Do not give it the chance."

He sneaks another glance at the battle raging on the far side of the rock. The ogre's back is turned. He knows he'll never have a better chance to kill the thing.

Roku lifts his tetsubo and starts forward quietly. The last of the goblins lets out a piercing shriek as the ogre rips the little green creature's leg off with a guttural chuckle. Roku creeps forward. The other leg. Closer. The ogre tears the rest of the goblin's body apart, stilling its shrieks; wet plops sound as pieces fall to the ground. Roku raises his tetsubo, closing to within a few paces. The ogre crunches down on one of the goblin's arms, chortling to itself with imbecilic glee. Roku takes one step forward, then another... and a small piece of bone, buried beneath the dust, crunches under his sandal.

The ogre whips around faster than a creature of its size has any right to. Roku swings the tetsubo at the creature's swollen, misshapen thigh. There is a sound like a cracking stone and the ogre drops to its knees.

The Crab rears back for another blow, but he is too slow. The ogre stretches out its long arms and pulls the boy into a crushing hug. Roku feels his feet lift off the ground, his tetsubo clattering from his hand. By desperate effort he manages to wedge his left arm into the creature's throat, and its massive yellow teeth snap inches from his face. Foul breath washes across him and he fights not to gag. The ogre is so strong, like nothing Roku has ever felt—

Hiroku sensei spoke of it, but the experience is beyond anything words could teach. Not even Roku's older brother, who could hold an ox cart up while someone changed the wheel, was so strong.

The ogre is crushing him, only his left arm and the strength of his armor resisting as it tries to squeeze the life and breath from his body. Roku stares into the yellow eyes of the creature that wants to eat him, to kill him and his family, his clan, everyone in the Empire. Fear claws at his heart. He will die here, in the Shadowlands, and if his corpse survives it will return to the Wall as one of the walking dead.

"If I die here," he gasps, "I'll take you with me, filth!"

Roku's right hand closes on the tanto shoved under his belt; he drags the short blade free and plunges it into the side of the ogre's chest. The sharp steel blade sinks less than an inch into the beast's thick flesh. The ogre laughs, saliva and bits of goblin flesh spraying from its mouth to strike Roku in the face.

Screaming, Roku rears back his head and smashes it forward, slamming his iron kabuto into the ogre's broad face. It is like slamming his head into a stone wall—a brief memory of a training accident flashes through his head—but the ogre lets out a grunt and its grip slackens for the briefest of moments. The young Crab squirms, pulling his left arm down and dragging the tanto up with his right... and then the ogre squeezes again, and Roku lets out a strangled cry as his left arm dislocates with a sickening pop. His breath comes out of his lungs and his vision turns dark and blurry, the pain of his shoulder soaring into an unbearable fire that seems to be drowning him.

The ogre grins, its huge yellow teeth glistening with goblin blood... and then its eyes widen and the pressure of its grip suddenly eases. The beast falls backward, crushing the goblin corpses it left lying in the dust. The hilt of Roku's knife stands out of its chest, driven through its thick hide by the strength of its own lethal embrace.

Roku stands up, slowly, wobbling on legs weak as a child's first steps. Slowly the pain begins to recede slightly, allowing him to take account of specific injuries. His left arm is out of its socket and probably broken. A few of his ribs feel like they may be broken as well, his head aches harder than it did the night he first drank sake, and he belatedly realizes he has lost three teeth.

But he smiles as he draws his wakizashi and hacks off the ogre's head. A menace to the Empire is dead... and tonight at the Wall, the clan will welcome him and celebrate. Another Crab samurai has come of age.

History of the Crab Clan

"Every day would be the death of you all, the end of everything the Empire has built... except that we are here."

– Hida Reiha, Crab Champion, twelfth century

The Crab Clan was founded after the First War, when Hantei ordered his brother Hida to defend the Empire from the followers of Fu Leng. "Our safety is on your shoulders, brother, for only you are mighty enough to bear its weight," Hantei said, and Hida accepted the order willingly. In truth, he had already gathered many followers who had fought at his side during the First War. The Crab Clan was formed from those who had survived those desperate battles: the strongest, the toughest, and the best of those who had flocked to the banner of Hida.

Hida led his surviving followers south to the barren lands near what is now Kyuden Hida, and there he asked them who was strong enough to join him in the fight against the newly formed Shadowlands. Three men stepped forward: Hiruma, Kuni, and Kaiu. Hida was grateful for their devotion, but wondered if they were truly strong enough for the long struggle that lay ahead. He tasked the three men with defeating a great oni ravaging the land, a demon whose touch was said to bring never-ending pain: Hatsu Suru no Oni.

The three men set out to the Shadowlands, working together and calling on their respective skills to confront the oni. Hiruma tracked the movements of the beast, Kuni researched its nature and weaknesses, and Kaiu built a small forge and crafted a weapon certain to kill the creature. When the three were ready, Hiruma led the oni to the place Kaiu and Kuni had prepared. There the three men fought Hatsu Suru no Oni together; Hiruma struck the final blow, separating the creature's head from its shoulders.

When they returned to Hida with the oni's head, he was deeply impressed, and granted each of them permission to found their own family. The Hiruma became the Hida's right hand, serving as both warriors and scouts, because it was Hiruma who found and tracked the beast as well as striking it down. The Kaiu became the craftsmen of the Crab, for it was Kaiu who made *Chikara*, the sword that slew Hatsu Suru no Oni and which went on to become the ancestral weapon carried by a thousand years' worth of Crab Clan Champions. And the Kuni became sages and magicians, for it was Kuni who learned the creature's secrets and prepared the others for the battle.

Crab and Crane: The First Yasuki War

The Kenkai Hanto Peninsula sits between Crab and Crane lands, and from the earliest days of the Empire both clans built settlements there. The Crab built defensive fortifications along the coast of the peninsula, while the Crane built shipyards and commercial ports to help them expand their trading interests on the same peninsula. The Crab claimed the Crane had no need for such settlements just to peddle their wares, while the Crane argued the Crab had no need to build fortifications so far from the Shadowlands. Conflict was inevitable, and the first war between Great Clans began.

Initially, the war was hardly a contest. The Crab soldiers, hardened by three centuries of war against the Shadowlands, easily crushed the Crane forces beneath their sandals. However, the Crane soon called on their commercial resources and their web of political contacts to cut off the Crab Clan's supplies. Unable to keep their army fed, the Crab faced defeat. Help, however, arrived from an unexpected source.

The Crane Clan had for some time been increasingly dissatisfied with the dubious commercial and legal practices of their Yasuki family. Doji Mizobu, the Clan Champion at the time of the war, was especially displeased with the Yasuki family and had recently ordered them to cease all questionable and illicit activities, regardless of their nature or purpose (or profitability). The Yasuki responded in a most unexpected way: they broke away from the Crane Clan and offered to join the Crab. This was an unprecedented act; never before had a samurai family sought to sever its ties of fealty with its parent clan.

The Crab Clan Champion, Hida Ichido, readily accepted the Yasuki offer. He knew the Yasuki had vast wealth that

The Crab and Other Clans

The Crab Clan has effectively spent its entire existence at war, a condition no other clan in the Empire has shared—not even the Lion, for all their martial traditions. It is sometimes said that at least one samurai of the Crab Clan has died defending the Empire every single day since the clan was founded. This state of constant conflict and constant loss is wholly alien to the other clans in the Empire, most of whom do not even comprehend it. They believe if there is no war within the Empire, Rokugan is completely at peace—hence the term "A Thousand Years of Peace," commonly used to refer to the reign of the Hantei Dynasty. To the Crab, of course, such attitudes are naïve at best, and they sneer at the other clans for their failure of understanding. Given that the Crab are also notorious for their crude manners and general lack of refinement, these disagreements often harden into contempt or outright enmity.

If there are no significant Shadowlands incursions into the Empire for a few generations, it is common for the other clans to begin to question for the need for the Crab Clan and to argue the resources sent to the Crab could be better used elsewhere. The Crane and Scorpion in particular have been known to suggest more than once that the extensive lands of the Crab could be better managed under their control instead. Scorpion courtiers are notorious for sneering at the crude and clumsy ways of the Crab and for suggesting the Crab defense of Rokugan is overrated and largely unneeded. Such attitudes quickly change during a major Shadowlands attack, of course, but once the outward appearance of "peace" reasserts itself, hostility to the Crab begins to climb once more.

These conflicts of ideology have caused numerous wars and border skirmishes between the Crab and their neighbors, as well as endemic political and social hostility. In fact, the first significant war between clans was between the Crab and the Crane, and the two have been frequent enemies since.

could turn the tide of the conflict, and he also knew their mercantile skills could be a huge asset to the Crab in the long term. Sure enough, with the support of the Yasuki the Crab were able to retake the peninsula once again.

From there the war dragged on for the better part of a decade. The Crane, furious at the Yasuki betrayal, were unwilling to accept a Crab victory; the Crab were unwilling to give an inch to the Crane they so despised. Finally the Emperor ordered both clans to lay down their arms. To prevent further debilitating conflict he proclaimed the Yasuki to be a Crab family and decreed the two clans would split the peninsula down the middle. The peace negotiations were protracted (and a bizarre incident in the midst of the negotiations led to the creation of the Sparrow Clan), but finally a permanent border was established.

Although the war was over, relations between Crane and Crab would remain bitter for centuries, with frequent border skirmishes and political clashes. However, one notable exception to this legacy of hostility did emerge many years later: the Daidoji.

The Battle of the Tidal Landbridge

In modern times the Crab show considerable respect for the Daidoji family of the Crane, referring to them as the "Iron Crane." The Daidoji, for their part, have a custom of sending some of their young bushi from each graduating class to spend a year serving on the Kaiu Wall alongside the Crab. This unusual respect and friendship was born out of an incident in the early eighth century, usually dated to the year 715, one year before the attack of the Maw.

In that year a clever demon called Kinjiro no Oni assembled a sizable force of Shadowlands creatures and attacked a sparsely defended Crab watchtower on the shores of Earthquake Fish Bay, near the tidal landbridge. The Crab were caught by surprise and badly outnumbered; their commander, one of the Clan Champion's younger sons, sent up a signal arrow in hope of summoning help from the rest of the clan, but Kinjiro no Oni had chosen his target well and no help was forthcoming. The battle seemed lost.

At that moment a hunting horn sounded and a group of samurai in Crane blue charged the flank of the Shadowlands creatures, forcing them back. The new arrival was none other than the daimyo of the Daidoji, Daidoji Masashigi, with twenty of his men. He had been out hunting and seen the signal, and led his men across the landbridge to help.

The fighting continued, and it seemed that despite the arrival of reinforcements the Shadowlands might yet win the day. The Crab commander fell and Masashigi's men cleared a path so he could be carried from the battlefield. Recognizing the situation, Masashigi deliberately fought for time, delaying Kinjiro no Oni's forces until the sun set and the tide began to rise over the landbridge. The daimyo and his remaining three men fought to pin Kinjiro no Oni and its minions in place, keeping them engaged until the rising waters swallowed both forces.

The only survivors of the fight were the two Crab soldiers who carried their fallen general away. They watched for any signs of movement, but no one ever emerged from the sea. The only sign Daidoji Masashigi had been there was his kabuto, which washed ashore a short while later. The Crab built a shrine on that site, ensconcing Masashigi's helmet, and the Daidoji have held their respect ever since.

The Maw's Attack and the Birth of the Great Carpenter Wall

In the year 716, a previously unknown Oni Lord known simply as the Maw emerged from the Shadowlands at the head of a vast army. Until that time the largest Shadowlands armies that had attacked the Crab Clan seldom numbered more than a few thousand creatures, and for the most part they had no true leadership; indeed they were often just as likely to fight among themselves as to attack the Empire. The Maw, however, assembled an army that numbered in the tens of thousands, possibly even hundreds of thousands. Under his leadership the creatures of darkness swept through the Crab lands, wrecking the Crab armies, overrunning vast swaths of territory, and capturing Hiruma Castle. The castle had withstood many previous assaults, but the Maw unleashed foul Earth magic that allowed scores of oni to enter the castle's basement and rampage through its chambers, murdering the entire garrison. It seemed as though the Maw's forces would keep going through the lands of the Hida and on to the rest of the Empire.

The Crab Champion, Hida Banuken, gathered his remaining forces at Kyuden Hida on the north bank of the Saigo River in a final effort to stop the Maw's advance. They were hopelessly outnumbered, and Banuken asked

The Crab and Clan Warfare

Over the course of Rokugan's history many clans have gone to war with the Crab, and more than a few have beaten them. This may seem contradictory given that the Crab have one of the largest armies in the Empire. In truth, if the Crab were ever able to rally their full strength, they could probably defeat almost any other two clans simultaneously, with the exception of the Lion and possibly the Unicorn. However, the Crab can never commit more than a small fraction of their forces to battle within the Empire. Most of their strength is perpetually tied down on their southern border, waging endless war against the Shadowlands. Indeed, the full military might of the Crab has only been seen inside the Empire once, in the Clan War, when Hida Kisada abandoned the Wall and forged his tragically misguided alliance with the Shadowlands.

Normally, the Crab can only deploy one of their armies against enemies from within Rokugan; however, their defensive training and expertise often allows them to hold their own against hostile neighbors. Going on the attack is more difficult, though, and whether attacking or defending the Crab often find their battlefield accomplishments overturned in other arenas of conflict. Lion Clan samurai famously lament that "victories won on the battlefield are given back in the courts," but the Crab are even more vulnerable to such reversals of fortune due to their weak economy. They are a food-deficit clan, and although they have a few strong exports (notably iron ore and tea) they are extremely vulnerable to embargoes or other political or economic maneuvers by their rivals.

Given the combination of political/economic weakness and the inability to ever bring more than a fraction of their forces to bear, it can be surprising the Crab win any wars at all. The sheer might and ferocity of Crab soldiers sometimes compensates for enemy numbers, and while the Emperor is usually sympathetic to political clans like the Crane and Scorpion, he is also mindful that the Crab protect the Empire and thus cannot be damaged too badly lest all of Rokugan suffer.

his daimyo for anything that might offer a hope of victory. None spoke, but then a young Kuni teacher, Kuni Osaku, stepped forward and asked Banuken how much time he would need to build new defenses. The Clan Champion replied it would take at least sixty days to create any kind of effective fortification. Osaku answered simply, "I will give you that time."

The next morning, as the army of the Maw surged across the plain toward the Saigo River, Kuni Osaku climbed to the top of Kyuden Hida's battlements, raised her arms, and began to chant. As her voice rose, the river rose with it, turning into a churning wall of water that swept away every creature which sought to cross. The Maw's forces balked, unable to cross the torrent. Osaku's younger brother quietly told Hida Banuken, "Every day when the sun rises she will age one year. You have your sixty days, my Lord."

With just two months to work, Banuken called all the remaining forces of the Crab to build a fortification strong enough to withstand the Maw's vast legions. The Kaiu designed the new fortification, a vast wall wide enough that the Maw could not outflank it. All of the Crab, samurai and peasants and even eta, threw themselves into the work. Food and supplies flowed in from every corner of the Empire as word spread of the terrible threat rising from the south. And every day Kuni Osaku aged, her skin wrinkling, her body shriveling, her hair fading from lustrous black to gray and then to white.

Seventy-three days after she began her spell—thirteen days longer than Banuken had asked—Kuni Osaku fell to the ground and breathed her last. Within moments the magical tsunami subsided and the Maw's forces stormed across the river... and broke themselves on the stalwart defense of the newly built Kaiu Wall. Thousands of monsters and undead abominations fell, and at the critical moment the Hiruma, filled with rage at the loss of their castle and lands, launched a ferocious counterattack that shattered the Shadowlands army. Hida Banuken slew the Maw by his own hand, and its purified skull would hang over the gates of Kyuden Hida for centuries to come.

Although the Crab prevailed against all odds, the Maw's attack left permanent scars. The Crab quickly went to work expanding and strengthening the Wall until it protected their entire border with the Shadowlands, but vast tracts of Crab territory had been Tainted, and the Kuni would spend generations purging their lands of Jigoku's touch—at the cost of also purging them of all life. The Hiruma lands lay on the wrong side of the Wall altogether, and thousands of Hiruma samurai would perish in later years trying vainly to retake Shiro Hiruma.

Kisada's Alliance with the Shadowlands

"Yes, the Hantei are descended from gods. But by how far?"

—Hida Kisada

At the dawn of the twelfth century, the Crab Clan was ruled by Hida Kisada, the so-called "Great Bear," a man of great strength and courage but also possessed of a distressing amount of arrogance and ambition. Kisada felt nothing but contempt for the rest of the Empire's samurai, who he saw as weaklings hiding behind the protection of the Crab. He also felt little respect for the waning Hantei Dynasty, which he believed had become corrupt and feckless, unwilling to do what was needed to defeat the forces of Fu Leng. At the same time, Kisada had developed a grudging but real respect for the strength of the Tainted creatures and demons he fought all his life.

After the failure of the Scorpion Clan Coup, Hantei XXXIX ruled the Empire. He was a weak and sickly boy, and Kisada believed he showed the time of the Hantei had come to an end. The Crab, as the strongest clan, were entitled to rule. But so long as the clan was locked into defending the border against the Shadowlands, it could never muster the strength to challenge the other clans for the throne of Rokugan. Kisada commanded his chief advisor Kuni Yori, daimyo of the Kuni, to find a solution to the problem. Yori returned with a seductive idea: why not ally temporarily with the forces of Shadowlands, using them as disposable shock troops to claim the throne—and then turn a united Rokugan against the Shadowlands and destroy it once and for all? Most Crab would have rejected such an idea out of hand, but Kisada's fascination with strength and power caused him to embrace Yori's scheme. The samurai of the Crab Clan were filled with doubts when Kisada announced his plans, but they were still loyal samurai and followed his commands.

Thus did the Crab Clan forsake—for the first and only time—the lesson it had learned so bitterly for a thousand years: never trust the Shadowlands. The price was high. Kuni Yori quickly succumbed to the Taint and betrayed the clan. Kisada's younger son Hida Sukune became a human sacrifice to the forces of Fu Leng, while Kisada's older son Hida Yakamo was forced to give his name to an oni. Although Kisada finally saw the error of his ways and spent the last years of his life working to redeem himself, the damage to the Crab Clan was considerable—not only the direct loss of many to death or the Taint, but also the moral and psychological blow to the clan's duty and purpose. Much of the burden for rebuilding fell on Yakamo, who became the Crab Clan Thunder. Although he cleansed his Taint with the power of an ancient artifact called the Jade Hand, Yakamo never married and spent the remainder of his life working to redeem his clan's honor. Ultimately, he did so by ascending to the Heavens as Lord Sun, reigning there for over half a century before he was replaced by the Jade Dragon.

After the Clan War: The Modern Crab

In the years after the Clan War, the Crab returned to their traditional role as the defenders of the Empire, fighting bitter battles against the forces of the Shadowlands. An all-out campaign succeeded in finally retaking Shiro Hiruma, against ferocious resistance from Shadowlands creatures led by the now-undead Kuni Yori. It was also in this era that the Toritaka of the Falcon Clan were devastated by an evil spirit known as a Shuten Doji; the Crab absorbed the remnants of the Falcon Clan to protect them from any future attacks.

The Crab faced a dire threat a generation later when the Kaiu Wall came under concerted attack from Shadowlands forces led by the so-called Dark Lord Daigotsu. A significant portion of the Wall fell, and Clan Champion Hida Kuroda was captured and corrupted by the Taint. Kuroda's brother Hida Kuon took control of the clan and organized a counteroffensive that reclaimed the Wall; however, one tower was corrupted so badly that it remained a stronghold of the Shadowlands for years afterward. Undaunted, the Crab rebuilt the Wall opposite the fallen tower and carried on their duties as before.

Finally, the modern era saw the renewal of conflict over the Yasuki family when the death of the family daimyo appeared to leave a Crane, Daidoji Hachi, as the closest heir to the position. This crisis led to two successive bitter wars (known popularly as the Second and Third Yasuki Wars) within a generation, ending with the situation largely unchanged save for the existence of some Crane who now claimed the Yasuki name.

Families of the Crab Clan

"Knowledge, Preparation, Action."

- The Creed of the Crab Clan

The majority of the families of the Crab Clan have existed in the same form since the founding of the Empire. The Hida, Hiruma, Kaiu, and Kuni all were born with the clan and have endured ever since, often through dire trials and tragedies. The Yasuki joined the clan three centuries later during the first Crab-Crane war, while the Toritaka family remained independent as the Falcon Clan until it was absorbed into the Crab Clan in the twelfth century.

Each of the families of the Crab has a distinct role within the clan. The Hida are the leaders and front-line warriors; the Hiruma are the scouts and yojimbo; the Kaiu are the builders; the Kuni are the priests and researchers; the Yasuki are the logistical arm of the clan; and the Toritaka are the experts on spirits both evil and benign. The creed of the Crab Clan reflects the different roles of each family. The Hida present a problem to the clan, the Toritaka and Kuni seek the knowledge needed to overcome the problem, the Kaiu and Yasuki make certain the clan has the resources required, and then the Hiruma and Hida take action.

The Hida Family

"I will not fail."

– Hida family motto

The Hida are the undisputed leaders of the Crab Clan. They are the clan's strategists and officers, but also form the vast majority of the rank and file troops. The Hida family

The Hida Family Mon

All four of the original Crab families incorporate the image of a crab into their mon. The Hida mon depicts a large blue crab against a background of slate gray. The crab clutches a tetsubo in its right claw, signifying the family's great strength and dedication to duty.

is by far the largest in the Crab Clan and is, in fact, one of the largest in the Empire. Indeed, to the rest of the Empire the Hida family is for all intents and purposes synonymous with the Crab Clan.

The popular image of the Hida is a hulking unshaven brute, probably too stupid to understand the rules of etiquette and protocol; a man who would sooner smash one's skull in than exchange pleasantries. Incidents such as Hida Yakamo's notorious duel with Mirumoto Satsu in the early twelfth century, when he bludgeoned his foe to death with a tetsubo, only serve to enhance the impression that all Hida (and by extension all Crab) are thuggish brutes. There is a certain amount of truth to this stereotype, for the Hida spend their entire lives under the constant threat of death and thus place little value on the subtle rules of Rokugani court society. However, the samurai of the Hida family are far from stupid—to the contrary, since they fight perpetually against a foe both powerful and malignantly cunning. Indeed, some of the greatest military strategists in the history of the Empire have been Hida, and many more might have earned similar reputations had they not died in battle—as so many do every year.

Since the Yasuki joined the Crab Clan, they have actually sometimes worked to encourage the Hida stereotype of the stupid, sullen brute. This causes their rivals in court and on the battlefield to underestimate the clan, a useful advantage.

The Hida respect strength, perseverance, duty, and the courage and fortitude required to fight the Shadowlands. The only people the Hida respect more than strong battlefield leaders are their mothers. Indeed, the family considers its women to be the unsung heroes of the Empire; without their efforts the family would long since have faltered under the heavy casualties it suffers year to year. Married women in the Hida are expected to have as many children as possible so there will always be warriors to man the Kaiu Wall. It is rare for a Hida woman to bear fewer than two children, while three to four is more common; there have been instances of Hida women having ten or twelve children over the course of their lives. The Hida fully understand the role their wives and mothers play in the defense of the Empire, and though they may sometimes appear to be disrespectful to non-Crab women, they will never insult a mother. For that matter, if you truly want to make a Crab warrior angry, insult his mother—you are unlikely to survive long enough to apologize.

Notwithstanding their maternal loyalty, many of the things the Hida do seem to be outside the bounds of honor and etiquette as Rokugan sees them. The Hida do actually follow Bushido—in fact, they believe in it very strongly. However, they believe sacrifices must be made to do their duty to the Empire, and a thousand years of war with the Shadowlands has taught them pragmatism must always take pride of place over strict idealism. The Yasuki sometimes spread various rumors to try to mitigate the impact of Hida pragmatism on the Crab Clan's reputation—for example, they often suggest the Crab favor the use of heavy weapons because they do not wish the sully their katanas with the Tainted blood of Shadowlands creatures. In truth, the Hida use heavy weapons because they are the most effective against their foes... though in a pinch, a Hida will use whatever is at hand to kill his enemy.

Given the magnitude of their duties, the Hida take the raising and training of their children very seriously, and no Hida samurai becomes an adult without passing several challenges. Crab children play games like *Stoutwall* and *Emperor of the Watchtower* which teach them to think defensively and to be physically tough. Training in Hida dojo is harsh to the point of brutality, encouraging a stoic resistance to pain and a determination to keep fighting while a single breath remains in the body. As noted in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*, the Hida dojo do not allow their students to graduate until they venture into the Shadowlands and return with the head of a Shadowlands creature. Most often, students return with the head of a goblin or a similar minor foe, but some return with larger trophies, such as the heads of ogres, trolls, or even oni. Those students are generally given more responsibility and groomed to become officers. (A student who brings back the head of a ratling is punished severely and is often forced to retire immediately so as not to endanger the rest of the clan.) This form of gempukku is hazardous, of course, and some observers have suggested that as many as one out of every ten students never returns alive. But the Hida consider it essential to prove their students are capable of the harsh and merciless life that lies before them.

The Hiruma Family

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing at all."

– Original Hiruma family motto

"We are as smoke in the wind."

- Unofficial Hiruma motto after the fall of Hiruma Castle

"A single fire against the darkness always burns brighter."

– Official Hiruma motto after the recovery of their lands

If the Hida are the commanders of the Crab Clan, the Hiruma are their lieutenants. Hiruma samurai tend to be smaller and more agile than Hida warriors, qualities which serve them well when scouting the far reaches of the Shadowlands and ambushing their inhuman foes. Ever since Hiruma himself, the family has been known for its swift and deadly combat style and above all its legendary scouting abilities. Tragically, when Hiruma Castle fell to the Maw's attack Hiruma's original fighting techniques were lost, seemingly forever. For the next three centuries the Hiruma trained with the Shinjo scouts in Unicorn lands; the Shinjo made some of their own secret techniques available to the Hiruma, who were eventually able to develop a new school around them. In the late twelfth century the lost family techniques were finally rediscovered, but some Hiruma continued to train with the Shinjo and maintain the new techniques they had developed.

Although the Hiruma have always been best known as swift warriors and clever scouts, after the fall of Shiro Hiruma a new element was added to their family image. Many Hiruma samurai were filled with an inexpressible rage; their home was gone and every effort to recover it ended in failure. The family chose to abandon its mon and creed until it could reclaim its lands. In these long years without a home the Hiruma developed a disproportionate number of berserkers, men who sought to release their fury and heartbreak in the madness of battle. More than one Shadowlands creature was caught by surprise when a lone Hiruma scout suddenly became an unstoppable force of rage and destruction.

The Hiruma Family Mon

The original Hiruma mon depicted a pair of open crab claws surrounding a stylized eye; it symbolized the family's twin roles as warriors and scouts. After the fall of Hiruma Castle, the family forsook its mon completely, believing itself dead until it could reclaim its lands. After the recovery of Hiruma Castle and its lands in the early twelfth century, the family adopted a new mon showing a silhouetted castle tower, symbolizing their victory against the Shadowlands.

Aside from their primary duties as scouts, Hiruma bushi also frequently serve as yojimbo for the small number of Crab diplomats circulating through the courts of the Empire. The Hiruma are well-known for their powers of observation and—best of all—their silence. A Hida yojimbo is likely to speak loudly and cause offense at vital moments, whereas a Hiruma will more likely stand and listen, perhaps even seeing or hearing things the courtier he guards did not.

Although the Hiruma do not usually follow the Hida tradition of retrieving a Shadowlands creature's head, some of the Hiruma dojo show solidarity with their Hida brethren by administering a final test of their own. Their students are gathered on the Great Carpenter Wall, where they are given one week's worth of rations and a single jade finger. They have one week to meet their instructors at the village of Shinsei's Last Hope, the Crab Clan's most remote stronghold within the Shadowlands. Although the mission is dangerous, most students complete the ritual, usually reaching the village in only two or three days.

The Kaiu Family

"The strength of the mountain lies at its base."

- Kaiu family motto

The Kaiu are without dispute the best engineers in the Empire. When other clans need bridges built or defensive fortifications constructed, they call on the Kaiu. It was the Kaiu who put together the basic structure of the Great Carpenter Wall in just 73 days, and after the Battle of the Cresting Wave they continued that work, turning the Wall into the greatest defensive edifice in the history of the Empire.

Although the Kaiu are most famous for their construction projects, they are also skilled smiths and craftsmen. An army that must fight off vast hordes of screaming Shadowlands monsters requires the finest quality weapons and armor, and it is the Kaiu family that crafts these armaments. They also design, build, and man the siege engines that strengthen the Wall and the various Crab fortifications, and the cunning traps that guard the tunnels beneath the Great Wall.

While the Hida are leaders and warriors and the Hiruma are quick-thinking and quick-acting scouts, the Kaiu are planners. Master Kaiu engineers have been known to spend countless days puzzling over the best shape for the corner of a wall, making sure it is strong enough and provides the maximum possible defensive advantage. The Kaiu often describe their role in the clan by saying, "We temper their passion with discipline, and their swords are stronger because of it." The Kaiu take great pride in their creations and in seeing them used effectively. Every oni that is slain by a ballista bolt or by boiling oil poured from a clever trap is a victory for Kaiu engineering. Moreover, the Kaiu find value even in their failures, since they can use them to learn how to make their creations better.

The Kaiu perform extensive tests on everything they build, trying to make sure their creations work properly before allowing them into the hands of the Hida and Hiruma. After all, their devices could be the difference between life and death for those who defend the Wall. The Kaiu also have a few peculiar ways of testing their work; for example, visitors to the Crab lands are well advised to avoid empty villages with small red flags tied to the nearby trees. Such villages are actually test sites for Kaiu siege gear, and unwise visitors may fall victim to cleverly camouflaged traps or come under bombardment from ballista and catapults.

A unique feature of the Kaiu is that in addition to being the greatest engineers in the Empire, they are also its greatest toy makers. Making toys is a way of relieving the stress of their more vital duties, and they delight in crafting intricate mechanical amusements. Sometimes these toys will end up sparking insights that lead to bigger and better siege engines and fortifications, but more often they are simply a way for the Kaiu to enjoy the beauty and challenge of creation. Not even a Crab's soul is fully fed by war alone, after all.

The Kaiu Family Mon

The Kaiu mon depicts a single huge blood-red crab claw against a background of bricks on a field of white. The bricks represent the protection of Kaiu fortifications, while the claw represents the hidden weapons that strike from those fortifications.

The Kuni Family

"Sometimes you have to look into the darkness to bring forth the light."

- Kuni proverb

The Kuni have what may be the most dangerous job in the Empire: they must understand evil so as to know how to defeat it. It is the Kuni family's duty to make certain the Crab Clan is always fully prepared to defend Rokugan from any threat the Shadowlands may spew forth. They study the beasts of the Shadowlands, the sinister powers of maho, and the secret nature of oni and undead so the Hida and Hiruma will know what they are fighting, so the Yasuki will know what supplies the clan needs, and so the Kaiu will know what kind of weapons to make.

The family founder saw the warriors of the nascent Crab Clan were often unprepared to defeat their foes. Casualties were heavy, and frequently victory was won by sheer chance or solely by the tremendous strength of Hida himself. Kuni knew Lord Hida would not lead the clan forever, and those who followed him must be properly armed against the darkness. He took it upon himself to travel into the Shadowlands and study the creatures that dwelt there. It was Kuni who discovered the purifying traits of jade and the methods by which it could be used to defeat oni and other Tainted beasts. He paid a terrible price for this wisdom, however. As the years passed, the things he had seen and done ate away at his mind until they drove him mad; eventually he sequestered himself with a handful of apprentices to record all he had learned. According to their records, during one of his final lucid moments he murmured, "It was all worth it if the information I discovered saves a single life."

With the possible exception of the tattooed men of the Dragon, the Kuni have the highest incidence of madness in the Empire. They regularly conduct strange experiments, dissect living and dead Shadowlands creatures, and delve into esoteric and dangerous magical knowledge. Unsurprisingly, the rest of the Empire generally fears and reviles them, and for their part they feel little more than contempt for those who are not Crab.

The Kuni lands were overrun and Tainted during the Maw's attack in the eighth century, and the family spent many years afterward slowly purging the Taint from its holdings. Unfortunately, this process also purged the normal elemental kami from the land, leaving behind a bleak, lifeless desert—the so-called Kuni Wastes. The Kuni also faced the problem of how to preserve and pass on their knowledge in the wake of losing their primary temples and the accompanying records and knowledge. Their solution was to abandon the traditional custom of teaching students in temples, replacing it with a system of apprenticeships.

The Kuni Family Mon

The Kuni family's symbol shows two crossed crab claws, red, against a cream-white background and surrounded by a blue circle. It symbolizes the Kuni search for knowledge and reminds them the deepest secrets may be found within.

In the modern Kuni family, each adult Kuni shugenja spends years teaching one or two individual apprentices the secrets of speaking with the spirits and defeating the Shadowlands. Once the students are deemed worthy they are proclaimed adults, and within a few years they take students of their own. In this way the accumulated knowledge of the Kuni is spread across the entire family so there is no way the Shadowlands can ever destroy all of their wisdom again.

The Kuni are some of the best healers in the Empire, rivaled only by the dedicated Water shugenja of the Iuchi and Isawa. In the case of the Kuni, however, this skill derives not from magical power but from a thorough understanding of anatomy. Kuni learn all there is to know about the makeup of the human body, both to aid in treating injuries and so they can easily recognize the markings and symptoms of the Taint and of Shadowlands infiltrators. The Kuni also regularly dissect Shadowlands creatures, and even capture such creatures alive so they can subject them to tests and experiments, learning what harms them, what heals them, and what kills them. Such practices would horrify normal Rokugani, and the Kuni are careful not to publicize their studies. The Crab Clan's reputation is bad enough without such secrets being exposed.

Although the primary focus of the Kuni family is on their magical practices, they also maintain a separate order of mystical warriors known as the Witch-Hunters. This

Kuni Face-Paint

The Kuni—both the shugenja and the Witch-Hunters—have an ancient tradition of painting their faces with cosmetics in a style reminiscent of kabuki theater. By custom this paint is normally applied fresh each morning, though this will be skipped when a Kuni is traveling through wilderness or spending extended time in the Shadowlands. Applying the paint properly is an exacting process and can sometimes take an hour or more, time unavailable when in hostile environments.

Each Kuni has a unique pattern of face paint and only changes it in response to a major life event. However, most Kuni design their face paint in tribute to their sensei's design, and someone knowledgeable in the more obscure aspects of heraldry can identify a specific Kuni's teacher solely from the face paint.

group emerged in the seventh century after the second attack of Iuchiban; the Kuni were deeply concerned that such a powerful maho-tsukai could have twice attacked the Empire without prior detection. The Kuni daimyo agreed to choose one hundred of the family's best students to become Witch-Hunters, searching the Empire for maho and for Shadowlands infiltrators such as bog hags and pekkle no oni. The Witch-Hunters are drawn almost exclusively from the Kuni family's own ranks, and train their apprentices "on the job" as they roam the Empire in search of their foes.

It is a notable fact that the Kuni are the only Crab family to be on somewhat good terms with the Scorpion Clan. The Scorpion have their own maho-hunting organization, the extremely secretive *Kuroiban* or "Black Watch," and the group maintains quiet ties with the Kuni, sharing information and resources with the common goal of exterminating the forces of darkness.

The Toritaka Family

"There are not enough names."

- Toritaka Yotogi

The Toritaka were originally the Falcon Clan, a minor clan founded in the ninth century. In that era a clever peasant named Hayabusa saved one of the Emperor's advisors from a ninja, giving his own life to defeat the assassination attempt. As a reward, the peasant's family was elevated to samurai status and given permission to form the Falcon Clan. Hayabusa's son Yotogi and his three brothers became the founding members of the clan. Interestingly, the Emperor did not immediately grant them a family name, although Yotogi and his kin soon began calling themselves "Toritaka" in private. The family name was finally officially recognized three hundred years later, shortly before the Toritaka joined the Crab.

The Falcon Clan settled in a single village and surrounding farmland in the remote Tani Hitokage valley, located between the Shinomen Mori (well known for its ghosts and other spirits) and the Twilight Mountains (likewise known to be haunted). Unsurprisingly, the Falcon quickly found it wise to learn how to combat evil spirits and ghosts.

A key early turning point came when Yotogi discovered the "ninja" who killed his father was merely a peasant with some manner of dark magic. However, the Kuni Witch-Hunter who examined the peasant found no evidence of maho. Disturbed by this discovery. Yotogi meditated for seventy-three consecutive days in a shrine to Fukurokujin, Fortune of Wisdom. On the seventy-fourth day he emerged and took up his duties as Clan Champion. When asked what he had learned in his vigil, he said only, "There are not enough names." In the aftermath of

The Toritaka Family Mon

The Falcon Clan adopted a mon depicting their namesake animal, a falcon, in the midst of striking at its prey. It symbolized the family's self-appointed role as hunters of dangerous spirits. When the Toritaka family joined the Crab Clan, they brought the symbol with them unchanged, and while they now dressed in Crab colors they usually kept the mon itself in their family's original colors of dark gray and forest green, a gesture of respect to their ancestors.

this incident, the clan began to develop techniques of observation to detect and, more importantly, defeat hostile spirits and ghosts.

The Falcon Clan's focus on combating evil spirits soon brought them into contact with the Kuni family, especially the Witch-Hunters who roamed the Empire in search of maho and Shadowlands infiltration. The two families were allies for many generations before the Falcon finally joined the Crab, and those Falcon fortunate enough to have the gift of speaking to the kami usually trained in the Kuni school.

The Falcon remained an independent Minor Clan until the year 1125, when a maho-tsukai's ritual unleashed a demonic force known as the Shuten Doji. The terrible spirit had appeared only once before, centuries earlier, when it destroyed the Snake Clan. This time the Shuten Doji's malignant power fell on the Falcon Clan, killing a majority of the peasants and samurai in Tani Hitokage before it could be banished. The devastated Falcon turned to their Crab neighbors for help, asking for supplies as well as troops to watch over and protect them—not least because they feared some of their people might still be possessed by the Shuten Doji. A short time later, the Emperor gave the Crab Clan permission to fully absorb the Falcon; the Toritaka daimyo agreed, albeit not without some reluctance, and the Toritaka became part of the Crab. For their part the Crab—and especially the Kuni—welcomed a closer relationship with the family which had acquired so much wisdom about dangerous and evil spirits.

Ghosts and spirits are not the Toritaka's sole area of expertise. Because the Emperor gifted their new clan with the name "Falcon," the samurai of the Toritaka set out from the beginning to make themselves into some of the best falconers in the Empire. There are few birds of prey native to the Tani Hitokage valley, however, and over the centuries the Toritaka daimyo have traded considerable political favors and influence to procure the best falcons, hawks, and owls for their mews. The Toritaka expertise with falconry is not solely an act of vanity, however; they use their birds as extra sets of eyes. The raptors are taught to spot anything out of the ordinary or unnatural and bring such things to their handlers' attention.

The Yasuki Family

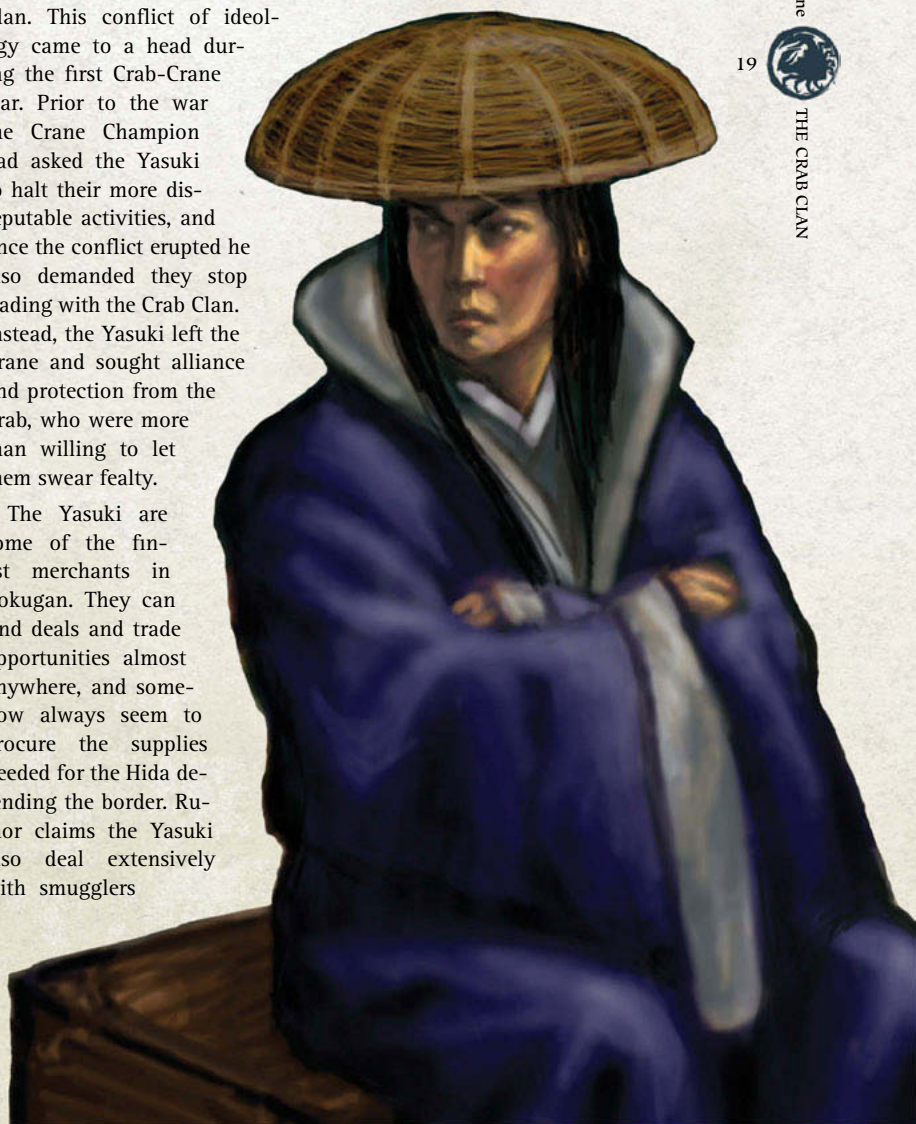
"May your cup always be full and your hands never be empty."

- Yasuki family motto

The Yasuki are probably the most unusual of the Crab families, perhaps in part because they were not originally Crab at all. They do not train to kill Shadowlands creatures, and in fact most of the family has never even seen the Shadowlands or the Kaiu Wall. However, it is the Yasuki who make it possible for the Crab to fight. They are the clan's merchants and diplomats, and make sure supplies and political support always continue to flow to the Wall.

The Yasuki were founded by a wise peasant woman who helped Kakita in his quest to win the hand of Lady Doji. However, they were a poor fit for the Crane Clan. From the beginning the Yasuki have always been keenly interested in the distasteful subject of commerce, in the ways the flow of money and goods makes the Empire run, and in the ways those goods could flow more smoothly without undue interference from the law. It was probably inevitable that their pragmatic and mercantile philosophy would collide with the ideals of the highly traditional and self-consciously honorable Crane Clan. This conflict of ideology came to a head during the first Crab-Crane war. Prior to the war the Crane Champion had asked the Yasuki to halt their more disreputable activities, and once the conflict erupted he also demanded they stop trading with the Crab Clan. Instead, the Yasuki left the Crane and sought alliance and protection from the Crab, who were more than willing to let them swear fealty.

The Yasuki are some of the finest merchants in Rokugan. They can find deals and trade opportunities almost anywhere, and somehow always seem to procure the supplies needed for the Hida defending the border. Rumor claims the Yasuki also deal extensively with smugglers



The Yasuki Family Mon

The original Yasuki mon depicted a crane swimming alongside a peony; this symbol was abandoned when the family left the Crane Clan, and for eight hundred years was considered a symbol of bad luck within the Crane. However, when the Second Yasuki War erupted in the twelfth century, some of the Daidoji family reclaimed the mon and adopted the Yasuki name.

The Crab Yasuki mon keeps the azure peony but replaces the crane with a carp, a fish believed to be a symbol of prosperity and good fortune.

and other such criminals, although the family always denies such allegations in public. Much of the Empire looks down on the Yasuki family for their focus on commerce and their dealings with dubious characters, but the family knows without their assistance the Crab Clan would be unable to defend the Empire.

There is much bad blood between the Crane Clan and the Yasuki family, and at varying times in history the Yasuki have been completely banned from Crane lands. Although the Yasuki normally handle most of the clan's diplomacy, the Hida and Hiruma maintain a small contingent of diplomats for the specific purpose of handling relations with the Crane. Moreover, in the twelfth century the Yasuki become the focus of two more wars between the Crab and the Crane. Although these conflicts ultimately resolve mostly in favor of the Crab, they also result in a small number of Crane claiming the Yasuki name for themselves... a division which may yet lead to further conflict in the future.

Heroes of the Crab Clan

The following section lists some of the greatest heroes of the Crab Clan through its thousand year history. The mechanical statistics for each hero are drawn from specific points in their lives—GMs who wish to depict a hero earlier or later in life should adjust the statistics up or down as needed.

Hida Osano-Wo

Son of Hida, Son of the Thunder Dragon

Hida Osano-Wo was born the child of Hida and the Thunder Dragon, who took mortal form to show her love for the founder of the Crab. Osano-Wo was the second son of Hida, and lived for much of his youth in the shadow of his lost older half-brother Atarasi, the Crab Thunder who never returned from the battle with Fu Leng. Osano-Wo spent his childhood striving to live up to Atarasi's memory, to be the best Hida warrior he could be. He learned tactics and strategy, the ways of the sword and the tetsubo, and the art of commanding men. He won almost every competition he entered... and when he lost, he sought out the winner and learned from him so it would not happen again. He was convinced his older brother was not truly dead, and even had a special suit of armor created for Atarasi to use when he returned. But by the time he reached adulthood, it was clear Atarasi would never come back, and the armor was never used.

Eventually Hida retired from public life and gave rule of the clan over to his son. Osano-Wo ruled the Crab for many years, and his strength and skill were legendary. He spent much of his time waging war against the corrupt and vile kingdom of the trolls, eventually destroying it completely. He is also believed to have been the first Rokugani to pursue the art of falconry, and modern artwork often depicts him with a falcon on his wrist.

There came a time when Osano-Wo realized he needed an heir. He determined that to have strong children he would need an equally strong wife. After much contemplation, he decided he would marry a woman of the Matsu, known throughout the Empire for their honor and ferocity. He sent messengers to the Matsu family with his demands they provide him with a bride. None of them returned with their bones intact, and finally Osano-Wo decided to travel to the lands of the Lion himself. There he stood outside of Shiro Matsu and demanded, "Where is my bride?" The gates opened and a high lady of the Matsu stood waiting alongside a thousand men ready to die for her. Osano-Wo laughed with joy, convinced he had found the right woman.

Osano-Wo found that his new Matsu wife was more than he had expect-

ed. She constantly pointed out errors in his tactics and complained about the sparseness of the Hida courts and castles. When she finally announced she was with child, Osano-Wo was overjoyed and went out to celebrate with much sake. When he awoke the next morning he found himself in the hut of a lovely peasant girl, who handed him his tetsubo with a smile.

Nine months later, two children were born on the same day. Osano-Wo acknowledged both of them. Kaimetsu-Uo, son of his Matsu bride, and Kenzan, son of the peasant woman, competed through their entire childhoods and well into their adult lives, Kaimetsu-Uo always beating Kenzan by a narrow margin. When it came time for Osano-Wo to appoint his successor, however, he chose Kenzan. Kaimetsu-Uo demanded to know why, and Osano-Wo replied: "You are a great warrior. But Kenzan knows how to endure defeat and keep trying undaunted. That is what the leader of the Crab must be."

Kaimetso-Uo and his mother left the clan, traveling to the Isles of Spice and Silk where they founded what would later become the Mantis Clan.

Surprisingly, Hida Osano-Wo did not die in battle. He was poisoned to death by a traitor within the clan, a man whose name is now erased from Imperial history. The killer fled to the Phoenix lands, and Hida Kenzan was forced to immediately take over rule of the clan. He wrote to his brother Kaimetsu-Uo to avenge their father's death, a task the Mantis leader undertook willingly. When the peaceful Phoenix refused to open their gates to Kaimetsu-Uo, he screamed to the Heavens, pleading to his father for help... and the Heavens answered, smashing the gates of Kyuden Isawa with lightning. This was the first sign that Osano-Wo had become the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, a station in which he is worshipped to this day.

The game statistics shown here depict Osano-Wo at the peak of his mortal life, when he ruled the Crab and waged war against the troll kingdoms.

Hida Osano-Wo, Son of Hida, Son of the Thunder Dragon

Air: 5	Earth: 8	Fire: 7	Water: 5	Void: 6
			Strength 7	

Honor: 4.5 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 8.5*

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 5/Defender of the Wall 3

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 5, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 7, Intimidation 5, Kenjutsu 6, Lore: Shadowlands (Trolls) 6, Jiujutsu 6, Battle 6, Investigation 3, Etiquette 3, Meditation 3.

Advantages: Crab Hands, Elemental Blessing (Fire), Friend of the Elements (Fire), Great Destiny, Language (Troll), Large, Leadership, Magic Resistance (3 ranks), Strength of the Earth, Tactician.

Disadvantages: Brash, Bitter Betrothal.

Other: Because Osano-Wo is the son of the Thunder Dragon he is immune to fire and lightning and is unaffected by extremes of weather.

Hiruma Mai

Daughter of Hiruma, The Iron Hummingbird

Although Hiruma founded his family, it is popularly said that his daughter Mai made them into what they became for the rest of history. Mai was a hard and demanding woman, fearless and daring, obsessed with achieving victory at any cost. She is reputed to have been one of the most unforgiving commanders the Crab Clan ever had. Despite this, none could argue with her results, which made the Hiruma into a formidable family of warriors, scouts, and spies. Her personal daring was famous, and stories are still told of her bold actions and willingness to take on any sort of challenge. She was also a notorious gambler who never turned down a wager, sometimes to her sorrow. As a warrior, Mai was responsible for developing and perfecting the fighting style her father pioneered, passing on its techniques to the rest of her family.

Ironically, while Mai's life contained many accomplishments, it is the mysterious nature of her death which is best known in modern Rokugan. The most famous story claims Mai died while attempting to leap over the Festering Pit of Fu Leng. Other stories claim she died in a one-on-one confrontation with an Oni Lord. Still other tales say she single-handedly saved a remote Hiruma outpost from a horde of ogres, losing her own life in the process.

The truth of her fate is far more prosaic. Mai lost a wager with an Ikoma daimyo and found herself obligated to marry him, move to Ikoma lands, and take his family name. Ashamed of this defeat, she concocted a wild assortment of tales about her death and then slipped quietly into Lion lands to take up her new married life. Descendants of the Iron Hummingbird live among the Lion to this day.

Hiruma Mai, Daughter of Hiruma, The Iron Hummingbird

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 5 Water: 5 Void: 4

Honor: 3.5 *Status: 6.0* *Glory: 6.0*

School/Rank: Hiruma Bushi 5

Skills: Athletics 4, Hunting 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Stealth (Ambush, Shadowing, Sneaking) 6, Games (Kemari) 3, Battle (Skirmish) 5, Defense 5, Knives 4, Intimidation 4.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Crafty, Daredevil, Quick, Silent, Way of the Land (many).

Disadvantages: Compulsion (Gambling), Overconfident

Kaiu Gineza

Builder of the Tomb of Iuchiban

Kaiu Gineza was a prodigy even by the standards of his family. He was a genius in all forms of engineering and construction, and was the youngest Kaiu ever to be allowed to lead his own team on an out-of-clan construction project. Gineza was working on a bridge in Crane lands when a Shadowlands incursion killed his wife and everyone in the village where they lived.

In the wake of this grim loss, Gineza turned into a very different man. He became obsessed with developing new ways to kill the clan's enemies. He invented hundreds of new traps, many of which are still used in modern times. Whenever there was a report of Shadowlands infiltration he arranged to get himself assigned to a project in that area. Gineza would often create a field of traps and lure enemies into it, then take notes about the effectiveness of his traps as the victims slowly died.

When the Emperor decided to build a tomb to imprison the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban, the Crab Clan Champion assigned his finest engineer to the project: Kaiu Gineza. Gineza applied all the vast knowledge of his long career to the monumental task of building a tomb that none could enter and live. In the end, he entered the completed tomb himself, activating the traps behind him to ensure no knowledge of their secrets would survive. He died within the tomb, bringing his grim crusade to an end at last.

Kaiu Gineza, Legendary Engineer

Air: 2 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3

Willpower: 5 Intelligence: 6

Honor: 3.5 *Status: 3.0* *Glory: 2.2*

School/Rank: Kaiu Engineer 3

Skills: Battle 3, Craft: Armorsmithing 2, Craft: Traps 9, Craft: Weaponsmithing 4, Defense 3, Engineering (Construction, Siege) 8, Etiquette 2, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Architecture 5, Lore: Shadowlands 6, War Fans 2

Advantages: Dark Paragon (Knowledge), Heart of Vengeance (Shadowlands), Precise Memory.

Disadvantages: Small, Lost Love (wife).

Yasuki Fumoki

Famous Pirate

During his lifetime Yasuki Fumoki often claimed, "I am the most famous man in the Empire." He may have exaggerated, but not by much. The seventh century was a lawless time in the Empire and pirates like Fumoki became the stuff of legend, remembered long after their deaths.

Fumoki began his career as a yojimbo aboard a Yasuki merchant vessel, the *Crimson Carp.* He had gone to sea to avoid his wife, a Lion maiden who felt shamed by her marriage to a lowly Yasuki and made his home life miserable in retaliation. On one of its voyages the *Carp* was attacked by pirates and Fumoki was thrown overboard. The *Carp* wound up burned and sunk, but it is unclear what happened to Fumoki—he later told a fanciful tale of gathering pieces of the *Carp* to make a raft and then roping a passing shark, forcing the creature to pull him after the pirate vessel. Whatever the truth may be, it is undisputed that Fumoki later boarded the pirate vessel and single-handedly defeated the crew, taking the ship as his own.

Fumoki renamed the ship the *Storm Shark,* and over the next fifteen years it became the most infamous pirate vessel of its day. Fumoki never actually admitted

he was a pirate, instead claiming he was capturing other ships that were in Crab waters "illegally." Of course, he had a liberal interpretation of clan boundaries and sometimes attacked ships very far away from the Crab lands.

What made Fumoki truly famous compared to other pirates was his style and panache. By all accounts he was an incredibly handsome man, and he never harmed a woman outside of battle—and sometimes not even then. The Crab still tell tales of his outlandish and dangerous antics, of the many merchants' daughters who returned to shore half in love with the dashing pirate, sometimes even carrying his child. Moreover, Fumoki seemed to have an uncanny sense for which ships were carrying profitable cargo and which were packed with samurai waiting to ambush him. None of the many vessels which sought his head ever succeeded.

Within Crab lands Fumoki was widely regarded as a hero, especially since he made a point of sending a significant share of his plundered cargo to support the defense of the Empire. He also distributed plunder to the inhabitants of Crab coastal villages, remarking, "Keep the peasants happy and they will never betray you."

Fumoki died protecting the *Storm Shark* from a sea monster that attacked during a ferocious storm. According to the crew, he dove head-first into the monster's mouth, driving his katana into the side of its throat. Supposedly he split it nearly in half as it swallowed him. Whether the beast died or not, neither it nor Fumoki ever returned to the ship, and the crew gave up their piracy without their bold captain.

The statistics here represent Yasuki Fumoki at his prime, when he was the scourge of Rokugan's merchant shipping.

Yasuki Fumoki, Dashing Pirate

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 4 Void: 3

Awareness: 5

Honor: 2.0 *Status: 0.0* *Glory: 8.0* *Infamy: 5.0*

School/Rank: Hiruma Bushi 3 (clan ronin, Insight Rank 5)

Skills: Acting 4, Commerce 5, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Lore: Shipping Lanes 4, Lore: Underworld 3, Athletics (Climbing, Swimming) 5, Hunting 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Stealth 4, Sailing 7, Jiujutsu 3, Knives 5, Temptation 4.

Advantages: Luck (2 ranks), Daredevil, Dangerous Beauty, Fame, Hero of the People, Daikoku's Blessing.

Disadvantages: Bitter Betrothal, Compulsion (Adventure), Infamous, Overconfident.

Kuni Osaku

The Savior of the Crab (695-716)

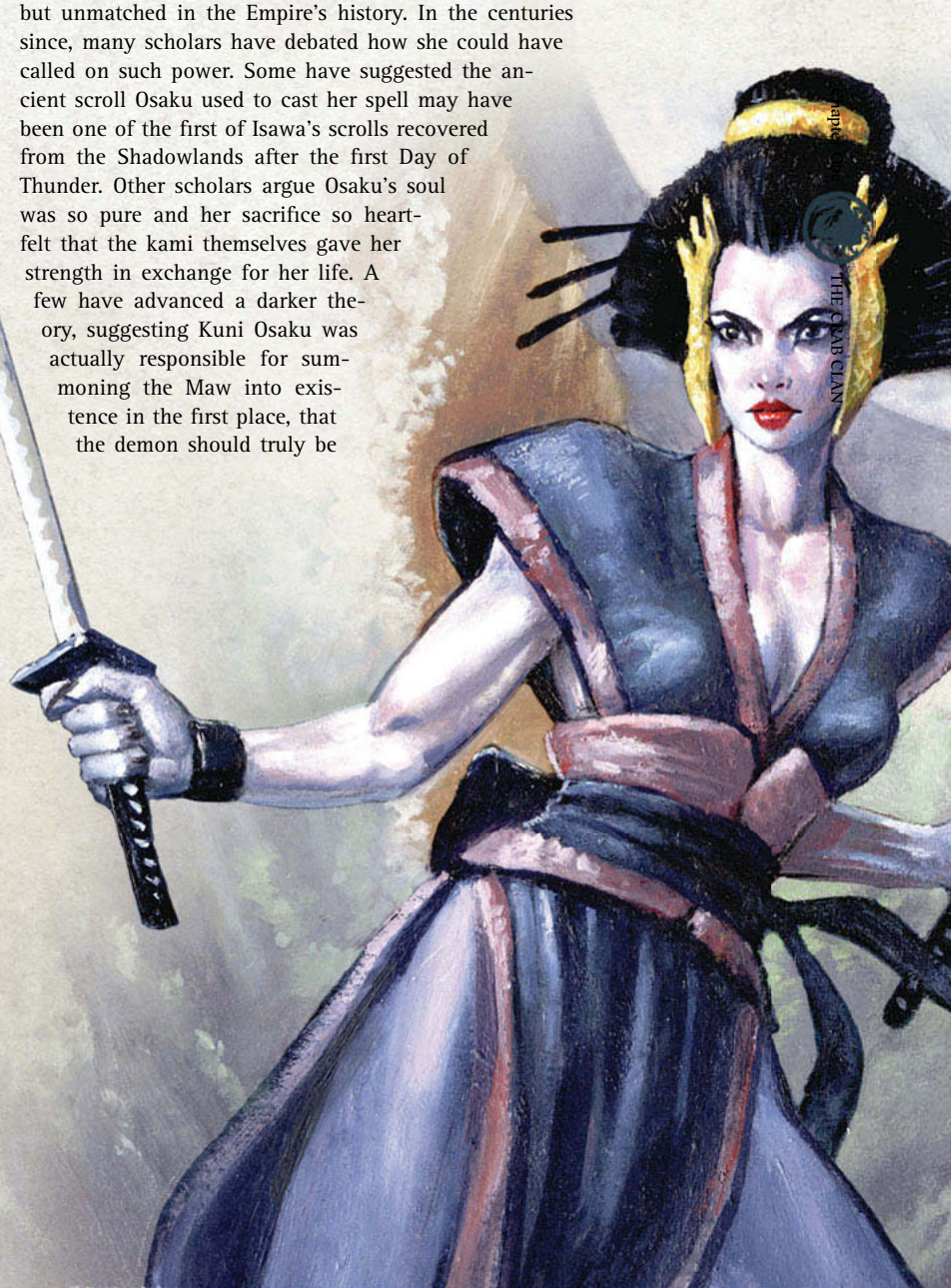
"In the end, all of our petty feuds mean nothing. The empire exists for a single reason, for a single purpose. There is only one true enemy."

– Kuni Osaku

Kuni Osaku is remembered today as a hero, but for much of her life she was a perfectly average Kuni shugenja. Osaku was one of two children and doted on her younger brother Hohiro. She exhibited talent with the kami typical for the Kuni family, and entered the Kuni school at the age of eight. By the time she was eighteen she was a full-fledged shugenja serving in the Crab armies.

Three years later, she saved the Empire.

Osaku's deed—sacrificing her life to raise the Saigo River for seventy-three days, buying the time needed to build the Kaiu Wall—was unprecedented and remains all but unmatched in the Empire's history. In the centuries since, many scholars have debated how she could have called on such power. Some have suggested the ancient scroll Osaku used to cast her spell may have been one of the first of Isawa's scrolls recovered from the Shadowlands after the first Day of Thunder. Other scholars argue Osaku's soul was so pure and her sacrifice so heartfelt that the kami themselves gave her strength in exchange for her life. A few have advanced a darker theory, suggesting Kuni Osaku was actually responsible for summoning the Maw into existence in the first place, that the demon should truly be



The School of Fatal Spellcasting

Kuni Osaku's sacrifice is one of the more spectacular examples of a phenomenon which has been witnessed many times in the history of the Empire: a shugenja sacrificing his (or in this case, her) life in order to achieve an impossible feat of magic. This act of ultimate sacrifice is, of course, entirely fitting for a samurai, and more than one shugenja has used it to save comrades or defeat a terrible foe.

In game terms, a shugenja who chooses to "life-cast" will automatically succeed in the Spell Casting Roll, regardless of penalties or obstructing circumstances. Further, since pouring one's life-energy into an entreaty to the kami usually produces spectacular results, the caster is considered to have succeeded at the maximum possible number of Raises, plus Free Raises equal to the caster's Rank in the spell's Element. GMs who wish to emphasize the importance of self-sacrifice and honor in their campaigns can award additional Free Raises equal to the character's Honor Rank. (It should also be noted that a shugenja who "life-casts" a spell *must die*. Effects like Force of Will or Great Destiny cannot save him.)

Alternatively, given the epic nature of such a deed, the GM can set aside the normal rules for things like spell effects and Raises and simply allow the dying shugenja to accomplish something suitably miraculous and unique.

remembered as Osaku no Oni. They claim her heroic sacrifice was actually an act of contrition for summoning the oni—although this raises the obvious question of how she could do such a thing if the Oni Lord had already stolen her name and soul. No one knows the true story, and Kuni Osaku carried her secrets to her grave.

Kuni Osaku, Savior of the Crab

Air: 2 Earth: 5 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 5

Awareness 3 Intelligence 4

Honor: 3.5 *Status: 1.5* *Glory: 2.0*

School/Rank: Kuni Shugenja 4

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Lore: Medicine (Non-Humans) 3, Theology 3, Spellcraft 5, Lore (Maho) 3, Lore (History) 2, Staves (Bo) 3.

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon; Air: None; Earth: Courage of the Seven Thunders, Jade Strike, Minor Binding, Earth Becomes Sky, Force of Will, Purge the Taint, Strength of the Crow, Wall of Earth. Fire: Fury of Osano-Wo. Water: Path to Inner Peace, Reflections of Pan Ku, Strike of the Tsunami.

Advantages: Great Destiny (save the Crab Clan), Friend of the Elements (Water)

Hida Kisada

The Great Bear, Fortune of Persistence

Hida Kisada is remembered as both the best and worst Clan Champion the Crab Clan ever had. His actions during the Clan War brought shame on the entire clan, but his noble intentions and his later efforts at redemption caused him to be decreed the Fortune of Persistence after his death. Two generations later, he returned to life and spent almost a decade as a mortal before dying and returning to the Celestial Heavens once more.

Kisada's character was shaped by an incident which occurred when he was merely a child of five. He accompanied his father to the Imperial Capital, and during the journey Kisada chanced on three older Lion children tormenting a peasant child. He watched, wondering why no one helped the peasant boy. The next day he sought the Lion out and watched as they tormented another such peasant child, and when no one else intervened, he stepped forward himself. The Lion children, older and larger, sent him home bruised and bloodied.

Two months later, Kisada and his father passed through the same town on their way home from the capital. The young Crab spent that night away from the inn, making preparations. The next day he sought the three Lion boys out once more, this time encountering them at a tea house. He taunted and insulted the boys, unleashing all of his rage and frustration in a string of epithets and curses. The Lion boys chased him, furious, and Kisada led them into the nearby woods. When they reached a particular spot, Kisada leapt—and the three Lion children fell in the pit he had constructed the night before. He heard their bones snap and heard them cry out, wailing for help. He watched for a time, then covered the pit with braches.

Months later he returned and looked into the pit again, seeing their decaying corpses untouched and undiscovered. Then he uttered the words that would be his mantra throughout his long lifetime: "This is what it means to challenge a Crab."

Kisada grew up to become one of the greatest warriors in the clan's history as well as one of the largest Rokugani ever to live, standing over six and a half feet tall. Sadly, his drive to protect the Empire at all costs also led to an obsession with Strength. It was this obsession that allowed Kisada to embrace Kuni Yori's foolish idea of allying with the Shadowlands in order to seize the Throne. In time, however, Kisada came to repent these actions; he was mortally wounded in a confrontation with Fu Leng, who had possessed the Emperor. Realizing his own ambitions and bad decisions had helped spread the Dark Kami's power, Kisada abandoned Yori's plans and dedicated his remaining life to opposing Fu Leng's forces with all his power. Despite his severe injury, which would have killed most mortals within hours, he lived for almost two more years and planned the final battle that allowed the forces of Rokugan to defeat the Shadowlands army on the Day of Thunder. After his death, the new Emperor Toturi decreed him to be the Fortune of Persistence.

In the Four Winds era, the poet Rezan brought Kisada back into the mortal world through Oblivion's Gate. Kisada was the only one who knew the true location of Iuchiban's heart, which was needed to defeat the Bloodspeaker once and for all. Kisada's presence in the mortal world was controversial, and although the Crab Clan Champion offered

to let him rule to Crab once more, he refused. His presence also led to clashes with the Scorpion Clan, which blamed him for the defeat of the Scorpion Coup prior to the Clan War. After several assassination attempts failed, the aging Kisada finally perished to an attack from over two dozen Scorpion shinobi, most of whom died at his hands. After his death he returned to the Heavens and resumed his station as Fortune of Persistence.

The statistics here represent Hida Kisada at the height of his original reign as Crab Clan Champion.

Hida Kisada, The Great Bear, Crab Clan Champion

Air: 4	Earth: 9	Fire: 4	Water: 5	Void: 5
			Strength: 6	

Honor: 5.3 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 9.0*

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 5, Defender of the Wall 3

Skills: Lore (Shadowlands) 7, Lore (Heraldry) 2, Lord (Crab Clan) 5, Lore (History) 3, Lore (Law) 3, Athletics 5, Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 6, Defense 5, Hunting 3, Jiujutsu (Grappling) 5, Games (Go) 4, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 7, Kenjutsu 5, Intimidation 6.

Kata: Hida Kisada knows all of the kata for which he qualifies.

Advantages: Blood of Osano-Wo, Crab Hands, Clear Thinker, Inheritance (Chikara), Large, Magic Resistance (6 points), Quick Healer, Social Position (Clan Champion), Strength of the Earth, Tactician

Disadvantages: Consumed (Strength), Great Destiny (to become a Fortune)

Chikara, the Crab Ancestral Sword

The first Kaiu forged Chikara for Hiruma to use against Hatsu-Suru no Oni. Hiruma carried the sword until the dedication of Kyuden Hida, when he presented it to Lord Hida; it was passed down through the line of Hida Champions ever after. The sword is of magnificent steel and is inlaid with jade symbols that run the length of the blade; the handle is of polished ebony and covered with gray silk stitching. Like all the great Ancestral Swords, Chikara was taken into the Heavens by Shinjo after the War Against the Darkness.

Chikara's jade lettering glows in the presence of Shadowlands creatures up to a hundred feet away, growing brighter as they get closer. Its jade is infused with sacred spirits and does not corrode when exposed to the Taint; further, the bearer of the sword is immune to the Taint so long as he carries the sword. Against Tainted foes the sword moves with a life of its own, guiding the wielder toward their most vulnerable points. In game terms, the sword awards the wielder a number of Free Raises against Tainted foes equal to two times the wielder's School Rank.

The Jade Hand

The Jade Hand is an ancient artifact of unknown origin, shaped in the form of a human right hand. The Hand can be used like a real hand, but it will only attach to the severed stump of a mortal who is judged worthy of its power—typically someone of great honor or heroic destiny. Once attached, the Jade Hand instantly purges all Shadowlands Taint and Shadow corruption from the wielder, and makes him immune to any further corruption by either force.

The Hand can be used to deliver jiujutsu strikes, with a DR of 2k3 in place of the normal unarmed DR of 0k1. It is a jade nemuranai for the purpose of defeating Invulnerability and other such powers, and grants the wielder a +1k1 bonus to all Skill rolls when opposing a creature with Shadowlands Taint.

Hida Yakamo

The second Crab Thunder, Crab Clan Champion, the Jade Sun

The story of Hida Yakamo is one of tragedy and redemption. He was born the eldest sun of Hida Kisada and went on to become the Crab Clan Thunder and eventually ascend to the Celestial Heavens as Lord Sun, ruling over the Celestial Realm for almost three generations before he was replaced by the Jade Dragon.

Yakamo was not as strong nor as strategically capable as his father, but even so he was far more formidable than most other men; had he been born in another era, he would probably have been the greatest warrior of his time. Yakamo's greatest weakness was his temper—he was prone to outbursts of anger when frustrated or challenged. He saw the delicate dance of the courts as an unnecessary layer of society that prevented the smooth flow of information and weakened the Empire as a whole. Thus, it is not surprising that the most famous incident of his youth was a duel with Mirumoto Satsu, heir to the Mirumoto daimyo, after Satsu's wife accused Yakamo of drunken improprieties. Yakamo chose to fight with a tetsubo, violating all accepted dueling etiquette, and killed Satsu brutally. Only Yakamo's station as heir to the Crab Clan saved him from dire consequences, and as it was Satsu's younger sister Hitomi swore vengeance against him. Several years later, the adult Hitomi would face Yakamo in another duel and cut off his right hand.

When Hida Kisada chose to ally the Crab to the Shadowlands and march for the Imperial throne, Yakamo initially supported his father whole-heartedly. However, the price for this misguided alliance proved gruesomely high. Yakamo's name was given to an oni and Kuni Yori grafted a demonic claw onto the stump of his missing hand. The new claw gave Yakamo tremendous power—he later used it to cut off Hitomi's hand in retaliation—but the Taint soon suffused his body. Finally he and his father learned the terrible truth: the Emperor was possessed by Fu Leng and the alliance with the Shadowlands had been Jigoku's scheme all along. A desperate and feverish Yakamo tore off the Tainted claw. It was replaced, miraculously, by a sacred artifact called the Jade Hand which purified his Taint. Yakamo never learned who put the Jade Hand on his wrist—some stories claim it was Togashi, while others credit the reincarnation of Shinsei.

With the Jade Hand, Yakamo faced and defeated the oni that bore his name, then went on to confront Fu Leng as one of the Seven Thunders. He survived the epic battle with the Dark Kami and became the leader of the Crab Clan, guiding them through the subsequent campaign to retake Hiruma Castle from the Shadowlands.

During that campaign, Yakamo died and the rule of the clan fell to his younger sister, Hida O-Ushi. However, this proved—quite unexpectedly—to not be the end of his story. The Naga Vedic known as the Shashakar believed Yakamo was destined to help defeat the Foul, and sacrificed his own place in the Akasha so Yakamo could be reborn through it and restored to life. Yakamo's soul was merged with the Qatol, ancient and revered leader of the Naga race, and the Naga treated the restored Yakamo as a veritable god. Soon after, Yakamo's connection with the Akasha allowed him to sense the pain and sorrow of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, and he served as witness and second when she took her own life. Infused with her divine power as well, Yakamo ascended to the Heavens as Lord Sun, a position he would hold until the year 1170. When he was finally overthrown by the Jade Dragon, Yakamo fell to earth and

his entire body transformed into eternal blessed jade, a final gift to his clan and the Empire.

The following statistics represent Hida Yakamo during the years immediately after the Day of Thunder, when he served as the Crab Clan Champion.

Hida Yakamo, Crab Clan Champion

Air: 4	Earth: 7	Fire: 5	Water: 4	Void: 5
			Strength: 6	

Honor: 4.3 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 8.0*

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 5, Defender of the Wall 2

Skills: Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Lore (Crab Clan) 5, Athletics 5, Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 4, Defense 5, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 4, Jiujutsu 4, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 6, Kenjutsu 4, Intimidation 5.

Advantages: Blood of Osano-Wo, Crab Hands, Great Destiny, Inheritance (Chikara, the Jade Hand), Large, Social Position (Clan Champion), Strength of the Earth.

Disadvantages: Brash, Failure of Bushido (Courtesy), Sworn Enemy/Nemesis (Mirumoto Hitomi), Unlucky.

Other: Hida Yakamo knows all kata for which he qualifies. He wears the Jade Hand where his right hand would normally be. He also benefits from the guidance of the Ancestor Hida.

Toritaka Genzo

Last Daimyo of the Falcon Clan (1103-1133)

When Toritaka Genzo was a child, he read the words of the first daimyo of the Falcon Clan: "There are not enough names." He puzzled obsessively over their meaning and began to study spirits and ghosts at an age when other children were still playing with dolls and pretending to be famous samurai. Although Genzo had no talent with the kami and trained as a Falcon bushi like most of his fellows, he was fascinated by the work of the Kuni family (who trained the handful of Falcon shugenja) and while still a youth he befriended a famous Kuni Witch-Hunter named Kuni Megumiko. Through the years Genzo would exchange much information with Megumiko and learn a great deal about the differences between what his clan did and the duties of the Witch-Hunters.

Genzo spent his early adulthood traveling, hunting down various evil spirits. He is credited with the defeat of over a dozen dangerous ghosts, each of which he declared a tribute to the clan founder Yotogi. One year while Genzo was at home, Megumiko and her sensei Kuni Takemura came to visit. Takemura was impressed with the young ghost-hunter and agreed to privately teach Genzo the ways of the Witch-Hunters if he promised to someday repay the debt to the Crab Clan. Genzo subsequently spent two years in the Crab lands training with the Kuni, and is credited with defeating one of the Dark Moto during that time. It was also this training that allowed Genzo to survive; he was in Crab lands investigating a haunting when the terrible spirit known as the Shuten Doji was unleashed in the Falcon lands.

The Falcon were nearly destroyed and Genzo's father perished, leaving him Clan Champion of a clan that barely existed any more. Genzo realized the Toritaka could no longer survive on their own, and used his connections with the Crab Clan to convince them to take in the Toritaka.

Genzo died eight years after becoming the first daimyo of the Toritaka Family of the Crab. He perished in battle against the Shadowlands, protecting his fellow survivor Toritaka Tatsune from an ogre.

Toritaka Genzo, Last Daimyo of the Falcon Clan

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4			Perception: 5	

Honor: 6.4 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 4.0*

School/Rank: Toritaka Bushi 4/Kuni Witch-Hunter 1

Skills: Animal Handling (Falcons) 3, Hunting 4, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Spirit Realms 6, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Spear 4, Investigation (Search, Notice) 4, Jiujutsu 3, Lore: Maho 3, Meditation 2.

Advantages: Multiple Schools, Higher Purpose (study and defeat evil spirits)

Disadvantages: Obligation (Crab Clan), Brash

Yasuki Taka

The Wily Trader, Kolat Double Agent, Yasuki Family Daimyo

Yasuki Taka was the daimyo of the Yasuki family during the Clan War Era. He was also a Kolat and a double agent working to bring the Kolat down from within. This was a difficult position for any man to be in, least of all a man as seemingly weak and cowardly as Taka, and perhaps it was inevitable that for all his achievements he ultimately met with a very dark fate indeed.

Taka was one of the least formal and most physically unimpressive daimyo in the history of the Yasuki family. He was a tiny wrinkled man who usually wore a simple kimono and straw hat. He preferred to travel the Empire masquerading as a simple trader pushing a cart of trinkets, stopping in every village and city along the way, chatting with commoners and samurai alike; under tension he was prone to muttering things like, "Oh my pots and kettles." He was a friendly and talkative man, the sort everyone was always glad to see. Despite his odd behavior

Taka was able to keep track of the Yasuki family's business by stopping at family-backed merchant shops to pick up messages and deliver instructions; moreover, his unconventional activities allowed him to keep his finger on the pulse of the Empire, and he did not have to worry about his underlings shading or concealing information because of his station.

Taka was recruited into the Kolat at a young age and played the part of a loyal member of the conspiracy. However, as he grew older he became increasingly disillusioned with the Kolat and began working against them, feeding them false information while quietly undermining their activities. Given time, Taka might well have brought the Kolat down almost single-handedly; tragically, however, he never got the chance.

During the War Against the Darkness, Taka fell victim to the corruptive power of the Shadow. The Kolat managed to capture him before he was completely consumed and trapped him within a crystal prison; this saved him from the Darkness, but too late to preserve his memories. Left with no personality but huge resources of intelligence and a bitter hatred for all forms of spiritual corruption, he became a useful tool of the Kolat and eventually was appointed to lead the conspiracy's Jade Sect. He served the Kolat for many years, finally perishing when the Scorpion Clan overran the Hidden Temple in the year 1170. The conspirators never realized their faithful Master Jade had once numbered among their deadliest enemies.

The following statistics depict Yasuki Taka as he was during the Clan War, when he traveled the Empire seeking information and profit.

Yasuki Taka, Wily Trader

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 6
Awareness: 6		Intelligence: 5	Perception: 5	
Honor: 1.2		*Status: 7.0*		*Glory: 4.2*

School/Rank: Yasuki Courtier 5

Skills: Acting 5, Animal Handling (Oxen) 2, Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Commerce (Appraisal) 7, Courtier 5, Defense 2, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Forgery 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation (Interrogation, Notice) 4, Knives 2, Lore: History 3, Lore: Kolat 4, Lore: Trade Routes 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth 3.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Allies (Many), Blackmail (many), Clear Thinker, Daikoku's Blessing, Luck (3 ranks), Read Lips, Voice

Disadvantages: Small

Other: For all practical purposes, Taka has access to unlimited material and financial resources. He has innumerable allies as well as blackmail on countless people.

Lands of the Crab Clan

The major holdings of the Crab Clan are outlined in the L5R RPG 4th Edition Core rulebook, pages 334-337. The following section describes several lesser-known but still significant strongholds.

Shinsei's Last Hope

One days' travel into the Shadowlands is a village which is an enigma.

Legend says after Shinsei and the Seven Thunders fought Fu Leng in the Shadowlands, a single Crab scout found Shinsei, Shosuro, and a mortally wounded Shiba in a valley near an inlet of the Sea of Amaterasu. It was in this very valley that Fu Leng had fallen. Supposedly, Shinsei told the young Crab that so long as the Crab defended the valley it would never fall to the Taint. "Guard it well, for it is in this place that the Empire shall find its last hope," the Little Prophet said. The scout stayed to defend the valley, killing every Tainted creature that entered. One week later another scout found him, and soon after that the Crab built a village in the valley, naming it Shinsei's Last Hope.

Over the centuries Shinsei's Last Hope has become one of the most heavily defended locations in the Empire. The settlement is surrounded by a stone wall studded with blessed jade, its green glow a beacon of safety to anyone lost in the Shadowlands. The lands within the wall are surprisingly fertile, even able to raise tea. Many Shadowlands forces have attacked Shinsei's Last Hope, but all have been defeated. The village's glowing walls have only been breached once, during the Four Winds Era. An army of undead, goblins, Lost, and demonic creatures attacked and broke through the walls. The timely assistance of Yasuki Hachi, the only Yasuki daimyo to be both Crab and Crane, saved the village and his oath of fealty to the Crab ended the Second Yasuki War.

Shinsei's Last Hope is normally a fairly quiet village, but during the occasional Twenty Goblin Winters it serves as the main staging area for ronin seeking admission to the Crab Clan.

Tani Hitokage

The Valley of Spirits is the seat of the Toritaka family: a small valley located between the northern reaches of the Twilight Mountains and the haunted eaves of the Shinomen Mori. The valley has always been sparsely populated, even before the Falcon Clan's near-destruction, and is home only to a single castle and a few small villages.

Because of the valley's location, the Toritaka get plenty of practice with their craft of hunting and exorcising dangerous spirits. Ghosts and gaki are common in this area and more dangerous entities are drawn to the spiritual strength of the region as well. The Toritaka have a nightly ritual in which they light a series of lanterns and watch fires that ring the entire valley, making it appear as if Tani Hitokage is set in the middle of a circle of fire. The fires are kept ablaze from sundown to sunup every day.

Although maintaining these nightly fires is difficult and expensive, the Toritaka consider it well worth the effort. During the time immediately after the Falcon Clan's near-annihilation, the family lacked the numbers to keep the fires burning, and there were multiple spiritual incidents within the valley each night. The chaos finally stopped when the family was able to resume lighting the watchfires.

Fundai Mura

Fundai Mura is the seat of the Fundai family, a vassal family of the Kaiu. The Fundai are some of the finest shipwrights in the Empire, exceeded only by those of the Mantis lands. Their home lies on the eastern shore of Earthquake Fish Bay. It is only a small village, but the shore boasts a whole series of shipyards with room to construct a dozen ships at a time. The legendary Crab "Iron Turtle" ships are built here.

The wall surrounding Fundai Mura is very well made, a product of Kaiu workmanship, and unlike most of the defensive fortifications in Crab lands it is also a work of art. The artisans who built it mixed oyster shells into the mortar so the walls shimmer in the sunlight, resembling the surface of a calm sea. There are also scenes of ships and the sea sculpted into the walls, ensuring no visitor can mistake the purpose of this village.

East Mountain Village

Higashiyama Mura is not so much a village as it is a small city. It lies on the eastern edge of Crab lands, one of the few settlements on the shared Crab-Crane border. The village is heavily fortified lest the Crane decide to march on Crab lands, but has seldom come under attack. What truly sets East Mountain Vilage apart are the caverns in the nearby Wall Above the Ocean Mountains, caverns with a peculiar propensity for attracting Shadowlands creatures.

For unknown reasons the caves on the eastern side of the mountains often become infested with all manner of Shadowlands creatures and evil spirits, even though the caves on the western side of the mountains, closer to the Shadowlands, remain largely clear of such threats. Theories on this strange phenomenon range from a powerful maho-tsukai summoning the creatures to a hidden underground route directly from the Shadowlands. Whatever the reason, the pragmatic Crab use these regular infestations as a way of training some of their younger troops. Every year a group of Crab samurai march into the mountains and purge all of the creatures from the caves. When they return, the town holds a celebration, the so-called Purge Festival.

Watchtower of the East

The Watchtower of the East predates the Great Carpenter Wall and was once one of the most important watchtowers in Crab lands. However, after the Wall was built it fell into disuse, since it only can be strategically important if the Wall itself falls. Because the Watchtower is in a remote location of little significance, the Crab use it as a dumping ground for troops unfit for duty elsewhere. It is staffed with some of the worst samurai in the Empire: drunks, opium addicts, temperamental thugs, the crippled, the marginally competent, and the marginally sane. The Watchtower of the East is, for all intents and purposes, a prison that doubles as a garrison.

Siege Warfare and the Crab

There is some debate amongst battlefield commanders about the use of siege weapons in warfare. Many deem their use to be dishonorable, something only savages and bandits would do. I must respectfully disagree. There are no degrees to warfare. The optimal end result of any battle is victory over one's enemies—even Akodo One-Eye himself acknowledges this. A battlefield commander should utilize any tools at his disposal to achieve that victory.

Siege engines are an invaluable tool when properly utilized. A few well placed catapult shots can bring down a wall. A few ballista shots can clear the defenders from the top of a wall faster than any frontal assault. A load of loose stones can decimate the ranks of a massed force of goblins at a much longer range than the shots from a hundred archers. Oni which laugh at arrows will turn away when ballista bolts punch into their sides.

While it is a truism that we Kaiu are the masters of siege warfare, it is my contention that other strategists could learn from our example. It is foolish not to arm your defensive fortifications with weapons that make them stronger. It is foolish not to use weapons that can reduce a siege of months to a few days. Sadly, foolishness is a quality all too common in those who have the luxury of waging warfare away from the harsh realities of the Shadowlands.

Excerpt from On the Use of Siege Engines
by Kaiu Kamato, c. 850

The Crab are indeed the undisputed masters of siege warfare, partly due to the knowledge and collective legacy of the Kaiu family engineers, but mostly due to the grim realities of their duties. The Crab believe that when it comes to battling the Shadowlands no advantage should be overlooked and no weapon left unused. The Crab employ traps, poison, and siege engines with equal readiness and usually to great effect. Every Crab fortress boasts dozens of siege engines, and the Great Carpenter Wall mounts literally hundreds of them along its vast length, all facing toward the Shadowlands.

The Crab also employ their expertise in siegecraft against other clans, but this comes into play far more rarely, for the simple reason that the Crab seldom find themselves in the position of attacking a Rokugani castle. Their limited ability to take the offensive against other clans means their armies seldom venture far beyond their own borders. On the rare occasions when Crab armies have roamed farther into Rokugan, however, their superior siege weaponry has played a devastating role. During the Scorpion Clan Coup, Crab siege engines were instrumental in bringing down the walls of Otosan Uchi and breaking the Scorpion hold on the Imperial City. During the Clan War a few years later, Crab armies easily breached and razed multiple strongholds in other clan territories, including Shiro Sano Kakita and Ryoko Owari.

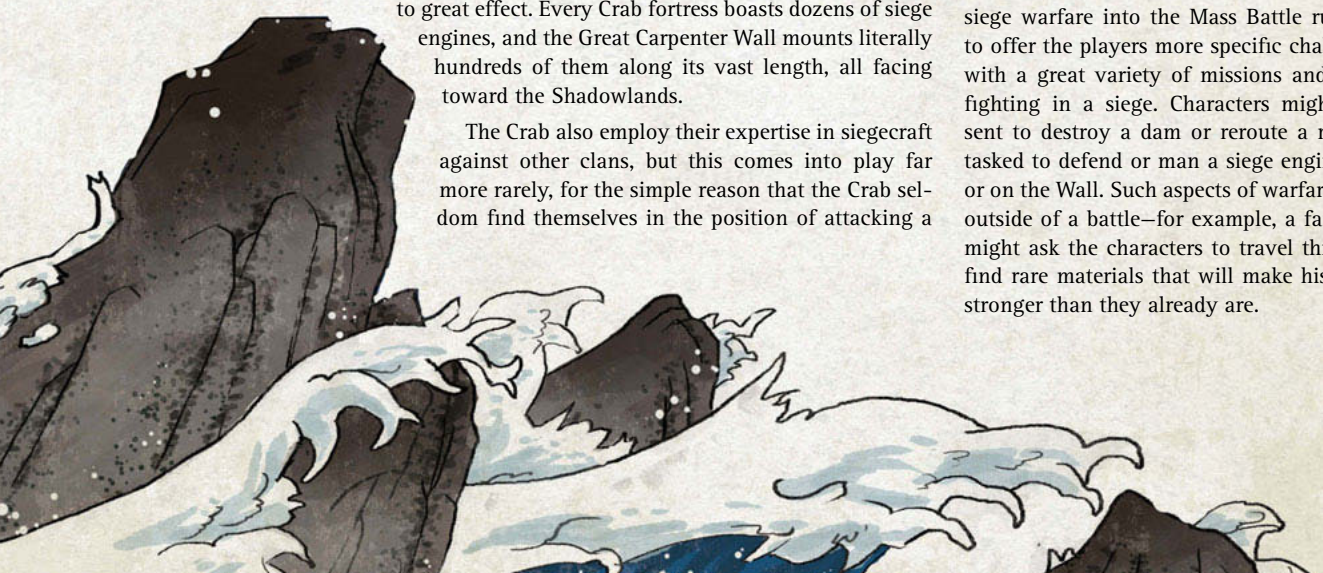
Some of the other clans, notably the Lion, have adopted some aspects of siege weaponry and tactics from the Crab, but their capabilities remain a pale shadow of those displayed by the clan of Hida. This is not difficult to fathom when one considers the advantage offered by the Kaiu family. There are no finer engineers in the Empire than the Kaiu, and some master sensei in the Kaiu family spend their entire lives developing and testing new siege engines. The sheer variety of siege weaponry and tactics in Crab lands often leaves visitors stunned and bewildered.

Although most Rokugani think of siege engines as solely for reducing walls and castles, the Crab have found many other uses for them. Ballista loaded with thick yari can fell ogres and even oni with a single hit. Catapults firing loads of stone can crush scores of goblins at a time. Winch-and-lever systems can dump vats of boiling oil onto hordes of hostile creatures. Siege towers can be used to assault Shadowlands strongholds or hostile clan castles with equal facility.

Siege warfare isn't limited to the use of siege engines, however. The Kaiu are experts in undermining walls and digging tunnels to come up behind an attacking force. They have at various times built and destroyed dams to sweep an attacking force away and flooded entire plains to bog the enemy down. Anything is fair if it means that the advance of the Shadowlands will be stopped.

Using Siege Warfare in the Game

While siege warfare is not terribly common in the Empire itself, it can still take place and such battles offer a variety of unusual challenges for PCs. The L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire* contains options for incorporating siege warfare into the Mass Battle rules. GMs who wish to offer the players more specific challenges can come up with a great variety of missions and challenges for PCs fighting in a siege. Characters might serve in a group sent to destroy a dam or reroute a river. They might be tasked to defend or man a siege engine, either in a battle or on the Wall. Such aspects of warfare can also enter play outside of a battle—for example, a famous siege engineer might ask the characters to travel through the Empire to find rare materials that will make his siege engines even stronger than they already are.



Rules for Siege Engines

Although normal weapons are ill suited to inflict any significant amount of damage on major standing structures, siege engines are another matter. The following section offers some simple, basic rules for sieges and siege engines in play. GMs who wish to delve more deeply into this topic are encouraged to add more details. For those who prefer a simple approach, however, the following rules can suffice.

Typical structures follow these guidelines for how much damage they may withstand before being destroyed. A Reduction rating is also given to reflect the strength of their materials and construction. These numbers may of course be varied depending on the age and condition of any given structure—Crab castles are likely to have significantly higher Reduction, for example.

Table 1.1: Typical Structure Wounds and Reduction

Structure	Wounds	Reduction
Hut	50	1
House	100	4
Shrine	250	8
Common (inn, tea house, etc.)	400	8
Temple	500	8
Estate	2,000	10
Keep/Tower	5,000	15
Castle	10,000	25
Palace	100,000	30
Fortress	500,000	40

Ballista

Although crossbows are not acceptable weapons in the view of honorable samurai, their much larger cousins, the ballista, are widely used by the Crab, and other clans sometimes employ them as well. They are greatly respected for the sheer amount of damage they can inflict, although the rate of fire on these large engines is a matter of some frustration for many officers. Ballista cannot be elevated for arcing fire, or at least not effectively, but can inflict a very powerful direct impact.

- **Skill:** Engineering (Siege)
- **Crew:** 4
- **Range:** 500 feet
- **Damage:** 8k8 (ignores 10 points of Reduction on wooden structures and living targets)
- **Area:** The damage applies to the point of impact. If the target is not sufficient to stop the bolt (GM's discretion), the bolt applies 6k6 to everything in a twenty foot line behind the point of impact, then 4k4 for another twenty foot line beyond that.
- **Rate of Fire:** 1 shot per 5 minutes

Catapult

The catapult is the most widespread of all modern Rokugani siege weapons: a large counterweight propels missiles long distances via arcing fire. Like the ballista, catapults take a long time to prepare in between firing, making them ill-suited for traditional military engagements but perfect for the torturously long siege process. Crab catapults are known to be of higher quality and can fire heavier missiles at greater distances than the average device shown here.

- **Skill:** Engineering (Siege)
- **Crew:** 4
- **Range:** 800 feet
- **Damage:** 10k8 (ignores 8 points of Reduction)
- **Area:** Full damage applies to the point of impact only. A hit also inflicts 4k4 of "splash" damage to anything within ten feet of the impact point.
- **Rate of Fire:** 1 shot per 10 minutes

Siege Ram

Rams are the most simple and basic siege weapon and are used by the armies of almost every clan when attempting to breach a fortified position. At its simplest a ram is nothing more than a convenient tree trunk, but a proper siege ram (depicted here) is a well-constructed device with a capped log mounted on chains from an armored frame. The protective framework allows the crew to stay alive while they bring the ram up to striking distance.

- **Skill:** Engineering (Siege) with the Strength Trait
- **Crew:** 6
- **Range:** 3'
- **Damage:** 4k4 (ignores 10 points of Reduction)
- **Area:** Damage applies only to the point of impact.
- **Rate of Fire:** 1 blow per half-minute
- **Special:** The typical siege ram has 200 Wounds and Reduction 4 against attacks from above. Crab-built versions may have as much as twice the number of Wounds and Reduction of 8 or even 10.

Siege Tower

Siege towers are not meant to inflict damage on structures, but rather to allow attackers to circumvent fortifications altogether. A siege tower consists of a large platform atop a tall wheeled scaffolding. Typically the tower is protected on all four sides by wooden walls, one of which is designed to be lowered in the same manner as a drawbridge. The towers are pushed against castle walls or towers, and the door is lowered to allow the troops inside to storm the fortification.

- **Skill:** Athletics/Strength (to push)
- **Crew:** 6 minimum, up to 16 maximum
- **Range:** May be up to 25 feet in height
- **Notes:** A siege tower may hold up to 16 troops, who disembark at a rate of 4 per Round. The typical tower has 300 Wounds and Reduction 6.

Constructed Traps

In general, samurai have little need for traps. Improvised traps are occasionally employed when hunting dangerous prey or in isolated rural communities. Scouts also employ improvised traps in warfare. The Kaiu family, however, constructs extremely powerful and sophisticated traps for use in the Carpenter Wall, employing them ruthlessly and without hesitation. A few other clans have also been known to use constructed traps in their castles—notably the Scorpion.

A selection of the more common types of constructed traps is listed below. The GM is encouraged to develop more unusual or esoteric types as well, for the Kaiu are nothing if not creative.

Trap Door

The simplest of constructed traps, a trap door is a portion of floor that drops open, either as a result of pressure placed on it or when triggered manually by an outside party via a lever or switch. Trap doors are usually paired with deep pitfalls to ensure the individual who falls through does not survive, but they can also be used with a simple holding pit in order to capture prey alive.

- **Skill:** Engineering (Traps)
- **TN to Create:** 25 (minimum 8 hours to create)
- **Materials:** Basic stoneworking tools
- **Rules:** Targets who set off a trap door may make a Perception Roll (TN 25) to notice the trap beforehand, or a Reflexes Roll (TN 25) to avoid falling in once the trap is triggered. Targets caught by a trap door also suffer damage for falling, as determined by the depth of the fall.

Pendulum

A pendulum trap is any trap that involves striking elements swinging out of a wall or ceiling to hit the target. This requires a complex system of pressure plates and counterweights, and can be both time-consuming and rather expensive to create. The damage, however, tends to be quite lethal.

- **Skill:** Engineering (Traps)
- **TN to Create:** 40 (minimum of 16 hours to create)
- **Materials:** Extensive stoneworking tools, counterweights
- **Rules:** Targets who step on the pressure plate (TN 40 to notice on an Investigation (Notice) / Perception Roll) must succeed at a Reflexes Roll (TN 30) or be struck by the pendulum. The device can inflict damage ranging from 4k4 for small stone strikers, up to 7k7 for heavy stones or massive blades.

Grinder

A particular favorite of the Crab who maintain the tunnels beneath the Great Carpenter Wall, a grinder is a gruesome trap that not only kills but mutilates in the process. The simplest form is a simple trap door that opens onto two spiked cylinders. The prey falls between the cylinders, and the victim's own weight forces him down between the spikes, simultaneously crushing and impaling him. More advanced versions have a system of counterweights in place that cause the cylinders to spin, forcing victims deeper in and crushing them completely regardless of whether their weight is enough to force them downward.

- **Skill:** Engineering (Traps)
- **TN to Create:** 35 (minimum 12 hours to create)
- **Materials:** Extensive stoneworking tools
- **Rules:** A grinder inflicts horrific damage on those caught in it. The target takes 5k5 damage, plus an additional number of rolled dice equal to half the target's Earth Ring rounded up. This damage is applied during the Reactions stage every Round the target remains within the grinder.

Life on the Wall

Laugh while you can. Tomorrow you may be dead.

– Crab saying

To say that life on the Kaiu Wall is hard is an understatement. The samurai who serve there live under the constant threat of death and witness brutal violence and horrific abominations on a regular basis. Although all samurai are expected to live with the expectation of death, the Crab must embrace that ethic in a way different from others. They must expect not only to die, but to die cruelly and very likely in futility, despised and forgotten by the rest of Rokugan. Thus, the Crab face their duty with a grim fatalism and a dark, sardonic sense of humor that is quite strange and unsettling to other samurai. "Wear your scars on the outside," the Crab say, and they mean it in more ways than one. A Crab who lets himself be scarred in mind or soul is a Crab who will flinch and break when the time comes for swift and brutal action, a Crab who will fail his comrades.

Many in the Empire think all Crabs are drunken hedonists with no discipline. This is a profound mistake. Indeed, the discipline maintained on the Kaiu Wall is harsh enough to make the strictest Lion flinch. There is no room for drunkenness or sloth on the Wall, where a single man's failure may mean death for his entire squad. In fact, Crab soldiers punish such behavior so brutally that intervention by their officers is seldom required. It is not uncommon for a soldier who exhibits such failures to encounter a group of masked men with clubs the next time he is off duty.

Commanding soldiers on the Wall requires particular talents, including matchless courage and the ability to impose discipline and extract loyalty from men who face unimaginable horrors on a daily basis. Like the Lion, the Crab appoint officers on merit, not birth; even the children of the Clan Champion are required to prove themselves in low-ranking positions before they can be promoted. Political maneuvering and influence peddling are all but unknown in the Crab military, and officers who engage in such behavior are required to commit seppuku if they are found out. Further, due to the continual threat from shapeshifters and body-stealing monsters such as bog hags, Crab soldiers are trained to watch their comrades and even their superiors for suspicious behavior. When someone acts oddly, a common tactic is to "accidentally" blunder into them with a palmed piece of jade.

A Letter From the Wall

My sister,

It has been a month since I arrived in Crab lands, and I have learned a great deal about our brutish cousins—more than I would have liked, truth be told. Nearly all of the rumors and stories we have heard about how they live are true. I will serve my year here and then go home to the gardens, go home to pleasantly mundane threats like blackmail, romance, assassins, and duel-happy courtiers. I cannot comprehend how the Crab can live here year after year, live with the constant threat of death, the constant fear.

On my very first shift I was almost killed by a goblin. The beast had covered itself in mud and climbed the Wall with nothing but its fingertips—the Fortunes alone know where it carried the rusty knife. It was a couple of inches away from slitting my throat when my sempai clubbed it off the parapet with his tetsubo. He just stared at me for a moment, then told me to look down the Wall once in a while. I've almost been killed three or four other times since then, though never again by something climbing up the Wall. I suppose that is fortunate.

I cannot help fearing that my civilized nature will be forever blunted and atrophied by my time here. It is difficult to remember things like whether my obi matches my eyes or what style of kimono to wear each day when I am always worrying whether some vile beast is going to crush my skull later that day. I've even worn the same kimono twice in the same week here and didn't realize it until days later. It's been a week since I composed a proper haiku—every time I try, I get distracted watching the sky, wondering when some winged demon will drop out of the foul gray clouds overhead. And the language! I find myself speaking more crudely by the day. It is not hard to understand now why the Crab are so lacking in proper etiquette. It is all purged from them here.

Eleven more months. I am Daidoji, I will not shame my line. But I very much look forward to seeing you again next spring.

Daidoji Tokiru, Gunso, Third Tower of the Carpenter Wall

The Crab and Insanity

Rokugan generally regards insanity as a supernatural event, the result of a curse, a Fortune's anger, spiritual possession, or the influence of the Taint. The Crab, however, have learned through hard experience that men's minds can simply give way under the intense and unrelenting pressure of duty on the Wall. The Kuni in particular have made a study of the phenomenon, and Kuni Mataemon's treatise *The Twists of False Madness* serves as their primary guide for how to identify and treat those driven mad by the pressures of the endless war against the Shadowlands.

Mataemon studied and identified a series of nine maladies based on excessive strength or weakness in the Elements. For example, he described a man afflicted in Fire: "The one weak in Fire becomes as one dead or deep in mourning. He cannot care for his family, his comrades, or even his lord. He does not move or eat and barely breathes. The one too strong in Fire is extremely rare: he outsmarts himself, sunders his being like the Phoenix and becomes many people at once." Mataemon believed all these maladies were different responses to the same basic problem: those who could not endure the horrors of the Wall came to believe they were in a "trap without end."

Mataemon's treatment method is still used by the Crab even in the modern era. It calls for those afflicted with False Madness to be bound and held without food for at least three days, preferably within an iron cage. A sane man who knows and understands the victim is asked to stay at his side, speaking with him and sharing his enforced fast. When the prisoner understands he is no longer in a trap without end, he can be released and returned to his duties as a samurai.

Needless to say, Mataemon's methods have never come into favor with the rest of Rokugan. Samurai from other clans generally show little to no sympathy for the insane, who are usually executed or required to commit seppuku. To the Crab, however, treating the insane is simply one more tool to keep their army strong in the face of its terrible foes.

Crab officers must also master a variety of skills not found in other armies. They must know the tunnels beneath the Wall, know the properties and abilities of siege weapons and traps, know the correct tactics to use against a hundred different types of Shadowlands creatures. The peculiar nature of the constant warfare on the Wall also requires a great variety of specialized soldiers, such as watchmen with excellent vision, couriers who can run along the Wall for hours without tiring, and surgeons who know how to treat strange and potentially Tainted wounds.

The life of a night watchmen on the Wall is particularly harrowing. Such men know full well that in the event of a major attack they will probably not live for more than a few seconds, yet their actions in those seconds may be the difference between life and death for their comrades. There is a famous scene from the novel *Meifumado* in which a surly Crab watchmen tells the clan's guests from the Dragon, Crane, and Scorpion not to bother posting their guards, who will all surely die. "I will guard your lives better than your finest yojimbo," he snarls. That night a terrible attack takes place and all the guards are killed, but swift-arriving reinforcements save the visiting dignitaries. Afterward they find the watchmen dead, and the Dragon daimyo snorts that he accomplished no more than his own dead guards. The Hida Champion replies only, "That man's job is to scream."

Although it is common in the rest of Rokugan to think of the Kaiu Wall as a single solid fortification, this is another misconception. The Wall is riddled with tunnels, linking the various garrisons and strongpoints and providing routes for scouts and raiding forces to pass into the Shadowlands. (Indeed, the Wall has no gates—all traffic into the Shadowlands must go through these tunnels.) However, the tunnels are also routes for the enemy to come into the Empire, so the Kaiu guard them with a vast array of traps and constantly modify the layout of the passages, opening some and closing others, installing new traps and removing those which no longer function. During major influxes of Shadowlands creatures, Crab troops must go into the tunnels to fight, so they are expected to memorize the layout and any changes to it.

Drills and training take up almost every minute the Crab do not spend fighting or watching for the enemy. Training includes constant hand-to-hand and weapon practice (injuries are common), as well as running drills in heavy armor. Troops run along the Wall, up and down the stairs, and do timed sprints through the tunnel networks below. Archery practice is a special favorite since it usually is made against live targets—either captured Shadowlands creatures or lame ponies which cannot serve any other use.

If there is no training left to occupy the soldiers' time, officers will invent other ways to keep the men occupied. Idle men become bored and lose focus, which can be fatal on the Wall. Some of the more peculiar Crab customs, such as the notorious "draw lot plays" (described in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*) are the result of Crab officers trying to stave off idleness.

All this being said, it remains a fact that the Crab have a well-earned reputation for drunken debauchery. It is their behavior off-duty which is responsible for this. Typically, Crab soldiers at the Wall spend a week "on station," guarding the Wall or waging offensive raids into the Shadowlands, followed by three days off duty. During this short period of freedom they unleash their pent-up emotions and celebrate life, often in very exuberant ways. Many Crab spend all of this time drunk, and almost all Crab indulge heavily in sake. It helps them to forget the horrors they have seen, to wash away—if only for a brief time—the memories of what they must do on a daily basis. It is while they are drinking that they can laugh, cry, and celebrate. Crab weddings are infamous for the marathon drinking sessions that accompany them.

Crab who are off-duty (and especially Crab who are drunk) are also notorious for engaging in violent brawls. Sometimes these are a chance to resolve grudges from their time on the Wall, grudges that could not be resolved there without endangering their duty. And sometimes they are simply a way to release pent-up tensions in a burst of violence. Whatever the case, most innkeepers have learned to dread the arrival of a group of off-duty Crab.

These brief reliefs from duty are relatively frequent; visits to home are far less common, often separated by weeks or months. Still, no Crab turns down the chance to go home and spend time with his family. Helping raise the next generation of samurai reaffirms their belief in their duty and in the future of the clan. Because child-bearing and child-rearing is so important to the clan, the Crab have a lower proportion of women in their army than almost any other clan, and those who visit a Crab samurai's home are often surprised to discover a gentle, feminine wife who seems the very model of Rokugani manners.

Any mention of manners inevitably brings up the well-known fact that Crab samurai routinely ignore the etiquette and protocol that rules the lives of most samurai in the Empire. This behavior is not necessarily malicious, however. There is simply very little room in their grim lives for anything that does not help them to fight the Shadowlands. On the Wall, there is no time to speak in courtly niceties, and politely ignoring someone's error may get hundreds killed. The Crab learn to speak crudely because their duty does not allow them any other option. However, by that same token rude and disconcertingly direct manners do not carry the same insult to the Crab that they would for other samurai. A nod and a grunt may be all a Crab offers to a comrade who did well, but such gestures carry far more weight among them than a flowery speech might carry in a Crane court.

Speaking of manners, it must always be remembered the Crab spend their lives battling an honorless foe who routinely employs deception and trickery; thus, they despise dishonest behavior, indirect words, and all the other forms of social delicacy and misdirection which other Rokugani take for granted. Life on the Wall makes most Crab highly suspicious (the less charitable would say paranoid) and they dislike any sense that others are trying to manipulate them. There is a famous story about a Hida bushi who encountered a histrionic courtier and snarled, "Oh, how sincere." Whether the tale is true or not, modern Crab tend to describe as "sincere" anyone they think is being less than up front with them. This also helps explain their special dislike for the Scorpion and the Crane (aside from the Daidoji), both of whom make heavy use of deception and courtly manipulation. A popular saying among Wall troops is, "Lies are for Scorpion and oni, not us."

It may be noted the Wall's garrison has a much higher proportion of samurai than other clan armies; although the Crab do use ashigaru in their armies, they try to minimize their reliance on peasant levies at the Wall. The forces of the Shadowlands are terrifying even for hardened

Crab Slang and Battle-Language

The mixture of isolation, constant danger, and harsh duty which the Crab face on a daily basis has given rise to an entire set of slang terms and catch-phrases which are unknown to the rest of Rokugan. Many of these are used as short-hand terms during battle or danger, allowing the Crab to react swiftly and automatically to complex and challenging situations.

- *Banjaku!* (Big Rock!)—Used to warn that a creature can only be hurt by crystal.
- *Dairyo!* (Big Catch!)—Warning that a large Shadowlands force is approaching. Hearing this from a Hiruma scout is never a good thing.
- *Iye, dozo, osakini*—Literally, "No, please, after you." A phrase widely used on the Wall when speaking with those who have drawn ire... especially annoying non-Crab.
- *Kannishiki!* (Anvil!)—Used to warn that a creature can only be hurt by jade.
- *Koma* (Pony)—An insulting term for a non-Crab who has been sent to the Wall. Derived from the Yasuki custom of supplying lame ponies to the Hida for archery practice. In the Crab view, an outsider serving on the Wall is about as useful as a lame pony, only able to stumble around and bleat for help.
- *Mami!* (Deceiver!)—A word warning of the presence of a shapeshifter or similar infiltrator; the Crab have standard drills for responding to such a threat.
- *Maru*—A unit of time with a specific meaning: it is the minimum time it will take an Invulnerable oni to kill an armored Hida warrior. About two seconds, usually. The most common usage is when discussing the sacrifice of troops for time.
- *Suihi!* (Liquid Manure!)—Used to warn of a creature that is insubstantial, can pass through walls, etc.
- *Tsuta* (Ivy)—Warns of the possible presence of Shadowlands creatures in a "civilian" location where they would not be expected, such as an inn, geisha house, or similar. Crab hearing this word know to get their weapons and meet at the exit.
- *Yamijiai*—Warning that a military situation is dire. Sometimes rendered as "Fighting unknown assailants, the situation is a mess."
- *Yasha!* (Demon Woman!)—A companion term to "Tsuta." Warns that the jig is up, so fight your way out any way you can.
- *Zakennayo!*—A general-purpose phrase of frustration and anger. Heard quite often on the Wall.

samurai, and all too often a peasant soldier simply flees or collapses in the face of such entities. However, the Crab do not despise their peasants for such weakness. To the contrary, the Crab routinely supply their peasants with weapons in order to keep them safe from the occasional creatures who slip through the Wall.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Wall has the largest concentration of eta in the Empire. Not only does the presence of such a large permanent garrison create a lot of waste, but the near-constant battles also create a relentless flow of corpses. Bodies must be removed and burned as soon as possible so the Taint does not touch them, and of course Shadowlands creatures must be disposed of when slain lest their Taint be able to spread. The eta who serve at the Wall wear simple suits of white-painted ashigaru armor to protect them from stray arrows, and carry parangu to remove the heads of corpses—or occasionally even dispatch still-living Shadowlands creatures or reanimated samurai. During major battles, small teams of these eta remove corpses from the Wall during lulls in the fighting.

The Crab Before the Wall

The prior discussion is oriented toward Crab culture in the wake of the Kaiu Wall's construction in the eighth century. However, almost all of this information also applies to troops serving on the Empire's border in earlier centuries when the Wall had not yet been built. The chief distinction between the two eras is that prior to the Wall the Crab defense tended to be more "in depth" rather than focused directly on a single fortified line.

The earlier Crab border defenses used a network of smaller fortifications and watch-posts, backed up by a number of major fortifications such as Shiro no Kaiu, Shiro Hiruma, Razor of the Dawn Castle, and Kyuden Hida. The smaller fortifications served as bases for patrols and raids against enemy forces; in the event of a major attack they would serve to draw in and "fix" enemy attacks, or provided forward bases for sallies and counterattacks. The major castles hosted large troop concentrations which could march forth to bolster the border or crush enemy armies as needed. Thus, in this era the Crab were far more likely to meet their enemies in the field rather than fighting purely from behind fortified walls. They also tended to be more pro-active in their operations, frequently launching "spoiler" attacks to disrupt Shadowlands forces before they could assemble for an offensive. (The swift and deadly Hiruma troops were especially well-suited to this sort of mission.)

For the most part, this approach worked well—it faltered only twice, once during the reign of Hantei Fujiwa and the second time during the overwhelming attack of the Maw's horde. In the modern Empire this style of border defense is still used on Crab Clan's northern border where the Kaiu Wall does not extend. After the Hiruma retake their lands in the Hidden Emperor era, they also use this method of defense—unavoidably so, since their territory is on the wrong side of the Wall.

The Twenty Goblin Winter

There are times when the Crab Clan finds itself sorely lacking in trained warriors to man the border with the Shadowlands. This may be due to heavy casualties in battle, but can also result from plague, famine, or similar disasters. On these occasions the Crab Clan Champion may declare a Twenty Goblin Winter. As their name implies, Twenty Goblin Winters usually last for a single winter season, although they may extend longer if the Clan Champion thinks it necessary. The longest Twenty Goblin Winter on record was in the year 1021, when the ranks of the Crab Clan were nearly halved by a plague. That one lasted three years and added more than five thousand samurai to the clan.

During a Twenty Goblin Winter any ronin (and on rare occasions even ashigaru) can petition the Crab Clan for admission. The ronin is permitted to enter the Shadowlands under supervision, and if over the course of the season he can bring back the heads of twenty goblins he will be permitted to swear fealty to the Moshibaru family, a vassal family of the Hida. Heads of more powerful creatures such as ogres, trolls, and oni are considered to count for multiple heads, depending on the strength of the beasts involved. However, any ronin who returns with the head of a ratling is executed.

Using the Twenty Goblin Winter in Play

The Twenty Goblin Winter can become the basis for an entire campaign in which the players portray ronin trying to win a place in the Crab Clan, or Crab characters ordered to serve as escorts for ronin going into the Shadowlands. Much of the attention during the Twenty Goblin Winters focuses on the village of Shinsei's Last Hope,

and the sudden influx of strangers into the village can generate all sorts of plotlines, from forbidden romance to criminal activity... not to mention the constant threat from the creatures of Jigoku. At the very least, a Twenty Goblin Winter is an effective way to introduce the characters to the Shadowlands and the Crab.

A GM seeking a more creative campaign approach might allow other clans to establish similar traditions, such as a Twenty Bandit Winter or similar concept depending on the clan (the Togashi might have a Twenty Butterfly Winter).

Crab Naval Power: The Iron Turtle Ships

In the earliest years of Rokugan's history the Crab realized what much of the Empire still does not recognize: the corruption of the Shadowlands does not stop at the shoreline. For much of their history the Crab patrolled the edges of the Sea of Shadows (as they call it) using standard Rokugani kobune with double-thick hulls, but in the eighth century an engineer named Kaiu Sunshin invented the *koutetsukan* or "Iron Turtle" ship. He extended the hull of a kobune and plated it with iron, mixing in pieces of jade whenever possible. He also added a covered topdeck studded with iron and jade spikes to repel boarders. In later versions of the ship he incorporated a collapsible mast to supplement the oars, along with the peculiar dragon-shaped figurehead that marks all koutetsukan.

The figurehead on an Iron Turtle ship always depicts the head of a dragon. However, this is not mere ornamentation. The mouth of the dragon contains a hollow tube that leads below deck, allowing the Crab to pump out clouds of smoke (masking them from enemy missile fire), toxic fumes, or even gouts of burning oil. The technology behind these fire projectors is a closely guarded Kaiu secret.

The Iron Turtle ships are heavy, awkward, slow to turn, and not particularly seaworthy. They tend to roll heavily when taken into the open ocean, giving them the nickname "tilting turtles." The Mantis Clan pays them little heed and claims it could easily build similar ships of its own if it saw any use for them. However, the Iron Turtles are extremely good at what they are designed to do: protect the sheltered coastal waters of the Crab against pirates, enemy fleets, and above all the Shadowlands. Their jade makes them resistant to the Tainted waters of the Sea of Shadows and they have stopped more than one attack from aquatic Shadowlands creatures. The most notable such instance was in the reign of Hantei XXXVI, when a small group of Iron Turtles stopped an entire fleet of Tainted kobune with undead crews.

The Damned Berserkers

The darkness, it speaks
Turn on the Empire, it says
I face the wrong way.

Hiruma Taki - Damned Berserker

Typically, when a Rokugani samurai is found to be Tainted he is permitted to either commit seppuku or to retire to a special monastery where he drinks Jade Petal Tea under close supervision. However, the Crab Clan sometimes offers its samurai a third choice: join the Legion of the Damned. The Damned are a special force of shock troops, the first to take the field when the Shadowlands attack. They are no longer considered true citizens of the Empire, but rather are treated as expendable weapons, hurled into battle with little expectation of survival. They are kept separate from the rest of the Crab army, posted to secure barracks located near regions of frequent Shadowlands attack.

The Damned are probably the most extreme example of the Crab tendency to use any possible weapon against the Shadowlands—in this case, using the Taint itself. However, the Crab are quite realistic about the dangers inherent in keeping Tainted troops. The Damned are constantly watched and supervised by special teams of Kuni Witch-

From A Treatise on the Damned, by Kuni Tsukan

Would you throw a tool away if it became scratched when you used it for the task it was designed for? No. That would be a foolish waste of resources. Why then should Crab who have been afflicted by the Taint of Jigoku be granted the right to seppuku instead of continuing to do the task they were trained for? Seppuku in the face of the Taint when a samurai could still be of use to the clan is nothing more than cowardice.

When Hida Banuken first formed the Legion of the Damned, the daimyo of the Kuni committed seppuku in protest. But the Damned turned the tide of the battle, and without Banuken's courage the Empire might have fallen. We in the Crab Clan use every other resource we can to defend the Empire. Why shouldn't we use samurai the darkness believes it has defeated to crush that same darkness?

Hunters and shugenja, men trained to know all the signs of the Taint; their duty is to make sure the Tainted soldiers continue to obey orders... and to kill any who show signs of finally succumbing to Jigoku's control.

The speed of the Taint is different for each victim. Some of the Damned last for only a few days or even a few hours of battle before they have to be put down, but some last for years or even decades, stalwartly resisting their final dissolution at the hands of the Taint. Indeed, some of the greatest warriors in the history of the Crab Clan have actually been Damned... but no one knows their names or sings of their deeds. No one remembers their decades of service in the most dangerous and bloody battles in the Empire's history. Nor do they seek such recognition. The Damned know the Taint has them in its grip, and all they ask for is a chance to serve their clan rather than become Lost. Better the most agonizing death imaginable than to be forced outside of the Celestial Wheel.

The soldiers of the Crab look on their Damned brethren with both pity and awe. No Crab wants to become Damned, but at the same time the existence of the Damned gives them hope: even if they should fall to the Taint, they can still defend the Empire.

By ancient and universal tradition, the Damned are only used against the Shadowlands. There have been times when the Crab Clan has been sorely beset by other clans and Clan Champions have been tempted to turn the Damned loose on such enemies, but they have never given in to such temptation. The use of Tainted troops against fellow Rokugani is a crime not even Crab pragmatism can stomach.

Using the Damned in a Game

Allowing Damned characters into an L5R campaign is problematic, since the extreme restrictions placed on them will then apply to the entire group. However, a GM who wants to run an extremely grim Shadowlands campaign (and whose players are up for the challenge) could run a game in which all the characters are either Damned or their Kuni caretakers. If giving the Kuni power over the other characters seems likely to create tensions within the group, the GM can opt to make the Kuni NPCs and require all the players to run Damned characters. Regardless, given the nature of the Damned this is unlikely to be a long-running campaign—although it can be a good change of pace, a fun interruption to a more conventional L5R campaign.

Damned NPCs can provide a great variety of plot hooks, of course. The characters might be required to track down a Damned soldier who has fled his unit, or they might be saved from the Shadowlands by a unit of the Damned—an unsettling experience, to say the least. There are many themes of morality, pragmatism, and the question of the "greater good" that can be explored through encounters with the Damned.

New Game Mechanics

The following section provides new mechanics and options for Crab characters in the Legend of the Five Rings RPG 4th Edition. GMs and players may use as much or as little of these mechanics as desired.

New Basic School: Kaiu Engineer

The Kaiu Engineers are the most formidable crafters in the Empire, and their skills are turned almost entirely to the Crab Clan's duty of defending Rokugan against the Shadowlands. Masters of construction and siegecraft, they are also formidably talented at the manufacture of arms and armor. Many Kaiu also serve as battlefield commanders, turning their talents at siege to the service of war.

Kaiu Engineer School [Artisan/Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Battle, Craft: Armorsmithing, Craft: Weaponsmithing, Defense, Engineering (pick one Emphasis), Lore: Architecture, War Fans
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Heavy Weapon or War Fan, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Kaiu Method

A student of the Kaiu Method is taught the many basic essential disciplines the family uses to serve the Crab. You gain a bonus of +1k0 when making any School Skill Roll. When spending a Void Point to augment a School Skill Roll, you gain a bonus of +2k2 instead of +1k1. These effects are not cumulative.

Rank Two: The Path of Stone

The Kaiu are feared on the battlefield for good reason—they are the masters of both construction and destruction. When constructing any large structure (temple-sized or larger), you may make an Engineering Skill Roll at TN 25 to add an additional number of Wounds to the structure equal to your School Rank x 100. Also, when commanding a siege engine, you may re-roll once any of the siege engine's damage dice that roll below your School Rank.

Kaiu Armor

Obviously, the armor created by a Kaiu Engineer of Rank 3 or higher is a significant benefit to bushi everywhere. Such armor is almost never available for non-Crab samurai, however, for it is immediately put to use in the war against the Shadowlands. At the GM's discretion, a Crab character may acquire a set of Kaiu Armor during play, but this will generally incur major obligations and is likely to cost a small fortune (a minimum of five to ten times the normal cost for that type of armor). Kaiu characters may of course produce the armor and give it as gifts, but those selling it for profit will quickly attract the severe ire of their superiors for betraying their duty to the clan. If GMs wish to allow it, Kaiu Armor can be purchased as a Granted Advantage with a cost equal to 3 + the creator's School Rank.

Rank Three: The Path of the Shell

The security and protection of Crab samurai is a somber duty all Kaiu take very seriously indeed. When crafting any set of armor, you may double the crafting time and cost in order to add your School Rank to the armor's Reduction value. You may also add half your School Rank (rounding up) to the armor's Armor TN bonus.

Rank Four: The Path of War

Every Kaiu is a student of battle, as are all Crab. When you roll on the Mass Battle Chart, you may modify your result (up or down) by an additional amount equal to half your School Rank. Additionally, when fighting with a katana, dai tsuchi, or war fan, you may make melee attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action.

Rank Five: The Path of Steel

The greatest and most sacred duty of the Kaiu is crafting the sacred weapons of the Crab Clan. When crafting any weapon, you may choose to confer either a +1k0 bonus to all attack rolls made with that weapon, or a +0k1 bonus to all damage rolls made with that weapon. If the weapon is a katana, you may expend all your Void Points (a minimum of one point must be spent) to make the blade unbreakable (as per the Sacred Weapon: Kaiu Blade Advantage). Doing so renders you unable to recover Void Points for one week.

New Basic School: Kuni Witch-Hunter

The Kuni Witch-Hunters are a small but highly skilled group of mystical warriors who serve the Crab Clan by hunting for maho-tsukai and Shadowlands infiltration within the Empire. They travel freely through Rokugan, often disregarding clan borders and jurisdictions... much to the displeasure of local authorities. Samurai from other clans tend to regard Witch-Hunters as superstitious and ill-mannered louts, but common folk throughout the Empire respect them and seek their aid whenever supernatural threats arise. Within the Crab Clan they are treated with respect and not a little fear, since their appearance often betokens the presence of the Taint.

New Basic School: Kuni Witch-Hunter [Monk]

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Investigation, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, Lore: Maho, Meditation, any one skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Rugged Clothing, Daisho, Knife, Jade Pendant, Traveling Pack, 3 koku.

Techniques

Rank 1: To See the Darkness

Witch-Hunters are taught both to sense the power of Jigoku and to crush those who carry its dreadful mark. You may attempt to detect the Taint in another person by holding your jade pendant (or another piece of jade) and staring intently at them. This is a Complex Action and requires you to make a Contested Roll of your Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness against the target's Sincerity (Deceit) / Willpower. You gain a +1k0 bonus to this roll for every full Rank of Taint the target possesses. If you succeed in the roll and the target is Tainted (has at least 1 Rank of Taint), you are able to sense the presence of the Taint and its approximate strength. If you fail the roll or the target is not Tainted, you gain no information.

In addition, you gain +1k1 to your rolls to resist the Shadowlands Taint and to your attack rolls when attacking a foe who is a Shadowlands creature or who you know to be Tainted.

Rank 2: To Ride the Darkness.

Witch-Hunters do not confine themselves to rooting out Tainted men and women—they also learn how to fight the creatures of the Shadowlands, and spend considerable time studying their strengths and weaknesses. Any time you are confronted by a Shadowlands creature, you may take a Free Action to roll Lore: Shadowlands / Intelligence at TN 20 to recall either one specific strength (such as Invulnerability) or one specific weakness (such as jade) for that creature. You choose whether you recall a strength or a weakness, but the GM chooses the exact information. You may Raise on this roll to learn additional pieces of information—one strength or weakness per Raise.

Rank 3: To Strike the Darkness

At this rank the Witch-Hunter learns to call on the power of purity to guide and strengthen his blows. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action when your opponent is a Shadowlands creature or when you know your opponent to be Tainted.

Rank 4: To Repel the Darkness.

The Witch-Hunter's intense study and spiritual training now gives him access to esoteric powers and makes it almost impossible for the forces of darkness to deceive him. You gain a +3k0 bonus to the roll for your Rank One ability to detect the Taint and to the roll for your Rank Two ability. In addition, you may learn one Kiho. (If the optional rule allowing Kiho for non-Brotherhood monks is in effect, this Kiho does not count against the maximum number of Kiho you can learn, although it is subject to their other mechanical limitations such as Mastery Level.)

Rank 5: To Shatter the Darkness

The Witch-Hunter is now the true nemesis of Jigoku's forces, able to strike down his enemies with unmatched power. You gain a +4k1 bonus to your attack and damage rolls against Shadowlands creatures and against foes you know to be Tainted. This stacks with the attack bonus from your Rank One technique.

New Alternate Path: Toritaka Exorcist

From the days of their founding as the Falcon Clan, the Toritaka have studied the ways of the spirits, especially ghosts and gaki. Those of the Toritaka who had the gift of the kami undertook special studies in these topics, learning the ways of *yorei* and *goryo*, of *gaki* and *kitsune-tsuki*, and the ways to purge their influence from the natural world. The near-destruction of the Toritaka by a malevolent Shuten Doji spirit only furthered their determination to learn the

Possession and Exorcisms in Rokugan

Many spirits and ghosts have the ability to possess mortals. Ghosts (yorei) in particular are notorious for possessing humans in order to try to carry out an unfulfilled duty or desire, or simply to vicariously enjoy mortal life once more. Many types of Gaki are also known to possess humans, and this phenomenon is often confused with possession by ghosts. Other entities which can possess mortals include kitsune-tsuki spirits, oni and yokai from Jigoku, and even ancestral spirits or Fortunes visiting the mortal realm for a short time. Finally, certain maho spells allow their casters to possess and control other mortals.

For the most part, the Rokugani have few direct answers to possession. The spell Bonds of Ningen-do, which can drive spirits back to their native realm, can be effective in driving Gaki out of their targets, and the spell Ward of Purity can sometimes drive out possession by oni, yokai, or other Tainted entities. Neither of these methods is consistent or reliable, however. Ghosts in particular are extremely difficult to drive out unless their needs or demands are fulfilled.

In many cases, the victims of a possession are reduced to praying for aid from higher powers, pleading with the possessing spirit to leave, or simply restraining the possessed individual until the spirit leaves. Thus the arrival of a Toritaka Exorcist or a Kuni Witch-Hunter is often welcomed by those whose friends or relatives are suffering in the throes of spiritual possession.

Exorcism Wards

Many Toritaka Exorcists enhance their exorcisms by placing specially-inscribed paper wards on the target. They (and only they) can create these wards as a Complex Action that requires expending an Earth spell-slot (which cannot be regained until the ward is used) and rolling Calligraphy / Intelligence at TN 25. Placing an exorcism ward on an unwilling target is an unarmed attack that uses a Spellcraft / Agility roll; placing it on a bound/helpless/unresisting target is a Simple Action.

Exorcism wards are especially useful items because they can potentially be employed by other people, not just the Exorcist who created them. Any non-Exorcist shugenja or monk who has a Toritaka exorcism ward may place it on a possessed person and then try to perform an exorcism (a Contested Willpower roll) as a Complex Action; this expends a spell slot for a shugenja, or a Void Point for a monk. The PC does not gain any bonus to the Contested Willpower roll from the ward and in addition must successfully call three Raises on the roll for it to succeed.

Many Kuni shugenja and Kuni Witch-Hunters visit the Toritaka lands regularly to equip themselves with exorcism wards.

ways of all such dangerous creatures. Toritaka Exorcists are skilled at both detecting dangerous spirits and purging their influence.

New Alternate Path: Toritaka Exorcist (Shugenja)

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Kuni Shugenja 2
- **Requirements:** Willpower 3, Perception 3, Calligraphy 3

Technique: Purge the Darkness

You can sense the presence of dangerous spirits (ghosts, gaki, yokai, creatures from the spirit realms, etc) by making an Investigation (Notice) / Perception roll. The base TN for this roll is 20, but may be increased by the GM for spirits which are exceptionally difficult to notice. You may make two Raises on the roll to learn the specific nature of the spirit you detect (e.g. a yorei, a gaki, etc).

You may take a Complex Action to attempt an exorcism on someone who is possessed by a ghost, gaki, oni, kitsune-tsuki, or similar entity. You expend one spell slot and make a Contested Willpower roll against the spirit; if you first place an exorcism ward on the target (see sidebar), you gain +2k2 on the roll. With a success, you force the spirit to leave the body it is possessing; it cannot attempt to re-possess that same person for at least 24 hours.

New Kata: Strength of the Crab

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- Schools: Any Crab Bushi
- Effect: While wearing Armor and in the Attack Stance, your armor provides an additional +2 Reduction.

New Crab Ancestors

Hiruma [11 points]

The man who founded the Hiruma family was a pragmatic warrior who employed speed, precision, and stealth to defeat powerful foes. His guidance makes it easier to follow in his footsteps, granting you a +1k0 bonus to your Stealth, Kenjutsu, and Kyujutsu skill rolls.

- **Demands:** If Hiruma watches over you, you can never willingly betray the Crab Clan or he will abandon you. However, as a pragmatic warrior who eschews many of the niceties of Bushido he will also abandon you if your Honor Rank ever rises higher than 5.0.

Kaiu [9 points]

The legendary master craftsmen who forged the Crab Clan Ancestral Sword that slew Hatsu-Suru no Oni. Kaiu founded the most potent engineering school in the Empire and his descendants built the Great Carpenter Wall. Kaiu's guidance grants you a +3k1 bonus (instead of +1k1) any time you spend a Void Point on a Craft or Engineering skill roll. In addition, once per game year you may call on Kaiu's inspiration and roll an appropriate Craft skill at TN 50 to create a minor awakened nemuranai. The initial powers of this magical item are chosen by the GM, but should start out weak (e.g. +1k0 to skills or damage rolls, for example) until the spirits within the item grow stronger over time.

- **Demands:** Kaiu abhors mediocrity, laziness, and failure. You must never deliberately produce Craft/Engineering work that is less than your best. This obviously includes keeping low dice on a skill roll but will also have many subtler role-play applications; such situations should be adjudicated by the GM.

Chapter Two

The Crane Clan

Akodo Tatanko strides through the snow-dappled pine boughs of the winter garden, lost in her private irritation. She does not see how the path meanders around and through small clumps of trees, making the garden appear much larger than it is. She does not notice the artful way in which a great pine tree is planted in the background of a plum tree, so as to set off the shapely bareness of the plum's branches. Nor does Tatanko notice the mournful rustle of the wind through the scattered clumps of bamboo. Her attention is entirely fixed on how unpleasant her afternoon is going to be, how difficult to get through without causing embarrassment to the courtier she is supposed to be protecting.

She had felt misgivings from the moment she learned she was to be assigned to Ikoma Cheomo's honor guard at the Winter Court of Kyuden Doji. But a Lion samurai does not question orders. Tatanko grits her teeth. It isn't right, she thinks. Being skilled in war and obedient to my lord should not land me in situations like this.

Yesterday Cheomo had done some small favor for one of the visiting Doji lords, and as a gesture of thanks the Doji had arranged for a member of Cheomo's honor guard to have the privilege—the privilege!—of spending an afternoon sparring with Doji Nobutaka. Tatanko feels the muscles in her jaw clench a little bit more at the memory. Nobutaka is a Kenshinzen. Which just proves how little the Crane actually know about the way of the sword. She has never seen him in the palace's dojo. She had only glimpsed him a few times in court, laughing as he bantered with the ladies there, dressed so sumptuously as to outshine them. Now I am supposed to be honored by sparring with him.

Tatanko walks around a graceful cascading yew and stops. She has found Nobutaka. The Doji stands with his back toward her, looking at something further down the path. She draws a slight breath and starts to approach, but without turning he raises a hand in a gesture of caution. Tatanko drops her bokken and grasps the hilt of her sword—and stops. There is nothing in sight, no danger, and Nobutaka himself still holds his bokken loosely clasped under one arm.

Tatanko retrieves her own wooden sword from the snow and quietly approaches the Crane until she stands just behind and to his right. She follows his gaze, looking out into a section of the garden sheltered by pine trees and bordered by a small stream composed entirely of smooth black rocks.

"What is it?" she asks quietly.

"The sparrow," Nobutaka replies, his rich voice full of delight.

Tatanko blinks, confused, and looks again. There is indeed a sparrow, perched on a garden lantern carved of some white stone, its head turning about as if looking between the cloudy gray sky above and the snowy ground below. It seems perfectly ordinary.

She turns to ask Nobutaka another question and stops, struck by what she sees on his face. The Kenshinzen is utterly absorbed in watching the sparrow; he practically glows with the intensity of his attention. She has seen men go into battle for their lives with less focus than Nobutaka shows now. Tatanko turns back to the sparrow, trying to figure out what can possibly be so interesting about it.

The bird flies down from its perch and hops about the ground, hunting for whatever it is sparrows hunt for. Tatanko slowly scans the clearing again, using the senses honed on the battlefield, but she sees nothing but black stream, white ground, dark pine trees, and white lantern. As she turns her gaze back to the sparrow it suddenly strikes her that the chestnut patch on its head is the brightest color to be seen; all the rest of the world is composed at that moment only in white and black.

She looks harder at it, noting the subtle shades of brown and tan on its body, the vivid punctuation of black and the clear definition of white.

The sparrow gives a last hop, shakes out its wings, and flies off. Tatanko notices its breast was the same gray as the heavens above, and she smiles.

Nobutaka sighs and moves into the clearing, his steps careful, almost reverent. "It was lovely, was it not?" He pauses, then seems to return to himself. "But now it has gone, so we can begin." He begins to strip off his haori.

Tatanko blinks a bit. "You do not practice in the dojo?"

"Oh, sometimes I do," Nobutaka replies. "You never know when you will have to fight a duel indoors, after all." The haori drapes over the lantern. He begins swinging his bokken lightly, loosening the muscles in his shoulders. "But it is a shame to let this beautiful garden go unused."

It has never occurred to her to wonder why Nobutaka wanted to meet in the garden. Tatanko berates herself for it; that kind of sloppiness gets samurai killed on the fields of battle. She strides into the clearing and takes off her own haori, then begins the process of tying back her sleeves. "I hope you will not let the beauty of the garden distract you from our sparring," she says tartly.

Nobutaka smiles warmly at her. "I will give you all the attention I would give a sparrow," he says.

Despite herself, Tatanko finds herself smiling back at him. Her afternoon is suddenly looking much more interesting.

History of the Crane Clan

"We are the children of Lady Doji, first in all things. Excellence is our past, our present, our future. Others hate and fear us only because they can never achieve what we have been given."

– Doji Kurohito, Crane Clan Champion, twelfth century

The Crane Clan was founded by Lady Doji, of all the children of the Sun and Moon the closest to her brother Hantei. She was determined to make his new Empire a place of elegance and glory. Doji ultimately created most of the political and cultural institutions of the Empire, as well as many arts, thus launching the Crane Clan's dominance of the Empire's civilized life. However, perhaps the most important act of her life was her marriage to the mortal, Kakita, whose legacy is as important to the Crane Clan as her own.

Kakita was a simple warrior from the wild provinces of the north, self-taught in a swift and deadly fighting style that used a sharp, narrow blade—one of the first true katana in the Empire. When the first Hantei sponsored a great tournament to determine who would be his personal champion, Kakita entered and defeated every foe, including Lady Matsu, the greatest follower of Akodo. By the end of the tournament Kakita was Hantei's champion. By the end of the day, the two had become fast friends and Hantei had offered his sister Doji to be Kakita's bride.

Lady Doji was incensed at the thought of marrying a mortal and decided to rid herself of this unwelcome match by asking Kakita three questions. Only if he answered them would she become his bride. The questions were designed to be impossible—Doji asked Kakita to bring the dead to life, to tell the court how large the world was and how many days it took to walk it, and to bring her something whose beauty could not be challenged.

A lesser man might have given up, but Kakita had become smitten by Doji's beauty and grace, and he dedicated himself to the task of answering these impossible demands. He spent many weeks traveling the early Empire, seeking a way to resolve the puzzles, while his twin sister Kiyamori remained at the Imperial Court and spoke of her brother's worthy qualities to Doji. Eventually, with the help of a canny old fisherwoman named Yasuki, Kakita found his answers and returned. The Emperor's court watched expectantly as he spoke, and while Lady Doji sought to project her former arrogance and hauteur, her heart had been softened by Kiyamori's words.

For the first answer, Kakita presented a piece of driftwood, lifeless and dead... and a biwa he had carved from the same wood. The music from the instrument was so beautiful that none could doubt Kakita had brought the dead to life.

For the second answer, Kakita declared the world should be measured not by one's journey but by one's companion, the blessed Sun. A man guided by Doji's mother, Amaterasu, would surely traverse the whole world in a single day. Hantei and the court were delighted with the wit of this answer, and Doji herself hid a pleased blush beneath her fan.

For the third answer, Kakita held up a small golden mirror, showing Lady Doji her own reflection.

The founder of the Crane allowed herself to be fully satisfied with Kakita's answers, and the two were wed. From their many children sprang the family lines of the Doji and the Kakita, for each child was permitted to choose which parent's name they would take, and soon the Daidoji would also spring from the same family.

The Crane Clan Thunder

The eldest children of Doji and Kakita were the twins Doji Konishiko and her brother Doji Yasurugi—who, like their father and his sister, shared the same soul in two bodies. Yasurugi was a skilled swordsman and artisan who forged the Empire's earliest Kakita blades, while Konishiko was a gentle girl who studied the arts of the court. When the terror of the First War fell upon Rokugan, Shinsei came seeking champions from each clan to fight against Fu Leng. The Little Teacher sought out Yasurugi, but before the young man could answer he was struck down by an oni. "His soul is gone, and we are lost," Shinsei whispered.... but then Konishiko picked up her brother's sword. "No," she said, "his soul is here."

Doji and Kakita, stunned by the loss of one child, balked at the thought of sending their gentle daughter to face the Dark Kami. Lady Matsu mocked the girl, declaring she

would be useless in battle. Konishiko, however, suddenly took the stance of a swordsman. "What I lack, my brother will provide," she whispered. "I may die in the first moment of fighting. But I only need to hit him... once." Before such honor and determination her parents bowed their heads, and Konishiko went into battle alongside the other Thunders, dying in the Shadowlands against Fu Leng.

Doji Hayaku and the Birth of the Iron Crane

"The Kakita are the sword—swift and evasive. We of the Daidoji are the spear—we are power, strength, and cunning."

– Daidoji Kuzan, third daimyo of the Daidoji

Soon after the Day of Thunder, Lady Doji suffered a series of nightmares that convinced her Konishiko was still alive in the Shadowlands. Her husband Kakita urged her to give up this false belief, but her youngest son, Doji Hayaku, believed her. He quietly departed on a quest to rescue his lost sister. Three years later Hayaku returned, bearing the sword Konishiko had carried with her, the sword of her dead twin Yasurugi. The blade held both of their souls, safe from the Taint, and when Lady Doji touched it the sword rang with a single note of pure joy. Doji's children had come home from the darkness.

Hayaku's success had a price, however. His beautiful raven-black hair had turned snow-white and he could no longer speak, for a great scar disfigured his throat. Lady Doji was moved by her son's heroism and declared him the founder of a new family in the Crane, the Daidoji—the "Defenders of the Doji." Some versions of this tale also claim Hayaku brought home a fiancée, a mysterious and beautiful woman who married him and bore his children, but this is disputed by the official Crane histories.

The family which Hayaku founded and built became the toughest and most pragmatic warriors and scouts of the Crane Clan, men and women who protected their cousins in the other families at any price and, sometimes, through almost any means.

Kakita, Mirumoto, and The Sword

"The secret of swordplay is not the swift defeat, not the prolonged strike and block. A pure stroke will defeat any technique."

– *Kakita's* The Sword

During the early years of the Empire, before the First War erupted, Kakita wrote *The Sword*, a treatise on the art of swordsmanship and the fighting style he had created,

which he called iaijutsu. *The Sword* is still studied and revered in the modern Empire, and its approach to combat and dueling is considered by many Rokugani to be the definitive one. Kakita advocated a highly philosophical approach to sword-fighting, in which the purity and perfection of the mind, body, and soul together ensured victory. In Kakita's view, a true swordsman—a *kenshinzen*—first sought to defeat his opponent's soul, his spirit... after which, victory in combat followed without effort. He also spoke of the "strike of no-thought," completely emptying the mind in order to make a perfect victorious sword-strike.

Kakita's writings were in some ways a deliberate response to another work on swordsmanship, Mirumoto's *Niten*, which advocated a far more direct and pragmatic style of fighting using both the katana and wakizashi. The two men never met to test their skills and philosophies against each other, for when the First War came Mirumoto was chosen as the Dragon Thunder and died fighting Fu Leng. However, Mirumoto's son Hojatsu took up where his father had left off, perfecting the Niten style and deliberately pursuing a rivalry with Kakita.

According to legend, on the day of Hantei I's fortieth birthday Kakita and Mirumoto Hojatsu were invited to duel in order to prove whose technique was superior. The two men spent the entire day facing each other, unmoving, each knowing that to strike would mean the death of both.

A few years later, during a skirmish between the Lion and the Crane, the two met on the battlefield. Hojatsu was serving as an advisor to the Lion, and both swordsmen knew this might be their last chance to cross blades. According to the Imperial histories, when the moment of the strike came, Hojatsu fell dead instantly... but Kakita was mortally wounded. He commanded his son Kakita Shimizu to bring him Hojatsu's katana, then whispered, "Do your duty to your master," and fell on the sword, dying alongside his rival.

An Excerpt from The Sword

"The One Strike"

This means to strike an opponent with the strike of a single moment; to perform each action so that no second is needed, to strive for perfection in each kata, each duel and each moment. This is the sharpest weapon of the warrior. Complete objectivity, the 'eye outside of the body,' allows us to choose our moment. The entire body must be unified with the sword. A single man, a single weapon. They are one. But this is not simply to say that the duelist wields one sword - rather that the duelist is one sword. Thus, perfection of the strike is achieved as naturally as the outward breath. The strike of the body, spirit, and sword - this is the strike which the student must master if he is to become a true Kenshizo, a Swordmaster. If this is mastered, no other strike is needed. The single strike, the One Strike of the attuned weapon, this alone will defeat your opponent.

There are those who tell you that your opponent will defeat himself in the moment of the strike. This is not true. The defeat comes for the single imperfection that your opponent will carry within their soul. The perfect spirit, the soul which bears no stain and the sword whose temper is true—this is the essence of the One Strike. Meditate on this until you understand the eye outside the body, until you reach a point of unity with the Sword.

The Death of Lady Doji

Lady Doji lived for many years after the death of Kakita, and continued to dedicate herself to serving the Emperor and his successors as well as perfecting the place of art and beauty in Rokugani culture. Every five years she journeyed the Empire to visit her surviving siblings among the Kami, but over time these journeys grew shorter as they died or vanished one by one. Finally the day came when none of them remained.

She went to her home at Kyuden Doji and walked out to the cliffs which towered above the heaving waters of the ocean. There she raised her arms to the heavens as the last rays of the setting Sun fell on her. The waves crashed against the rocks, their foam engulfed her, and she was gone. Some Crane claim her voice can still be heard in the ocean's waves.

Well before Lady Doji's death, the rule of the clan had already passed to her second son Doji Nio, a man of great intelligence, elegance, and discretion; under his care the clan flourished. The Crane lands expanded, profitable trade routes spread across the Empire, and Lady Doji's system of politics was formally established in all the courts of Rokugan. It is rumored Nio also wrote a great treatise on economics, though if so it did not survive to enter the clan's libraries. It was also during Nio's reign that most of the formal institutions of the Crane Clan came into existence, such as the famous Kakita Academies that institutionalized Kakita's practices of swordsmanship and art.

Isawa Asahina and Doji Kiriko

Early in the fourth century, during a period of intense tension between the Lion and the Phoenix, the Crane stepped in to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Isawa Asahina, the Phoenix Master of Air, was an unusually militant Phoenix and took offense at the Crane intervention, which he believed had robbed his clan of victory. He unleashed a cam-

paign of destruction through the northern Crane lands. Asahina's rampage put the Crane in a difficult position, for they had very few shugenja and their armies were mobilizing in the south against the Crab, beginning a half-century of hostilities with the Clan of Hida.

Doji Kiriko, the daughter of the Crane Clan Champion, took matters into her own hands. She sought out the so-called Mad Phoenix in a small village and resolutely stepped in between him and his targets, enduring his blasts of elemental fire. She never yielded but finally collapsed from her wounds. Asahina was shaken, for here was a Crane who embraced the ideal of peace as strongly as any Phoenix priest. Stung by her silent rebuke, he abandoned his quest for revenge, took her to Kyuden Doji and begged to be allowed to nurse her back to health as atonement.

As the weeks of her convalescence went by, Kiriko discovered Asahina was a man of great intellect and curiosity who delighted in making beautiful and useful things. Asahina, for his part, learned Kiriko was a woman of learning who was committed to advancing the art and culture of the Empire. Benten smiled upon them, and when Kiriko had recovered the pair went to her father and asked for permission to wed. The Crane Champion was happy to approve the match, and the Phoenix released Asahina from his fealty so it could proceed. Many of his students followed him into the Crane Clan, and what few shugenja the Crane already possessed likewise swore fealty to him. Thus the Asahina family and its peaceful traditions were established.

The Yasuki Break and the Gozoku Alliance

A few years after the incident with Asahina, the Crane Clan found itself plunged into a major conflict with its southern neighbor, the Crab. The so-called First Yasuki War was also the first full-scale, all-out inter-clan war in the Empire's history. Claim and counter-claim have been made concerning the origins of the war, but there can be no doubt there were those outside of the Crane who were envious of the Yasuki's skill in commerce. Likewise it cannot be denied there were many Crane outside of the Yasuki who were uncomfortable with the family's intense focus on money and its often questionable methods of acquiring it, and in turn there were undoubtedly many Yasuki who chafed under the limits imposed by the Crane Clan's leadership. With no external foe to foster clan unity, perhaps a break was inevitable. Regardless, the Yasuki departed for the Crab Clan, an incident which left the other families of the Crane aghast. In their view, the "Yasuki break" violated both samurai loyalty and the bonds of kinship. Yasuki's son Torikago had married Kiyamori, Kakita's twin sister, in reward for Yasuki's assistance in Kakita's quest to marry Lady Doji. To forsake such a bond seemed nothing less than a crime.

The First Yasuki War dragged on for several years before ending in something of a stalemate mediated by the Throne (and leading indirectly to the founding of the Minor Clan of the Sparrow). The settlement left the Yasuki as part of the Crab Clan, an outcome that bred hostility and bitterness between the two clans for centuries to come. The Daidoji family was especially angry over the Yasuki's defection, since they had fought and died for many years to protect Yasuki lives and holdings only to now see them serving a clan hostile to the Crane. The few members of the Yasuki who remained loyal to the Crane swore fealty to the Daidoji, adding their own disgust for their kin's treason to the family.

Even as the Yasuki War was ending, the Crane became ensnared in the conspiracy of the Gozoku Alliance. Doji Raigu, Crane Clan Champion, was one of the three Gozoku leaders alongside Shiba Gaijushiko and Bayushi Atsuki. While the Yasuki conflict did not directly lead to the Crane's support of the Gozoku, the Imperial sanction of the Yasuki defection doubtless made it reasonable to many Crane samurai that the Empire needed to be protected from the Hantei and the Hantei from themselves.

When Hantei Yugozohime and her Lion supporters overthrew the Gozoku in the year 435, the Crane Clan were left in a delicate position. On the one hand, their Clan Champion had been one of the chief conspirators, but on the other hand their courtiers were so widely influential in the courts that completely purging them would have crippled the new Empress's government. Yugozohime took a middle course, executing or accepting the seppuku of those in the higher levels of the conspiracy while acknowledging the loyalty of the rest. She also maintained long-standing Hantei tradition by marrying a Doji samurai, giving the Crane as a whole every reason to support her reign.

The fall of the Gozoku diminished the Crane Clan's influence on Imperial politics for over a generation, but the clan's status as arbiters of style and art remained unaffected. Their wealth was also largely untouched, since Yugozohime only stripped them of a few token holdings. Thus, within a few decades the Crane leaders rebuilt the clan's political strength and status.

The Crane Clan and the Clan War Era

When the Scorpion Clan Coup failed in the year 1123, the new Emperor Hantei XXXIX disbanded the Scorpion Clan and forced the Clan Champion's widow, Bayushi Kachiko, to marry him. The Crane found this highly inconvenient; not only did it break the 1100-year tradition of the Emperor marrying a Crane, but it left in power a woman who had every reason to hate their clan. Kachiko had once been the lover of Crane Champion Doji Hoturi, and Hoturi unknowingly killed their son Dairu in the battle to reclaim the capital from the Scorpion. Kachiko was determined to have vengeance on the Hantei, the Empire, and especially Hoturi and the Crane. Her plotting embroiled the Empire in the conflict known as the Clan Wars.

The Crane found themselves beset by the Lion on the north and the Crab to the south, but worse was yet to come. Kachiko kidnapped Doji Hoturi and used a dire artifact known as the Egg of Pan Ku to create an evil duplicate of him. The False Hoturi shamed the Crane in court with lewd and bizarre actions, then gathered an army of madmen and Tainted creatures and went on a violent rampage through the Crane lands. The apparent treachery and madness of their own leader was almost enough to destroy the Crane Clan even without the military efforts of the Crab and Lion. The clan's remaining leaders—Doji Kuwanan, Hoturi's younger brother, and Daidoji Uji, the Daidoji family daimyo—managed to slow down the False Hoturi's forces and keep the clan from total destruction, but they fought without any real hope, driven only by duty. Finally the real Hoturi was rescued and returned, arriving just as the False Hoturi seemed about to break the clan's last defenses. The Crane rallied and faced the False Hoturi on the fields outside the Asahina Temples, and there they were victorious at last. Hoturi killed his malefic doppelganger in single combat, proving his true identity before the clan's armies.

The rest of the Empire had fared little better than the Crane. Soon after the defeat of the False Hoturi, the Emperor was revealed to be possessed by Fu Leng. Shinsei's descendent called Hoturi to serve as the Crane Clan Thunder, and the lord of the Crane died fighting the Dark Kami. In his final moments Kachiko forgave him for the death of their son, and he died at peace, ascending to Yomi.

The Lying Darkness and the Crane Civil War

In the aftermath of Fu Leng's death, the Lion Thunder Toturi was crowned Emperor and a new dynasty began. The initial years of Toturi's reign were good for the Crane, as he restored their borders to their pre-Clan War state and appointed a Crane as Imperial Advisor. However, a few years later the kidnapping of the Emperor ushered in a new conflict known as the War Against the Darkness.

This strange and confusing struggle against the minions of the Lying Darkness saw many clans embroiled in conflicts both internal and external. The Crane Clan encountered one of the worst of these conflicts when the Doji and Daidoji families were manipulated into a civil war, pitting Clan Champion Doji Kuwanan against family daimyo Daidoji Uji. This was an unprecedented event in the clan's history and might well have torn it wholly asunder, but finally the truth emerged and both families realized they had been deceived. As the true nature of the Darkness' threat to Rokugan became clear, the Crane armies joined the other clans in the march to Volturnum where the Shadow was finally defeated. Doji Kuwanan died at Volturnum, mere days before his son and heir Kurohito was born.

The Four Winds Era

In the year 1158 Emperor Toturi died at the hands of a Shadowlands demon, bringing on a power struggle between his four children. The Crane Clan reacted in classic fashion by attempting to insert a Crane advisor into the household of each possible heir. This ensured they would maintain their influence in court no matter who prevailed, and indeed when Toturi's youngest son Naseru became Toturi III, a Crane was once again appointed Imperial Advisor—in this case, Doji Tanitsu.

Aside from the dynastic struggle, however, this era saw both great victories and significant losses for the Crane. Crane Clan Champion Doji Kurohito broke the curse on Chukandomo, a sword forged a thousand years before by Doji Yasurugi to be a gift to the Lion Clan. The sword had been lost to the sea before it could be presented, and for centuries its hatred and frustration had contributed to the ongoing bitterness and blood-feud between the two clans. Kurohito purified Chukandomo and presented it to the Lion, ushering in an era of peaceful relations between the two clans... although whether such friendship could endure for future generations remained to be seen.

At the same time, however, the Crane became embroiled in the Second Yasuki War with the Crab Clan. The Yasuki daimyo died without heir, and based on official documents a Crane, Daidoji Hachi, was named as the new daimyo of the Yasuki family. The Crab refused to accept the loss of their vital merchant family to the Crane, and war soon erupted. The conflict lasted several bloody years before Hachi—now calling himself Yasuki Hachi—forged a truce by swearing joint fealty to the Crab and Crane Champions. While unorthodox, this deal was enough to end the violence for a time, and a treaty was hammered out that shared control of the Yasuki lands between the two clans.

The Crane Clan in Modern Times

Like all the Great Clans, the Crane encountered an era of chaos and disruption in the latter years of the twelfth century, as the short-lived Toturi Dynasty collapsed amid war and spiritual crises. The rise of the new Gozoku conspiracy proved especially devastating when it was revealed that one of its chief leaders was Doji Akiko, the wife of Crane Clan Champion Doji Kurohito. Like many Crane, Kurohito was a passionate man and had come to genuinely love his wife; the revelation of her treason was devastating. He executed her immediately and then committed seppuku to cleanse his clan of its shame. Kurohito's teenage daughter Doji Domotai became the new Champion, just in time to confront multiple addition crises: the Race for the Throne, a strange and difficult war with the Dragon Clan, and the Third Yasuki War with the Crab.

Yasuki Hachi died a hero's death alongside Emperor Toturi III, but barely a year later the Crab discovered information that he was not, after all, the true heir of the Yasuki lands. The Crab demanded the full return of those lands, but Domotai refused, feeling the Crab accusations had insulted her father Kurohito's honor. In the manner of many previous wars, the Crane endured battlefield defeats until their political and economic power forced the Crab to concede; however, in the meantime Domotai learned Toturi

III had intended the Yasuki family be returned wholly to the Crab. As part of the peace treaty she forced the highest-status Crab Yasuki to take a Crane wife, then gave him the Yasuki lands as a dowry. The settlement was a fragile one, but the subsequent rise of new external threats such as the War of Dark Fire allowed it to hold for the time being.

The rise of the Iweko Dynasty left the Crane in an uncertain position facing the future. Although their mastery of artistry and politics remained impressive, their economic power was being undermined by the Mantis and they no longer held the stranglehold on Imperial favor which had protected them for so long. It remained to be seen how they would deal with this new age.

The Asahina Family Mon

The symbol of the Asahina family is the head and outspread wings of a crane, holding a peach blossom in its beak. In Rokugan a peach blossom symbolizes both "change" and "peace," and changing the world by bringing peace is the Asahina ideal. Peach wood is also considered to be the most suitable for making talismans, fetishes, and nemuranai, making the blossom doubly appropriate.

Families of the Crane Clan

"Beauty and precision, form and function in all things.

-Creed of the Crane Clan

The Crane are unusual in that all four of their families can trace their lineage directly back to the clan's founding Kami, Lady Doji. In fact, the Doji, Kakita, and Daidoji are all directly descended from the children of Doji and Kakita at the dawn of the Empire. Although the Asahina cannot make such a claim, they are still directly related to the original bloodline through Doji Kiriko. This close connection may help to account for the generally good relations between the families and the rarity of serious disagreements between them—the Crane Civil War created by the machinations of the Lying Darkness was a bizarre aberration which the clan prefers to pretend never happened.

The Asahina Family

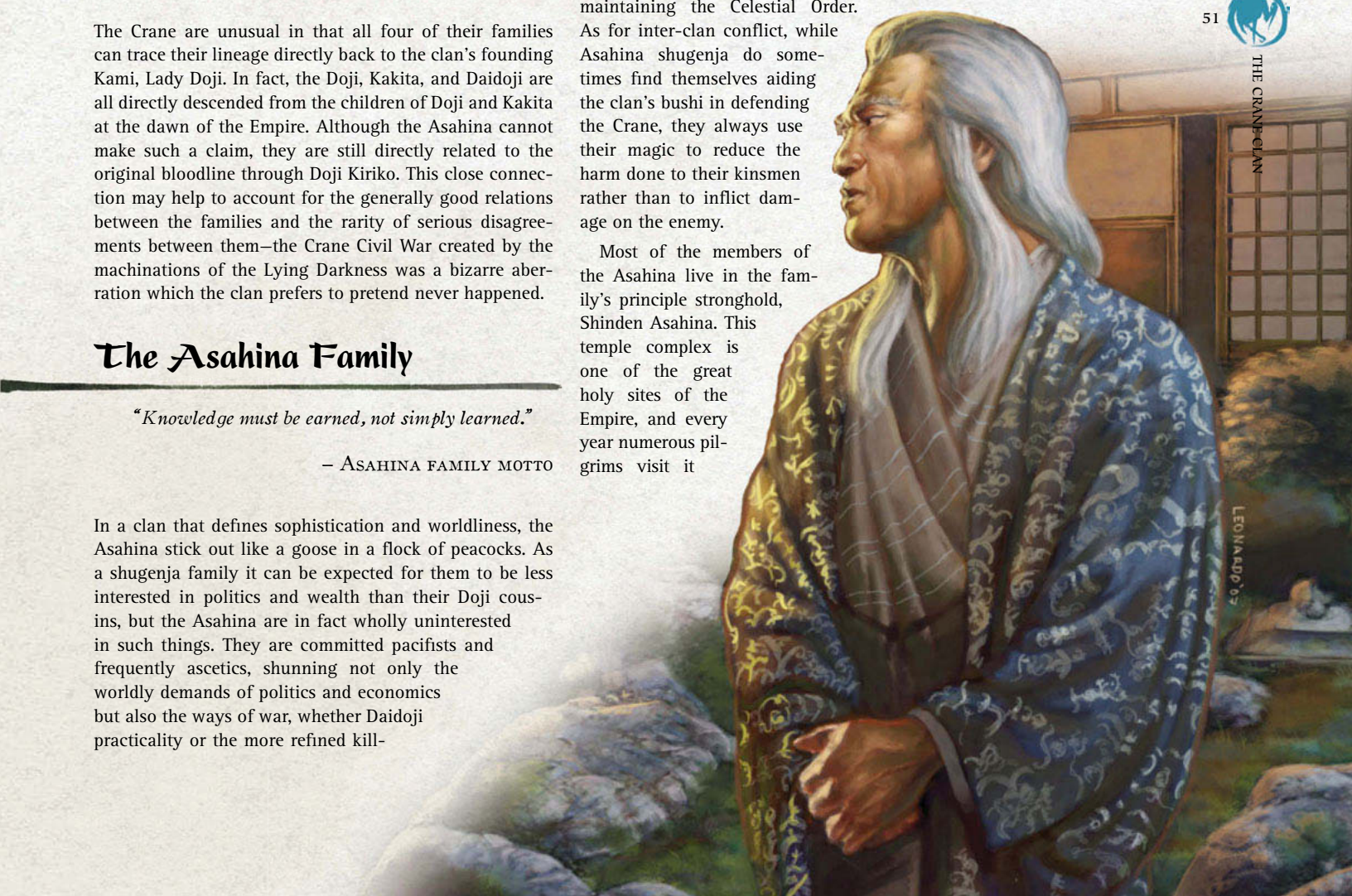
"Knowledge must be earned, not simply learned."

– Asahina family motto

In a clan that defines sophistication and worldliness, the Asahina stick out like a goose in a flock of peacocks. As a shugenja family it can be expected for them to be less interested in politics and wealth than their Doji cousins, but the Asahina are in fact wholly uninterested in such things. They are committed pacifists and frequently ascetics, shunning not only the worldly demands of politics and economics but also the ways of war, whether Daidoji practicality or the more refined killing arts of the Kakita. What they do share with the rest of the clan is a passion for a life well-lived, an appreciation of civilization and its structures of life, and a deep appreciation for the power of art.

As a result of their founder's experiences (described in the history section earlier in this chapter), the Asahina are dedicated pacifists. They do not disparage the other families for their militant ways, but they themselves refuse to kill and will not train anyone who has. An occasional exception to this is creatures of the Shadowlands, but even in this case the Asahina can be divided, and those who uphold their founder's ideals most strictly do not harm any living creature. Those who do fight the forces of Jigoku argue that since such entities do not belong in Ningen-do, destroying them is simply maintaining the Celestial Order. As for inter-clan conflict, while Asahina shugenja do sometimes find themselves aiding the clan's bushi in defending the Crane, they always use their magic to reduce the harm done to their kinsmen rather than to inflict damage on the enemy.

Most of the members of the Asahina live in the family's principle stronghold, Shinden Asahina. This temple complex is one of the great holy sites of the Empire, and every year numerous pilgrims visit it



The Daidoji Harriers

The Daidoji family's scouts have long employed traps, ambush, and stealthy maneuver to defeat numerically superior foes such as the Lion. They excuse such tactics on the grounds that their own honor is less important than the safety of the Crane Clan. However, during some eras of Imperial history this willingness to sacrifice honor for victory has spun out of control.

The Daidoji Harriers were a tiny elite force of saboteurs, assassins, and ambushers, trained in methods not dissimilar to those of the Scorpion Clan's shinobi—and indeed, some of their tactics may have contributed to the prevalence of the "ninja myth" throughout Rokugan. Exactly when the Harriers were split off from the more conventional and numerous forces of the Daidoji scouts is uncertain, for the group was extremely secretive and hid most of its activities from the rest of the Crane Clan and even from most of the Daidoji family. Over the years, the Harriers employed more and more ruthless and dishonorable methods, eventually using poison and even gaijin pepper (gunpowder) as weapons against their foes. They also became increasingly disconnected from the rest of the Crane Clan, often regarding their more honorable cousins as well-meaning fools who were best kept sheltered from what the Harriers did in their name.

In the late twelfth century the Harriers' use of gunpowder came to the attention of the Dragon Clan, which launched a war against the Crane—the so-called War of Silk and Steel—in order to force the Crane to confront the dishonor within their own ranks. As a result of the war, Crane Champion Doji Domotai learned of the Harriers and their methods and ordered them completely disbanded, ending their stain on the Crane Clan's honor. It is not known whether any Harriers survived her command, though their headquarters was indubitably destroyed.

to offer their devotions and to meditate in the deep peace to be found there. The walls of the temple are heavily decorated with paintings and carvings, each one illustrating the wisdom of the Tao or the stories of the Crane Clan. Much of the artwork in Shinden Asahina was done by the Asahina themselves, for they regard the creation of art as an act which brings grace and goodness to the world.

To most of Rokugan, the greatest artworks of the Asahina are their magical items, especially their *tsangusuri* (fetishes). These one-use talismans are highly sought for their usefulness, and Doji courtiers have made many friends for the clan by selectively gifting them to the right people. To the Asahina, however, tsangusuri are just another way of bringing beauty and peace to Rokugan.

The Daidoji Family

"The spear waits not for its master, but rushes forth to guard the way."

– Daidoji family motto

The Daidoji are sometimes referred to as the warrior family of the Crane, but they do not agree with this title. After all, in any Crane war the courtiers of the Doji are as active as the bushi of the Daidoji. They keep such opinions to themselves, since it is perfectly fine with them if the enemies of the Crane see only half the clan's resources as a threat. Of course, Daidoji silence is nothing to remark on, for the family does not speak much in public about anything. The silent, ever-alert yojimbo; the aloof merchant patron half-listening to his agents haggle over market goods; the concealed unit of skirmishers waiting to break the enemy's flank; these are the aspects of the Daidoji outsiders recall. They are the quiet, steely shadows of the Doji, the silent protectors who make sure the rest of the clan remains safe, secure, and prosperous. The Daidoji are very proud of this role, given to them by Lady Doji herself when Hayaku returned his siblings' sword. At gempukku every Daidoji warrior tattoos the family mon on his wrists, symbolizing his selfless devotion to family and clan.

The Daidoji always take their ancestor's legacy of bravery, determination, and faithfulness to heart. Their bushi train extensively in war, always seeking clever tactics and methods to make up for the limited size of their armies. The territory surrounding Crane fortresses and palaces is

The Daidoji Family Mon

The Daidoji symbol is a flying crane clutching a spear in its feet, a snake wrapped around the spear. A snake can lie in the grass for hours before it judges the time is right to strike. A spear rushes ahead of the warrior who wields it, as if eager to join the battle. The two together sum up the Daidoji approach to conflict.

mapped with obsessive care, giving Daidoji commanders accurate information for any campaign. Moreover, this devotion can extend to doing necessary but potentially dishonorable acts. Although the Daidoji prize honor as much as any other Crane, they are willing to sacrifice their own honor for the good of the clan.

Daidoji practicality is very noticeable in the arena of commerce. While most samurai consider money and trade to be beneath their notice, the Daidoji regard wealth as one of the most important defenses of their clan, and they are dedicated to gathering as much of it as they can. For the most part Daidoji merchant patrons operate in a perfectly lawful fashion, making their profits from the vast agricultural and marine resources of the clan as well as its multiple well-placed harbors. But there are also those the Daidoji refer to as "swamp dwellers," those merchants who operate just outside of the law. These samurai employ a mixture of shrewd judgment, legitimate business covers, and absolute faith in the ability of the Doji courtiers to cover up any lingering unpleasantness. The lords of the Daidoji prefer not to rely on such methods too often—that would make them predictable—but they know if a shipment of goods needs to be smuggled, appropriated, waylaid, mislaid, or destroyed, they have the people in place to do the deed.

This willingness to do what is necessary also shows up in warfare. The Daidoji would never assassinate a courtier—that's what the Kakita are for—but once war has been declared they regard every enemy officer and every supply convoy or messenger as a legitimate target, no matter where they might be. More than one enemy army has lost a key officer to an ambush before he ever arrived to assume command. This and similar tactics can lead to recriminations in the courts, but the Doji are always there to defend the good name of their kinsmen.

The Doji Family

"Be more concerned with good actions than great ones."

– Doji family motto

The Doji are the elegant face of the Crane. Affable and gracious, they are always willing to help their friends with a favor or two, and it is a rare lord in Rokugan who does not count a Doji courtier among his friends and allies. They are the Empire's taste-makers, its arbiters of art and fashion and style, and they make it their business to present to their friends and rivals alike the best the Empire's culture possesses. Conversations with the Doji are replete with references to literature both classic and modern. Their festivals offer the very best of artistic and popular entertainments. Their dwellings combine elegant architecture with the finest landscape gardening. One cannot stand in the presence of a Doji without being reminded they are the arbiters and masters of a highly cultured civilization.

The Doji family was founded by Lady Doji herself at the very beginning of the Empire. She was Emperor Hantei's closest advisor and established most of the Empire's political and cultural institutions. She is credited with personally creating many arts, such as ikebana and the tea ceremony, but her greatest creation was the art of Imperial politics. The modern Empire is essentially a cluster of semi-independent kingdoms held together by a common culture and by reverence for the Emperor; that it has survived so long and against so many threats speaks volumes about the quality of Doji's work.

The Doji Family Mon

The Doji family's symbol shows the head of a crane holding a snowflake in its beak. Lady Doji met Shinsei in a snowfall, and he taught her the importance of living in the moment. Her family's mon records this with the snowflake, representing a moment of perfect beauty that can never be repeated.

The first Hantei married a Doji woman, and all but one of the succeeding Hantei emperors followed his example. This was one of the sources of the Doji family's power in the courts, but it was not the only one by any means. Doji courtiers excel in the delicate manipulations of power, prestige, and resources that make politics work in Rokugan. It is a Doji who most often stands beside the throne as Imperial Advisor, and Doji courtiers can be found at all levels of the Imperial bureaucracy, making sure the system Lady Doji created for the Hantei continues to function.

The Doji appreciation of art dates back to an encounter between Lady Doji and the prophet Shinsei, a meeting in which he taught the Kami the importance of living life to its fullest and appreciating the beauty that could be found everywhere, even in a simple snowflake. The followers Doji attracted were those who shared her vision of a life filled with beauty, a life

The Kakita Family Mon

The Kakita symbol is a crane with an outstretched wing curled around a katana. Iaijutsu was the first art Kakita mastered and the first one taught at his dojo. His family places a katana in their mon to show their readiness to defend the clan with steel if need be.

dedicated to the glimpses of transcendence that beauty could bring. In the modern Empire the Doji try to promote the arts that celebrate the beauty of the world and make them a part of everyday life. Likewise, a true child of the Doji is never satisfied with the half-done, the shoddy, or the make-do—life is too short for such things. Life should be lived intensely, to the fullest moment by moment, because the next moment might be your last. Watching a sunrise, creating a piece of calligraphy, drinking from a road-side well: everything is to be fully appreciated for the beauty it possesses.

This philosophy is especially useful to the courtiers of the Doji because court can be a very dangerous place. The lands of the Crane are fertile and rich, and many in court envy both the wealth of the Crane and their high status in the Empire. To be sure, they have the Daidoji to serve as yojimbo and the Kakita to act as champions in duels, but physical hazards are the least of threats. One misspoken word could end a career or bring disaster to the clan. Knowing nothing can be taken away from someone who can find beauty everywhere supports the Doji in the dangerous halls they must walk.

The Kakita Family

"For the coward there is no life. For the hero there is no death."

– Kakita family motto

If the Lion brag about the warrior prowess of the Matsu, and the Phoenix acclaim the power of the Isawa shugenja, the Crane celebrate above all the skill of the Kakita artisans. No other family in Rokugan can match them for the intensity of their devotion, the breadth of their mastery, or the long history of their tradition. The first such artisan was Kakita himself, who was a master of both the sword and of music, the man who created the dueling form known as iaijutsu and who wrote *The Sword*, one of Rokugan's founding documents. Kakita studied many arts over his lifetime, and when he founded the Kakita Academy to teach his ways of swordsmanship he also included the study of art in the curriculum. In this way the twin institutions of the Kakita Dueling School and the Kakita Artisan Academy were born.

Since those early years Kakita's family has carried on his legacy in glorious fashion. The masters of the Kakita Academy are acknowledged by all to be the greatest practitioners of their arts. Other clans produce talented artisans, it is true, but none of them are accounted as great by the rest of the Empire until their work is praised by a Kakita Master. There is no other standard of excellence in the arts.

Most members of the Kakita family become artisans in one form or another, attending either the Dueling School or the Artisan Academy. Both paths are highly respected, though the Dueling School is considered just a bit more glorious—it was, after all, Kakita's first art. On the other hand, a bad duelist brings shame to his family while a good ikebana artist is a source of pride, so wise parents try not to force their child into an unsuitable art. Once they begin their study, however, Kakita children are expected to fully commit themselves to their art and develop themselves as far as they can. Failures due to lack of talent can be forgiven, since Heaven does not gift all students equally, but failure due to lack of effort is inexcusable. Kakita sensei drill their students mercilessly, emphasizing the basics so their students then move on to more complex techniques with confidence.

The Kakita believe in excellence to the point of perfection, and expect all in their family to pursue it. For every swordsman who stands in an icy cold winter stream to practice his cutting techniques, there is a painter who hikes out into the midst of a forest after a storm to study the play of light and dark created by snowfall on pine trees. The perfect cut can be found in all arts, and every Kakita artisan knows it is his duty to seek it.

Heroes of the Crane Clan

The clan of Lady Doji has produced many great samurai over its long history, starting with Kakita himself. The following section describes a few of the more notable individuals who had a lasting impact on their clan or the Empire.

Doji Raigu

Clan Champion and Gozoku Conspirator

Doji Raigu was a potent and subtle courtier, a duelist of truly terrifying skill, and a samurai who put the welfare of the Empire above all else. He was Champion of the Crane and also won the office of Emerald Champion against a field of many opponents, holding it until his death. Historians of the Empire would cite him as a shining example of all a Crane could be... had he not also been one of the leaders of the Gozoku Alliance. In fact, Raigu was in many ways the strong arm of the three men who led the Gozoku conspiracy, using the diplomatic resources of the Crane and the military might of the Emerald Champion to stymie opponents of the Gozoku's rule.

Raigu's enemies and the Imperial histories call him a villain, a man without honor, but the truth is somewhat more complex. Though his actions technically made him a rebel to the Emperor, Raigu was a passionate believer in the ideals of Imperial rule. In his view, he was forced into action by an Emperor whose personal deficiencies threatened the Throne far more than the Gozoku did. If Rokugan was to continue to thrive, the Gozoku had to take action, or so he believed.

In person Raigu was by all accounts a cool man who rarely smiled and almost never laughed. While he was never friendly he was always polite, and even his political opponents could be sure of a cordial reception at the Winter Courts he hosted. Most of them found this cool charm far more unnerving that open hostility, but for him it was not a tactic (or at least not solely a tactic). Courtesy was a principle of Bushido, and as the Crane Clan Champion he felt it was incumbent upon him to be a living example of honor. As lord of the Crane Raigu was demanding and uncompromising without being cruel. His vassals did not complain, since it was obvious to all he was simply holding them to the same high standards he applied to himself.

Imperial historical records say Doji Raigu was executed by order of Empress Yugozohime, and official Crane histories—when they mention him at all—agree with this. The Doji family, however, maintains the private belief he was granted seppuku by the Empress to clear his family of his shame. Whether this is true or not, the Crane still remember Raigu as a cautionary tale of how a great man may nonetheless fall into grievous error.

Doji Raigu, Clan Champion and Gozoku Conspirator

Air: 5 Earth: 3 Fire: 5 Water: 3 Void: 4
Willpower: 4 Perception: 5

Honor: 8.3 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 9.0*

School: Kakita Bushi 5 / Emerald Champion Path

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 3, Battle 3, Calligraphy (Cipher, High Rokugani) 3, Courtier (Manipulation, Rhetoric) 8, Defense 5, Etiquette (Courtesy, Bureaucracy) 7, Games: Go 5, Games: Letters 4, Iaijutsu (Focus, Assessment) 8, Investigation: 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: History 3, Lore: Law 6, Perform: Storytelling 2, Sincerity 6, Tea Ceremony 4

Kata: Striking As Void, Striking As Fire, Breath of Wind Style, Strength of Purity Style

Advantages: Allies (Shiba Gaijushiko 4/4, Bayushi Atsuki 4/4), Balance, Forbidden Knowledge (Gozoku), Inheritance (Shukujo), Precise Memory, Social Position (Crane Clan Champion, Emerald Champion)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Gozoku), Dark Fate

Kakita Wayozu

Heroic Artistan

Kakita Wayozu was a brilliant artisan from the sixth century. She became the first woman to serve as the head sensei of the Kakita Artisan Academy, an honor she did

not win easily. Though she was a brilliant painter and calligrapher, at the time the Academy was quite traditionalist in its attitudes and many of the resident Masters doubted a woman could bear such responsibilities. Wayozu's supporters pointed out that Kiyamori, the sister of Kakita, had helped found the Academy and had been headmistress of it in all but name. The skeptics replied Kiyamori lived in the brilliant age of the first Hantei and no modern woman could be expected to equal her.

Wayozu was known for her gentle even-tempered personality, but this persistent doubt of her abilities nettled her and she strove actively for the appointment, leading to repeated clashes with the more hidebound of the Masters. The struggle went on for months; finally the Kakita daimyo stepped in personally and simply declared her the Master Sensei of the Academy. He told the doubting Masters, "The day will come when you will remember your words and burn with shame."

Wayozu did her best to set aside former clashes and smooth over the ruffled feelings the controversy had created, and soon brought most of the Masters around to her view. She made a point of studying all the arts of the Academy, even iaijutsu. She guided the brilliant students, nurtured the average ones, and quietly found other vocations for the lackluster. Some began to call her a second Kiyamori and predict she would be remembered for the great wisdom she displayed as Master Sensei. Sadly, they were wrong—though her actions would make her remembered forever.

In the course of a forgotten war with obscure origins, a large Crab raiding force actually managed to breach the Seikitsu Mountains and threaten the Kakita Academy. The Daidoji leadership scrambled to send reinforcements, but it appeared the Academy would be taken and burned long before they arrived. Wayozu refused to give up or even to consider the destruction of the school and all of the precious artworks it contained. She sent out the Academy's iaijutsu students to fight the invading army, using that to win a small delay and put her final plan into action.

Gathering the most talented of the artisans together, using an inner gift no one dreamed she had possessed, Wayozu led then in creating a fictional world and then releasing their own souls into it to make it real. Although the Kakita Masters had been able to achieve such deeds before on a limited scale, nothing of this scope had ever been done or even attempted. Artisans and invaders alike vanished instantly, leaving behind only a finely-made book with text no one can read and illustrations showing the Crab army at war. To this day no one has been able to duplicate her feat, not even the most supremely talented Masters, and even the most learned of shugenja have only a dim idea of how she managed it at all. The Kakita family is content just to name her as one of their most distinguished ancestors, a woman whose art was quite literally her life.

Kakita Wayozu, Heroic Artisan

Air: 6 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 5
Intelligence: 5 Perception: 6

Honor: 5.5 *Status: 6.0* *Glory: 8.5*

School/Rank: Kakita Artisan 5, Master Artist 3

Skills: Acting (Clan, Gender, Profession) 5, Artisan: Bonsai 4, Artisan: Gardening 4, Artisan: Ikebana 4, Artisan: Origami 4, Artisan: Painting 9, Artisan: Poetry 4, Artisan: Sculpture 4, Calligraphy 9, Courtier (Manipulation) 3, Etiquette (Courtesy) 3, Games: Sadane 2, Iaijutsu 6, Perform: Biwa 5, Perform: Dance 4, Perform: Drums 2, Perform: Flute 5, Perform: Oratory 5, Perform: Puppeteer 4, Perform: Samisen 4, Perform: Song 4, Perform: Storytelling 4

Advantages: Balance, Great Destiny, Great Potential (Painting), Inner Gift, Prodigy, Social Position (Master Sensei of the Kakita Artisan Academy) Disadvantages: Driven (become Master Sensei of the Kakita Artisan Academy)

Daidoji Masashigi

Hero of the Landbridge

Daidoji Masashigi is celebrated as a hero by two clans, for he is the Crane daimyo who charged into battle to help the Crab hold back a Shadowlands attack. The Daidoji who knew him in life found this ironic, as he was known to hate the Crab with a passion—a fact the courtiers of the Doji made certain to obscure after his heroic death.

During the all too brief years of his adult life, Daidoji Masashigi was by all accounts a handsome young man with a good temperament and formidable martial skills. Those who met him were often struck by how talkative he was compared to the other Daidoji around him. More careful observers, however, noticed his talk was always about his casual interests—hawking, pretty women, and puppet theater. He resolutely avoided any discussion of serious matters, especially regarding the Crane Clan's military or economic status.

The rest of the Daidoji family viewed Masashigi as an excellent samurai but at best an adequate daimyo. His courage and skill at arms was unquestionable, but his advisors were continually frustrated by the slow pace of his decision making. Time and again they would present a plan for his approval, a plan ready to be set into motion, only to have him defer the matter for a week or more. Masashigi knew of his vassals' frustration and discounted it; he had become daimyo at an early age and feared it was all too possible for his inexperience to hurt the clan he had sworn to protect. He believed it was better to delay a matter until he had carefully considered it than to efficiently leap into an error.

But on the fateful day of the Battle of the Landbridge, for the first time in his career as a daimyo Masashigi did not delay. Seeing the Crab outpost being overwhelmed, he instantly recognized the potential consequences for the

Crane and for the Empire as a whole. Setting aside his personal feelings he charged into the fray... leading himself and his followers into legend.

Daidoji Masashigi, Hero of the Landbridge

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 2
Reflexes: 4			Perception: 4	
Honor: 6.5		*Status: 7.0*		*Glory: 7.2*

School/Rank: Daidoji Iron Warrior 3

Skills: Animal Handling (Falcons) 3, Athletics 2, Battle 5, Commerce 1, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Hunting (Falconry) 3, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation (Notice) 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 5, Sincerity 3, Spears 5

Advantages: Great Destiny, Social Position (Daidoji Family Daimyo), Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Fascination (Falconry)

The other great love of her life was the playwright Kakita Kosho, who she met a few years after her husband's death. He was already married, but the two carried on an affair via correspondence for years. This was completely overlooked by even the most insightful of court gossips, chiefly due to the fact that every time they were seen together in public they were arguing about issues in the theater world.

The best word to describe Barahime is probably 'intense'; she had a mind as sharp as a Kakita blade and was never afraid to use it. While she was never personally powerful, she had a long list of influential fans most of whom were quite willing to do almost anything to gain her favor. Despite her reputation, her critiques were not always harsh—Barahime genuinely loved art, and loved beauty and success in art. However, to inferior art she was merciless regardless of the artist's prestige or influence. To Barahime the matter was obvious: an artist who desired critique desired to improve, and she did her best to facilitate that.

Doji Barahime

Legendary Critic

Doji Barahime was a courtier and an art critic in the early tenth century, and early on in her career it became clear her talent as a critic far outstripped her skills as a courtier. In another clan this might have gotten her assigned to some backwater court where she could do no harm, but the Crane take art criticism as seriously as they do art itself. Barahime's lord assigned her duties that left her with plenty of time to enjoy, and write about, the Rokugani art world.

Barahime could be savage in her critiques, but she was also witty and insightful. Her essays and pillow books were read and discussed all over Rokugan, and lords vied with each other to secure her as a guest for their Winter Courts. She turned this to her own lord's advantage as much as possible, but otherwise ignored her fame: her focus was always on the art.

Barahime's husband died soon after their marriage, the tragic victim of a fugu-fish poisoning that some whispered was self-inflicted—for Barahime was rumored to be difficult to live with. However, she was capable of great love. When her sister developed complications while pregnant with her sixth child Barahime was obliged to take in one of the other five children, a girl then named Yoritoko, to help lessen the strain. By the time autumn arrived she and the girl had bonded; Barahime neglected to send her niece back, and her sister neglected to object. The girl grew up to become the noted poet Doji Yuuki, and her descendants honor Barahime to this day.

Doji Barahime, Legendary Art Critic

Air: 2 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 3

Awareness: 4 Willpower:4 Intelligence: 5 Perception: 4

Honor: 6.5 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 6.4*

School: Doji Courtier 2

Skills: Artisan: Prose Literature 5, Artisan: Poetry 2, Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 4, Etiquette (Courtesy, Conversation) 5, Games: Letters 3, Games: Sadane 3, Lore: Literature 4,Lore: Poetry 2, Lore: Rokugani Aesthetics 2, Lore: Theater 3, Perform: Storytelling 2, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 2

Advantages: Allies (many), Clear Thinker, Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Contrary, Dependent (niece, Doji Yoritoko), True Love (Kakita Kosho)

Kakita Rensei

The Iron Swordmaster

Kakita Rensei is known throughout Rokugan as one of the greatest swordmasters of the Kakita family. This causes the family some slight amount of embarrassment, because Rensei was not a student of the Kakita Academy.

Rensei's father, a minor tenth-century sensei in the Kakita Dueling Academy, began drilling his son in the Kakita style of swordsmanship at a young age and was dreadfully disappointed by the boy's poor grasp of technique. Reasoning that a poor duelist could still be a good soldier, he sent his son to train with the Iron Warriors of the Daidoji. To his family's complete surprise, Rensei not only took to the Daidoji style but quickly blossomed into a swordsman of deadly skill.

After his gempukku Rensei undertook a *musha shugyo* (warrior's pilgrimage), wandering the Empire seeking challenges and honing his skills. As his fame as a warrior and duelist grew, the Kakita Academy made several attempts to recruit him as a sensei, but Rensei always refused. Though he eventually did spend some time training with the elite Kenshinzen, he treated it as just another stop on his journey of learning. Indeed, at one point one of his fellow Kenshinzen became angry at him and demanded to know how he could show so little respect for the school founded by Kakita's son. Rensei replied mildly that the Daidoji school had also been founded by a son of Kakita, and went on his way.

This sort of answer was characteristic of the man. Rensei was always a soft-spoken, even-tempered samurai and never bragged about his skills. He did, however, seek to challenge any skilled duelist he met. Rensei believed such duels were the only true way to pursue his own growth as a swordmaster.

Rensei's death is something of a mystery. After the Lion attacked and took Shiro no Yogin (the infamous Night of Falling Stars, described on page 243 of *Emerald Empire*), Rensei set off for the Lion lands, apparently intending to challenge the Lion Champion to a duel. Nothing further was heard from him; the Lion Champion disappeared three months later, but no one knew if this was due to a duel or even if such a duel occurred.

Centuries later at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Kakita Rensei was one of many heroic spirits who came through the gate to help defend the Empire. He never spoke of the circumstances of his previous death, and the few who nerved themselves to ask received no answer. Rensai lived out his second life in the mortal realm quietly and died soon after the coronation of Toturi III.

Kakita Rensei, the Iron Swordmaster

Air: 5 Earth: 4 Fire: 6 Water: 5 Void: 5

Reflexes: 6 Agility: 8

Honor: 7.6 *Status: 4.0* *Glory: 9.5*

School/Rank: Daidoji Iron Warrior 5, Kenshinzen 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 5, Courtier 3, Defense 6, Etiquette 4, Iaijutsu (Assessment, Focus) 9, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Bushido 4, Lore: Heraldry 4, Meditation 5, Poetry 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 5, Spears (Yari) 3

Kata: Striking As Fire, Breath of Wind Style

Advantages: Bishamon's Blessing, Sacred Weapon (Kakita Blade), Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Idealistic

Kakita Ryoku

Author and Imperial Advisor

Kakita Ryoku was one of the most powerful courtiers of her time, serving as Imperial Advisor to Emperor Hantei XXXVIII in the early part of his reign and serving as Mistress of Ceremonies for many of his Winter Courts. Born into a noble family of Kakita artisans, Ryoku was first sent to the Kakita Artisan Academy to study storytelling. However, her sensei soon noticed that while her skill in the arts was not inconsiderable, her skill at manipulating her classmates far outstripped it. Her parents were consulted and after some discussion agreed to send Ryoku to the Doji to study the ways of court.

At first Ryoku was upset by the change, for she loved the arts and had greatly enjoyed her life at the Academy. However, as her training went on she realized court life was in fact a vast collage of stories that wove together into one greater story... and as a skilled courtier she could influence the story's outcome. Armed with this new perspective she embraced her studies to the fullest, determined to acquire the skills she needed.

After her gempukku Ryoku moved from one major court to another, always bringing honor and advantage to the Crane. She soon became a regular attendee at the Imperial Winter Court, and it was at one such that Ryoku

engineered what was perhaps her greatest political triumph: marrying one of her younger sisters to Emperor Hantei XXXVII. As the sister of the Empress and aunt to the next Emperor, her political future was assured. It was no great surprise when many years later her nephew, Emperor Hantei XXXVIII, chose her to hold the office of Imperial Advisor.

By then Ryoku was an old woman, but she had aged well. Her skin was still smooth and wrinkle-free, her eyes were still sharp and clear-sighted, her movements still graceful. She was gracious and dignified under all circumstances and did her best to cultivate those traits in the people around her. There is no doubt that the harmonious success of the Emperor's early reign owed much to her. (After her eventual retirement the office of Advisor went to Bayushi Kachiko, which doubtless contributed to the more chaotic nature of the Emperor's later reign.)

Ryoku is widely remembered in modern Rokugan for her novel *Winter*, which collected years of incidents from her court experiences. The text is full of stories of the famous romances of the day, and many Rokugani enjoy reading it simply as a romance pillow-book. However, it also contains accounts of the courtly manipulations Ryoku witnessed or took part in, and many modern courtiers study it as a manual of political strategy.

Kakita Ryoku, Author and Imperial Advisor

Air: 5	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 4
Awareness: 6		Intelligence: 5		
Honor: 7.6		*Status: 7.0*		*Glory: 8.5*

School/Rank: Kakita Artisan 1/Doji Courtier 4

Skills: Artisan: Ikebana 3, Artisan: Poetry 3, Calligraphy 4, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation, Courtesy) 6, Games: Letters 2, Games: Sadane 3, Investigation (Interrogation) 2, Lore: Theology 3, Perform: Storytelling 5, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 3

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty, Multiple Schools, Social Position (Imperial Advisor), Voice

Doji Hoturi

Clan Champion, the Second Crane Thunder

If Doji Hoturi's life had to be summed up in one word, 'dramatic' might be suitable. His mother died under tragic circumstances when he was a child. His cold and demanding father, Doji Satsume, was too busy with the twin demands of being the Emerald Champion and the Crane Clan Champion to bother with his sons' upbringing. As a result Hoturi's strongest childhood influence was his uncle, the famed iaijutsu master and womanizer Kakita Toshimoko. Perhaps that was why as a young man he spent an entire Imperial Winter Court intriguing with (and against) the beautiful Shosuro Kachiko, the brilliant and manipulative daughter of the Shosuro daimyo. The winter ended with the two of them falling deeply in love, a love that was not seriously impeded by Kachiko's marriage to Bayushi Shoju, the Scorpion Clan Champion.

A few years later Kachiko became pregnant with Hoturi's child. She cut off all contact with him, officially declaring the child to be Shoju's son. Hoturi did not know the truth and believed Kachiko had forsaken him. Angry and heartbroken, he eventually married as well, to a beautiful woman named Doji Ameiko—actually a foxwife who was smitten with the handsome Crane. By then he was serving as Doji Family Daimyo, although his father Doji Satsume remained Clan Champion. Hoturi had matured into an elegant, witty, and courteous man, and he enjoyed the company of beautiful women and fine sake. His dueling skills were great, having been honed by years of Toshimoko's tutoring, and his skills in the courts were almost as great. He acquired considerable repute as a womanizer, but maintained a strict and proper public reputation; Ameiko was willing to forgive his transgressions as long as he did not fall in love with any of his conquests.

Hoturi was also unusual for his time by maintaining a close personal friendship with the Lion Clan Champion, Akodo Toturi. Hoturi was even permitted to briefly enter the fabled Hall of Ancestors, and his brief exposure to the song of the Lion ancestor spirits made a deep impression on him.

Shukujo, the Ancestral Sword of the Crane

The Crane Clan's ancestral sword was forged by Doji Yasurugi and carried to the Day of Thunder by his twin sister Doji Konishiko. After Doji Hayaku retrieved the sword from the Shadowlands, it was taken up by Kakita and passed from him to the later Crane Clan Champions. The sword always sings with a pure note when it is wielded by the rightful leader of the Crane, for it still contains the twin souls of Yasurugi and Konishiko. Only a true descendent of Doji and Kakita can bear the sword—anyone else will be driven mad by the fury of the souls bound within the steel.

In design Shukujo is a katana of simple perfection, much like all the other great blades forged by Yasurugi before his death. Mechanically, this powerful nemuranai bestows on its wielder a perfect mix between the art of the court and the art of the duel—any courtier or artisan who carries the sword is considered to have ranks in the Kakita Bushi School equal to his current School Rank, and any bushi who carries the sword is likewise considered to have equal ranks in the Doji Courtier School. In addition, the sword's balance and keenness bestow a +3k3 bonus on all Iaijutsu Skill rolls.

Like the other Ancestral Swords, Shukujo was carried into the Heavens by Shinjo at the end of the War Against the Darkness. Whether it will ever return to the mortal realm is unknown.

Relations between Hoturi and his father, never good, became steadily worse during his adulthood. Satsume was a cold and harsh man who viewed his son as a shallow, flippant disappointment. For his part Hoturi learned his mother's death was actually a suicide; he blamed it on Satsume, further poisoning their relationship.

Satsume died in the Scorpion Clan Coup, slain by none other than Bayushi Shoju. During the fighting that crushed the Coup, Hoturi unknowingly faced his own son Dairu in combat and killed him. This tragedy enraged Kachiko and led to her kidnapping Hoturi and unleashing the supernatural double known as the False Hoturi. Hoturi was rescued from Kachiko's clutches and defeated the False Hoturi just in time to learn his wife Ameiko had committed jigai, the Emperor had been possessed by Fu Leng, and that as the Crane Clan Thunder it was his destiny to battle with the Fallen Kami for the fate of the Empire. Kachiko was also one of the Seven Thunders, but there was no time for them to discuss their past before the battle. At the climax of the fight, as all seemed lost, Hoturi and his old friend Toturi hurled themselves at Fu Leng. Hoturi and the dark god stabbed each other through the chest while Toturi's blow struck off Fu Leng's head. As Hoturi lay dying, Kachiko took him into her arms and forgave him for Dairu's death. The two were reconciled with his final breaths.

Throughout his life Hoturi strove to be the perfect Doji samurai. Had he lived he would undoubtedly have gone on to become one of the greatest Champions of the Crane Clan; as it was, he became one of the Empire's greatest heroes.

Doji Hoturi, the Second Crane Thunder

Air: 5	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 5
Reflexes: 6	Willpower: 4	Agility: 5		

Honor: 8.2	Status: 8.0	Glory: 10.0 (Crane Clan Thunder)	Infamy: 2.4 (False Hoturi)

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 4, Kenshinzen 2

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 4, Battle 3, Courtier (Manipulation, Rhetoric) 6, Defense 5, Etiquette (Conversation, Courtesy) 7, Games: Go 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Bushido 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 2, Lore: Lion Clan 2, Lore: Theology (Shintao) 3, Meditation 5, Sincerity (Honesty) 5, Tea Ceremony 3

Kata: Breath of Wind Style, Disappearing World style

Advantages: Allies (many, including Toturi the Black and Kakita Toshimoko), Great Destiny (Crane Clan Thunder), Inheritance (Shukujo), Kharmic Tie (Bayushi Kachiko), Luck, Seven Fortune's Blessing (Benten), Social Position (Crane Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (illegitimate child—Bayushi Dairu), Lechery, Lost Love (Bayushi Kachiko), Nemesis (the False Hoturi)

Daidoji Takihiro

The Kolat Harrier

Daidoji Takihiro's entire life consisted of layers of secrets. To most people he was a Daidoji samurai with a talent for dueling and the normal ambitions for advancing his family's status. A select number knew he was a member of the Harriers, a small and secretive military order that used dishonorable and illegal means to defend the Crane Clan. Only a handful knew he was also a Kolat.

Takihiro's recruitment into the Kolat conspiracy came when he was recovering from a particularly harrowing mission. While helping to investigate an attempt to set fire to Toshi Ranbo with gaijin pepper, he was captured by forces allied with the Second Gozoku conspiracy. They handed him over to their sinister ally, the Ashalan sorcerer Rashol. Rashol attempted to transform Takihiro into a mindless thrall by means of mystical Ashalan tattoos, but his efforts were slowed by Takihiro's fierce strength of will. Finally Takihiro escaped and then joined forces with a gaijin prisoner, Estaban Cornejo, to kill the Ashalan and end its plots.

Daidoji Kikaze, the Daidoji family daimyo, was deeply suspicious of the Ashalan magic now inked into Takihiro's skin. He sent Takihiro to a monastery in the Crane lands, where he was watched to see if his loyalty to the clan had been jeopardized. The monks eventually determined the Ashalan tattoos had no permanent effect on Takihiro's mind, but in the meantime one of their number was converting him to the Kolat.

It was the humanistic side of Kolat philosophy that attracted Takihiro. When he was resisting Rashol's attempts to enslave him, it was not the Celestial Heavens that strengthened him. Rather it was the solidarity he felt with all other Daidoji samurai past and present, a bond symbolized by the family mon tattooed on his wrists. How much was the influence of the Fortunes and the Heavens really worth compared to that? Were the gods more important than the influence of all of humanity? Fortune, after all, favored mortal men.

From that day forth Takihiro lived with a double loyalty. On the one hand, he was a devoted agent of the Kolat, working hard to rebuild and advance the conspiracy's interests. Yet at the same time he remained a loyal samurai committed to his lord and family. However, he did not see this as a conflict but rather as two forces pulling him in the same direction. His family gave him strength to fulfill his duties to both parties, and he was willing to fight to protect the Crane even as he labored to help free them from the domination of an uncaring Heaven.

The stats given here reflect Takihiro after he joined the Kolat.

Daidoji Takihiro, the Kolat Harrier

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 3
Willpower: 4

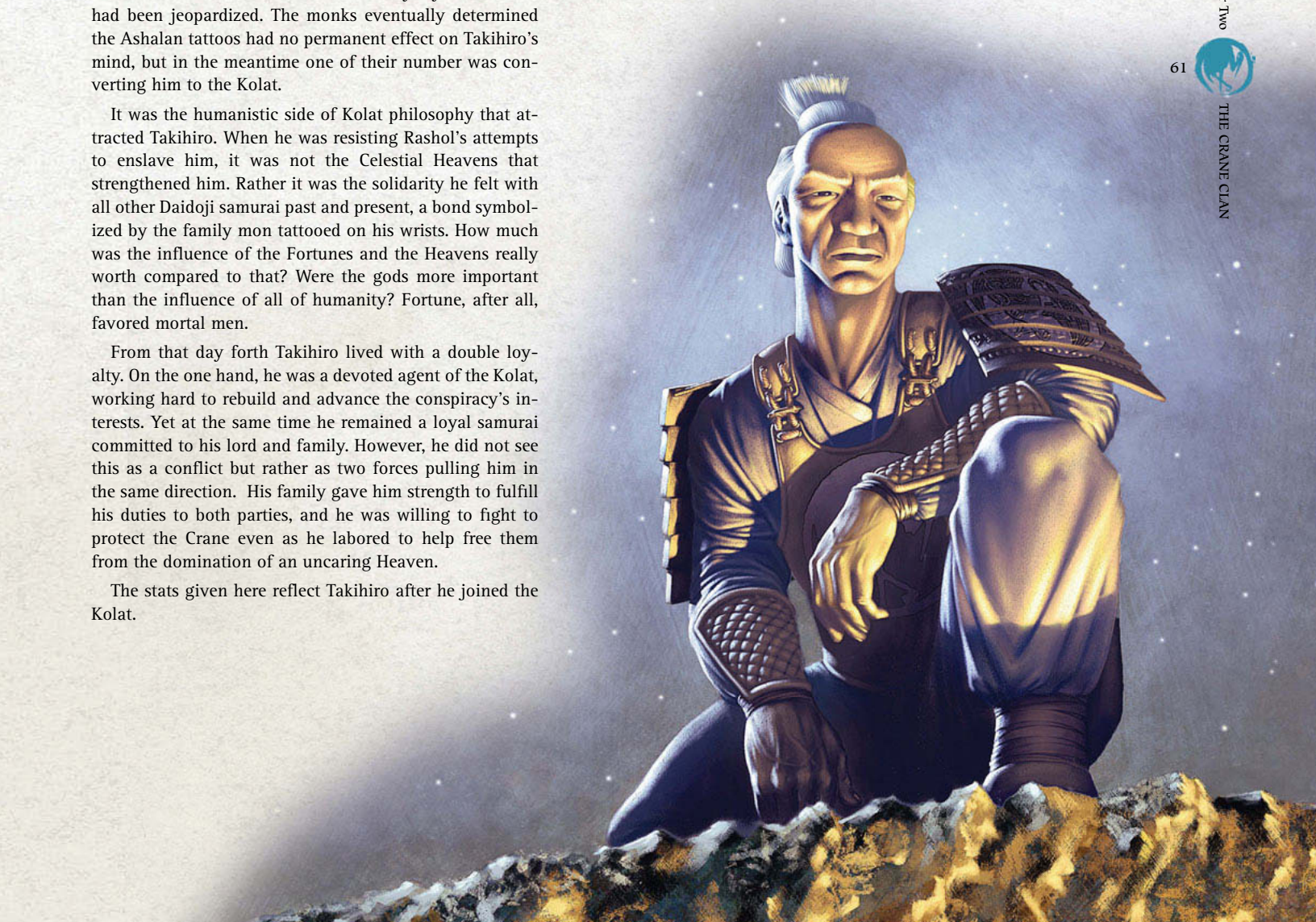
Honor: 3.5 *Status: 4.0* *Glory: 9.5*

School/Rank: Daidoji Scout 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Craft: Traps 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Hunting 1, Iaijutsu 5, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Knives 2, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 3, Stealth (Sneaking) 4, Sincerity 1

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Forbidden Knowledge (Kolat), Shadowed Heart

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Harrier), Dark Secret (Kolat), Disbeliever, Disturbing Countenance



Yasuki Hachi

Reluctant Daimyo, Emerald Champion

Yasuki Hachi was born Daidoji, to a branch of the family that could trace its lineage back to Yasuki samurai who refused to forsake their oaths to the Crane when their brethren joined the Crab Clan. He was a cheerful person who frequently found reasons to smile and never doubted the strength of an honorable man's spirit. He embraced the Crane philosophy of finding beauty in life, and usually that beauty was in the form of a pretty woman—a habit that caused more than one gossip-provoking incident in his younger years and forced him to study his dueling skills carefully.

No one was more surprised than Hachi when Emperor Toturi I declared him the new Yasuki daimyo after that family's ruling line had mysteriously died out. This would be enough trouble for one man, given the deep divisions between Crab and Crane over the Yasuki family, but there was more to come. Soon after Toturi I's death, Hachi was sent to compete at the Emerald Championship. Unexpectedly he won—with the Emperor's youngest son Naseru meddling with the contest to make it appear Hachi was his pawn.

A lesser man would have simply surrendered to Naseru's schemes, but Hachi's honor would not allow such behavior. He was determined to be a fair, just, and effective Emerald Champion no matter how hopeless that seemed. He was equally determined to find a solution to the Second Yasuki War which his elevation to daimyo had unleashed. Hachi's honor and tenacity won him a handful of close allies, and eventually he maneuvered his way out of Naseru's shadow. Shortly afterward he took advantage of the Crab tradition of the 20 Goblin Winter to claim a place in the Crab Clan, swearing fealty to both clans and bringing an end to the war.

Naseru went on to become Emperor Toturi III, and Hachi served him faithfully despite their earlier conflicts. A few years into his reign the Emperor found himself beset by the political conspiracy known as the Second Gozoku. It would have been an ideal time for Hachi to exact revenge, but he did not even consider it—loyalty to one's lord was the foundation of honor, and Hachi never stopped striving to live a life of honor. When Toturi III went into the Shadowlands, seeking the Tomb of the Seven Thunders and the mysteries it held, Hachi immediately gathered his forces and rushed to the Emperor's defense. There he died, fighting to defend a lord he did not like and yet served with all of his heart.

Yasuki Hachi,
Reluctant Daimyo, Emerald Champion

Air: 4 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4
Reflexes: 6 Willpower 3 Agility 4

Honor: 8.2 *Status: 9.0* *Glory: 8.0* *Infamy: 1.0*

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 4, Emerald Champion Path (Replacing Kakita Rank 4)

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 5, Courtier 3, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation (Interrogation, Notice) 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Law 3, Lore: Underworld 3, Meditation 3, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3, Tea Ceremony 1

Advantages: Allies (many), Leadership, Seven Fortunes' Blessing (Benten), Social Position (Yasuki Family Daimyo, Emerald Champion)

Disadvantages: Infamous, Lechery

Asahina Sekawa

Keeper of the Five Elements

Asahina Sekawa experienced more excitement and glory in his life than any member of his family previous to him. He would be the first to point out this showed his sensei in the Asahina school were right in saying that excitement and glory were overrated.

As a student Sekawa had already been marked out by his teachers as one of the more talented shugenja of his generation, but due to the retiring nature of the Asahina family this was not made known to outsiders. The Empire at large thus did not become aware of him until he won the Jade Championship. It was a struggle for a young shugenja from a family renowned for its pacifism to take up the mantle of the Jade Champion, but Sekawa's task was made easier by a demon called Hakai, the Onisu of Destruction, who attacked the Championship and killed Sekawa's sister and uncle. Sekawa was deeply enraged by this loss and threw himself into investigating how

Hakai had managed to reach the Imperial capital Otosan Uchi undetected. He soon uncovered a Bloodspeaker Cult cell in the capital city, and so his tenure began.

Sekawa weathered the turmoil of the struggle between the Four Winds and then the intrigues of Toturi III's reign through single-minded dedication to his duties. The Asahina ideal was a peaceful life in harmony with the Elements, and Sekawa was committed to building an Empire where this would be possible—and destroying those forces which opposed it. He believed in his family's ideal of peace, even when he thought he might never experience it himself, and he found it nearly impossible to turn away an appeal for help. He could be surprisingly sharp-tongued for an Asahina, but he was never cruel—save to creatures of the Shadowlands.

Sekawa had just begun to feel comfortable in his role when the world changed again. The murder of Rosoku, the son of Shinsei's descendant, led Sekawa on a long investigation that culminated in his discovery of the sacred Book of the Five Rings. Sekawa was enlightened by its wisdom and became the Keeper of the Five Elements. Initially he used his new understanding of the world to assist his duties as Jade Champion, but he could not help feeling there was another and greater task awaiting him. After much searching he located the infant son of Rosoku, now the heir to Shinsei's bloodline, and realized he needed to help raise the boy to understand his family's role in the Empire's history. Resigning his post as Jade Champion, Sekawa shaved his head and took up a monk's garb, leaving the Empire with the young child and all the wisdom his convoluted life had given him.

Asahina Sekawa,
Keeper of the Five Elements

Air: 6 Earth: 5 Fire: 6 Water: 3 Void: 5
Intelligence: 4 Perception: 4

Honor: 4.5 *Status: 9.0* *Glory: 7.1*

School/Rank: Asahina Shugenja 5, Jade Champion Path (Insight Rank 6)

Skills: Artisan: Origami 2, Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Divination 2, Etiquette 5, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 3, Lore: Law 5, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Lore: Shugenja 5, Lore: Theology (Fortunism, Shintao) 7, Meditation 7, Spears 3, Spellcraft 5

Kiho: Channel the Fire Dragon, Flee the Darkness, Rest my Brother, Touch of the Void Dragon, Waves in All Things

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Blessed Wind, Yari of Air, The Kami's Whisper, Essence of Air, Striking the Storm, Call the Spirit, Symbol of Air, Draw Back the Shadow, Slayer's Knives, Rise Air, Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami, Jade Strike, Tetsubo of Earth, Earth Becomes Sky, Strength of the Crow, Tomb of Jade, Major Binding, Extinguish, Sympathetic Energies, Path to Inner Peace

Advantages: Enlightened, Friend of the Brotherhood, Friend of the Elements (Air), Heart of Vengeance (Shadowlands), Social Position (Jade Champion)

Disadvantages: Driven (destroy the Shadowlands), Obligation (Keeper of the Five Rings), Sworn Enemy (Hakai)

Lands of the Crane Clan

The most important strongholds and territories of the Crane Clan are described in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, pages 337-340. The following section lists several additional holdings which, while less prominent in the Empire, are still significant to the clan.

Niwa Shita no Kage Toshi (Garden Under Shadow City)

To the rest of the Empire, Garden Under Shadow City is just another Daidoji city; busy with merchants and bristling with Daidoji soldiers stationed there to protect the Crane holdings in the south. To the Daidoji, it is far more important, for it is home to one of the family's prized strategic assets: a library filled with books and treatises on military matters. The collection is almost as old as the Daidoji family and no daimyo has ever neglected it; even the rare leaders who felt no need to consult it made sure the library was properly staffed and maintained. The contents range from detailed assessments of various Crane fortresses to esoteric studies of gaijin weapons. It is claimed some of the books were copied in secret from Lion Clan collections, but this may simply be a rumor started to annoy the Lion.

The library contains a second marvel: detailed scale models of all major Crane castles and palaces. These models rest on large tables with the surrounding landscape faithfully reproduced down to the last tree; each year the students of the Daidoji schools are sent out to survey the

land and determine if any changes need to be made. This has a two-fold benefit: Daidoji bushi learn early the importance of knowing the lands they are fighting in, and Daidoji commanders have detailed current information about the lands they may need to defend.

Water Music Village

Located two days' walk northeast from Mura Sabishii Toshi, this small village is built near a particularly lovely waterfall. Kakita Saigyu, a poet who lived during the reign of Hantei XVII, recorded in his journals his admiration for the waterfall's beauty, and ever since then there has been a steady trickle of travelers to look at it. Some artists choose to stay in the village for a time, feeling the waterfall's proximity inspires their work. Since the time of Hantei XXXI there have been enough artists visiting the area to support the growth of the town, which in modern times boasts two inns and a variety of other amenities.

Yufuku na Heigen Toshi (Prosperous Plains City)

One of the busiest trading cities in the Empire, home to Rokugan's largest open-air market. Even the Yasuki maintain a sizable presence here; there is just too much business to ignore, despite their dislike of the Crane.

Daidoji Training Grounds

This is the main site for training the Crane army's legions, and it has the distinction of being the only military facility in the Empire with a dedicated staff of professional gardeners. Bushi of other clans generally find this too peculiar to believe, but to the Daidoji it is just another sign of their dedication to the Crane Clan's ideals.

Jurojin Seido

This temple to the Fortune of Longevity was built by Kakita Yasuhime, an artisan and a daimyo of the Kakita, but its operation is overseen by Asahina shugenja. The shrine was constructed in honor of Emperor Hantei XX on his 97th birthday. A spring flows from the ground at the base of the shrine's statue, and its waters are known to bring healing to anyone who drinks them as part of a ritual in Jurojin's honor.

Giji Seido

Shiro Giji was a fourth-century Crane castle that stood for barely a year before it was burned to the ground by a crazed ronin. A shrine to those who perished in the fire was built on the site and has been maintained ever since.

The Daidoji Harriers, the infamously dishonorable offshoot of the Crane Clan's scouts, built a secret dojo and headquarters beneath the shrine, later expanding it to include a facility for manufacturing highly illegal gaijin pepper. After Doji Domotai ordered the disbanding of the Harriers in the late twelfth century, the dojo beneath was destroyed but the temple was left untouched. Many former Harriers chose to shave their heads and become monks at the shrine, spending their days in silent prayer.

The Crane and Power Politics

"It is honorable to be accused by those who deserve to be accused."

– The Tao of Shinsei

The Crane are one of the most politically oriented clans in the Empire, and it can be fairly argued they are the most politically potent of the clans as well. This can be seen in the strategies they pursue in defending their borders during war: though the warriors of the Daidoji are respected for their skill and dedication, the main purpose of the Crane military is to slow down the enemy long enough for the clan's courtiers to force a negotiated settlement... and those negotiations generally end with the Crane regaining any lost lands.

The Crane derive their political muscle from several sources, and though they generally prefer the rest of the Empire simply accept their power and not think about its sources, a canny observer can trace them out.

The first and most obvious source of Crane dominance is their close connection to the Hantei Dynasty due to their near-unbroken line of Crane spouses. During the Hantei Dynasty Imperial politics were overwhelmingly dominated by the Crane, who used their close connection to the Empress to populate all levels of the Imperial bureaucracy from the Imperial Advisor down to lowly clerks and scribes. This source of power took a heavy blow when the Toturi Dynasty and the later Iweko Dynasty replaced the Hantei, but it did not entirely vanish; Rokugan is a reactionary and traditionalist society, and the Imperial families of the Otomo, Seppun, and Miya retained their status despite having no blood relation to the Toturi or the Iweko. Many lords of these Imperial families had Crane wives of their own, so they were still very open to Crane influence. This was not as powerful as a Crane Empress, but it was still better than what anyone else had.

Another source of power is the Crane Clan's control of important resources. The Crane provinces produce both vast amounts of rice and vast quantities of luxury goods, two things sought by every clan in the Empire. A lord who suffers a bad harvest can expect a discreetly worded inquiry from a Crane courtier, while one who is planning on entertaining the Emperor or other high-ranking dignitaries will likewise be offered the highest grade of silks for clothing his household, not to mention elegant art objects to decorate his home and the most fashionable varieties of tea and incense. In return, of course, he will be expected to remember the Crane when they have need of his aid.

The Crane can also offer other highly-desirable services. For example, making a good marriage for one's child is one of the most important tasks a samurai parent faces, and the Crane are renowned for their skilled and impeccably honorable *nakado* (matchmakers). They can also help increase a child's marriageability by offering a Kakita artisan as a tutor in the arts—poetry, calligraphy, and ikebana are the most sought-after. Of course, the ultimate form of this favor is the opportunity to enroll a child in the Kakita Academy, a truly great privilege and one which can leave a family indebted for a generation.

Even those who have safely married off their children find a relationship with the Crane useful, as a skilled Crane courtier will have favors and allies available from all over the Empire. Whether one needs a consultation with an Isawa priest, a set of traveling papers for the Unicorn provinces, or an invitation to the most exclusive geisha house in Ryoko Owari, a Crane courtier can arrange it—in exchange for a favor to be named later.

These offers of help are usually well-received, and indeed generally speaking other samurai like dealing with the Crane. This is actually another aspect of the clan's power: they accumulate favors because given a choice more samurai choose to go to a Crane courtier than to someone else. Unlike the bullying Yoritomo, the greasy Yasuki, or the sinister Scorpion, Crane courtiers are charming and friendly people who influence others by simply offering them things they want. It is a technique almost guaranteed to make friends. It also helps that the Crane are known to be very honorable; when you accept a favor from a Crane courtier, you are reasonably assured they will not ask for anything dishonorable in return. (Expensive and difficult, perhaps, but not dishonorable.) This is extremely important to courtiers and lords from the more honorable

clans... which helps explain why even when the Lion and Crane were at each others' throats the Crane had no lack of favors to call in with the Lion. Even Scorpion courtiers will sometimes work with a Crane before they work with a fellow Scorpion courtier whose fealty is to a different lord; getting entangled in another's plots is usually far too much trouble.

The flip side of an ability to grant favors is the ability to withhold them, and this forms another facet of the Crane Clan's political power. A samurai who is in the disfavor of a Crane courtier finds it very hard to get things done; not only is he shut out of the Crane's network of favors, but very few other courtiers will want to help him lest they also compromise their relations with the Crane. Those who owe favors to the Crane will be pressured not to deal with him, while those who want to trade favors with the Crane in the future will avoid him so as not to damage their prospects.

A determined and skillful courtier can find ways to function in the face of Crane disapproval, of course, and if they are very good at it the Crane will eventually decide to take more active steps against them. The Crane Clan disapproves of assassination, regarding it as not only illegal but highly dishonorable, the sort of thing Scorpions do. Assassinations are completely alien to the Crane mindset since they require no skill (at least, no skill the Crane consider worth having), exhibit no drama or excellence in their performance, and cannot be publicly claimed afterwards. Even the Daidoji, who consider ambushing and killing enemy officers to be the first order of business in war, will argue passionately what they are doing is not "assassination" as Rokugan understands the term. Thus, when a Crane courtier needs a troublesome rival eliminated, he will work to entrap that rival in a lethal duel, with a Kakita duelist as champion for the Crane. The loser of a duel is just as dead as someone who has been poisoned at breakfast or knifed in a dark alleyway, and there are no unnecessary or shameful complications involving Imperial magistrates afterward. To the contrary, a victorious duel is both honorable and glorious, something to brag about.

This is one of the major reasons why important Crane courtiers are assigned a Kakita duelist as yojimbo; the Kakita may not be quite as skilled as a Daidoji at keeping a charge alive during an ambush, but many a negotiation has been helped along by the implicit threat of a duelist standing behind the diplomat. The Crane usually prefer to leave the threat subtle and implicit, as is appropriate in civilized society. Moreover, lethal duels are usually avoided unless they are absolutely necessary—killing someone generally makes their family and friends into enemies, and while in some cases this is an acceptable cost, in the long run the Crane usually find it is better to make friends.

The War of Art

"Perfect gift, or perfect cut: we are Doji."

– Doji Domotai

Art is important to every clan in the Empire, since it is one of the things that defines samurai as civilized human beings and not barbarians. Obviously, not every form of art is important to every clan equally—the Crab have little patience with things like ikebana, and the nomadic Unicorn shy away from sculpture—but every clan uses art to celebrate the deeds of its great heroes, to express its values and ideals, and to pass on its beliefs to the next generation and to the Empire at large. Art is also used as a means of entertainment for the samurai class and, to a lesser extant, the common folk. This can be anything from a courtier and her friends attending a day of noh theater to a Crab samurai spending a few moments of relaxation folding origami animals. Indeed, art is so widely and deeply woven into the lives of the Rokugani that few take the time to consider the power it has in their lives.

The Crane, however, consider it constantly. Lady Doji and her husband Kakita were both artists and patrons of art, and they established a pattern their clan has remained faithful to down through the ages. The Crane are well-known for their large numbers of trained artisans, but they also have by far the largest percentage of casual artists, those who pursue art as a hobby or a personal calling. Amateur painters and poets abound in the Crane Clan, and it is by no means unusual for a Crane samurai to design the landscape garden for his own house. Cranes with no artistic talent themselves become fans of the theater, collect paintings, read poetry voraciously, or cultivate some other hobby or interest relating to art. And those rare Crane samurai with no artistic feelings whatsoever keep such opinions to themselves and argue the virtues of art in public.

The Crane work tirelessly to make sure art is important to everyone else in the Empire. Some arts, like storytelling, are obviously useful to all of the clans. Ikebana and the tea ceremony, on the other hand, need some promotion. That these and other arts are so widely distributed through Rokugani society is a measure of both the Crane Clan's dedication to this mission and to its success. Even the Crab, who disdain most arts, feel the need to justify their position with appeals to the importance and difficulty of their duties at the Wall.

For most samurai of the Empire, speaking with a Scorpion is frightening because of the possibility he is a spy; speaking with a Crane is stressful because of the possibility he is an art critic.

Since art is so important, it follows naturally that it can be used as a tool to influence the opinions of others. The most obvious method of doing this, the one beloved by the courtiers of the Crane, is to use the arts to call into question the judgment or moral quality of one's opponent. A lord who fails to sponsor puppet shows at important festivals is clearly unconcerned with maintaining his family's reputation and history among the common folk. A samurai who does not commission new wall screens and paintings in his castle on a regular basis is cheap and shallow. A host at winter court who does not provide storytelling, tea ceremonies, theater performances, and poetry contests for his guests is obviously insulting their intelligence and taste. The possibilities are endless, and Crane courtiers are diligent in seeking them out—especially since their clan is the principle source of such art.

A more subtle form of influence is the power to decide what defines 'good' art in Rokugan. The Crane Clan's Kakita Artisan Academy makes them the undisputed masters of Rokugan's art world. The Scorpion have a flourishing theater tradition, the Shiba have painters and sculptors of great skill and sensitivity, the Ikoma have storytellers of dazzling skill—everyone knows this is true... because the Kakita Masters say so. Great individual artists have arisen in every clan, even among the ronin, but none have been acknowledged as such by the rest of the Empire until they were approved of by the Kakita.

This authority is derived first and foremost from tradition, a powerful source in a society where all things ancient are revered. Lady Doji was the Kami most interested in art, so clearly her clan should be first in all matters relating to it. To question this is akin to questioning the Lion Clan's mastery of war or the Phoenix Clan's knowledge of magic. The Crane Clan has also invested a great deal of hard work and wealth over the centuries to maintain this authority. Parents of talented children are strongly encouraged to send them to the Kakita Academy, so the clan never lacks skilled artisans. Crane lords consider their spending on art and artists with the same care they devote to spending money on bushi and fortifications. From the Crane viewpoint, money spent on the arts is never frivolous or luxurious; it is an investment in the essential identity of the clan.

Of course, Crane courtiers are only too happy to help their friends and allies with any art-related problems, generating a steady stream of favors owed to the Crane Clan. The Doji make sure a daimyo or important courtier who is building a new home, or renovating an old one, has the latest in elegant gardens and paintings. They make sure every festival is made more memorable by performances from talented kabuki troupes. They make sure guests feel honored and welcomed by tasteful ikebana arrangements in their rooms. Everyone in the Empire knows the Crane can provide these things, in the very best quality possible.

This power over the arts can also be used negatively to censor artists or performances the Crane find distasteful, inconvenient, or obstructive. A Lion playwright may delight in writing plays that portray Crane Clan samurai as cowardly villains, but his plays will never be staged outside the Lion lands after the Kakita criticize him for plodding prose or badly constructed scenes. Even the Scorpion, the Crane Clan's perennial rivals in the courts, will shy away from someone with such a reputation: they have too much to lose to casually defy the Kakita Masters. In a similar fashion, a rival diplomat who is proving troublesome in the Imperial Court can be horribly embarrassed when the painter he is championing is suddenly derided by the Kakita for being unsophisticated in composition and crude in technique. Of course, these sorts of tactics only work when there are actual flaws to exploit, but few artists are so skilled that their work is above all criticism. Thus, when an artist is singled out for censure the Crane simply dwell exclusively on his weak points and ignore the strong ones. Most of the Empire will accept such a judgment without question because it comes from the Crane... who are, after all, the experts in these things. Even those samurai with some knowledge of the art in question will usually defer to the Crane rather than get into an acrimonious debate or accuse the Kakita of falsehood. After all, one of the many arts practiced by the Crane is dueling.

The Kakita themselves prefer to avoid this sort of action as much as possible, because for many of them it treads very near to dishonorable behavior. Lady Doji and Lord Kakita were known to be honest and intensely honorable, not the sort to be untruthful about the quality of a work of art. Kakita Masters like to hand down the cautionary tale of Kakita Itoku, although they do not allow it to be circulated outside of the Academy.

During the reign of Hantei XI, Kakita Itoku was a highly regarded painter. He was asked to judge a painting competition that pitted the favorite painter of the Phoenix ambassador to the Imperial Court against an up-and-coming painter admired by the Lion Clan Champion. While the Phoenix painter had a slight superiority in his brush technique, the Lion's painting was strikingly composed and it shone with the clarity of the artist's vision. Itoku was ready to rule in the Lion's favor when the Crane courtier who had summoned him took him aside and told him to support the Phoenix. The courtier was in the process of negotiating an important trade treaty with him and need-

ed his support. Itoku was unhappy at this, but the courtier would not relent, and Itoku did as he was told. Afterward, he watched in horror as the angry Lion Champion cast his former favorite out of the clan for his failure. Itoku returned to the Kakita Academy, gifted his entire estate to the new ronin Lion (including his eldest daughter as a bride), and then quietly committed seppuku in his studio. Itoku's seppuku was technically illegal, as he had not asked his lord's permission, but after seeing examples of the ex-Lion's work the Kakita Masters decided to treat it as a legal act of *kanshi*—seppuku made in protest of unjust orders from one's lord. His death serves as a reminder that art places its own demands on honorable behavior, and no artist can expect to escape them.

Courtly Romance: How to Have an Affair in Rokugan

"A choice between love and honor always ends in blood."

– Doji Nagori, twelfth century storyteller

The Rokugani are very conflicted over the issue of love. It is a temptation to dishonorable behavior, but also a glorious experience to be boasted of in poetry. Love is a distraction from duty and loyalty, yet Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love, is not only one of the Seven Major Fortunes but frequently speaks for them when they appear to mortals. Love is usually considered an emotion for lesser men, but even Emperors have been swayed by it: Hantei XVII ignored tradition and arranged for himself to be buried at Pale Oak Castle in the Phoenix Lands, the birthplace of his beloved wife.

A phenomenon this complicated calls for the guiding hand of etiquette, and the Crane Clan has not shirked its duty to the Empire. Over the centuries the Crane have developed a complete system for having affairs that maximize the glory of the participants (assuming, of course, this is something they desire) while minimizing chances for public embarrassment, shame, or disgrace. In love, as in so many other things in Rokugan, causing a scene is the sin least likely to be forgiven.

The first step of engaging in a love affair is making your affections known to your intended beloved in the hope that they share your feelings. Traditionally it is considered the role of the man to make the approach to the woman, but there are many socially acceptable ways for a woman to signal she is waiting for that approach, so this is more of a technicality than an actual guide to who moves first.

The best method is generally considered to be a brief poem that hints at the writer's feelings. A symbolic ikebana, a cunningly folded origami, or a painting will do for those who are better at such arts. Regardless of the approach, the man must not put his name on the gift lest it be exposed to the dishonor of all, so he must include some other way make his identity clear. This sometimes causes difficulties, and a number of popular noh and kabuki plays have plots revolving around the tragic consequences of a misattributed gift. Some samurai, especially among the Crab and Unicorn, find all this indirection too much to deal with and opt for a straightforward note, regardless of possible consequences. This is considered foolish and uncouth by the Crane, but depending on the sincerity of the writer, his skill in calligraphy, and the temperament of the recipient, she might still be willing to accept the approach—more than one maiden has found a blunt samurai to be charmingly rough around the edges.

Once the woman has received the token and figured out the identity of the sender, she must decide if she wishes to pursue a romantic affair with him. This is a simple question if she is already attracted to him, but if not, it requires some thought. How interesting is the man? Would an affair be pleasant or tedious? A surprising number of discreet affairs are begun purely for their entertainment value rather than out of any great passion. This is especially common during Winter Court, and in fact it is considered the most respectable and safe kind of affair to have—it is purely a mild self-indulgence with no deep well of emotion to interfere with the demands of duty and honor. However, even casual affairs undertaken for entertainment are not without danger; Benten is powerful and sometimes true love blooms unexpectedly.

If the woman decides to proceed with the affair, she sends back a favorable reply. Such a reply is likewise in the form of a poem with no name attached to it. Since love has the potential to interfere with the demands of duty and honor, one should never get caught admitting to being in love. On the other hand, a subtle public declaration of love—one which refrains from directly naming the beloved, but allows clever witnesses to figure out the truth—is considered quite the coup in Rokugani court society, and usually raises the reputation of the persons involved. In effect, they are boasting of their ability to enjoy themselves while still keeping to the norms and public rules of society, not unlike a warrior boasting of his victories on the battlefield.

The affair begun, the two participants begin to spend time in each other's company. Rokugani do not go on "dates," of course, and it is considered improper for an unmarried man and woman to be alone together in privacy. Thus, such meetings are either made in public with suitable excuses, or are clandestine and secret. Suitable public meetings include strolls through the gardens, attending tea ceremonies, or playing courtly games such as shogi, go, sadane, or kemari. More than one famous romance has started over a go board. Art appreciation can also furnish excuses for meetings, as it is very common for a samurai who obtains a new painting or a poetry book to invite friends over to admire it. And of course there is a steady stream of notes and poems passed back and forth between the two: one cannot properly be said to be having an affair if poetry is not involved somehow. All of these poems

are unsigned, not only for discretion but also because it is assumed the recipient will pass them around their circle of friends to admire.

Many affairs develop into a sexual relationship, but just as many do not. Indeed, some of the Empire's most celebrated romances were entirely platonic. Consider the example of Asako Matsigoshi and Shiba Yusuko, two samurai from the sixth century who loved each other deeply. When Matsigoshi's lord was killed, he shaved his head and retired to a monastery as a demonstration of his grief. Yusuko immediately shaved her own head and retired to a nunnery. The two of them spent the remaining years of their lives writing letters to each other, but never met again. In Rokugan this is considered to be a love story with a happy ending, and more than one pair of lovers have vowed to be as faithful as Matsigoshi and Yusuko were to each other.

If the romance does become physical, it is traditional for the lovers to exchange fans after their first night together as a sign of devotion. Usually the fans are kept as private tokens of affection, but they can be used in public if one or both of the pair want to draw attention to the affair. This is somewhat blatant and is considered daring and a touch shocking, but since fans are a popular gift the use of someone else's fan can be excused away if necessary. As long as plausible deniability is maintained, the lovers' public reputations will suffer little to no harm.

A more important tradition is that of the morning-after note: after their first night together, the man sends the woman a note with a poem. Failure to do so has consequences ranging from the immediate ending of the affair to igniting a long-term feud with the furious ex-beloved. This can be problematic for men who are not good poets, and some will try to compose a few "morning-after" poems in advance, or quietly commission the needed poems from another's ink-brush. More than one court poet has found a life of luxury by ghost-writing such notes for the rich and powerful.

Some affairs last the lifetimes of the lovers, but these are rare. More commonly, the affair is broken off when one or both parties lose interest. However, breaking off an affair can be tricky, since it can easily lead to insult or heartbreak. The usual method is to send a letter with an excuse and, naturally, a poem. "I no longer love you" is the worst possible excuse and is only used when the sender is deliberately seeking a fight with their former lover... or when the sender is a Unicorn, who are notorious for their direct approach to such things. More suitable excuses include, "My parents have heard about us and have forbidden me to see you," "My wife is in poor health and I must return home and see to her," "Now that summer has come duty compels me to attend to my husband's estate," or "I fear my passion for you will engulf all other feelings, even that of my love of my lord." All of these make it clear the other party is in no way to blame; the sender is being pressured by outside considerations. The poem should, ideally, express sorrow over the affair's end while simultaneously hinting that this is the normal cycle of things.

If the excuse is suitable and delivered with good taste, the other party is expected to accept the affair is over and move on. They can weep and mourn in private as much as they like, but in public they must not give any sign of emotion regarding the matter. This is not easy, of course; many samurai struggle with maintaining their face in public after the end of a heartfelt affair. Temporarily claiming illness is a popular coping strategy, since this gives justification to stay in one's room for a few days. Deciding one absolutely must go on a pilgrimage to visit a nearby shrine is even better, as it gets the heartbroken samurai away from court while cultivating the appearance of piety.

Love in Rokugan offers many opportunities—the chance to gain an important ally, the opportunity for fame or for much-needed intimacy and emotional support. But not all affairs are harmonious, and not all of them conclude according to the proper forms promoted by the Crane. Sometimes love and passion are too intense to allow the affair to end with propriety. Sometimes the indulgence of passion leads to an illegitimate child. Sometimes the prospect of marrying another for duty becomes unbearable for lovers who can only imagine being with each other. In these situations, tragedy is the inevitable result. Lovers may be exposed and forced to commit seppuku, or they may commit a lovers' suicide together, hoping to be reborn into a better life where they can live together in happiness. Such tragic tales are popular choices for songs, plays, and pillow-books; cautionary and yet sympathetic works that remind samurai of their own human frailties and of the dangers inherent in letting love rule their hearts.

New Game Mechanics

This section contains new Crane Clan mechanics for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition role-playing game. GMs and players can use as many or as few of these options as they desire.

New Basic School: The Daidoji Scout School

Although the Iron Warriors are the most well-known public face of the Daidoji family, they also study a style of warfare specialized in scouting, ambush, and precision strikes against vulnerable enemy assets like commanders and supply caravans. Daidoji Scouts readily employ traps and surprise attacks, accepting a certain amount of dishonor in their own conduct for the sake of the greater good of the Crane Clan. They rely on the rest of the clan to provide them with political cover for their questionable actions.

New Basic School: Daidoji Scout (Bushi)

- **Benefit:** +1 Reflexes
- **Starting Honor:** 3.5
- **Skills:** Athletics, Hunting (Traps), Kenjutsu, Knives, Kyujutsu (Yumi), Stealth (Sneaking), any one Bugei or Low Skill
- **Outfit:** Light or Ashigaru Armor, Rugged Clothing, Daisho Set, Bow, Knife, any one weapon, Trap-Making Gear, Camouflage Face-paint, Traveling Pack, 5 Koku.

Techniques

Rank One: Surveying the Land

The Daidoji scouts are masters of observation and pursuit, tracking their opponents, harassing them, and delaying them with traps and ambushes. You gain +1k0 with Stealth and Hunting skill rolls. Any rural/improvised traps you create are exceptionally deadly, inflicting +1k1 extra damage.

Rank Two: Scouring the Shadows

Daidoji scouts strike from concealment, hitting their opponents with swift and devastating attacks. When attacking an unaware opponent you gain a bonus of +2k0 to your attack roll.

Rank Three: Weaken the Resistance

The Daidoji learn to strike with precision, hitting their opponents in weak spots and evading their armor. You may ignore any Reduction your opponent gains from wearing armor or from school techniques. (You cannot ignore the natural Reduction of creatures, or Reduction bestowed by magical or supernatural effects.) If you attack an opponent who has no Reduction from armor or techniques, you gain +1k0 to your damage rolls.

Rank Four: Strike and Move

The Daidoji scout strikes with the swiftness of the wind itself. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when wielding a katana, wakizashi, knife, or bow. Your traps now inflict +2k1 extra damage.

Rank Five: Cunning of Daidoji

The true master of the Daidoji scout school needs only a single strike, for his opponent never survives to see the second one. During a skirmish, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to attempt a deadly precision strike on your next attack (this may be done with a melee or a ranged attack, but cannot be done more than once in the same Turn). Any Maneuvers called on this attack require 1 less Raise (to a minimum of 1 Raise), and if you successfully hit you gain a bonus of +1k1 to your Damage roll. Furthermore, if your opponent is unaware of you, your Raises on this attack are not limited by your Void.

Rural Traps

Rural traps is a catch-all term for any trap that is created and planted quickly with minimal equipment, usually (though not always) outdoors. These are used primarily for hunting (ronin make extensive use of them) but can also be employed by military forces to harass or ambush enemy troops. The Hiruma and Daidoji Scouts are both well-known for employing rural traps against their foes.

Pitfall

The pitfall is far and away the simplest of traps, consisting of a hole (often lined with sharpened stakes if there is sufficient time) covered with foliage or other concealment. The goal is to trick an opponent or prey into falling into the pit, maiming them or killing them outright.

- **Skill:** Hunting (Traps)
- **TN to Create:** 15 for a simple pit, 20 with stakes (requires a minimum of 1 hour)
- **Materials:** Stakes, foliage, soft ground
- **Rules:** Opponents may make a Perception Roll to see the trap. The TN of this roll is equal to the amount by which the trap's creator exceeded the Hunting (Traps) TN to create it in the first place. Falling into a pitfall inflicts appropriate falling damage (1k1 for every ten feet), plus an additional 3k3 Wounds if stakes are present. Injury from stakes can also cause infection if they are dirty, and ruthless ambushers will deliberately smear the stakes with filth to enhance this possibility.

Pongi Stick

A very simple trap used to weaken and slow the target. It consists of a sharpened wooden stake concealed either underwater (in a stream, ford, swamp, or similar place where targets must wade through the water) or within a small camouflaged hole. The target steps on the trap and impales his foot on the stake, wounding and crippling him.

- **Skill:** Hunting (Traps)
- **TN to Create:** 15 (minimum of fifteen minutes to create)
- **Materials:** Wood, soft or water-covered ground
- **Rules:** Opponents may make a Perception Roll to see a pongi stick. The TN of this roll is equal to the amount by which the trap's creator exceeded the Hunting (Traps) TN to create it in the first place. Stepping on a pongi stick inflicts 2k1 Wounds and the target is Lame until the Wounds heal. This injury can also cause infection if the pongi stick was dirty, and ruthless ambushers will deliberately smear the stake with filth to enhance this possibility.

Rope Catch

The rope catch is simple in appearance and execution, but delicate in construction. The snare portion of the trap is a simple rope loop concealed with light foliage. When the prey steps within the loop's open end, the disturbance causes a large counterweight to fall from a precarious perch somewhere nearby, pulling the rope taut around the prey's leg and hefting it into the air, where it is hung upside down until it can be killed or captured. Individuals who remain in a rope catch for a prolonged period of time can suffer damage from the constriction or simply from hanging upside down for so long.

- **Skill:** Hunting (Traps)
- **TN to Create:** 20 (minimum of 2 hours to create)
- **Materials:** Rope, counterweights, sturdy trees or suitable substitute
- **Rules:** Opponents may make a Perception Roll to see a rope catch trap. The TN of this roll is equal to the amount by which the trap's creator exceeded the Hunting (Traps) TN to create it in the first place. Once the trap is sprung, a Reflexes Roll at TN 30 can avoid the catch. Once captured, a target is likely helpless, although an extremely acrobatic victim may be able to reach upward to cut himself loose (GM's discretion). Falling from a freed rope catch may cause damage (usually 1k1 or 2k2).

Tiger Trap

The tiger trap is a somewhat elaborate and notably lethal trap that is most widely used in tropical climates (hence the name), although the Hiruma and Daidoji have adopted it for war as well. It requires highly elastic wood, and involves a trip-wire or similar trigger that unleashes a tightly-bound branch lined with spikes. When the trigger is hit, the ropes release the branch and it springs back into its normal shape with considerable force, driving the spikes into the target.

- **Skill:** Hunting (Traps)
- **TN to Create:** 25 (minimum of 2 hours to create)
- **Materials:** Wood, rope
- **Rules:** Detecting the hidden trip-wire of a tiger trap is usually quite difficult, typically requiring a Perception Roll at TN 25. When the trap is triggered, the target must succeed on a Reflexes Roll (TN 30) or suffer 6k6 damage from the spikes slamming into the body. Heavy armor will reduce the damage to 4k4. Much as with other spike traps, the spikes may cause infection by driving dirt and filth deep into the body.

New Basic School: The Kakita Artisans

Unlike their occasional rivals among the Shiba, the Kakita Artisans do not confine themselves merely to the creation of physical art such as paintings or books of poetry. The Artisan Academy devotes itself to the study of every sort of art, whether it be performance-based or creation-based, and studies not only the ways of art but also the ways in which such art may be turned to the service of the Crane Clan.

New Basic School: Kakita Artisan School [Artisan]

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Starting Honor:** 5.5
- **Skills:** Courtier, Games: Sadane, Etiquette, Sincerity, any three skills chosen from the following list: Acting, Artisan (Gardening, Ikebana, Origami, Painting, Poetry, or Sculpture), Perform (Dance, Oratory, Puppeteer, Song, Storytelling, or any musical instrument)
- **Outfit:** Court Robes, Beautiful Clothing, Wakizashi, Art Supplies, Fan, Steed (Rokugani pony), Traveling Pack, 10 Koku

Techniques

Rank One: Soul of the Artisan

The Kakita Artisan is taught from earliest youth to focus on one specific form of art above all others, devoting himself to it heart and soul and pursuing the goal of absolute perfection within its forms. Of course, in keeping with Crane tradition the Artisan is also taught to be a ruthless critic to any artistic rivals. Select one of your three chosen School Skills (Acting, an Artisan skill, or a Perform skill) as the focus of your artistic training. This becomes your *chosen art*. When making skill rolls with your chosen art, you gain a +2k0 bonus and your Raises are not limited by your Void.

Any time you are using Games: Sadane to criticize someone else's art or performance, you gain a Free Raise on your skill roll.

Rank Two: The Soul's Dream

The Kakita Artisan is taught to use his art to affect those around them, inspiring emotions and shifting the views of the audience. When presenting a public performance or display of you chosen art, you may make a Contested Social Roll of [chosen art]/Awareness against the Etiquette (Courtesy)/Willpower of the audience members. Those audience members who fail their rolls are profoundly swayed and their emotions shift in a direction you desire—becoming friendlier, more hostile, calmer, or whatever other emotional shift your art is designed to evoke. This emotional shift normally lasts a number of hours equal to your Insight Rank.

Note that not all persons are equally susceptible to the impact of art—the GM may rule that a particular individual is affected for a shorter period of time, or award a bonus to the resistance roll for persons whose emotions are difficult to manipulate. The GM should normally have each individual audience member roll separately to resist this technique (this should always be done for PCs or important NPCs), but with large groups of ordinary NPCs the GM can opt to save time by making a single roll for most or all of them.

Rank Three: Free the Spirit

You may select a second of your three chosen School Skills as a chosen art, and all Technique bonuses and effects which applied to your first chosen art now apply to it as well. The bonus to your chosen art skill rolls increases to +2k1.

Rank Four: Undying Name

Your art is now so magnificent that you can make and break the reputations of others by depicting or referencing them in your work. You may create a piece of art referring to another person by rolling [chosen art]/Awareness at a TN equal to 20 plus 5x their Glory Rank. With a success, you may either increase (if your art is complimentary) or decrease (if it is critical) their Glory by up to 5 points, plus an additional 5 points for every Raise you make on the roll. You may call two additional Raises to inflict a gain of Infamy on the target instead of a Glory change.

You may not target the same person with this technique more than once every six months. Furthermore, persons of high station cannot have their reputations damaged by artists lacking in prestige—the target's Status Rank cannot exceed your Glory or Status Rank (whichever is higher).

Rank Five: A Gift Beyond Price

You art is now so perfect that a gift of it can profoundly change another person's attitude toward you and your clan. Once per month, you may give a gift of your chosen art to someone from another clan or faction. Make a Contested Social Roll of your [chosen art]/Awareness against their Etiquette (Courtesy)/Willpower. (The GM may award Free Raises to you or the target of this technique based on the type and subject of the art and the attitudes and beliefs of the target—some people are easier to sway than others.) With a success, you permanently alter their attitude toward your clan/faction in a favorable direction. With a failure, the target becomes aware of your attempt to manipulate his emotions, and his attitude toward your clan/faction permanently shifts in a hostile direction.

This technique cannot target the same person more than once per year.

New Alternate Path: The Kakita Jesters

Within the Kakita Artisan Academy is a small dojo where students are instructed in one of the most peculiar arts of the Kakita: the path of the Jester. The Jesters are a specialized variant on kabuki acting, and their studies include acting, dance, poetry, music, and political commentary. There are few samurai suited to the life of a Jester, and the dojo is never crowded.

Jesters are a very unusual form of performance artisan, created by the Crane but occasionally seen among other clans. While most Artisans focus on creating beautiful and immortal works of art, the Jesters focus on tearing down the pretensions of the arrogant and the powerful. A Jester is chosen for his role early in his schooling and is expected to serve in that role throughout his life, wearing a distinctive kabuki-style costume and makeup and using his performance skills to mock, deride, and needle those who deserve it. Highly experienced and skillful Jesters eventually earn access to the special Technique taught by a handful of sensei at their dojo.

Jesters dance and strut through the courts, singing, telling stories, making slightly inaccurate quotes from famous books, and generally making sure any samurai knows when he or she does something inappropriate. They usually speak in rhymes or riddles and have a habit of foretelling doom for anyone who criticizes or attacks them. It should be noted, however, that Rokugani jesters never behave in a lighthearted or "wacky" manner—their humor is satiric, biting, and often sour, and their favored tool is mockery. Among normal samurai such behavior would prompt duels, but the Jesters receive the sanction of their lords to say things otherwise never tolerated. They are permitted to speak publicly about another person's loss of reputation, honor, or face so long as they do so in a tone of mockery and satire. The GM should generally not inflict Glory or Honor losses on Jesters who are making public insults or committing minor breaches of etiquette as part of their "role" as a Jester. Notwithstanding this "immunity," however, most Jesters are careful to attach themselves to a noble patron in order to gain extra protection for their often-acerbic performances.

New Alternate Path: Kakita Jester [Artisan]

- **Technique Rank:** 5
- **Replaces:** Kakita Artisan 5

Technique: The Art of Mockery

The Kakita Jester is tasked with sardonically puncturing the pretense and arrogance of court, reminding all present of their flawed and mortal natures. You may publicly mock a suitable target (someone hypocritical, arrogant, dishonorable, or otherwise deserving of your attention) by means of speech, dance, song, or other such methods. This requires a Contested Roll of your [chosen art] / Awareness against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. If you lose the roll, you lose points of Glory equal to the target's Status Rank. If you win the roll, the target loses face in public, suffering a loss of Glory points equal to your Glory Rank, and a loss of Honor points equal to half as much (rounded up).

You may not target the same person with this Technique more than once per month.

Art and non-Rokugani

It should go without saying that the social techniques of artisan schools such as the Shiba Artisans and the Kakita Artisans are effective only against those who can appreciate and enjoy Rokugani art. Nonhumans, gaijin, Lost, and other such entities are unlikely to be swayed by artistic presentations, although exceptional cases may exist—the GM is the final arbiter on whether an artisan technique works on a non-Rokugani.

New Advanced School: The Kakita Master Artisans

The most talented elite of the Kakita Masters learn secret techniques of artistic perfection passed down from the early centuries of the Empire. These methods were developed by some of the Empire's finest artists and mastering them is beyond the ability of most students at the Artisan Academy, so only the most supremely gifted are ever taught them. However, for that same reason the techniques are not limited solely to students of the Artisan Academy—any supremely talented Crane may become a Kakita Master.

The Perfect Art in Play

The Perfect Art is a deliberately vague and open-ended technique. The manifestations of a Crane master's art should be tailored to the circumstances. They will always be beneficial, impressive, and helpful to the PC in some way, but not necessarily in the way he might expect. The GM should remember these manifestations will always be dramatic and memorable events, but they are not predictable and should never be "auto-win" effects unless the situation properly justifies it.

At their highest pinnacle of skill the Kakita Masters can actually change reality temporarily, a phenomenon which mystifies those shugenja who have studied it. Some speculate the art is so perfect it inspires the kami in response, but in truth no one knows how the Masters achieve these effects.

New Advanced School: Kakita Master Artisan [Artisan]

Requirements

- **Rings/Traits:** Awareness 5, Void 5
- **Skills:** At least one Kakita Artisan chosen art Skill must be Rank 8 or higher.
- **Other:** If you are trained as a Kakita Artisan you must have Great Potential in the Skill of one of your chosen arts. If you are not trained as a Kakita Artisan, you must be a Crane with both the Prodigy advantage and Great Potential advantage in either Acting, an Artisan skill, or a Perform skill. This single skill becomes your chosen art for the purposes of this school's techniques.

Techniques

Rank 1: The Master's Touch

The Master Artisan transcends the social demands of art to focus on creating works of lasting magnificence which transform those who witness them. You may attempt to create such a work or performance with a chosen art Skill roll at TN 40. A success results in a creation or performance that awes everyone who witnesses its first public appearance. You gain 5 points of Glory, +1 additional point of Glory for each Raise called on the roll. Everyone in the audience at the art's unveiling/performance gains one bonus Void Point (which can exceed their normal maximum) for the next 24 hours; if you successfully called at least 4 Raises on the roll, they gain two bonus Void Points instead. (The effects of this technique cannot stack.)

Rank 2: Mastery Unbounded

At this level of skill, the Master Artisan's skills become truly legendary. You gain a bonus of +2k0 with your chosen art Skill rolls. If you are trained as a Kakita Artisan, you may select a third chosen art from your School Skills.

Rank 3: The Perfect Art

The final secret of the Master Artisans is a level of excellence that transcends the normal bounds of mortal capability, producing art that literally comes to life. Once per month when creating a work or performance with one of your chosen arts, you may spend two Void Points and then roll [chosen art] / Awareness at TN 50. With a success, the art comes to life—birds fly off a painting, the characters of a play manifest on the stage, the statue of a Fortune comes to life, and so forth.

The specific nature of the manifestation, and what action it takes after appearing, is chosen by the GM—but it will always be helpful to you, and will usually be something awe-inspiring and extraordinary. The manifestation normally lasts only a few minutes, but if you successfully call four Raises on the skill roll it will last for one hour.

New Kata: Strength of the Crane

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Schools:** Any Crane Bushi
- **Effect:** When fighting with a sword or spear you add an amount equal to your Honor Rank –3 (minimum 1) to your Armor TN.

New Crane Ancestors

Asahina [9 points]

A powerful and talented Phoenix Clan Fire shugenja who forsook the ways of violence and married into the Crane Clan, Asahina became one of the Empire's foremost advocates of peace. His family maintains his traditions to this day. Asahina's spiritual guidance grants you a +1k0 bonus on Meditation rolls and a +1k1 bonus to Spell Casting Rolls when casting a non-damaging spell with the Craft or Defense keywords.

- **Demands:** Asahina expects you to live up to his ideals of absolute pacifism. If you ever willingly and deliberately harm a living creature, even a Tainted creature, he forsakes you.

Doji Hayaku [7 points]

Doji's youngest son, the founder of the Daidoji family, was a skilled warrior who spent two years hunting for his lost sister Konishiko. He ultimately retrieved her sword (and her soul) from the Shadowlands, but in the process he lost his voice and his hair turned white. Hayaku's guidance grants you a +1k1 bonus to Lore: Shadowlands rolls and a Free Raise on all attacks with Spears.

- Demands: You must honor Hayaku's sacrifices by dyeing your hair white. You can never abandon, betray, or endanger a member of the Doji family (or your charge if you are a yojimbo)—if you do, Hayaku abandons you in fury.

Chapter Three

The Dragon Clan

A Letter from Ide Kin in the Year 1171

My sister,

I write you from Shiro Kitsuki, where I have arrived to take up my new post as diplomat for our clan. It has been a strange and exhilarating experience, and I wonder if I can properly convey it in mere words. Of course we have both always listened avidly to stories of the other Great Clans, tales of the Kitsu family and their strange connection to the ancestors, of the Phoenix samurai and their strange pacifistic traditions, so different from any other bushi, even of the Mantis who supposedly hold control over the sea itself. But I confess I seldom put much faith in the stories about the Dragon Clan.

That is, until I came face to face with them.

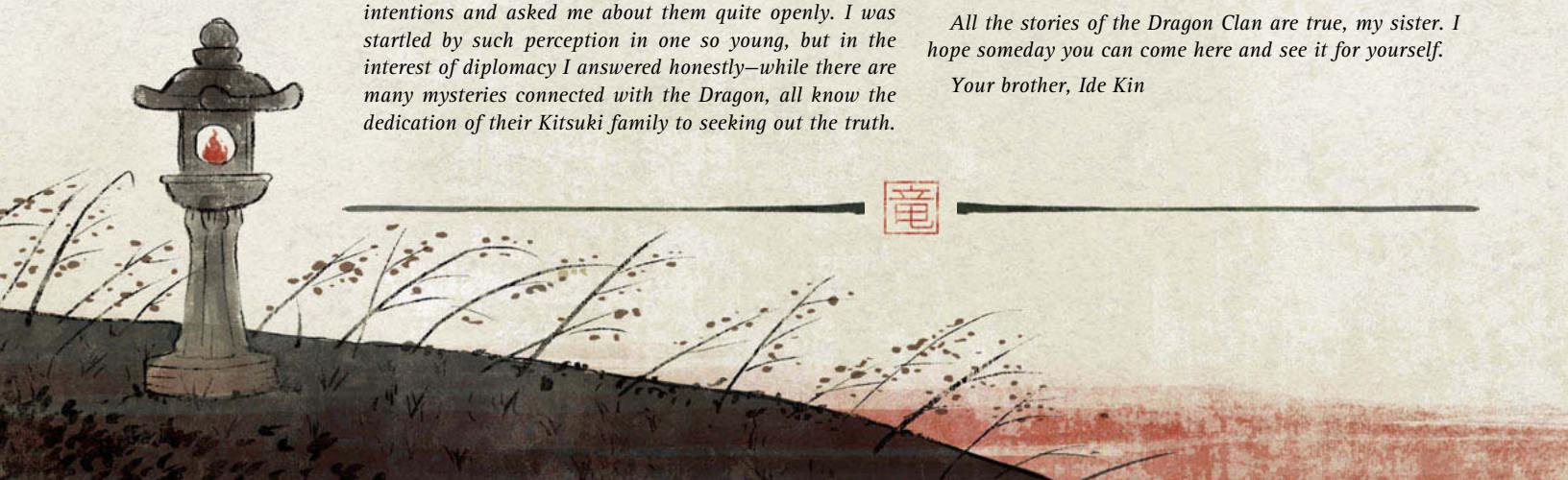
When I reached the village outside Shiro Kitsuki, I stopped for a brief meal before presenting myself at the gates. The climb up the mountain pass had been an arduous one and I was famished. While I was eating my noodles, however, an argument arose across the street between two merchants, something to do with the value of a group of items—I did not pay much attention to the undignified topic. However, a young Kitsuki maiden took unexpected interest in this dispute. Within a minute, she called the guards and had one of the merchants arrested—the guards accepted her judgment without question.

I was intrigued by her behavior and decided to invite her over for tea, hoping to gain some insight into my new hosts. Much to my surprise, she immediately perceived my intentions and asked me about them quite openly. I was startled by such perception in one so young, but in the interest of diplomacy I answered honestly—while there are many mysteries connected with the Dragon, all know the dedication of their Kitsuki family to seeking out the truth. She explained quite confidently that the arrested merchant had been lying about being the vassal of a Yasuki. She believed him to be a spy from the Scorpion, sent here to stir up trouble and cause unrest between the Crab and Dragon. I asked her, in the most polite manner possible, how she could possibly be so sure of this. She answered with a lengthy and largely incomprehensible discussion of the merchant's facial expressions and body language, as well as a side dissertation on how his coins were from the Scorpion lands and not from the Crab, and even made mention of the style of stitching in his kimono. Altogether the whole discussion was quite over my head, though I confess I was not a little awed by such intelligence and insight in one so young. And I can now say truthfully that I have encountered the notorious Kitsuki's Method in action.

A week after I arrived, I was permitted to ascend higher into the mountains to pay my respects to the Mirumoto. As I climbed the road through the twisting peaks, I suddenly came upon one of the Tattooed Men, standing on a jagged peak above the road. It seemed like he had appeared out of nowhere! No sooner did I perceive him than he leapt into the air, plunging downward in a dive that carried him over the road and down out of sight. I was so startled that I confess I doubted my own sanity for a moment. When I finally arrived at the castle I found another Tattooed Man at the gates; mustering my courage, I asked him about the incident. He replied with a smile, "Because the sun must rise as the rain must fall." I pleaded my lack of understanding, but no more would he say; I inquired with the Mirumoto about the whole affair, and they would only say that jumping off of mountains is the least I can expect from the Tattooed Men.

All the stories of the Dragon Clan are true, my sister. I hope someday you can come here and see it for yourself.

Your brother, Ide Kin



History of the Dragon Clan

When the Kami fell to the mortal world and competed to choose who would rule over them, one stood apart. Togashi held the gift of prophetic foresight, and already knew who would win; he stood aside and simply watched the tournament silently. After Hantei won as foreseen, he charged his enigmatic brother to continue watching—not only his brothers and sisters, but also the rest of the Empire. The Dragon would be the Emperor's impartial eye, a part of the Empire yet forever set apart from it. Togashi accepted his brother's command, for he had foreseen much of what was to come; he departed for the northern mountains of Rokugan to find his home.

Unlike his fellow Kami, Togashi did not actively recruit vassals, but nevertheless men and women from all over the newborn Empire searched for him—some because they fit in nowhere else, some because they needed answers to questions nobody else could understand. Togashi accepted all of them, offering them a place at his side in what would come to be called the Dragon Clan.

Unlike the other Great Clans, the Dragon do not have a ruling house descended from their founding Kami. Most of those who joined the early Dragon Clan swore fealty to one or the other of his two most prominent followers, the warrior Mirumoto and the shugenja Agasha. Only a few felt the call to serve Togashi personally, and they took his name as their own—but they formed a monastic order of tattooed mystics called *ise zumi*, rather than a conventional samurai family. Their order had no lineage, no written history, and they seldom married. Togashi tattooed them with his own blood, granting them strange and unpredictable powers based on the forms the tattoos took—forms which reflected the inner nature of each *ise zumi*.

Mirumoto and the Way of Niten

"I have two swords in my belt, why should I let one of them rest?"

- Mirumoto

Mirumoto was a ferocious warrior, cunning tactician, and lethal duelist of renown and terrifying skill. He was not a handsome man and is usually represented in modern art and theater with scars crisscrossing his face, representing both his poor looks and the many battles and duels he fought. As a young man Mirumoto was known to be bold to the point of brashness and fought many duels over trivial matters, but after he became a follower of Togashi he

Excerpts from Niten

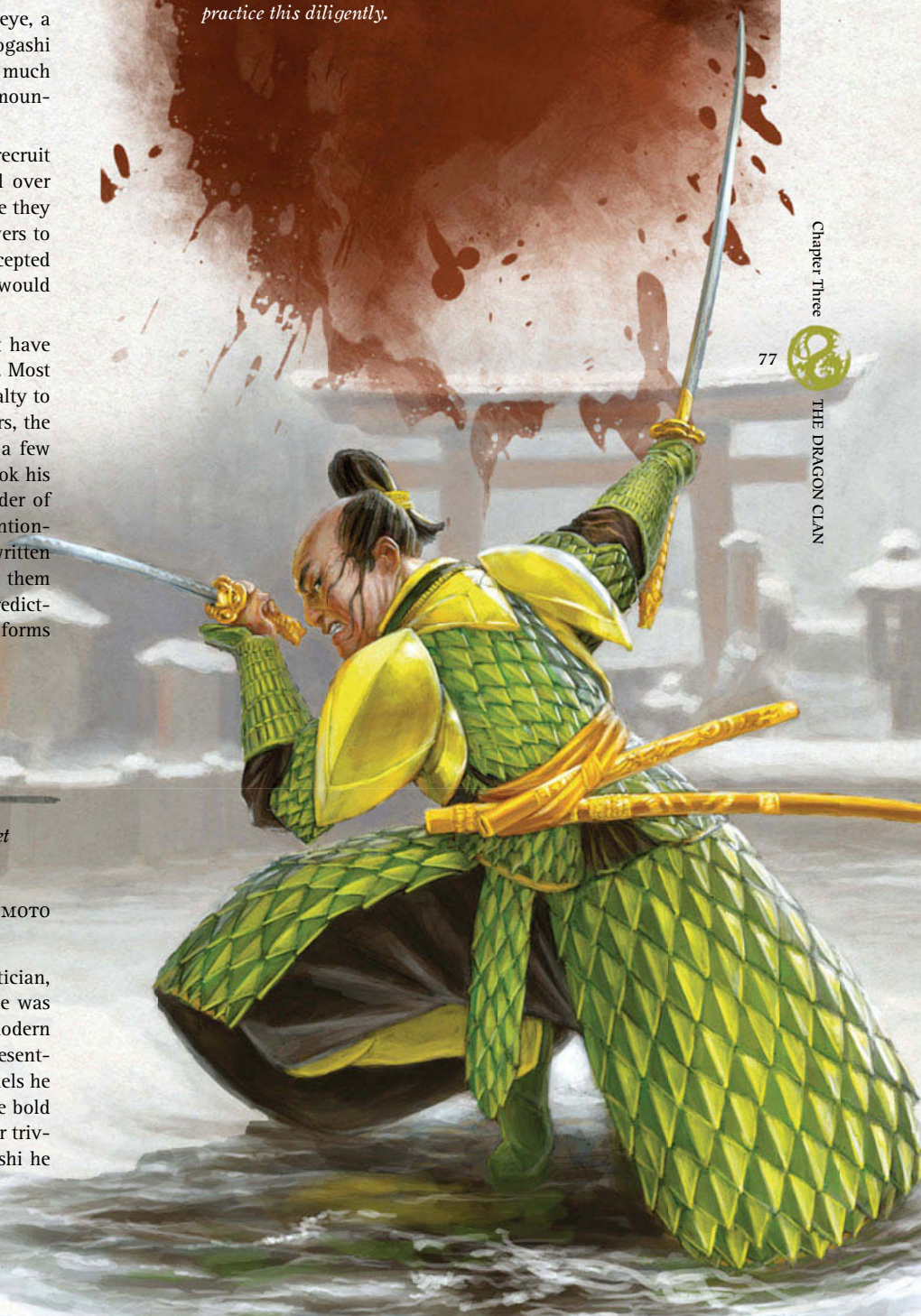
What You Show

There are two concepts taught by Shinsei: "What you show" and "What you do not show." Strategy is nothing more than knowing how to deceive. Truth is in the killing.

Practice showing something different than your intentions. Practice as often as you can. Then, when the need arises, you can do it without effort or concentration. When it is time to draw the sword, your mind should be on nothing else. Hold your swords out of position, to show your ignorance or vainglory, and anticipate his half-hearted attack.

Seeing the Surface

Do not be deceived by the surface. Learn to see what you are not meant to see. Watch what your opponent cannot hide from you. Do not look at his eyes. A man can always lie with his eyes. Watch his shoulders, his belly, his breathing. Watch all of these. Keep a broad mind. A man can fool you with one, but if your mind is broad, he cannot fool you with all of them. You must practice this diligently.



began to change. As he aged he discovered a sense of harmony, shaved his head, and lived a monastic life, studying poetry and art as well as swordsmanship—an oddly mixed legacy of ferocity and piety which he passed to his sons and his followers.

It is said Mirumoto never lost a fight, and he practiced a unique swordsmanship style using both the wakizashi and the katana simultaneously instead of the single blade favored by others. The other clans saw this as inappropriate or possibly even cowardly, and the followers of Kakita were especially outraged by it. Mirumoto cared little for the opinions of others, however, and taught his ways to any willing to follow him. He wrote down many of his methods and philosophies; his son, Mirumoto Hojatsu, expanded these writings into the book called *Niten* (which means variously "two swords," "two heavens," or "two swords fall from heaven"). *Niten* is considered one of Rokugan's two classic works on swordsmanship, alongside Kakita's *The Sword*, and is still studied avidly centuries later.

Agasha and Her Studies

Agasha contrasted with Mirumoto in almost every way save for the fact that she was drawn to follow Togashi just as he was. She was a peaceful inquisitive woman who sought to understand the world around her. She kept journals of all her experiences and observations, writing down everything she saw and learned. Agasha was especially captivated by the natural world and often spent days at a time in forests and other remote places, observing the plants and animals, drawing pictures of them, and writing everything down. Unlike many other early shugenja (such as those of the Phoenix) she was not secretive and freely published her works, distributing them to other clans. In many ways her journals were works of art, with beautiful pictures, eloquent text, and deeply compelling poetry. However, they were also works of profound observation and scientific inquiry. Agasha believed the whole world was a puzzle to be solved, and she filled her journals with experimental results and strange alchemical symbols which her followers would take centuries to understand.

Agasha did share the pacifism which characterized many early shugenja, and opposed violence in any form. She once commented, "Humanity is the only creature that argues and the only creature that can choose not to." However, some years after the First War she was kidnapped by a roving band of goblins and carried away toward the Shadowlands. Mirumoto's son Hojatsu rescued her, and thereafter she acknowledged that the creatures of Jigoku might form an exception to her pacifistic principles.

In subsequent centuries many plays and books have portrayed Agasha's rescue and some of them have even depicted a romance between her and Hojatsu. This is highly improbable, to say the least—by that time she was in her fifties, while Hojatsu was only nineteen. Certainly no historical evidence has ever arisen to support such a tale.

The First War, Shinsei, and the Day of Thunder

"Choose your weapon, brother," Fu Leng snarled. Togashi answered: "The people of Rokugan."

– From a story of the First War

When the legions of Fu Leng assailed Rokugan, the small army of the Dragon Clan took the field alongside the rest of Hantei's forces. Togashi understood the threat from his brother better than any of his siblings, and he knew the Empire would have no future if the Dark Kami prevailed. But the strength and bravery of the Dragon samurai was not enough, and it seemed Fu Leng's victory might be inevitable.

The sudden arrival of the Little Teacher, Shinsei, offered hope to Rokugan—but not to Togashi himself. Disturbed by the implications of the small man's teachings, Togashi left halfway through the long conversation between Shinsei and the Emperor. He sat alone, struggling to meditate on the meaning of Shinsei's words. Days passed with his clan leaderless while Togashi remained so deep in thought that he forgot to eat or drink, even when his followers placed dishes at his side. Finally Shinsei came to meet with him. "I will not leave until I understand," Togashi declared. The

Togashi, the Scorpion, and Hoshi

There is one other group that knew of Togashi's secret. In the third century the daughter of the Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Kuninoko, set out to infiltrate the Dragon Clan. She succeeded... but the price was high. She came back to the Scorpion with her eyes blind and her hair filled with white streaks, and told her father the truth: Togashi was still alive, still ruling the Dragon. She also told him she had to return to the mountains, for she was pregnant with Togashi's child. Reluctantly the Scorpion lord let his daughter depart, certain he would never see her again. He was right.

Kuninoko's son was Togashi Hoshi, a near-immortal half-man and half-dragon. He lived secretly within the innermost holdings of the Dragon Clan, but after many centuries of investigation the Scorpion learned of his existence. When the Scorpion Champion confronted Togashi on the matter, he agreed to share many of his secrets with the Scorpion—but not all of them. "Remember this, Scorpion," he said. "The only secrets you know are those I will tell you."

While Hoshi's origins sowed bitterness between the two clans, the incident also forged an oddly close relationship between them—for the Scorpion now knew the Dragon Clan's deepest secret, while Togashi's prophetic gifts allowed him to know all of theirs. The two clans clashed often, especially due to the later activities of the Kitsuki, but on those occasions when their objectives matched they could cooperate quite well.

little man answered, "Neither will I," and stepped over the circle of food and drink to sit beside Togashi.

Togashi's eyes were opened; he saw that his selfish quest for enlightenment had brought suffering to those around him. The Kami smiled and nodded, and at that moment a nightingale flew overhead and dropped a plum into his hand. Togashi and Shinsei ate the plum and the other food which encircled them, and then Togashi sent Mirumoto to serve as the Dragon Clan Thunder. Mirumoto died, but Fu Leng was defeated, saving the Empire. Togashi returned to his mountains with a deep respect for the ways of Shinsei, and he and his tattooed followers threw themselves into the study of enlightenment.

Togashi's Reign

At the dawn of the second century, Togashi's death was announced to the Empire, and he was succeeded by his son—although no wife or marriage had ever been proclaimed. In truth, Togashi remained alive. He knew his brother Fu Leng would one day return to threaten the Empire once more, and he believed he must remain alive until then. In order to avoid questions from the rest of Rokugan, he continued to falsify his death roughly every sixty years, and thus the Dragon were led by a succession of Clan Champions who were all, ultimately, the same person. Togashi did not actually exercise much direct control over the clan, and most day-to-day leadership was entrusted to the Mirumoto family.

Exactly how Togashi maintained himself within the mortal realm is a matter of conjecture, and indeed the very fact that he did so was unknown outside of the Tattooed Order until the Second Day of the Thunder in the twelfth century. Some investigations suggest Togashi actually switched bodies, transferring his soul into the body of special Tattooed Men known as *tamashii*—men born with the destiny to host the soul of another. Other theories suggest this was a ruse; they claim Togashi was not merely a Kami but actually a Celestial Dragon in truth, and thus immortal, able to remain in the same physical body throughout his twelve-hundred-year history. Ultimately, only Togashi himself knew the truth.

Togashi's distant, hands-off rule of the Dragon Clan encouraged a credo of individuality throughout the clan. Each samurai of the Dragon Clan was left to find his own path through life so long as it did not conflict with the principles of Bushido. The Dragon Clan soon became known as a clan of odd and enigmatic hermits. Tales circulated about the bizarre habits of particular Dragon, such as Mirumoto Genkoru (who spent most of his life breeding the perfect pet cats) or Agasha Shiriko (who collected a

series of pebbles from all over the Empire). And of course the *ise zumi* were a truly strange and unpredictable group, not only in their behavior but also in their magical tattoos, which appeared completely otherworldly to the rest of Rokugan. The Dragon cared little about the opinions of other Rokugani and focused on their own personal quests for understanding, whether of the soul, the elements, or the blade.

Likewise, the Dragon Clan's public actions during the long reign of the Hantei Dynasty seldom made sense to the other clans. Togashi only sent his samurai to act when he felt the welfare of the whole Empire was at risk. The armies of the Dragon would suddenly appear and strike, only to depart without explanation right after the battle—often leaving offended and puzzled allies behind. Their limited numbers of diplomats and courtiers behaved in much the same way, or simply stood aloof from politics and focused on art, scholarship, and personal friendships. In reality, the Dragon Clan's inexplicable actions were often for the greater good. They helped prevent the Gozoku Alliance from assassinating the Emperor and later helped Hantei Yugozohime reclaim the throne from the conspiracy. They protected the Steel Chrysanthemum from external rebellion, preserving the sacred rule of the Hantei for the rest of the Empire, and allowing the Seppun to deal with him as a purely internal Imperial matter.

Togashi's knowledge of the future often caused him to hesitate to act, fearing unpredictable results, but it also sometimes caused him to behave in strange and indirect ways in order to serve higher purposes only he could perceive. For example, during the Battle of Kenson Gakka in the sixth century a Dragon army appeared uninvited to attack the Scorpion, retreating just after the fight. The Scorpion had their revenge—the general who led the Mirumoto army died some years later in mysterious circumstances. But a young peasant boy in Kenson Gakka reacted to the change in his town's allegiance by joining a nearby monastery. From there he went on to become Heisho, one of the wisest masters of the Brotherhood, whose efforts later saved hundreds of peasants when the Lion lands were stricken by famine.

The Emergence of the Kitsuki

Early in the ninth century the Dragon acquired a fourth family through the actions of a singular genius named Agasha Kitsuki. A mediocre shugenja but possessed of a keen mind and perception, Kitsuki was admonished many times for his researches into mundane topics such as natural phenomena and the behavior of his fellow samurai. His sensei eventually threatened him with expulsion from the school—and was found dead two weeks later. Accused of the murder, Kitsuki refused to confess and asked for one day to clear his name. By the end of that day, he had found the murderer and gained a confession. For this deed he was appointed as a yoriki to a clan magistrate.

Within a few years, Kitsuki averted an assassination attempt on an important Mirumoto officer. As a reward for this deed he was granted the right to found his own family. He pursued his skills of insight, deduction, and investigation with even greater vigor and drew like-minded

samurai to join him. The Kitsuki Method, a style of investigation that focused on logical deduction, indirect physical evidence, and intuitive judgment of human behavior, was his legacy. The Kitsuki soon became useful to the clan as a whole, first as magistrates and later as diplomats, although their strange methods and disdain for conventional Rokugani standards of evidence made them even more controversial in court than the rest of their clan. The Scorpion Clan in particular soon developed an intense dislike of the Kitsuki, whose investigative prowess disrupted many Scorpion plots and stratagems which might otherwise have succeeded.

The Clan War and its Aftermath

The Clan War and its consequences changed the Dragon Clan forever, in ways no other clan could truly match. The Dragon in general performed admirably during the Clan War, fighting the Shadowlands alongside the ronin army of the future Emperor Toturi I. However, the Mirumoto daimyo, Mirumoto Hitomi, took the deadly artifact known as the Obsidian Hand to replace her own hand, lost in a duel with her bitter enemy Hida Yakamo. The Hand, imbued with both the madness of Lord Moon and the corrupting touch of the Lying Darkness, gave her great power but also threatened her sanity and identity.

On the Second Day of Thunder, Hitomi was chosen to represent the Dragon. Togashi himself, now taking the false name of Togashi Yokuni, accompanied the Thunders to their confrontation with Fu Leng and was mortally wounded after fighting his brother in draconic form. At Togashi's dying command, Hitomi used the Obsidian Hand to rip the last of the Black Scrolls from his heart, where he had kept it hidden for a thousand years. Opening the final Scroll make Fu Leng's power complete, but also made him mortal, trapped into the Emperor's body he had possessed—as Togashi had foreseen a thousand years before. The Obsidian Hand absorbed a large part of Togashi's power and possibly even his soul, making Hitomi instantly into the new Dragon Clan Champion. But this new power also tipped her over the border into madness.

Hitomi's reign was brief and chaotic, characterized by madness and violence. She created her own tattooed order, the Hitomi, and massacred those who did not bow to her. Togashi's own son Hoshi fled the clan, gathering his own order of tattooed men to oppose Hitomi's reign. Even worse, most of the Agasha family defected to the Phoenix Clan, leaving only a small remnant under daimyo Agasha Tamori that eventually became the Tamori family.

Hitomi finally overcame the malignant power of the Obsidian Hand and atoned for her errors by defeating Lord Onnotangu and ascending to the Heavens as Lady Moon. However, her rule had shaken the Dragon Clan to its foundations. Hoshi, the half-mortal son of Togashi, reluctantly took control of the clan and formed the tattooed men into three orders bearing the names of Togashi, Hitomi, and himself.

The Dragon Clan in Modern Times

In the year 1159, Hoshi ascended to the Heavens and became the Celestial Wanderer, traveling endlessly through the skies just as he had traveled during his exile from the Dragon Clan. His son Togashi Satsu became Champion of the Dragon Clan. Togashi's soul haunted Satsu, advising him and trying to retain control over the Dragon, but in truth the time of the Kami had passed and with it the traditional role of the Dragon Clan. At the command of the Seven Fortunes, Togashi departed for Tengoku and Satsu took back full control of himself and the destiny of his clan. He folded the Hoshi and Hitomi orders back into the ranks of the Togashi and chose to officially end the Togashi's nominal rule over the clan, passing full authority to the Mirumoto. The Dragon Clan had spent a thousand years and more holding itself apart from the Empire, watching and waiting for Fu Leng's return. Now that time had passed, and the Dragon needed to forge a new role for themselves.

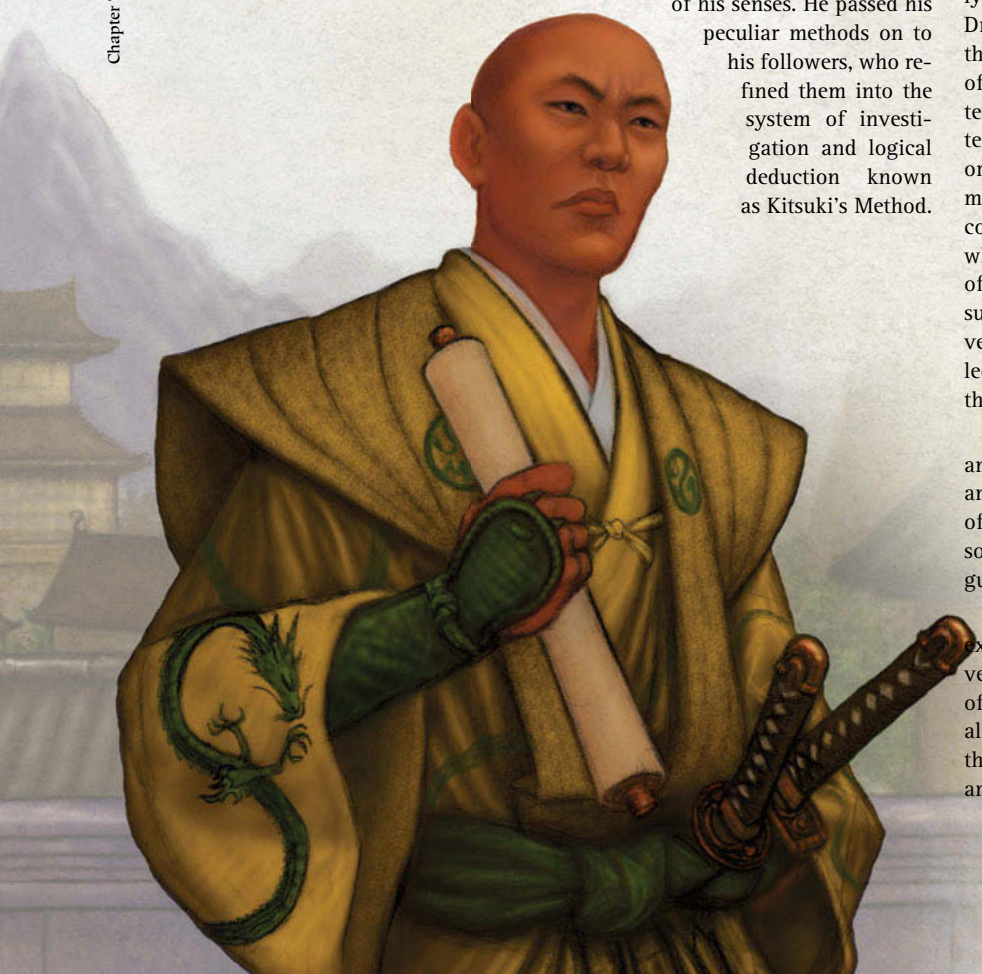
The ascension of Kitsuki Iweko to become the divinely mandated Empress Iweko, founder of a new dynasty, brought a final dramatic change to the modern Dragon Clan. Togashi Satsu became the Voice of the Empress, leaving his clan in the capable hands of its new Champion, Mirumoto Kei. Under her leadership the Dragon entered the new dynasty uncertain of their true role and purpose, yet unchanged in their eternal search for the mysteries and truths of the universe, closer to the rest of the Empire yet still in many ways separate from it.

Families of the Dragon Clan

The Dragon Clan is quite unusual in that the family named for its founder, Togashi, has no direct blood connection to the Kami—indeed, little blood connection even within its own ranks, for the tattooed men are recruited from throughout the clan and even from elsewhere in the Empire. Very few of them marry or have children. The other founding families, the Mirumoto and Agasha (and the Agasha's later descendent, the Tamori), are more traditional in their structure and leadership, although their individual customs are still unusual. The Kitsuki family are a relatively modern off-shoot of the Agasha, but one whose peculiar methods have made them in many ways iconic for the oddities of the Dragon as a whole.

The Kitsuki Family

Founded in the year 820, the Kitsuki are often considered the most traditional of the Dragon Clan's families by their own clan... and the least traditional family by outsiders. Their founder, Agasha Kitsuki, was gifted with a brilliant mind and the ability to work out a problem using only the evidence of his senses. He passed his peculiar methods on to his followers, who refined them into the system of investigation and logical deduction known as Kitsuki's Method.



The Kitsuki Family Mon

The Kitsuki mon depicts a dragon encircling and clinging to a lightning bolt. The lightning is represented as a swirling maze, showing the family's fascination with puzzles and mysteries; however, symbolically lightning also cuts through the darkness, revealing what could not be seen before. It is also representative of Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Thunder, who brings the wrath of the gods to those who deserve justice.

The Method relies on all sorts of investigative techniques which the rest of Rokugan considers improper or even heretical. For example, the Kitsuki do not automatically trust a samurai's word, but instead seek to ferret out the samurai's true motives and intentions. Their willingness to examine minute physical evidence and draw logical inferences from it is also outrageous to the Empire, which considers only the most obvious and direct physical evidence to have bearing on the truth of a criminal case. A typical Rokugani who sees a Crane-colored obi bead lying next to a murder victim will assume the killer is a Crane and begin questioning any Crane in the vicinity. A Kitsuki will wonder how the obi bead came to be there, why it is so conveniently a Crane bead, why the killing should be blamed on the Crane when the victim died of a poisonous herb which does not grow in Crane lands, and why the victim's widow seems so eager to see a Crane take the blame for her husband's well-timed death.

Within the ranks of the Dragon Clan, the Kitsuki Method is well-respected and members of the family frequently serve as clan magistrates as well as representing the Dragon in court. However, the rest of the Empire views the Kitsuki with unease and distaste, and seldom if ever offers respect to their methods—for most Rokugani, the testimony of a samurai is unquestionable, and the Kitsuki tendency to undermine such testimony verges on dishonorable. Kitsuki magistrates in the lands of other clans are more likely to encounter obstruction and disrespect than cooperation—especially in Scorpion lands, of course. Even when the Scorpion and Dragon enjoy one of their periods of good relations, such amity seldom extends to the Kitsuki. Indeed, the Kitsuki are known for their extensive investigations into the "ninja myth," a preoccupation which led to their learning a great deal about the deadly threat of the Lying Darkness in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

While the Kitsuki are best known for their investigative and political skills, there is no great shortage of warriors among them. Indeed, their courtiers often study the ways of the sword. There is even a faction with the family, the so-called Justicars, who use iaijutsu duels to prove the guilt of their suspects.

Kitsuki do occasionally become shugenja when they exhibit the talent for it, but the family as a whole puts very little stock in magical studies. They prefer the powers of the mind and the senses over the sometimes-mercurial kami. Physically, they tend toward the bland looks of their founder—there have sometimes been great romancers among the Dragon, but they are seldom Kitsuki.

The Mirumoto Family

"I have spent many years on the road, and I have fought forty-seven duels, and I have never lost."

– Mirumoto Hojatsu, son of Mirumoto

The Mirumoto are descended from a proud warrior who created the Niten method of swordsmanship and died fighting Fu Leng. Mirumoto's son Hojatsu perfected his father's techniques and died in a battlefield duel with his life-long rival Kakita (see the Crane chapter, page 47, for details). The rivalry between the Mirumoto and Kakita has endured through all the centuries since, albeit usually with more courtesy than other such grudges in the Empire.

Although the Kami Togashi ruled the Dragon for over a thousand years, in practical terms the Mirumoto were and are the face of the clan, dealing with most day-to-day matters. The family is by far the largest in the clan and in many ways the most conventional and traditional in its overall behavior, although it shares in full the Dragon Clan's tendency to encourage individualistic attitudes. The Mirumoto are predominantly bushi, and like most bushi they prefer to seek glory in duels and on the battlefield—although the Dragon Clan's tradition of isolation offers them fewer opportunities for this than other clans. They venerate their ancestors and the Code of Bushido, and never allow their family name to be tarnished. All that being said, the Mirumoto can still be baffling to outsiders. They tend to have a poetic viewpoint on life—seeing things in terms of elements, fate, and kharma, and using metaphors heavily in daily life. Almost all Mirumoto study poetry and compose haiku spontaneously whenever the occasion inspires them. They also tend to be masters of understatement and seldom explain themselves to outsiders, preferring to let others form their own opinions.

Most Mirumoto adopt the classical samurai topknot, although a few shave their heads entirely to mark their devotion to the Tao. Some follow an ascetic path, entirely forsaking mundane possessions and spending their lives in meditation, religious study, and martial practice. Tattoos are not uncommon among them, but they tend to keep theirs hidden (as opposed to the exposed tattoos of the Togashi and Tamori). Every Mirumoto tattoo has a story behind it, but such stories are never told—to do so is believed to invite bad luck.

The Mirumoto are also unusual among bushi families for their understanding of the ways of the kami. While the Shiba learn to protect their clan shugenja, the Mirumoto learn to fight along with them—for in the Dragon armies, shugenja and bushi often serve side-by-side. A Mirumoto student may sometimes have a deeper understanding of the Elements than a shugenja from another clan.

Most of the Mirumoto still train in the fighting style of their founding ancestor, the Niten two-sword technique. While often ill-regarded by other clans, who consider it wild, unfocused, and disrespectful of Rokugani traditions, the Niten technique is actually quite sophisticated and powerful, and its potency has won it a grudging respect from the rest of the Empire. Mirumoto bushi are considered to be rivals to the Kakita for the title of best duelist, though of course the Kakita insist their ways are superior. Some of the Mirumoto also study archery, and the famed Dragon's Flame dojo produces archers who can occasionally rival the Tsuruchi.

However, Mirumoto training goes well beyond the blade and bow: it includes meditation and intensive studying of the Tao, as well as poetry and art. Indeed, some of the Mirumoto have chosen to focus their swordsmanship studies on these more esoteric domains of the spirit and the Tao rather than the straightforward practicality of the Niten method. This diverse approach is even reflected in gempukku customs: many Mirumoto dojo, in both the Niten and Taoist schools, require their students to write a poem before gempukku, usually a meditation on the student's understanding of Shinsei's famous answer: "Neither will I."

The Mirumoto Family Mon

The mon of the Mirumoto Family is a dragon encircling and holding a sheathed daisho, the blades crossed. For a thousand years, the Mirumoto samurai have employed their patriarch's technique, and it is recognized—if not always respected—all across Rokugan.

The Tamori Family/ The Agasha Family

The Agasha family served as the Dragon Clan's shugenja for over a thousand years, pursuing their founder's boundless curiosity about the world and its mysteries. They embraced all manner of unusual practices, including the study of how the different Elements connected to each other, ultimately giving rise to multi-elemental magic. In the fifth century, Agasha Daikoju managed to decipher the family founder's alchemical notes, giving rise to a new field of study in which the Agasha prevailed over all other families. Agasha alchemy produced many innovations, including a variety of useful items and potions (known as *kagaku*) and the eventual development of *hanabi*, Rokugani fireworks, which are used at almost every festival in the modern Empire. The family's understanding of the physical realities of the Elements also led to their becoming very skilled crafters, and Shiro Agasha became home to a great forge known as the Agasha Foundry—and re-named in modern times as the Tamori Furnace.

Like all Dragon families, the Agasha were unconventional, individualistic, and creative in their approach to life. This caused them to study the ways of battle as well as magic, and many of their family trained alongside the Mirumoto and served in the Dragon armies. However, it was also this iconoclastic and self-willed nature which caused them to leave the Dragon Clan during the tyrannical reign of Hitomi in the mid-twelfth century.

Only a small number of the Agasha, led by their daimyo Agasha Tamori, remained within the Dragon Clan after this incident. Tamori was deeply embittered by the perceived betrayal of his followers, and his rage eventually led him to succumb to the Taint and become the Dark Oracle of Fire, a monstrous supernatural being. In the wake of this incident, the Dragon Agasha were weak indeed; they claimed the Tamori name to distinguish themselves from the "traitor" Agasha in the Phoenix Clan, but given Agasha Tamori's heinous acts few in the rest of the Empire believed the name was suitable. It was Tamori Shaitung, daughter of Agasha Tamori, who proved the new family was worthy of respect. Filled with anger—anger at her father for betraying the Empire, anger at the Agasha for betraying the Dragon, anger at the Phoenix for shielding the Agasha—she became one of the most powerful Earth shugenja of her time and transformed her followers into a militant and aggressive family which served the Dragon loyally and well. When she managed to stand off the entire Phoenix Elemental Council in battle, Rokugan was forced to recognize the power and worth of the new Dragon family. In modern times Shaitung is considered the founder of her line, while her blasphemous father is all but forgotten.

The Tamori family retained many of the Agasha traditions, especially the focus on alchemy and crafting, but largely abandoned the multi-elemental magic still pursued by their Phoenix cousins. They raised their smithing to new heights, and many modern Mirumoto bushi wear blades created by the Tamori. They also intensified their long-standing commitment to fighting alongside the Mirumoto on the front lines, using both blades and the alchemical potions and devices for which they are justly famous. Quite a few Tamori have been known to wear a katana, including Tamori Shaitung herself.

Like many Dragon the Tamori see little need to explain themselves to outsiders, preferring to let their actions speak for them. They tend to be stubborn and bullheaded, and while not all of them are violent they are universally intense and unbending in their choices and actions. At

The Agasha and Tamori Family Mons

The traditional mon of the Agasha family is a dragon encircling and clinging to a pomegranate. The symbolism here is based on the nature of the pomegranate: on the outside the fruit is simple, much like an apple or pear, but once opened it reveals its innumerable seeds—each of which represents a separate possibility, a different potential.

After the Agasha defection, the new Tamori family adopted its own mon: it shows a dragon flying through the sky above a snow-capped mountain peak, symbolizing both the family's resurgence and its loyalty to its Dragon home in the mountains.

The Hitomi and the Hoshi

In the early twelfth century the Dragon Clan Champion Hitomi fell under the influence of the Obsidian Hand and invited the mad Tainted monk Kokujin to join the Dragon Clan. At his urging she created her own order of monks, the Hitomi, tattooing them with her blood and condemning any who stayed loyal to Togashi. The Kami's son Hoshi reacted by founding his own order, the Hoshi, and tattooing them as well. For a time the Hoshi and Togashi joined forces to fight against the Hitomi order. Eventually, however, Lady Hitomi recovered her sanity and departed to become Lady Moon, leaving the clan in Hoshi's hands. Kokujin fled and devoted himself to darker and more destructive actions, eventually perishing decades later.

Togashi Hoshi chose to minimize further strife within the Dragon by officially accepting all three family names as part of the clan, each group pursuing enlightenment in its own way. The Togashi *ise zumi* remained the most numerous and influential group. The violent and aggressive Hitomi, who worshipped Lady Moon and sometimes manifested tattoos spontaneously from her blessing, were primarily *kikage zumi*, while the wandering, mystical Hoshi were mostly *tsurui zumi*. Each "family" had its own daimyo and the three divergent groups were able to serve the clan side by side with relatively little conflict, first under Togashi Hoshi and later under his son, Togashi Satsu.

The Order of Hitomi was the most feared and misunderstood of the three, embracing the *kikage zumi* philosophy of attaining enlightenment through physical and mental hardship. Their mon showed a dragon coiling around a flame-wreathed, two-thirds-eclipsed moon, symbolizing their devotion to Lady Hitomi.

The Hoshi, the smallest of the three Orders during their brief tenure, embraced the *tsurui zumi* philosophy of enlightenment through spiritual balance and harmony, denying the flesh in favor of the soul. To them patience was the greatest of all virtues; power and wisdom were of little worth to one who could not master patience. Their mon showed a dragon's face head-on with two human hands clasped in prayer before it, symbolizing their devotion to the ways of the spirit.

In the late twelfth century, the spiritual crisis that followed the death of the Toturi Dynasty caused disruptions within the tattooed orders. Satsu eventually came to the conclusion that the three divergent families were creating a powerful and dangerous spiritual imbalance. He ordered the Hitomi and Hoshi names ended and their members merged back into the original Togashi order. This largely resolved the problem, but left a legacy of stronger divergent traditions within the tattooed order—the violent *kikage zumi* and spiritual *tsurui zumi* were more numerous thereafter.

their gempukku, they are asked a single question: why do they wish to bear the Tamori name? Rare is the student who does not impress his sensei with his sincerity and conviction.

Like the Mirumoto, the Tamori (and their Agasha ancestors before them) have a taste for decorative tattoos, although the modern Tamori have a tendency to display their tattoos more openly than most. The Tamori consider their tattoos to show both individuality and familial endurance, and do not see the point in keeping them hidden.

The Tamori inherited the Agasha lands and holdings from their predecessors and for the most part manage them much as before, although they have made a few changes. Notably, several new martial dojo have been built, and many Brotherhood monasteries dot the land (as Shaitung asked for the Brotherhood's assistance in her early years as daimyo). This only further tightened the link between the Dragon Clan and the followers of the Tao.

The Tattooed Men: The Togashi and Off-Shoots

The Togashi are not a family so much as a spiritual brotherhood, founded by the first followers of the Kami Togashi at the dawn of the Empire. Togashi only ever had one child, his son Hoshi, and Hoshi did not have a child of his own until the mid-twelfth century. The Togashi "family" was instead created through adoption, as those men and women who swore fealty to the tattooed order and accepted Togashi's mystical tattoos were permitted to take his name for their own.

The Togashi are monks, but as the scions of a Kami they also hold status as samurai, an odd social position which

The Togashi Mon

The mon of the Togashi is a dragon encircling and holding a plum blossom. This is of course a reference to the story of how Togashi broke his fast with a plum after Shinsei's famous words: "*Neither will I.*"

sometimes leads to friction with other clans. Of course, for most Togashi it is rare to actually leave their mountain home and interact with the rest of Rokugan. The Togashi are best known for their strange tattoos, which grant them odd mystical powers—this is actually due to the tattoo ink being laced with either the blood of Togashi himself or with the blood of a fellow tattooed man who has lived for over two centuries. Needless to say, the Togashi do not share the secret of their tattoos' power with the rest of the Empire, since such practices could easily be mistaken for maho.

Togashi monks for the most part tend to stay at home in the Dragon lands, studying and training their minds and bodies, pursuing the quest for enlightenment. The Togashi consider all their actions to be part of this quest, and more than a few of their number have attained enlightenment over the centuries. All of them are ascetics to a greater or lesser degree, but some do leave the mountains from time to time, exploring the Empire and seeking wisdom and vision in unlikely places.

Although most of the *ise zumi* pursue a mixed path of physical, mental, and spiritual training, some in their ranks prefer to focus more on one side of their training than the other, seeking enlightenment through the perfection of the body or the spirit. The *ise zumi* themselves focus on a mix of spiritual studies and martial arts. The most extremely physical tattooed men tend to also be violent and confrontational, and usually go by the name *kikage zumi*. Conversely the most extremely mystical tattooed men, who wander aimlessly in search of wisdom or ignore all those around them and sink into long periods of prayer and meditation, are known as *tsurui zumi*. Regardless, all tattooed men tend to be very fit and muscular; they dress minimally, in part because their tattoos function best when exposed to sunlight, and some of them wear no more than a loincloth. All shave their heads in the style of monks, and they tend to be strange and unpredictable in their speech and behavior—speaking in riddles, answering questions with questions, quoting frequently from the Tao, and so forth.

While the majority of the Togashi never leave their homes, the minority who do set out to explore the rest of the Empire often have an outsized impact on its affairs. During a crisis or disaster it is not uncommon for a Togashi to mysteriously appear, offering counsel, rescuing endangered peasants, or taking some strange action such as leaving a puzzle box at the doorstep of a random samurai.

Heroes of the Dragon Clan

The Dragon Clan has seldom intervened in the affairs of Rokugan, but when it has done so the effects have often been dramatic. The following section lists an assortment of Dragon who had a lasting impact on their clan or the Empire.

Lady Agasha

Founder of the Agasha Family

The founder of the Agasha family was not recruited by Togashi for magical power or deep insights. Rather, she followed him voluntarily, fascinated by the thoughtful and mysterious Kami who disappeared alone into the mountains of the northern Empire. She was stubborn enough to climb the mountains, perceptive enough to find Togashi in his meditation, and patient enough to wait for him to permit her to stay. Agasha, Togashi, and the warrior Mirumoto together established the Dragon Clan's first mountain fortress around a shrine to Amaterasu.

Agasha was much like her cousins from the Isawa in many respects. Gifted in the ways of the elements, she was both a pacifist and a woman of great insight into the complex ways in which creation folded together. The teachings of Shinsei enraptured and fascinated her, and through them she saw lesser elemental kami as connected to the worship of the Fortunes themselves. Under other circumstances she might have played a major role in unifying the religious practices of the early Empire. However, she was always first and foremost driven by the desire to learn more about the world around her.

Unlike many mystics and shugenja, Agasha did not spend her life in meditation or deep reflection. She was never one to sit still, even as she advanced in years, and spent countless days wandering the mountains and observing nature and the Elements. She wrote extensive journals documenting her studies, filling them with strange alchemical symbols which her followers took centuries to decipher.

Most of Agasha's life was mysterious, even to the students who learned under her, for she was so devoted to her researches and lost in her alchemical formulae that she seldom interacted with her fellow samurai. Few ever saw her personality blossom, and even her husband and children spent little time with her. The one dramatic incident in her life took place years after the First War, when she was briefly captured by a roving band of goblins. She was saved from a certain death by Mirumoto Hojatsu, the

son of her compatriot Mirumoto. It is believed this experience moderated her famous pacifism—certainly the later generations of her family embraced a far more militant philosophy—but regardless, it did nothing to change her obsession with studying the natural world. Agasha continued to seek knowledge and understanding until the day she died; modern Rokugani alchemy would not exist without her discoveries.

Lady Agasha, Founder of the Agasha Family

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 5	Water: 2	Void: 4
			Perception: 4	

Honor: 6.7 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 5.0*

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 5

Skills: Artisan: Gardening 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 5, Craft: Farming 2, Defense 1, Etiquette 1, Investigation (Search) 5, Lore: Elements 8, Lore: Theology (Fortunism, Shinsei) 5, Medicine (Antidotes, Herbalism) 5, Meditation (Fasting) 4, Sincerity 2, Spellcraft 5

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, To Seek the Truth, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Jurojin's Balm, Be the Mountain, Wholeness of the World, Earth's Protection, The Kami's Will, Path to Inner Peace, The Path Not Taken, Extinguish, Never Alone, The Raging Forge, Mental Quickness, Fiery Wrath, The Mending Forge, Ward of Thunder, Wings of the Phoenix, Globe of the Everlasting Sun, Transmute

Advantages: Allies: Togashi (Devotion 4, Influence 4), Mirumoto Hojatsu (Devotion 4, Influence 4), Balance, Clear Thinker, Precise Memory, Social Position (family daimyo)

Disadvantages: Antisocial (2 Points), Fascination (the Elements in all life), Soft Hearted

Mirumoto Hojatsu

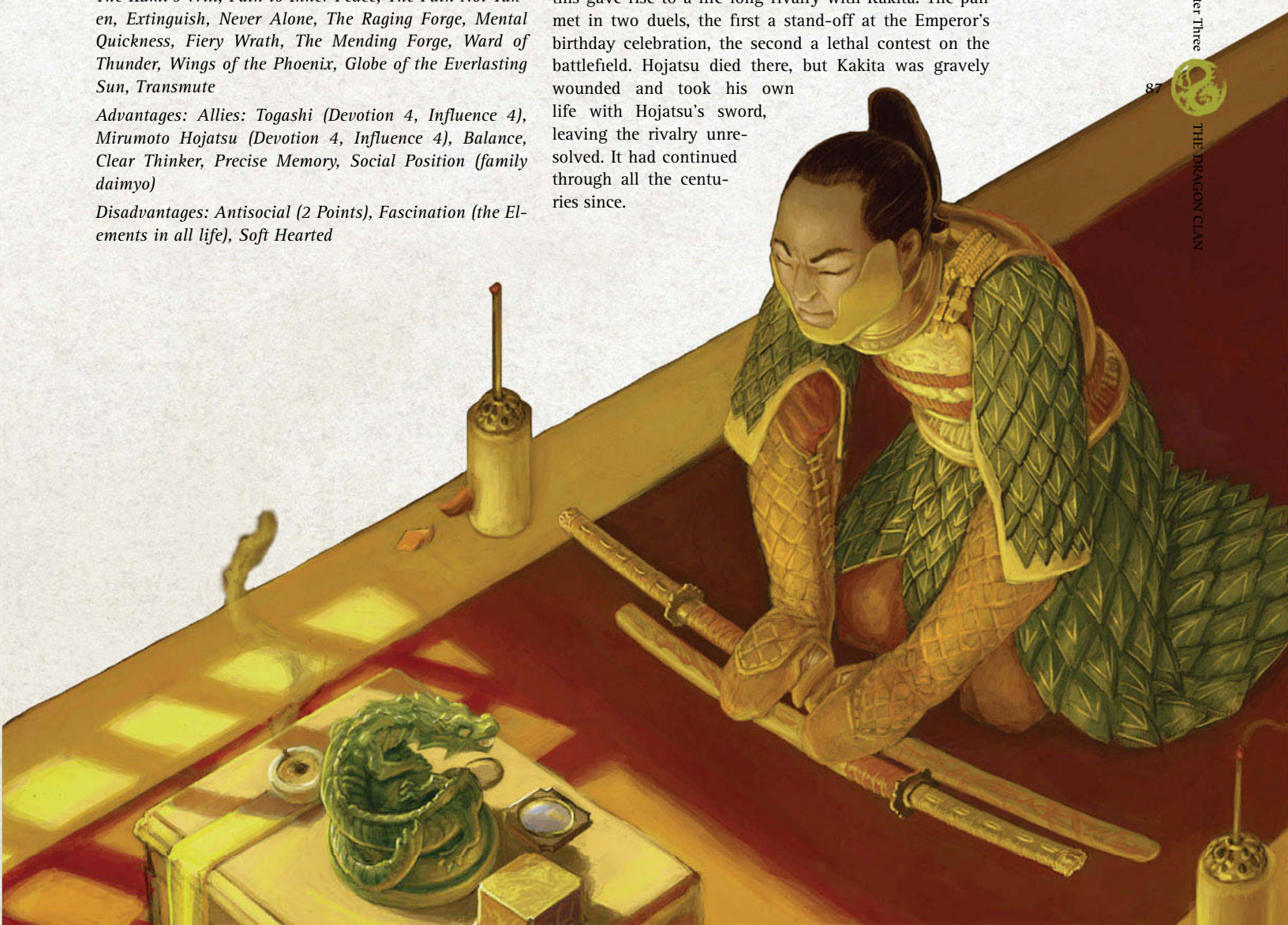
the Swordmaster, Author of Niten

Mirumoto Hojatsu was a commoner of formidable martial skill who was adopted by Mirumoto as his son. The family founder already had a natural son, Mirumoto Yojiro, but Yojiro lacked his father's martial nature and never felt jealousy of his adopted brother.

When Mirumoto died on the Day of Thunder, Yojiro willingly ceded control of the family to Hojatsu, who he believed was the proper successor to Mirumoto's legacy.

Hojatsu devoted his life to perfecting and formalizing his father's fighting style. He spent years traveling across the Empire, challenging many other samurai in order to strengthen his skills and learn more about the art of swordsmanship. His most famous duel was against a warrior named Ujimona; Hojatsu prevailed, but said afterward that Ujimona had been the better swordsman, his skill and techniques superior. Hojatsu won because he knew he would win, while Ujimona had not.

Eventually, Hojatsu formalized his own discoveries and his father's notes into the book *Niten*, one of Rokugan's most famous works of swordsmanship. Niten's views were radically different from those of Kakita's *The Sword*, and this gave rise to a life-long rivalry with Kakita. The pair met in two duels, the first a stand-off at the Emperor's birthday celebration, the second a lethal contest on the battlefield. Hojatsu died there, but Kakita was gravely wounded and took his own life with Hojatsu's sword, leaving the rivalry unresolved. It had continued through all the centuries since.



Hojatsu had one daughter, Ujaniko. She married his finest student, Mirumoto Kijome, who became daimyo after Hojatsu's death. The statistics here represent Hojatsu at his peak, shortly before his final duel with Kakita.

Mirumoto Hojatsu, the Swordmaster

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 5 Water: 4 Void: 6

Reflexes: 7 Agility: 7

Honor: 6.0 *Status: 8.0 (family daimyo)* *Glory: 7.0*

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 3/Swordmaster 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 4, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 2, Defense 6, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 9, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 10, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Shugenja 4, Lore: Swordsmanship 6, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 3, Sincerity (Honesty) 4

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Great Potential (Kenjutsu), Irreproachable, Prodigy, Quick, Virtuous

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Driven (perfect his swordsmanship), Idealistic

Agasha Daikoju

Founder of Alchemy

Agasha Daikoju is a hero to both the Phoenix and the Dragon. He was daimyo of the Agasha family in the fifth century, but he is not remembered for any political accomplishment. Rather, it is his unmatched insights into Agasha's secret research and the true nature of the Elements that is still used by both the Agasha and Tamori families.

Daikoju was born to a secondary line of the Agasha who were devoted but unexceptional servants of the Dragon Clan. As a young man he expected only to continue this tradition of faithful service. However, he had a keen mind and considerable skill with the kami. When he called on the Elements he could sense their connection to each other, the way each Element supported and interacted with the others. Perhaps this insight was what allowed him to recognize the true nature of Lady Agasha's cryptic notes and symbols in her journals.

Daikoju's realization led him to the founding principles of Agasha alchemy that are still studied and practiced today. At first his discoveries received little attention, but that changed during a Yobanjin raid into Dragon territory a few years later. Daikoju found himself one of a handful of samurai trying to hold an important pass against a huge swarm of the gaijin barbarians. Many of his brothers in arms already lay dead around him, but at the critical moment Daikoju called down the fire kami on his foes and then hurled a vial into the flames. It was an alchemical vial holding the distilled power of the Air kami, and the sudden infusion of air ignited the fire spirits into a fearsome maelstrom. Daikoju's theories of alchemy singlehandedly defeated the Yobanjin.

Daikoju was hailed a hero and a genius. The Agasha family daimyo brought him in for an audience and he demonstrated his alchemical creations—items called *kagaku* and potions which he named *mitsugusuri*. He also showed how he had created these objects using the cryptic symbols and formulae of Lady Agasha's notebooks. The daimyo was deeply impressed and made Daikoju one of his personal advisors, granting him leave to pursue his studies as aggressively as he might wish. When the daimyo died several years later, Daikoju was shocked to find he had been named as successor. However, he accepted the duty without complaint and under his wise hands the Agasha spread his insights throughout their dojo. A new style of magic had been born, one which would eventually blossom into another discovery, multi-elemental magic. Alchemy is still studied today by both the Agasha and Tamori families, and Daikoju is remembered and honored by both lines.

Agasha Daikoju, Founder of Alchemy

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 4

Honor: 4.0 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 5.6*

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 4

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy (Cipher) 7, Craft: Kagaku 8, Craft: Mitsugusuri 9, Defense 3, Divination 5, Etiquette 3, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Alchemy 8, Lore: Theology 3, Medicine 2, Meditation 4, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft (Spell Research) 7

Spells: As the Agasha family daimyo, Daikoju has access to any spells he may need and is capable of casting.

Advantages: Precise Memory, Sage, Social Position (Agasha family daimyo)

Disadvantages: Fascination (Alchemy)

Togashi Yamatsu

Scourge of Iuchiban

Togashi Yamatsu was not a man who ever wished to be famous or remembered. He was detached and ascetic, in some ways the very essence of a tattooed monk, and something about him always seemed distant from the life he lived, as if he were lost so deeply in the mysteries of enlightenment that even his health was not always important to him. Under normal circumstances he would most likely have lived out his life without any notable achievement whatsoever. Instead he is remembered as a hero, chiefly because he was simply in the right place at the right time.

Yamatsu spent almost his entire adult life in the High House of Light, and only very rarely visited the lands and courts of the greater Empire. It was by the merest chance of fortune—or perhaps divine fate—that in the year 750 he stood in a Dragon court chamber attended by the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban. The accursed *maho tsukai* had learned

the secret of stealing others' bodies, roaming the Empire in secret while he gathered strength to challenge the Hantei Dynasty.

Yamatsu's life of quiet contemplation and reflections on enlightenment ended abruptly when Iuchiban attempted to take control of his body. His tattoos, normally meant to aid him in understanding, mental balance, and focus, somehow gave him the fortitude to repel the spellcaster's dark magic. As both recovered from the shock of the botched possession, Yamatsu looked across the room and clearly saw the dark aura surrounding Iuchiban's borrowed body. "*Maho*," the ise zumi shouted, and Iuchiban fled in disarray.

Yamatsu's unexpected victory unleashed a series of dramatic events culminating in the massive Battle of Sleeping River, where Iuchiban was defeated for the second time. The night before the battle, Yamatsu met with his Clan Champion; none know what passed between them, but the next morning Yamatsu had a new tattoo, an image of an *inro*—a small box worn on the obi.

As the battle climaxed and the forces of the Bloodspeakers collapsed in defeat, Yamatsu confronted Iuchiban personally. The inro tattoo drew power not only from Togashi's divinity but also from the self-sacrificial will and honor of Yamatsu himself, for he knew the act he contemplated would likely ensure his death. With the tattoo's power he trapped Iuchiban's spirit, holding it prisoner within his own body and indomitable will until it could be bound once more into its tomb. Yamatsu did not survive the final ritual, but his act of self-sacrifice granted the Empire over four centuries of respite from the Bloodspeaker's machinations.

The Inro Tattoo

As far as anyone knows, Yamatsu's Inro tattoo was unique to him. However, a similar tattoo might appear in future if the Dragon ever faced a similar threat. The tattoo allows its bearer to spend a Void Point to attempt to capture a possessing or disembodied spirit within 50 yards, provided he already knows of the spirit's existence and approximate location. Successfully capturing the spirit is a Complex Action and requires a Contested Willpower roll, but the bearer of the tattoo gains a bonus of kept dice equal to his School Rank. The Contested Roll must be repeated once every 24 hours in order to keep the spirit imprisoned.

Togashi Yamatsu, Scourge of the Bloodspeakers

Air: 2 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 4
Reflexes: 3 Willpower: 5

Honor: 9.0 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 2.7*

School/Rank: Togashi Tattooed Man 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Craft: Tattooing 3, Defense 4, Jiujutsu 4, Lore: Bushido 2, Lore: Maho 2, Lore: Theology 3, Meditation 7, Sincerity 1, Tea Ceremony 3

Tattoos: Balance, Lion, Inro (see sidebar), Void

Advantages: Bland, Forbidden Knowledge (Maho), Great Destiny (Trap Iuchiban)

Agasha Kitsuki

Founder of the Kitsuki Family

Born at the end of the eighth century, Agasha Kitsuki was an odd individual from his youth. Although he was the nephew of the Agasha family daimyo and had the gift of speaking to the kami like many in his family, he was not a good student by any stretch of the imagination. He simply had little interest in the metaphysical realm. Instead, it was the most mundane research of the family's founder, Lady Agasha, that drew his interest. He was constantly searching for puzzles, riddles, and secrets to unlock and open, and much of what he knew was self-taught through intricate study of old texts. He also obsessively watched the behavioral patterns of others, trying to sift truth from falsehood, even to the point of studying charlatans and frauds among the common folk.

Kitsuki was often threatened with expulsion from the Agasha school, and his sensei viewed his studies with derision and contempt. Then one day that same teacher was found dead, Kitsuki's wakizashi planted in his back. A conviction for murder seemed all but certain, but Kitsuki insisted on his innocence; due to his position as nephew of the family daimyo he was permitted 24 hours to try to find the culprit. He returned at the end of that time with the true murderer, a confession, and all of the evidence and corroborating testimony he needed. He was cleared of the murder and named *yoriki* to a clan magistrate.

Two years later, Kituski saved the life of Mirumoto Januko, daimyo of the Mirumoto. For this deed he was granted the right to found his own family and teach his methods to others.

Kitsuki's persecutions did not end with this success, however. His single-minded determination to show the value of 'hard evidence' in ascertaining guilt or innocence was viewed with deep distaste by the rest of the Empire. His frequent reliance on physical evidence and his skepticism toward testimony earned considerable scorn, especially from his great courtly rival Bayushi Shiko. The Scorpion Clan was incensed by Kitsuki's methods, which not only frequently damaged their plots and schemes but also flew in the face of the established laws and methods created by their revered ancestor Soshi Saibankan. Shiko's relentless drive to discredit Kitsuki eventually culminated in a plot to murder the eccentric Dragon.

The Scorpion concocted a false trail suggesting he was seeking forged documents that would shame the Unicorn Clan. After a great chase, Kitsuki acquired the documents only to die of poison while on the long return journey. However, this Scorpion "victory" came far too late. His followers had embraced his methods and the new Kitsuki family would be a thorn in the side of the Scorpion for generations to come.

Agasha Kitsuki, Founder of the Kitsuki Family

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 3
Awareness: 4 Intelligence: 6 Perception: 6

Honor: 5.7 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 4.1* *Infamy: 2.5*

School/Rank: Kitsuki Investigator 5

Skills: Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette (Courtesy) 5, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Interrogation, Notice, Search) 9, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 5, Lore: Law 5, Medicine 4, Meditation 3, Sincerity (Honesty) 4, Stealth 2, Sleight of Hand 3

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Great Potential (Investigation), Social Position (Kitsuki family daimyo)

Disadvantages: Driven (prove the merit of the Kitsuki Method), Sworn Enemy (Bayushi Shiko)

Togashi Mitsu

Hero of the Clan Wars, Oracle of Thunder

"Why should I regret? I have no life but this one. All I can do is to live it."

In some ways Togashi Mitsu was the Dragon Clan incarnate. He was easily the most recognizable face in the Dragon Clan throughout the Clan War era, and stories of his deeds were told around the fires of even the most hated enemies of the Dragon. He was the very image of all that was noble, enigmatic, and powerful in the Dragon Clan. This is ironic given that he was very different from most of his fellows in the tattooed order. Mitsu was a jovial, smiling man who traveled the Empire throughout his life instead of living a life of meditation and contemplation in the mountains.

Mitsu was born a peasant and lived at Fukurokujin Seido as a child, growing up in the company of monks, pilgrims, and scholars. As he neared adulthood he was visited by the Champion of the Dragon, the Kami Togashi, who offered him the chance to join the *ise zume*. He jumped at the opportunity and claimed the name of Mitsu.

Mitsu soon learned he possessed the powers of a *tamashii*, a mortal who could serve as a spirit vessel, and

he knew that he might be called upon at any time to serve as a vessel for the Kami Togashi. Therefore he took to life with relish, living it as openly and boldly as he could, smiling every day and laughing at the seriousness of the world. He sought out those in need, helping them as his conscience dictated. The tales of his exploits, saving peasants and samurai alike, thwarting or aiding plots, soon became well-known throughout the Empire.

During the Clan Wars he was a staunch ally of the ronin, Toturi the Black, and fought alongside him at the Battle of Beiden Pass. Though he never held rank in Toturi's army, he was a trusted and invaluable aide.

The only period of Mitsu's life fraught with confusion, doubt, or fear came in the years after the deaths of Fu Leng and Togashi at the Day of Thunder. With the Kami gone, his power as a tamashii seemed to have no purpose, and he was unwilling to serve the maddened Lady Hitomi. Only after seeing the true evil of the mad monk Kokujin did Mitsu's spirits rally. He met a young fellow *tamashii* named Togashi Matsuo, born after the death of Togashi, and trained the boy personally. The two of them sought out the mad monk Kokujin and fought him in the mountains near Shiro Heichi.

For many years it was believed Mitsu and Kokujin died in that battle after Mitsu hurled them both into a volcanic fissure. However, their destiny lay elsewhere. Kokujin emerged to raise a great peasant revolt in the Scorpion lands, while Mitsu encountered the Dragon of Thunder. The Dragon chose Mitsu to serve as its Oracle, and in that role he reappeared once more in the Empire, following his old ways of wandering the land and saving those in need.

The stats here depict Mitsu when he was still mortal, before he took on the mantle of Thunder.

Togashi Mitsu, Hero of the Clan War

Air: 4	Earth: 5	Fire: 6	Water: 4	Void: 5

Honor: 4.5	Status: 1.0	Glory: 10.0 (Legendary Hero)

School/Rank: Togashi Tattooed Order 5 / Shrine of the Seven Thunders Monk 2

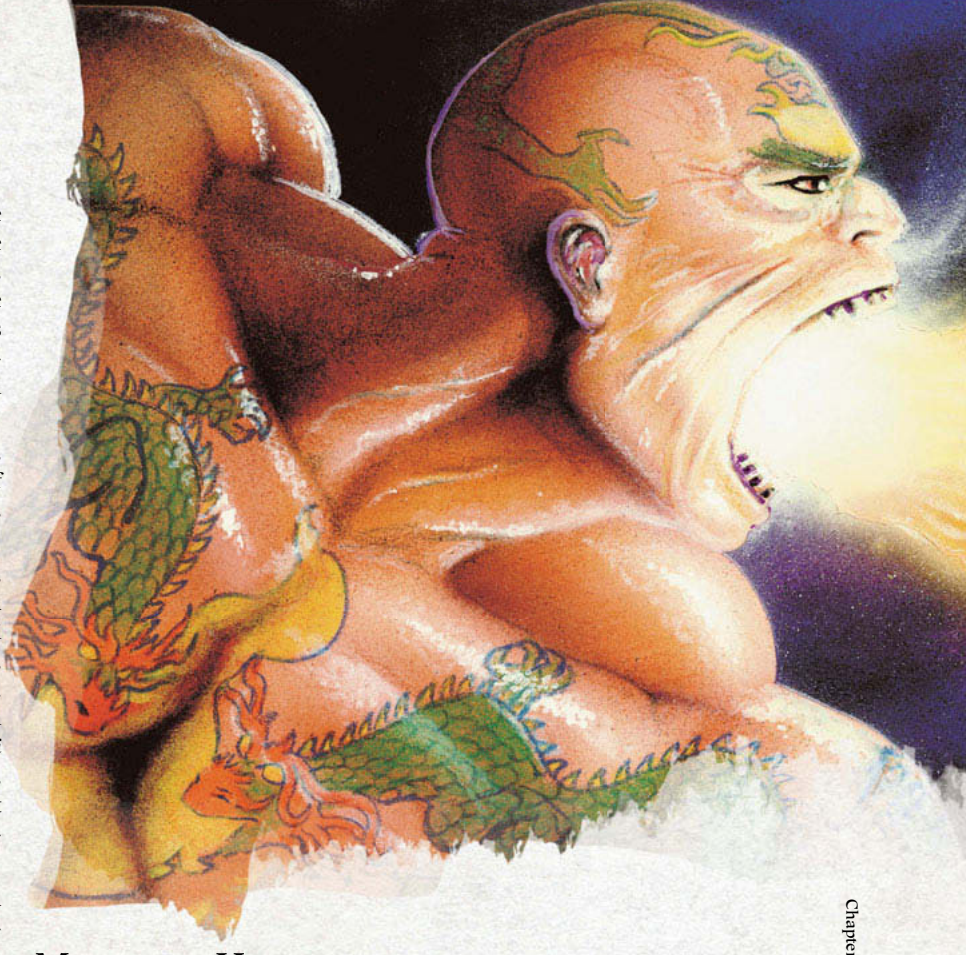
Skills: Athletics 7, Defense 6, Etiquette 2, Craft: Tattooing 6, Hunting 3, Investigation 5, Jiujutsu 9, Lore: Lying Darkness 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Theology (Shintao) 7, Medicine (Wound Treatment) 5, Meditation (Void Recovery) 8, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Stealth 4

Tattoos: Centipede, Dragon, Hawk, Mantis, Ocean, Phoenix

Kiho: Buoyed by the Kami, To the Last Breath, Earth Needs No Eyes, Riding the Clouds, The Body is an Anvil, Breaking Blow, Channel the Fire Dragon, Dance of the Flames, Destiny's Strike, Falling Star Strike, Flame Fist, Unbalance the Mind

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Great Destiny (Oracle of Thunder), Magic Resistance (4 points), Quick

Disadvantages: Brash



Mirumoto Hitomi

Second Dragon Thunder, Lady Moon

The second Thunder of the Dragon was a controversial and poorly understood figure, both in life and after her ascension to the Heavens as Lady Moon. Though she was a savior of the Empire and a guardian of the Dragon Clan, her single-minded intensity caused her to walk a dark path that nearly drove her mad and almost destroyed all she sought to save.

Hitomi's earliest years were spent at the feet of her elder brother Satsu, listening as he told tales of Shinsei and Togashi. She loved Satsu dearly, and when he died at the hands of Hida Yakamo it had a shattering impact on the young girl. The duel between Satsu and the future Crab Thunder ended with Yakamo shamefully smashing in Satsu's face with a tetsubo, shocking the assembled witnesses. The ten-year-old Hitomi rushed forward and snatched up her brother's sword; Yakamo smacked it aside and said, "I won't kill you now, little one. But you will remember that I could have."

The need for vengeance consumed Hitomi's young life, driving her to largely forsake her duty as family daimyo. The second time she faced Yakamo, she took his hand in a duel during the Battle of Beiden's Pass. But a few months later, Yakamo returned with an oni's claw in place of his missing hand... and crushed her own hand, leaving her crippled and maddened with fury and despair. Bayushi Kachiko, seeing an opportunity to create a cat's paw, saved Hitomi's life and gave her a strange artifact, the Obsidian Hand, to replace her missing one. However, Hitomi was far too strong-willed to serve Kachiko's desires, and for a time was even able to withstand the terrible power of the Hand. She slew her cousin Yukihara, who had usurped rule of the Mirumoto family in her absence, and even saved her hated enemy Yakamo from the oni

The Obsidian Hand

The Obsidian Hand is one of the darkest relics in the history of Rokugan. It is, in fact, nothing less than the severed hand of Onnotangu, Lord Moon, and its black stone is deeply corrupted by the power of the Lying Darkness. The Hand was originally brought back to Rokugan by Shosuro; it remained in the Shosuro family's possession for many centuries, serving as a direct medium for the covert alliance with the Lying Darkness which Shosuro herself began.

Any person who has lost their right hand can potentially attack the Obsidian Hand to the stump, whereupon it becomes a fully functional replacement for the missing hand. However, the combination of Lord Moon's madness and the foul influence of the Lying Darkness makes this an extremely hazardous act. The records of the Scorpion Clan record only three people who ever attached the Obsidian Hand, and two of them went mad within days; only Hitomi survived. In game terms, the wielder of the Obsidian Hand must roll Honor / Willpower every day at TN 30 to maintain self-control—otherwise the character is overcome by the madness and violent urges of the Hand until the next day. Moreover, anyone who wears the Hand for a sustained period of time (six months or more) will begin to slowly transform into living obsidian, spreading from the Hand across the body. This is accompanied by the spread of Shadow corruption, in the form of 1 Shadow Rank every six months.

Mechanically, the Hand has a DR of 2k3 when used for a Jiujutsu attack and can attack as a Free Action when used for Jiujutsu. If you use the Hand to wield a melee weapon, you gain your opponent's Honor Rank as unkept dice on your attack roll. The Hand's bearer is immune to the Shadowlands Taint, but not to Shadow corruption.

that had nearly stolen his name. In the aftermath of that battle, the exhausted Yakamo lay near-helpless before her, and Hitomi repeated back to him what he had once told her: "I will not kill you, Crab. But you will remember that I could have."

On the Second Day of Thunder, Hitomi joined the other Thunders to face Fu Leng. However, she played almost no role in the battle. Her true destiny was to unseal the last Black Scroll, concealed inside her Clan Champion Togashi's heart. Hitomi was the death Togashi had awaited for a thousand years, and answer to the riddle of his existence. The power of the Obsidian Hand took his life, and a portion of his spiritual essence entered into her, granting her near-divine insight.

The years which followed were dark and difficult. Hitomi became the Dragon Clan Champion, but the influence of the Shadow-corrupted Obsidian Hand made her rule erratic and drove her to near-madness. Under the influence of the madman Kokujin she founded her own family of tattooed monks and drive out all who did not obey her. She slew her own grandfather for withholding Togashi's secrets, precipitated a war with the Naga race, and unleashed the Darkness-corrupted Shosuro from her crystal prison beneath the High House of Light.

Finally, almost too late, Hitomi realized the true danger of the Lying Darkness, protected by a maddened Lord Moon. Seeking penance for her sins, she sought out the Moon's blood and bones, combining them with the power of the Obsidian Hand to challenge him for rule of the Heavens. Slaying Onnotangu, she rose into the Heavens as the new Lady Moon, and it was she who finally named the Darkness and broke its power.

The stats here represent Hitomi at the time of the Second Day of Thunder. Assigning statistics to her during her reign as Clan Champion is near-meaningless, as her power swiftly rose to that of a divine being.

Mirumoto Hitomi, Second Dragon Thunder

Air: 5	Earth: 4	Fire: 6	Water: 4	Void: 6

Honor: 4.3	Status: 7.0	Glory: 10.0 (Dragon Thunder)	Infamy: 2.1

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 4, Mirumoto Swordmaster 2

Skills: Defense 7, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 7, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 7, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History 2, Lore: Law 3, Lore: Shugenja 3, Lore: Theology 6, Meditation 5, Sincerity 4, Spears 4

Kata: Spinning Blades Style

Advantages: Great Destiny (Dragon Clan Thunder), Inheritance (Mirumoto Ancestral Daisho, Obsidian Hand), Kharmic Tie (1 point—Hida Yakamo), Quick, Social Position (Mirumoto family daimyo)

Disadvantages: Driven (vengeance on Hida Yakamo), Overconfident, Sworn Enemy/Nemesis (Hida Yakamo), Unlucky

Tamori Shaitung

Founder of the Tamori

The founding of the Tamori family, the growth of its nature and personality, and much of its early history centered around the woman named Tamori Shaitung. Her life was a chronicle of resilience and triumph in the face of unending struggles, drawing on an often underestimated inner strength. She was born the daughter of Agasha Tamori, the family daimyo, who remained within the Dragon Clan when most of the Agasha fled to the Phoenix Clan. He continued to claim the Agasha name and his position as daimyo for years afterward, but he had been marked by the Shadowlands Taint and during the War of the Spirits he embraced corruption to become the Dark Oracle of Fire. However, because he had sided with Hantei XVI during the War of Spirits, the treaty between the Steel Chrysanthemum and Emperor Toturi I included a provision for the creation of the Tamori family, with Shaitung as its first daimyo.

The young woman took up her duty as daimyo with some misgivings, especially given the shame which her father's actions and corruption had brought upon the family line. Moreover, she was deeply embittered at the Phoenix Clan for taking in and supporting the bulk of the Agasha. A few years into her reign, her corrupted father turned on his own clan, unleashing volcanic eruptions that devastated Dragon territory and forced many of their peasants to flee into Phoenix territory. The ensuing war was a confused and painful one, as the Phoenix felt considerable sympathy for the suffering of the Dragon but could not allow their own territories to be overrun by Dragon refugees.

In the year 1159, Shaitung confronted the Phoenix Clan's Elemental Masters in person. She surprised the Masters with a near-suicidal assault, using the full weight of her powers in an unpredictable fashion and with no thought of her own survival. The furious eruption of elemental energies collapsed the earth beneath them all, plunging them into an underground cavern where they confronted the Dark Oracle. Shaitung and the Phoenix Master of Air, Isawa Nakamuro, realized the former Agasha Tamori was behind the war and managed to escape, eventually exposing his corrupted agents Tamori Chosai and Isawa Hochiu within their respective clans. Ultimately, Shaitung and her allies succeeded in destroying Agasha Tamori and banishing his successor as Dark Oracle, Chosai, to beyond the Empire's northern boundaries.

During her meetings with Isawa Nakamuro, Shaitung had fallen in love with him despite her enmity for the Phoenix Clan; with the shame of her father's actions purged, she was able to admit her feelings to herself. In other clans such personal passions might have been set aside for the sake of duty, but Shaitung was a Dragon, scion of an unusually individualistic clan. The marriage was swiftly arranged and Nakamuro, who was himself smitten by Shaitung's passion and energy, took the Tamori name. Their union marked a first tentative step toward rebuilding positive relations between Dragon and Phoenix.

Although Shaitung had succeeded in establishing the Tamori family's name and reputation, she did not have many years to enjoy her happy marriage. She and her husband perished in a wave of assassinations by agents of the so-called Spider Clan in the year 1170.

The Mirumoto Ancestral Daisho

The twin swords of Mirumoto Hojatsu are passed down through the line of Mirumoto daimyo until the mid-twelfth century, when Shinjo carries them into the Celestial Heavens along with the other Ancestral Swords. The swords can only be used by members of the Mirumoto family—others cannot even draw them from their scabbards.

The swords are awakened nemuranai that convey many benefits on those who can wield them properly. Anyone carrying the swords knows the School and Insight Rank of any opponent he faces. The katana is a simple-looking blade but seems to leap toward the foe with deadly intent—it grants a +1k1 bonus to the attack roll for every Rank the wielder possesses in the Mirumoto Bushi School. The equally plain-looking wakizashi seems to always be in perfect position to block a foe's strike—it increases the wielder's Armor TN by 15.

Their own union had not yet produced children, so Shaitung was succeeded by her adopted heir, Tamori Shimura.

Tamori Shaitung, Founder of the Tamori

Air: 3 Earth: 6 Fire: 5 Water: 3 Void: 5
Reflexes: 5 Willpower: 8 Agility: 6 Strength: 5

Honor: 6.7 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 8.1*

School/Rank: Tamori Shugenja 5/Tamori Warrior Priest (Insight Rank 7)

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Craft: Alchemy 3, Defense 6, Divination 1, Iaijutsu 4, Intimidation 5, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Lore: Elements 5, Lore: History (Dragon Clan) 5, Lore: Theology 6, Medicine 5, Meditation 6, Spellcraft 7

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Path to Inner Peace, Biting Steel, Envious Flames, Fury of Osano Wo, Katana of Fire, The Fires From Within, Destructive Wave, Armor of Earth, Jade Strike, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Be the Mountain, Earth Becomes Sky, Force of Will, Earth's Protection, Armor of the Emperor, Essence of Earth, Strength of the Crow, Earthquake, Major Binding, Symbol of Earth, The Kami's Strength, The Kami's Will, Essence of Jade, Power of the Earth Dragon

Advantages: Friend of the Earth, Heart of Vengeance (Phoenix), Magic Resistance (4 points), Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Driven (redeem the Tamori name), Insensitive, Sworn Enemy (Isawa Taeruko)

Mirumoto Rosanjin

Heroic Daimyo

Mirumoto Rosanjin, master sensei of Iron Mountain Dojo and eventually family daimyo, was one of the most venerated Dragon heroes of the Toturi Dynasty. Like many Dragon, he was a somewhat eccentric man, fascinated throughout his life by the tattooed monks of his clan and especially the exploits of the legendary hero Togashi Mitsu. He emulated the tattooed men in dress and manners, shaving his head and adopting a contemplative and spiritual approach to life. Nor was he an exception in his family for such mystical attitudes; his sister Mirumoto Masae became the Keeper of Air, one of five mortals gifted with unique insights into the elements.

Rosanjin spent much of his career as a soldier, serving in one military campaign after another. He fought against the Lion when they campaigned northward into the allied Dragonfly Clan's lands, as well as against the aggression of Shiba Aikune and the Phoenix during the war created by the Dark Oracle of Fire. His record was chiefly one of success; on one occasion, however, he and his men were nearly overwhelmed by a Lion force, only to be saved by none other than Rosanjin's idol Togashi Mitsu.

For his many accomplishments in war Rosanjin was named the senior sensei of the Iron Mountain Dojo, a task he viewed as a duty comparable to military command. He also aided the tattooed men of his clan in many dangerous ventures, including several clashes with the Mad Prophet Kokujin. After several years of such service, he finally ascended to the pinnacle of status when his family daimyo Mirumoto Uso fell to an assassin. Togashi Satsu named Rosanjin as the new daimyo. He hoped to seek out his late friend and lord's killer, but fate intervened with a greater task.

Emperor Toturi III entered the Shadowlands seeking enlightenment, and Mirumoto Rosanjin was one of those who sought him out to protect him. He found the Emperor at the Tomb of the Seven Thunders, where several priceless relics had been hidden away for centuries. Rosanjin, his former enemy Shiba Aikune, and the Mantis hero Yoritomo Katoa sacrificed themselves to hold off wave after wave of Shadowlands monsters while the relics were retrieved and carried back to the Empire. Rosanjin died there, literally buried under the piles of his dead enemies, his body incinerated by Aikune's final unleashing of Isawa's Last Wish.

Mirumoto Rosanjin, Heroic Daimyo

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 5 Void: 5

Honor: 8.1 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 7.8*

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 5 (Mirumoto Mountaineer), Mirumoto Swordmaster 1

Skills: Athletics 5, Courtier 3, Craft: Weaponsmith 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 5, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Shugenja 3, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 4, Sincerity 2

Advantages: Balance, Social Position (Mirumoto family daimyo)

Disadvantages: Can't Lie, Fascination (Ise Zumi)

Lands of the Dragon Clan

The major Dragon holdings are described in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook, pages 340-343. The following section describes several additional holdings which are less well known to the Empire at large.

Great Falls Castle

Great Falls Castle derives its name from its unusual location, for the massive stone structure is actually built over a roaring waterfall. A river runs under the castle and the falls spill out from under the castle's main gates. This marvelous feat of engineering was accomplished in the fifth century by a Togashi monk who had been born a Kaiu of the Crab Clan.

Due to its remote and inaccessible location, Great Falls Castle is considered an ideal location for keeping the resources of the Dragon safe from invaders. It is used as a storehouse for the clan's always-meager extra rice, and also serves as an arsenal for the Mirumoto armies.

Great Falls Castle also protects the future of the Dragon Clan, as many of the young Mirumoto who join the ranks of the Dragon's armies study first at Great Falls Castle until they are assigned to a unit in the army. While training at Great Falls Castle is considered merely a duty rather than a great honor, the young men and women brought up in the area are known for their prowess not only with the blade but also in the arts. The spectacular views afforded from the castle inspire some of the Dragon Clan's greatest poets, painters, and playwrights to create lasting pieces of true beauty.

Morning Frost Castle

Morning Frost Castle was constructed in the year 774 and serves as a winter residence for the Mirumoto daimyo and his family and close associates. While this might lead outsiders to expect the castle to be located in a warm and pleasant area (or at least as warm and pleasant as one can get in the bleak lands of the Dragon), the reality is quite different. The lord who ordered the castle's construction was the first (and so far the only) Mirumoto family daimyo to have studied as a Taoist Swordsman rather than at the traditional Niten school of his family. Raised with the philosophy of improving oneself by overcoming adversity, the daimyo demanded the castle be built in the coldest and most inhospitable part of the Mirumoto provinces. Every day of his residence there, the young daimyo was up before the sun, training hard in freezing weather.

While no daimyo since that time has studied with the Taoist Swordsmen, each has attempted to live up to the tenacious example of their predecessor, spending at least part of the winter holed up at Morning Frost Castle training in weather that would kill weaker men.

Mountain Summit Temple

Mountain Summit Temple is one of several different temple complexes located in the lands of the Togashi. This particular one is located at the highest peak of Mount Toma, a mountain named for a famed martial sensei of the Togashi.

Toma and his followers practiced a variant of Kaze-do, the traditional Dragon martial art. Their style focused on movement rather than on striking one's opponent. Finding their dojo unsuitable for practicing the dangerous and outlandish maneuvers Toma was developing, the monks applied for and received permission to build a new training complex. Mountain Summit Temple was created to offer the greatest possible challenge to students. It is a series of interconnected towers built on the very edge of the mountain peaks. Sensei at the temple often demand their students perform amazing feats, such as leaping from the top of one tower to the other, running along the entire underside of the connecting bridges, or performing a series of kiho during mid-air leaps. Students who fail at their assigned tasks are free to try again... after they have been reincarnated into their next life. While this training is brutal, it has produced some of the most astounding martial artists in the history of the Dragon Clan.

The Hoshi Trading House

The Hoshi Trading House is located outside of Rokugan's borders: it is a building in the massive gaijin city of Medinaat al-Salaam. As its name suggests, it was originally created in the early twelfth century by monks from the Hoshi family, who sought to expand their wisdom by exploring the mysteries of the Burning Sands. Over subsequent decades, however, the Hoshi and Togashi also used it to bring knowledge of the Tao of Shinsei to the Burning Sands, while merchant patrons within the Dragon used it to establish some limited trade with the gaijin, offering Rokugani silks in exchange for exotic spices, coffee, and other curiosities.

It is characteristic of the Dragon that they see this place mainly as a means of sharing knowledge and enlightenment rather than as a commercial opportunity. The Trading House is a dojo and a place of scholarship; its students study the prophecies of the gaijin mystic named Mekhem and the mystical intricacies of Hakim's Seal alongside the writings of Rokugani shugenja and the Tao of Shinsei.

Despite the change in families, the Hoshi Trading House retains its original name and has become a fixture in the society of Medinaat al-Salaam. Someday, perhaps, the Dragon may be able to use it to assure peaceful relations with Rokugan's western neighbors.

Enlightened Madness

Throughout Rokugan's history there have been a few people who have been special, gifted, unique. These people attained a mental and spiritual state that many seek their entire lives without ever coming within reach of it. These people have achieved a profound understanding of the world around them, developed the ability to understand life both inwardly and outwardly, to see the connections between the Elements and between all living things. They have attained that which Shinsei spoke of and become *enlightened*—gifted with wisdom, clarity, and peace...

...most of the time.

While enlightenment itself is extremely rare anywhere in the Empire, there is a phenomenon that is even more rare, for which the people of Rokugan may give thanks. It is a terrible affliction which eventually destroys all those who contract it. *Enlightened Madness* is the Dragon Clan's term for what happens when an individual finds enlightenment but is unable to accept or endure the burden of clarity and truth which it places on the mind and spirit. Although the affliction may strike anyone, it has appeared among the Togashi more often than anywhere else, in part due to their intense focus on the quest for enlightenment and perhaps also in part because of the intense effects of Togashi's blood on the mind and soul of those who bear his tattoos.

It may be noted, in passing, that Enlightened Madness is not the same thing as normal insanity—what the Rokugani sometimes call the "false madness of Lord Moon"—which can afflict any mortal of weak mind or broken will. Rather, Enlightened Madness is a specific response to the unique burdens of the enlightened state. Those who become enlightened attain great spiritual insight, but if they have any imbalances in their soul or body, these can sometimes become magnified to the point of danger. Why this afflicts some and not others is not well known—plenty of flawed individuals have attained enlightenment without ill effects. Regardless, those who succumb to Enlightened Madness generally live brief and tragic lives, as these poor souls kill themselves or are killed by others during spasms of mad and destructive behavior, spurred by their minds' inability to fully handle their potent new vision of the world.

Those who succumb to Enlightened Madness may go on a simple rampage of violence, attacking all those around them. They may violate the social norms and taboos of Rokugan in grotesque ways, like running naked through the streets or eating bugs. They may flee into the wilderness, living a filthy animalistic existence far from humankind. They may remain outwardly sane for a time while their minds rot away beneath the surface, leading to later gruesome crimes or shocking outbursts. Their heightened perceptions and unbalanced minds may cause them to succumb to the whispered voices of *kansen*, embracing the Taint and its powers. All of these things and more have befallen those whose minds snapped under the impact of enlightenment.

The Dragon Clan, which pursues enlightenment with a fervor no other clan can match, long ago learned to watch its ranks—especially those of the tattooed men—for signs of such aberrant behavior. The mystical power and mental impact of the Togashi tattoos seems to make Enlightened Madness somewhat more likely, and there are many folktales of "tattooed madmen" both within the clan and in the Empire as a whole. However, even the Dragon do not always spot the danger in time. There is no more terrible example of this than the tale of a tattooed man from the twelfth century, a tale of violence and madness which serves as warning to the Dragon and all those who stray too far or try too much on the path to enlightenment. It is the tale of the man known as Kokujin.

In the popular view, Kokujin was a man who was born, lived, and died evil. However, this is not entirely true. When the Kami Togashi reflected on his readiness to face Fu Leng at the Second Day of Thunder, he found he had allowed mortal weaknesses—doubt, fear, regret—to creep into his mind and spirit. Fearing he might succumb to such sins, he sought to transfer these feelings and emotions into a *tamashii*, an individual whose body and spirit were capable of hosting another's soul. The experience of sharing Togashi's mind and soul for a brief moment brought enlightenment to the man, but his own mind shattered almost instantly under the weight of both supernal clarity and the burden of Togashi's dark emotions. He fled the Dragon mountains into the dark realm of the

An Enlightened Madman: Togashi Okkio

Moto Okkio was a man who believed everything was connected. He knew deep within his soul that the physical world was a lie and that only by connecting everything could he become more than what he was. It was no surprise to anyone that he eventually journeyed to the Spine of the World Mountains to become a Togashi monk.

When Okkio passed his gempukku, the tattoo he received was unique, unlike any seen before. It resembled a lizard, its arms wrapped around his upper torso, the head climbing his neck to the side of his head, as if whispering to him. At first, the tattoo seemed to have no special power or significance, and he lived normally among his brother monks. Then one day he cried out, 'I understand! The Void is the answer... in the absence of everything is *everything*! The world must be re-shaped!" He sprang to his feet and struck down his sensei with a powerful blow. His fellow monks subdued the madman and imprisoned him to await the judgment of the Clan Champion.

It is unknown how Okkio escaped. What is known is that the monk assigned to guard him, Togashi Nodogu, was found dead... skinned and drained of blood. Other Togashi monks were sent to seek him out, but none returned. Two were eventually found dead, likewise skinned: Togashi Sujin and Togashi Gunojo. The fate of the others remained a mystery.

Okkio's strange Void Lizard tattoo combined with his Enlightened Madness granted him truly bizarre powers. By drinking his victims' blood and wearing their skins, Okkio absorbed their powers. Their skins merged with his own and he could summon their skins forth in order to use their tattoos. Having evaded capture, Okkio turned the tables and set out to hunt his fellow ise zumi, absorbing every tattoo, every soul. In his shattered mind Okkio had become a living avatar of the Void.

Like the later madman Kokujin, Okkio seemed to possess unending youth. With each life he took the signs of aging disappeared. Perhaps someday he will finally be slain and his rampage brought to an end... or perhaps someday he will grow strong enough to return to the Dragon lands and confront his brothers directly.

Togashi Okkio, Ise Zumi Hunter

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 5
Reflexaes: 5 Agility: 5

Honor: 0.0 *Status: 1.0* *Glory: 1.0* *Infamy: 5.6*

School/Rank: Togashi Tattooed Order 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Craft: Tattooing 2, Defense 5, Hunting 4, Jiujutsu 7, Knives 3, Lore: the Void 5, Medicine 3, Meditation 3, Stealth (Ambush, Sneaking) 5

Tattoos: Bamboo, Crab, Void Lizard

Stolen Tattoos: (Nodogu) Blaze, Ki-Rin, (Sujin) Centipede, Hawk, Lion, (Gunojo) Dragon, Mantis, Mountain Advantages: Crafty, Hands of Stone, Quick, Silent Disadvantages: Antisocial, Black Sheep, Dark Fate, Enlightened Madness (Void Lizard Tattoo), Fascination (the Void) Stolen Tattoos: Okkio can use the tattoos of those he's killed and skinned as if they were his own. However, he can only use one set of tattoos (his own or a set he skinned) at a time. Switching between different tattoo sets is a Simple Action.

Shadowlands. This man was Togashi Kokujin, destined to be known in Rokugan as the Mad Prophet.

Enlightenment brings with it many gifts, and despite his madness and corruption Kokujin nonetheless shared those gifts. Kokujin gained a profound understanding of the powers of the Kami and the ways of life and death, seeking to achieve a state beyond both entirely. He sought to share this knowledge, albeit in perverse manner, by following in the footsteps of Togashi himself and tattooing his followers—some of them willingly, others by force. His Tainted powers made these tattooed followers slaves to his will, spreading violence and chaos in his wake. His unnatural state of spiritual power allowed him to live far beyond the span of a normal mortal.

Many of those who attain enlightenment are able to swiftly grasp even the most complex of tasks. Kokujin, who had never before touched a smith's hammer, was able to masterfully forge a set of potent and terrible nemuranai using the artifact known as the Anvil of Despair and the souls of captured Dragon samurai. He created the Shameswords, terrible weapons that embodied the worst traits of those he slew to craft them. Yet even in the midst of this terrible crime, Kokujin continued to seek wisdom and to grasp at the hidden secrets of the universe; he also used the power of the Anvil of Despair to try to learn Fu Leng's true name.

Kokujin's enlightened nature also gave him a powerful charisma, not unlike the impact which Shinsei himself had on all those who met him. A few subtle words from the Mad Prophet were often enough to subvert the loyalties of dedicated samurai. Even Hitomi herself was swayed by his words, and many of the worst excesses of her brief reign were caused in part by Kokujin's advice.

After many years of violence and bizarre actions, Kokujin sought to incite a rebellion among the peasantry of Rokugan, an action which finally brought an end to his insane life. Bayushi Shinzo pretended to serve as Kokujin's apprentice in order to get close enough to kill him, ending his reign of terror and removing a stain on the honor of the Dragon Clan. His life of corruption and madness had spanned four decades and more, and brought untold suffering to his clan.

What caused such a powerful soul to turn to such complete evil? It is clear that if Kokujin had kept his sanity he would have been a truly legendary hero of the Dragon. Exactly why he instead went down the dark path of Enlightened Madness remains a mystery, but it seems evident that imbalance within the heart and mind of one who attains enlightenment is the most probable cause of such tragedies. Such imbalances may cause the mind or soul to break under the stunning impact of enlightenment. There is no true solution to this threat, other than for the Dragon to remain vigilant against any future instances of Enlightened Madness.

Kitsuki's Method

The first Kitsuki had sharp senses and an inquisitive mind, and after he was granted leave to found his own family he passed his unconventional methods and practices down to his descendants. Their peculiar system is known as Kitsuki's Method to the Rokugani, but to the inhabitants of our own modern world it might better be called 'forensics.' It varies radically from the Rokugani norm of judicial process, and few outside the Dragon Clan are willing to afford it any respect.

Rokugani law relies primarily on eyewitness testimony to determine guilt or innocence; only the most simple and direct physical evidence is accepted, and such evidence can always be trumped by testimony. Kitsuki's Method instead teaches its adherents to use their perceptions to take in everything presented by their surroundings, analyzing all the facts and comparing them with eyewitness accounts to discern the truth. Since this method does not give preference to the words of a samurai, and has often led to samurai being caught in dishonorable lies, the rest of Rokugan views it poorly. To the Kitsuki, however, evidence is the only truth, and they are taught to pursue truth even at the cost of the ire of their peers. Far better to embarrass a few samurai than to allow a wrongly-accused man to be executed.

It should be noted that the Kitsuki do not truly utilize scientific forensics in any way that our own modern world would recognize. They do not know how to take fingerprints, analyze blood types, make plaster molds of footprints, or any other such scientific methods. However, compared to the simplistic investigations used by most Rokugani magistrates their methods seem quite advanced.

Kitsuki's Method teaches its students to always be observing, always remembering, and to filter all information into useful channels and categories. At a crime scene, a Kitsuki magistrate will first have doshin or yoriki cordon off the area to prevent observers or passerby from disturbing evidence. Eyewitnesses are sequestered and kept apart from one another. The magistrate will utilize *ichi miru* or the "first look," examining the entire scene for initial impressions. Often he will systematically walk the crime scene in a grid pattern, carefully searching every square inch for evidence.

Once the magistrate has had time to review the scene of the crime, he will interview the various eyewitnesses. Kitsuki are taught to be aware of "tells," subtle physical indications that give away deception. Once all interviews are completed, the Kitsuki will analyze all the testimony and evidence in private, attempting to discern the truth of the matter, checking what the evidence tells him against the facts he knows for certain.

The Kitsuki are also known for paying unusual (and rather scandalous) attention to the evidence supplied by corpses. Although many magistrates employ an eta to ex-

amine murder victims on their behalf, the Kitsuki often take a very active role in this aspect of the investigation, watching closely as the eta examines and manipulates the body.

Kitsuki's Method is not solely used or intended for criminal investigations, of course, although that is its most common application. Those trained in the Kitsuki techniques also apply them to political and diplomatic interactions. Kitsuki's Method can instantly read the intentions and truthfulness of a rival courtier, identify the strengths and weaknesses of various members of a court, and ferret out political connections and alliances by observing various tells or clues. The Kitsuki School has even developed a few techniques for argument and debate, turning the Method into a rhetorical tool.

Although Kitsuki's Method was created for honorable purposes—unearthing the truth and punishing the guilty—it can certainly be used for dishonorable ones as well. More than one Kitsuki has used his training to ferret out dark secrets for the purposes of blackmail or similar schemes, and the Method can be quite effective at deceiving others or figuring out how to say what they want to hear. Although such abuses are appalling to traditional adherents of the Method, there is no denying they have occurred in the past and will likely continue to do so in future.

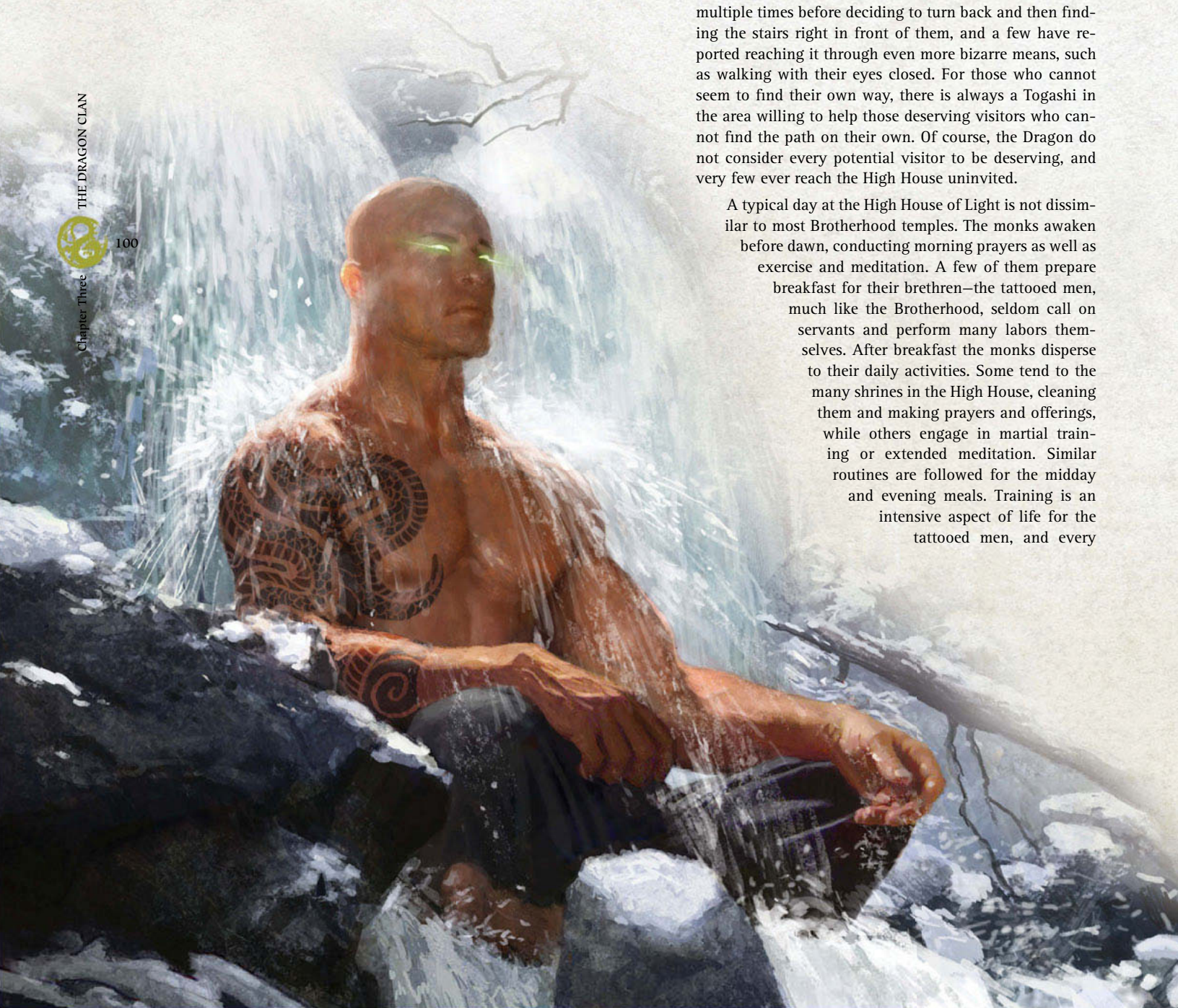
Kitsuki's Method in Play

In any situation dealing with PCs or NPCs from other clans, the use of Kitsuki's Method can and should cause friction. The average Rokugani samurai will balk at the abstract consideration of evidence, for such an approach reduces all men to an equal status—anathema to the samurai caste. In the history of Rokugan, it was not until the Scorpion were accused of assassinating Toturi I that Kitsuki's Method first received Empire-wide recognition, and even then it remained frowned on and frequently rejected by most non-Dragon. GMs should play up the conflict between magistrates following different traditions; this can provide much suspense and excitement during an adventure when evidence implicates one suspect while testimony incriminates another.

GMs overseeing games with Kitsuki PCs should try to add more flavor to the players' observations. Instead of simply saying, "You meet the TN, the Lion is lying," the GM might instead say, "You notice this samurai has a habit of glancing to the left briefly whenever you ask about his whereabouts last night, indicating deception."

The Dragon Clan Monastic Tradition

The Dragon Clan is the only Great Clan aside from the Phoenix that has a major monastic order within its ranks, and the Dragon tattooed men are far more numerous and prominent than the Phoenix Henshin (whose true nature is a closely guarded secret). The tattooed men share some obvious similarities to other monastic orders, but in a number of ways they are unique, with their own traditions and eccentricities quite distinct from the conventional monastic patterns of the Brotherhood of Shinsei.



Like most monastic traditions, the tattooed men have a number of temples which they maintain themselves, performing day-to-day maintenance and upkeep both for moral reasons (to pursue the ascetic lifestyle that best suits a quest for enlightenment) and practical ones (such labors help them to stay healthy, and keeping servants in remote temples can be difficult). It is worth noting that almost all the major holdings of the Dragon Clan have some sort of accommodations for the tattooed men, although the majority of them dwell within their own lands. Their primary temple, traditional home to a majority of the order, is of course the High House of Light (sometimes also known as Kyuden Togashi and even, briefly, as Kyuden Hitomi). It is located high up in the mountains of the Dragon Clan, and those who wish to visit it face a long and arduous pilgrimage. Oddly, there is no set path to reach the High House of Light. Some visitors have found it by walking back the way they came, others have circled the mountain multiple times before deciding to turn back and then finding the stairs right in front of them, and a few have reported reaching it through even more bizarre means, such as walking with their eyes closed. For those who cannot seem to find their own way, there is always a Togashi in the area willing to help those deserving visitors who cannot find the path on their own. Of course, the Dragon do not consider every potential visitor to be deserving, and very few ever reach the High House uninvited.

A typical day at the High House of Light is not dissimilar to most Brotherhood temples. The monks awaken before dawn, conducting morning prayers as well as exercise and meditation. A few of them prepare breakfast for their brethren—the tattooed men, much like the Brotherhood, seldom call on servants and perform many labors themselves. After breakfast the monks disperse to their daily activities. Some tend to the many shrines in the High House, cleaning them and making prayers and offerings, while others engage in martial training or extended meditation. Similar routines are followed for the midday and evening meals. Training is an intensive aspect of life for the tattooed men, and every

member of the order spends several hours a day in physical and martial practice.

While the Dragon order is traditionally referred to as the "Tattooed Men," they are by no means exclusively male. There have always been women present in the order, albeit relatively few in number. The order treats all members equally, and segregation is limited to the minimum required for modesty—sleeping in different cells and bathing at separate times. It should be noted that members of the Tattooed Order are not particularly respectful of other clans' notions of propriety—their tendency to openly display unseemly amounts of bare skin is well known—but given their ascetic lifestyle, they do see value in avoiding needless temptations of the flesh.

Much like the Brotherhood, the tattooed order does see value in exploring the outside world from time to time, and while the vast majority remain within Dragon lands there are always a few tattooed men roaming the Empire at any given time. In addition to seeking enlightenment through interactions with the material world, these roaming tattooed monks often share the Brotherhood's ethic of offering help to those in need, using their martial skills to defend the weak. The history of Rokugan contains many tales of mysterious tattooed Defenders suddenly arriving to protect villagers from bandits or abusive lords. Of course, the strange and unpredictable powers of the Togashi tattoos invest these stories with elements of the spectacular and bizarre which are usually absent from tales of the Brotherhood: stories of tattooed men leaping from cliffs, running across rivers, blowing down houses, and so forth. Such stories have a double edge, unfortunately, for they also promote fear and misunderstandings about the tattooed orders.

The tattoos which the Togashi wear so proudly are their most notable feature, and set them apart dramatically from all other monastic orders. These tattoos are inked into their skin in special rituals when their bodies and souls are deemed worthy to accept the gifts of their founder, Togashi. No monk ever knows what tattoo he will gain, for each is an expression of that specific monk's nature and strengths—while some tattoos recur over and over, more than one monk has received a unique tattoo which is never seen again. The tattoos allow their bearers to briefly tap into the power of the Kami Togashi, drawing on his strength to bridge the gap between mortal and god. There are tales of a monk crossing the whole of Rokugan in a single day, of individuals breathing fire from their mouths, leaping higher than birds, shattering stone with bare hands, or even warding off the corruption of the Shadowlands Taint.

These tattoos are not without hazard, however. Those who serve in the tattooed order must be mentally and physically prepared to accept the gifts of a Kami. Those not strong enough may find their bodies rejecting the blood of the Kami, a violent reaction leaving the victim unable to move for days or sometimes weeks. In a few cases tattooed men have gone mad—as with the example of Togashi Okkio—or even died, their bodies unable to handle the influx of such mystical power.

New Game Mechanics

This section contains new Dragon Clan mechanics for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition role-playing game. GMs and players may use as much or as little of these mechanics as they desire.

New Disadvantage: Enlightened Madness (4/6 Points) [Spiritual]

The touch of divine insight has twisted your mind and soul, driving you to strange and violent acts. Choose either a Ring or a Skill. If you are of the tattooed orders you may also choose one of your tattoos. Any time you use the Skill/tattoo or make a Ring roll or Spell Casting Roll using the Ring, you must roll Willpower or be temporarily consumed with madness, passing into the control of the GM for the next eight hours.

The TN of the Willpower roll is 20 for the 4-point version of this Disadvantage, 30 for the 6-point version.

New Advanced School: Mirumoto Master Sensei

High atop the mountains of the Dragon lands, in remote dojo and obscure strongholds, dwell the Master Sensei of the Mirumoto family—a tiny elite group of men and women who have attained true mastery of not only swordsmanship but also of their own bodies and souls. Their primary home is Morning Frost Castle, but they also have several lesser dojo scattered through the most remote and inhospitable corners of the Dragon lands. The Master Sensei are very few in number, seldom exceeding two dozen in total, and those who would join their company must meet with their personal approval. Some Mirumoto samurai have spent decades struggling to prove their worthiness to the Master Sensei, while others have been admitted on their first application. Although the nature of the Master Sensei is more amenable to those who have followed the ways of the Taoist Swordsmen, they do not play favorites and more than one Swordmaster or Niten practitioner has joined their ranks.

The Master Sensei are isolated even by Dragon standards, and rare indeed is it for one of them to leave their remote dojo and visit the rest of the Dragon lands, let alone the Empire as a whole. However, on the few occasions they do emerge to influence the world outside, their impact is always profound.

New Advanced School: Mirumoto Master Sensei [Bushi]

- **Requirements:** Air 5, Earth 4, Void 5, Kenjutsu 5, Meditation 6
- **Restrictions:** Must be chosen and taught by another Master Sensei, and cannot be Brash or Proud.

Techniques:

Rank One: The Sword and the Soul

The Master Sensei has learned that the sword can bring moments of perfect harmony, just like art or meditation. When fighting with a sword, any time you reduce an opponent to Down, Out, or Dead, you regain 1 Void Point. This can temporarily increase your total Void Points above your Void Ring, although any such "extra" points disappear at the end of the current skirmish.

Rank Two: The Body is Illusion

The Master Sensei has studied meditation and enlightenment to such an extent that he can transcend the limitations of the flesh. You may take a Simple Action to spend a Void Point to ignore Wound Penalties (including Down, but not Out) for the remainder of this skirmish, or for ten minutes when outside of a skirmish.

Rank Three: Sword of the Sensei

The Master Sensei knows that a true teacher can share his greatest power with his students. Once per day, you may take a Simple Action to roll Awareness/Meditation at a TN of 25 plus 5 for each ally fighting alongside you. If you succeed, your allies gain the benefits of your Rank One technique for the remainder of this skirmish.

New Advanced School: Tamori Master of the Mountain

The Great Wall of the North is a treacherous mountain range that kills those who are unready for its sudden, vicious changes in weather. Despite its dangers, the range is admirable to those who can see the beauty of its cold violence. Mountaineers who brave the fierce peaks are forged into powerful men. The Tamori Masters of the Mountain learn to harness the power churning within their own souls, a violent echo of the strength of the Elements themselves. It is an old tradition, dating back to when the Agasha family first explored the mountains and studied their secrets. The name may have changed over the years, but the traditions remain true.

The Master of the Mountain is a loose organization with few sensei and fewer regulations. The Masters induct shugenja into their ranks when they spot one with the proper potential. The elders tend to choose impetuous and brash shugenja who trust only their own strength, a preference those outside of the school often question (albeit usually under their breaths). They worry the Masters of the Mountains will be influenced by the impatient natures of their young recruits. However, usually the opposite is true, as the wild students are taught proper methods of venting their anger through their powers, making them wiser as well as more powerful.

New Advanced School: Tamori Master of the Mountain [Shugenja]

Requirements

- **Rings/Traits:** One chosen Ring at 4, two other Rings at 3
- **Skills:** Spellcraft 5

Techniques

Rank One: Integration of the Gods

The Master of the Mountain knows flexibility is the only way to survive in the harsh wilderness of the mountains. When casting a spell, you may choose to spend two spell slots of another Ring rather than a single spell slot of the appropriate Ring. (This cannot be the Ring of the opposing Element from the spell's Element, e.g. Air/Earth, Fire/Water.) For example, this means that you may spend 2 Earth spell slots to cast a Fire spell instead of a single Fire spell slot.

Rank Two: Inner Fortitude

The Master of the Mountain draws power from within his own body as well as from the Elements outside himself. Your Shugenja School Rank increases

by one. Additionally, you may spend a spell slot as a Free Action to gain Reduction 2 and +10 to your Armor TN. This effect lasts for a number of Rounds equal to your Earth Ring, ending during the Reactions Stage of the final Round. You may choose to end the effect early as a Free Action. For the purposes of casting spells, your School Rank is increased by 1.

While this effect is active, you find it more difficult to tap into the Elements around you. You must call one Raise to no effect every time you cast a spell.

Rank Three: Power in Need

The Master of the Mountain can coax power out of the most contrary kami by confronting them with his own strength and willpower. As a Simple Action you may spend a Void Point and a spell slot from any Ring. Choose a spell keyword. You gain a bonus of +4k1 to the total of all Spell Casting Rolls while casting spells with that keyword. This effect lasts until the end of the encounter (in combat) or for an hour (outside of combat).

New Alternate Path: Kitsuki Debater

The Kitsuki are best known as the Dragon Clan's premiere magistrates, but they also serve the clan in the courts. Kitsuki excel at an argumentative approach to the social battlefield of court, learning to refute every aspect of an opponent's position by destroying its logic. Every detail, no matter how small, must agree or be revealed as lies. This method can be extremely surprising to those not accustomed to it, flustering even experienced courtiers. Most samurai hide behind masks of courtesy; losing that defense can disorient a courtier long enough for the Debater to make his move.

New Alternate Path: Kitsuki Debater [Courtier]

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Kitsuki Investigator 3
- **Requirements:** Courtier 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 5

Technique: The Ebb and Flow of Deception

The Kitsuki Debater represents his clan in enemy courts across the Empire, fighting for every small advantage he can win for the Dragon. You can see the flow of a conversation and discern what topic may force your opponent to tell a lie. Make an Etiquette (Conversation)/Awareness roll at a TN 20, plus any Raises you wish to call. (The base TN of this roll may be modified at the GM's discretion, based on the opponent, the nature of the conversation, and other applicable circumstances.) If you succeed, you switch the topic of conversation to something uncomfortable for your opponent. He must roll Sincerity/Awareness at a TN of 20 plus 5 for every Raise you successfully called. (Again, the GM may apply circumstantial modifiers as needed.) If he fails the roll he is visibly discomfited by the conversational trap, and suffers a -1k1 penalty to his next Social Skill Roll against you.

Pre-Ninth Century Dragon Courtiers

Prior to the emergence of the Kitsuki family, the Dragon Clan had no true courtiers, and was usually represented in court by Mirumoto who had shown skill in the ways of etiquette. However, a GM who wishes to offer more mechanical options to Dragon characters in a game set prior to the ninth century can opt to make the Debater Path available to Mirumoto bushi instead of solely to those trained in the Kitsuki School.

New Alternate Path: The Dragon's Flame

The Tsuruchi family of the Mantis Clan is universally considered to possess the foremost archers of the Empire. Crane archers are celebrated for their accuracy and the Shinjo horsebowmen are known for their speed and unique style. The average samurai may know all of these names, but far fewer know the name of the Dragon's Flame. The warriors of the Dragon's Flame do not specialize in any one aspect of archery, choosing in true Dragon fashion to approach archery in a more individualistic manner. Some have distinguished themselves as excellent horsemen while others gain fame for accuracy over great distances. All of the Dragon's Flame share one important passion: they dedicate their lives to defending the mountains of the Dragon from anyone who might dare threaten them.

New Alternate Path: The Dragon's Flame [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 4
- **Replaces:** Any Dragon bushi 4
- **Requirements:** Kyujutsu 5

Technique: Rain of Death

The Dragon's Flame knows accuracy comes from finding tranquility within. You gain a +1k0 bonus to attack rolls, or +2k2 while using a bow.

New Alternate Path: Togashi Defender

The Togashi ise zumi dedicate their lives to chasing the ephemeral goal of enlightenment. The journey is unique to each person, so the monks of the tattooed orders tend to be a highly unique and varied lot. Some choose to focus on physical exertion over mental strength, honing their bodies through an emphasis on martial arts and hard labor. The Togashi Defender becomes adept at pushing his body

to its absolute physical limits... and beyond. The Defender often chooses to stay within the Dragon provinces to protect villages from bandits and other predators. Defenders are also more likely than other Tattooed Men to be seen fighting side by side with Mirumoto samurai and marching in the Dragon armies. The Defenders lose none of the quirks that define the Togashi family, but strike out with vicious strength against any who dare oppose Dragon might.

The Transmute Spell

The Transmute spell is the product of Agasha's deep and intense study of the Elements and their interconnected nature. It is taught secretly among the highest ranks of the Agasha and Tamori schools (only shugenja of Rank 5 or higher may learn it normally). However, Agasha herself has been known to bestow the spell's secrets on her favored descendants.

Ring/Mastery: Any non-Void *2*

Range: 10'

Area of Effect: One material object (up to 10 cubic feet)

Duration: Instantaneous

Raises: Range (+10'), Area of Effect (5 cubic feet), Special (one additional Element per *2* Raises)

This spell allows a shugenja to transform the Elements in a single physical object into other Elements. For example, a wooden table (Earth) could be turned into Air, Water, or even Fire. (The spell cannot affect Void in any way.) The spell is most easily used to turn a single Element into another Element, such as in the example of the table; for an object made of multiple Elements, the caster must Raise twice for each additional Element, both those in the original object and those which he wishes to transmute them into. For example, a lit candle (Earth and Fire) would require *2* Raises to turn into a single Element. A wooden table (Earth) transformed into Fire and Air (quite the spectacle!) would likewise require *2* Raises.

Only individual inanimate objects can be affected by the spell—it has no power over living creatures. It cannot target a complex structure or device (e.g. something made from many separate objects), although it could target a specific object within such a device (such as the axle of a wagon). The spell cannot affect an object whose mass is greater than the spell's area of effect.

The GM is the final arbiter of how many Elements are found within a physical object. As a general guideline, the more complex and sophisticated the object, the more Elements it will contain. The swords of the daisho set (the katana and wakizashi) are believed to contain all five Elements (including Void) and are thus immune to this spell.

New Alternate Path: Togashi Defender [Monk]

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Togashi Tattooed Order 3

Technique: Power Within and Without

The ise zumi knows the kami cannot aid any man if he proves himself an unworthy physical vessel. While unarmored and with no Kiho or Tattoos active, you gain Reduction equal to 3 plus your Void Ring. You gain one additional Tattoo.

New Kata: Strength of the Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Schools:** Any Dragon bushi
- **Effect:** While wielding a katana in your main hand and a wakizashi in your off hand, you gain a +3 bonus to your Armor TN.

New Dragon Ancestors

Agasha [6 points/10 points]

The founder of the Agasha family was an isolated researcher who studied the Elements and learned their secrets. Although much of her family joined the Phoenix, she remains loyal to the Dragon and appears only to those of her descendents found within that clan. Agasha's insights into the true nature of the Elements grant you a +1k0 bonus to Spell Casting Rolls with non-Void spells and a +1k1 bonus to all Spellcraft Skill rolls.

If you spend 10 points on Agasha as an Ancestor, you are one of her most favored descendents and learn the secret spell "Transmute."

- **Demands:** Agasha was a pacifist, and if you ever serve in war she will abandon you. However, she was once kidnapped by goblins, so she will not abandon a descendent who wages war against the Shadowlands (only).

Togashi Yamatsu [7 points]

The tattooed man who captured Iuchiban's soul during the Bloodspeaker's second rampage has no direct blood descendents, but his spirit sometimes appears to guide later tattooed men—you may only take Yamatsu as an Ancestor if you are a member of the Dragon tattooed orders. Yamatsu's favor grants two Ranks of Magic Resistance that only apply against maho. In addition, his courageous spirit grants you a +2k2 bonus to any Willpower roll to resist being possessed or magically controlled.

- **Demands:** Yamatsu will abandon you if you ever gain Taint of 1.0 or higher, or if you ever willingly use maho or a Shadowlands power.

Chapter Four

The Lion Clan

Her sempai had always been a pale young man, almost sickly—the complexion of a weak soul, of a leaf that would fall in the slightest of winds. He had pale-dyed golden hair and a sort of distant stare, as though he was gazing at something others could not see. Her cousins in the Akodo and Matsu, her kinswoman Matsu Tsuko, always had rippling muscles, but she could never recall those on him.

Today he was seated across from her, eyes unfocused as he watched the Go board. She looked from him to the window, idly wondering if he was truly a Lion at all. Certainly Tsuko did not think so. She called him...

"Your attention is slipping," he murmured. A slight knowing smile touched his lips. "You cannot allow yourself to do that. Much is expected of you, Tsanuri-chan. Losing concentration at a critical moment would not serve your lord well, would it?"

Ikoma Tsanuri suppressed the urge to blush, embarrassed he had caught her with her mind wandering. "Is this not a game of thought, sempai? Sometimes we need to think on several levels to achieve victory."

"We do. But the mind can become too inquisitive, so much so that it loses sight of our purpose," he answered softly, his smile growing a little. "Tell me, Tsanuri-chan, what is our purpose?"

"To serve," she said without hesitation. It was a rote answer, but true all the same.

"Good," he nodded. One hand moved down, placing a stone in a position that made her wince almost visibly. He had cut far too deeply into her territory in the last few moves, and her own counters had not stopped him. "We are samurai, the servants and swords of our lords. It is not for us to question our task, but to do; to do with diligence, dignity, and honor. And if we die, to die listening to the song of the ancestors, to die with pride knowing we are servants of our lords to the last."

Ikoma Tsanuri bowed over the board. "I resign," she said, and began to pick up the smooth polished stones. She regarded her sempai with an uncertain expression. "The song of our ancestors... have you ever heard it, Toturi-sempai?"

The slim, pale young man smiled. "I hear it... every day."

* * *

The year 1133, the Shadowlands, on the road to Volturnum:

It is strange, Ikoma Tsanuri reflects, what sorts of things you remember when you are about to die.

The landscape is a nightmare out of Jigoku. The earth refuses to hold still, and even the trees attack her men. Akuma no Oni has unleashed wave upon wave of monstrosities against her troops, but still they hold their ground. They have stood and fought here at the edges of nightmare for... days, at least. Time has bled into confusion, and even the rising and setting of the sun cannot be trusted in this place. She promised Motso three days. Has it been that long? She thinks so, but cannot be certain.

The Oni Lord had to be distracted, his attention pinned down while Kitsu Motso led the rest of the Lion troops to Volturnum's Gate. Motso will succeed, she is certain. He has already purged the madman Okura from the Lion ranks, and he will finish the work of cleansing the clan's honor.

It barely matters anymore. They are at their end. The supplies of jade are swiftly turning black, and the great Oni Lord has disappeared to the south, leaving its horde of minions to destroy them. Surely by now it has finally deciphered their plan, but she has held it here all this time—she can only pray it is enough, that the demon will be too late to stop Motso's men from reaching the gate.

And so this is our end, she thinks. We are exhausted, without supplies, our numbers too few to retreat successfully. She feels a smile pull at her face. This is as it should be. We always knew we would die in this place, ever since we prepared for the march. This is the way of the Lion. It is not for us to question or wonder or doubt. Only to serve, as our ancestors served, as our descendents will serve after us.

Her sempai, her Emperor, always knew that, no matter how weak and reflective he might have seemed once. He had not faltered when the Empire needed him. She and her men will not falter either.

A glancing blow draws blood along her left shoulder. Tsanuri turns and severs the head of the thing with a single strike, sure and quick despite the weight of exhaustion. The beast twitches and thrashes, its blood boiling the ground away beneath it as it dies. Behind it the other

beasts draw back, rallying, and for a moment there is an ebb in the fighting.

Tsanuri strides to the banner and pulls out her war-fan, motioning to her men. It is time to end this properly. She will not let them be captured or taken by the Taint. They will charge, they will die with honor and glory, their bodies burning with the purity of their souls.

Ikoma Tsanuri stands still for a moment, forming the words she must speak to her soldiers, and in that instant she hears it. The song, the voices of their ancestors, calling from Yomi.

"Men, we knew this time would come!" she shouts, and her voice mingles with the song. They merge and flow into one, into a shout great beyond the strength of her own worn body. "Rise up and stand with me! We are Lion, we are samurai, and today we die for our brothers and for the souls of our ancestors! Once more, cry to the heavens! Once more, let these creatures know they die at the hands of true samurai! Utz!"

"BANZAI!" The men roar with one voice, and she hears the song echo it, the ancestors shouting with them. Tears of pride sting her eyes, but her face is calm as she raises her sword overheard and points it toward the numberless enemy.

They charge into ranks of monsters, charge without fear, without hesitation. The song catches them and fills them, and all past distrusts and betrayals melt away. There is only duty and honor, only the call of their ancestors, only the service of a samurai.

Ikoma Tsanuri and her soldiers charge to their deaths, smiling, unafraid. Dying as they lived—as Lions.

獅子

History of the Lion Clan

The Lion Clan is the Right Hand of the Emperor, the sword arm of the Imperial Throne, a clan of soldiers without peer in the Empire, boasting some of the finest tactical minds in Rokugan's history. The history of the Lion is one of conflict and war, defined not by the cultural or courtly achievements of the clan but by the battles it has fought and the conquests it has made—whether in defense of the Empire or not. War defines what the Lion are, and nearly every Lion thinks of himself as a soldier first and foremost.

The Lion were born from blood and conquest. The Kami Akodo, defeated by his brother Hantei in the great tournament at the dawn of the Empire, pledged his loyalty as Hantei's Right Hand and immediately set about building the armies the Empire would need. Even before the rise of Fu Leng in the far south, the Lion Clan was emerging as a major military force, forged by Akodo with the help of his two earliest followers, Ikoma and Matsu.

When the First War came the clan took pride of place in the conflict. Lion armies fought ferociously and tirelessly against the forces of Fu Leng, and Akodo himself lost an eye in battle, giving him the name Akodo One-Eye by which he was known for the rest of his life. Without the courage and brilliant tactics of his followers the Empire would never have survived long enough for Shinsei and the Seven Thunders to defeat the fallen Kami.

Lady Matsu and Akodo

The lady Matsu, founder of the Lion Clan's greatest family, originally dwelt in a small village outside of what would become Otosan Uchi. She was a tall woman with iron-hard eyes and a spirit stronger, and would bow before no man. She was one of the Empire's first military leaders, orga-

nizing and training soldiers for the people's defense well before the First War. She was also the only person Akodo sought out specifically to join him.

At first, Matsu spurned and scorned Akodo's efforts, and it was not until he returned with all the armies he had gathered at his command that she agreed to join his new clan. Akodo was clearly entranced by her skill, honor, and courage, and sought to court her. She refused his offers of marriage and finally, insulted by his persistence, challenged him to a duel. The winner would lead the clan and its armies, but the two warriors added an additional condition. If Akodo won, he would rule the clan but never ask her to marry him again; if Matsu won, she would marry him as part of her claiming leadership of the clan. Their titanic battle ended with Akodo victorious. Matsu dutifully knelt and acknowledged Akodo as her Clan Champion, and Akodo kept his word and never again sought her hand in marriage. A few years later, Matsu married a man from among her followers, founding her own family line.

It was in those early days that the great feud between the Kakita and Matsu families began. Matsu attended a tournament to honor the creation of Otosan Uchi as the Imperial City; the victor of the tournament would be proclaimed the champion and personal bodyguard of Emperor Hantei. Kakita, a previously unknown ronin with unusual skill as a swordsman, attended the tournament. Both he and Matsu defeated one opponent after another, but while Kakita bowed in respect and thanked each foe he met, Matsu's fierce pride and strong will would not allow her to show such deference to her lesser foes—who of course were all men. Ultimately, the two faced each other in the last bout.

Kakita was angered at Matsu's treatment of her opponents, and when he faced her, he held his hand above his blade like one offering a gift, smiling slightly to draw forth her ire and rage. He won the duel in an instant, leaving Matsu on the ground with Kakita's blade at her throat. Victorious, Kakita did not bow to her as he did to his other opponents. Matsu was humiliated and furious; she rose to her feet and pointed at her foe, growling: "Let there be enmity between us, little man." As Kakita and Matsu forged their followers into samurai families who embodied their philosophies, that enmity swiftly spread through those families and from there into the two clans as a whole, cemented by a thousand years of warfare and bloodshed.

Ikoma and Akodo

In the earliest days of the Empire, before the First War against Fu Leng, it is said Akodo once visited a small village in his lands. There he asked after warriors of great renown who could stand beside him in the new clan he was building. In many villagers such a question met only silence, but on this occasion Akodo heard the laughter of a portly old man, covered in scars, with a broad toothy grin on his face. This was Ikoma, and at first his mockery made the Lion Kami furious. He challenged the old man for his insolence.

Ikoma answered by listing each of his scars and how he had gotten them. As Akodo listened to each tale, he felt his anger melt away, replaced with a strange respect for this fierce, unorthodox, and proud old warrior. He acknowledged Ikoma's strength of body and will, and decided he had no wish to fight him. Instead he welcomed Ikoma as his follower.

Ikoma's death is not recorded in the histories of the Lion, or anywhere else in the Empire for that matter. Many tales are shared about it, but none of them are considered true histories. Most tales claim Ikoma died as he lived, surrounded by the comforts he most enjoyed. He had maintained an active life and impressive physique well into old age, but at last the end approached and he recognized the faint murmurings of weakness and impending death. Ikoma returned to the town where he met Akodo and finished his days among friends and in the company of beautiful women. Sake flowed freely and he recounted many exaggerated tales of his exploits. Those present claimed that when he finally died, the revelry continued with such ribald strength that his passing was not noticed until an hour or so after he laid his head down to rest in his favorite corner.

The Lion Clan Thunder

As the war against Fu Leng threatened to overturn the fledgling Empire, the little teacher Shinsei approached each clan, seeking mortal champions to strike back against the darkness. He did not seek out the Kami themselves, however, for he knew fortune favored the mortal man.

Thus, when Shinsei came to the Lion he first approached Ikoma and his son Jujinin. Before they could answer Shinsei's request, however, Matsu stepped forward and felled Ikoma with a single blow from her fist. No others dared oppose her, and when Shinsei asked why she should be allowed to serve as the Lion Thunder, she replied, "Because there is no one else." She did not ask Akodo's permission to go, and historians still debate why.

Akodo's Leadership

Leadership, Akodo's legacy and the book still studied in every Lion dojo, is actually a collaborative work. The first half is Akodo's own words, his thoughts and musings on military leadership, civilized warfare, the Code of Bushido, and military conflict in general. Most of it was written in the final years of the Kami's life, drawing on his experiences in the First War. However, the second half of the book was left deliberately unwritten. Akodo believed his successors would be able to adapt what was already written to many new situations, and wanted them to add their own experiences to the book's wisdom. In this way *Leadership* has grown with time as successive Clan Champions and great teachers of the War College add their insights. In many respects the modern *Leadership* is a history of the philosophy and prevailing attitudes of the Lion Clan's leaders. Its wisdom is studied intensely by every Lion samurai, as well as by many other samurai who seek insight into military conflict.

Aside from its discussion of Bushido, *Leadership*'s principle theme is military command and the path to victory. Some of the more well-known sections have become aphorisms in modern Rokugan.

War is inevitable, like a spring fog. It creeps in from the sea and slowly covers the country in a cold, white shroud. It dissipates in time, but once it is gone, the land is never the same.

Shinsei says, "Nature does not recognize good and evil." But I tell you now that men do recognize the difference, and to ignore the fact that they do is to ignore the way of the world and hope it is a better place than it is.

Duty is the samurai's soul, your reason to life. Neglect your duty and scar your soul. Duty is the perfect gem with a hundred thousand facets. Each facet is a way you live, a way you act, a way you serve. Fulfilling Duty is all or nothing, black or white. There are no grays. Live for each facet, for if you dismiss even one, your gem loses all worth. This is what it is to be samurai.

The way of the samurai is death. Do not mistake this. Your life is not your own. It belongs to your lord, and you live and die in service to your lord, just as they live and die in the service of the Emperor and through him all of the Empire. When the time comes that your life is called for, do not hesitate for fear of death or waste undue time in making sure that yours is a 'good death.' Serve, live, and die without hesitation, and give every moment to your lord. A heart without hesitation is one that will never fail.

When your enemy is stronger than you, nurture him. It is well known in nature that anything that is too strong will certainly break. Then, when he falters, you may attack at your leisure.

Lead with perception and intelligence. With these two virtues, you need not be a master of tactics or strategy. Nor must you be a master of command or ordinance. Nor will you need to understand supply or terrain. With perception, you shall find those who do understand such things, and direct them to their proper duty. With intelligence, you will know not to get in their way.

To charge your army into battle without foreknowledge of your opponent's capabilities and weaknesses brings you no glory and brands you a coward. Your concern is to the safety of the Emperor and that of your clan. Blind death is swift death. Instead, when facing the enemy, let him see what you want him to see. Show him your right hand, strike with your left. Hide all he does not need to see, for the sting of your slap will ease the pain of a sudden blade in his side.

When your enemy is entrenched and secure, lure him from his nest. Attack that which is dear to him to draw him from his ground. Take him from his sanctuary and take him on your time.

Make examples of your enemy's errors, but do not make examples of your officers' errors. A man knows his own mistakes all too well. Showing them the errors of others teaches them confidence in themselves. Showing them their own errors teaches them doubt.

If I am greater than my enemy, I surround him. If I am twice the size of my enemy, I divide my forces and flank him. If I am equal to my enemy, I find his weaknesses and exploit them. If I am lesser than my enemy, I outmaneuver him and strike him as a bee strikes the samurai.

Akodo and the Kitsu

Akodo survived the First War and helped rebuild the Lion Clan and the Empire afterward. In truth, the fall of the dark god did not end the days of war for the Lion, but rather began them. Akodo saw to it the Lion would always stand at the front of the Empire's ranks, and the duties and needs of the Right Hand kept them constantly militarily active and constantly seeking more sources of men, supplies, and lands. Akodo always knew war was not only a matter of honor and glory, but also of practical necessity, and it was in these years that he wrote his book *Leadership*—considered the Empire's foremost work on military tactics, strategy, and honorable conduct.

Those early years were not without mistakes and tragedy, however. Akodo was a zealous man in executing Hantei's will and in protecting the people, but in the name of that duty he made a tragic miscalculation. When he encountered the kitsu, a race of ancient and highly intelligent spirit-creatures who outwardly resembled lion-like beasts, he initially mistook them for monsters and ordered their extermination. Only in the last battle with the kitsu, when he saw the light of nobility and the glow of intelligence in their eyes, did he realize the terrible error he had made. He bowed before the five remaining kitsu, seeking their forgiveness.

Akodo's atonement was no small feat. All five remaining kitsu were male, so the Lion Kami granted them his daughters as wives. The line of Akodo continued only through his sons, while his daughters gave up his name to ensure the last remnant of the kitsu race would survive. The kitsu were led by one called Soli Tendo, and while he never fully forgave the humans for their deeds, he chose for the sake of peace to join with them. The descendants of those five survivors became the Kitsu family, bearing the mixed blood of their founding, which enabled them to commune with the ancestors and travel the spirit realms.

The Death of Akodo

Like most of the Kami, Akodo lived far longer than a normal mortal man, and by the time he perished his followers Ikoma and Matsu were long dead, while the first Kitsu were dying out and their grandchildren taking over the family. All those he had come to love and respect as his chosen vassals had passed in glorious combat, and he longed for a noble death worthy of a warrior, though he refused to sacrifice himself vaingloriously. Fate, however, granted him a death worthy of a Kami.

While the Hall of Ancestors and Ikoma Libraries were first being built, Akodo learned of a force of monstrous creatures—described as oni, trolls, and ogres by Imperial

envoys—passing through a lesser pass in the Spine of the World Mountains. Only a hundred men were available to help, but Akodo took them and raced to the pass, fighting the terrible creatures—who in fact were Tsuno, corrupted and twisted kitsu. Akodo knew he and his men could only delay the powerful force, but as the battle approached its end, he called to his divine mother Amaterasu with a final roar. The last spark of his divinity shook the mountains, collapsing the pass and destroying Kami and monsters alike.

The Lion Clan After Akodo

The Lion Clan's military primacy in the Empire was quite pronounced throughout the first half of the reign of the Hantei Dynasty. After the departure of the Ki-Rin Clan to journey through the world outside Rokugan, the Lion acquired control of their lands, forcing out the remnant that became the Fox Clan. Consequently the Lion held the largest single expanse of land of any of the clans, including much rich farmland. This rendered the Lion Clan nearly unassailable on the field of battle, and prior to the return of the Unicorn in the ninth century they suffered few defeats. Constant border skirmishes kept the clan's soldiers battle-hardened and its generals well experienced. The Lion were often dangerous neighbors, and all of the clans who shared borders with them felt the brunt of the clan's military prowess on more than one occasion—most frequently the Crane, of course, due to the rivalry that began with Kakita and Matsu.

Although the Lion fought many wars throughout these centuries, they did not do so to conquer their neighbors (which the Emperor in any case would have frowned upon), or even simply to prove their martial prowess. After all, once they claimed the Ki-Rin lands the Lion holdings were vast, leaving them with little need for further gains, and it was rare indeed when the Lion were not feared on the battlefield. Rather, the constant fighting was to ensure the Right Hand's blade never dulled. Of course, if that meant their foes sometimes lost control of lands they had once ruled because they were too weak or incompetent to protect them properly, the Lion would reap the rewards.

In court, however, the Lion were less imposing. During the reign of Hantei Yugozohime in the fifth century, when the Lion aided in crushing the Gozoku conspiracy, they held great respect within the courts, but for most of the Empire's history they were regularly outmaneuvered by the more politically savvy clans, especially the Crane and the Scorpion. Indeed, it was only their relative weakness in the political sphere that kept the Lion from outright dominating the Empire during these centuries.

As the years advanced, however, the Lion Clan encountered somewhat more frequent troubles and defeats, perhaps due to their enemies growing more capable or perhaps because the Clan of Akodo became slightly complacent. One notable event during this period came in the early fifth century when the Lion Champion Matsu Itagi decided to confront the Shadowlands itself. Having defeated all possible opponents within the Empire, he decided the Crab must be lazy and incompetent for not defeating the Shadowlands permanently. Itagi journeyed south in the year 412 to attack the Shadowlands himself, but like many other bold samurai he had underestimated their true power. His men perished and he was trapped in the land of evil. Only through the sacrifice of the Crab Champion Hida Tadaka was Itagi rescued, averting a lethal enmity between the two clans. Thereafter the Lion showed greater respect to the Crab, and the incident is remembered as a testimony to Tadaka's brave and honorable nature and Itagi's dangerous overconfidence—a flaw to which the Lion are often prone.

It is notable that the Lion Clan's own historians make little effort to remember their victories (although individual families always boast of their ancestors' deeds). The histories of the Empire, for that matter, tend to make only passing mention of Lion victories... but both the Lion and the Empire remember their defeats. For the Lion, only defeats are worthy of study, since they offer opportunities to learn and improve and thus prevent further defeats. And to the Empire as a whole, the Lion's enemies win so rarely that they take every chance to trumpet their few victories.

The Battle of Red Snow

Akodo Meikuko, champion of the clan at the beginning of the sixth century, is a name the modern Lion associate with "Mistake" due to the disastrous Battle of Red Snow in the year 509. However, Meikuko's actions during that military campaign were severely out of character with her prior reputation. She had been known as a level-headed leader and thoughtful general, and her sudden and violent offense at an ill-timed joke by an Ise Zumi named Togashi Moho was shocking to all.

The reason for Meikuko's odd behavior was in fact the Bloodsword Vengeance, gifted to her a few weeks earlier by Asahina Yajinden, servant of the sorcerer Iuchiban. The blade's dark power quickly subverted her normally calm nature and drove her to extremes of vengeance for a seemingly minor insult. The Emperor at the time attempted to defuse the situation by putting off the duel and sending Togashi Moho back to the Dragon lands; since it was the depths of winter, he expected no further conflict until spring, allowing Meikuko's temper to cool. Instead, the Lion Champion mounted an immediate war against the Dragon, leading twenty thousand soldiers into the mountains amid heavy snow. After a disastrous series of battles and maneuvers, only two thousand troops returned to the Lion lands. The Lion histories record the battle as a series of mistakes piled on one another, and while later revelations about the Bloodswords reduced the shame attached to the incident, the Lion continue to study the Battle of Red Snow as an object lesson on how not to fight.

The Battles of Humility's Lesson

In the year 518, a Scorpion Clan Champion named Bayushi Tsuya staged a daring attack through a lesser pass of the Seikitsu Mountains and captured Shiro no Meiyo, the Castle of Honor, and its associated city. The ambitious Scorpion lord held the castle for fifteen years, taunting the Lion for their inability to defend territory so close to Kyuden Ikoma. Not until 533 did the Lion mount a successful counterattack, recapturing the castle and killing every Scorpion there. The Lion renamed the city Kenson Gakka, Humility's Lesson—but whether the "humility" they spoke of was that of the defeated Scorpion or their own hard-learned lesson about complacency remains in question.

The Battle of the Great Climb and the Birth of the Dragonfly Clan

At the beginning of the eighth century, the Lion became embroiled in a personal conflict that ultimately became both a serious eyesore in the clan's history and the source of a new minor clan, one which would remain a perpetual thorn in the Lion Clan's side thereafter. In the year 704, Isawa Mariko and Mirumoto Asijin were wed, an act that caused an immediate backlash from the Lion Clan. The two had married for love, but Mariko had already been pledged to marry Akodo Yokutsu. The marriage was supported by both the Phoenix and the Dragon, and with their backing it led to the founding of a new minor clan, the Dragonfly, and its family, the Tonbo. Akodo Yokutsu led a vengeful attack on the Dragonfly, only to find its two Great Clan allies standing in his way. He was forced to agree never again to attack the Dragonfly directly.

Yokutsu fumed for seven years, meditating on this slight to his honor and reputation. Finally his opportunity came when an Agasha diplomat caused a grievous insult to the Lion in court. Yokutsu used this incident as an excuse to assault the Dragon, skirting the Dragonfly lands to attack the Dragon territories where they first rose from the plains of the Empire.

During the ensuing Battle of the Great Climb, Yokutsu demanded the right to duel against the former Dragon, now Tonbo Asijin, to assuage his slighted honor. The Mirumoto daimyo agreed to the duel in order to bring an end to the war, and Asijin yielded to the request in return for a promise that the Dragon would protect the Dragonfly thereafter. Asijin lost the duel without ever drawing his blades, and Akodo Yokutsu proclaimed himself the new daimyo of the Tonbo... but before he could seal this with a marriage to Mariko, he was felled in a duel by her young son, Tonbo Kyuden. Kyuden became the next daimyo of the Tonbo and the Dragonfly became close and permanent allies of the Dragon, serving as a diplomatic and military buffer against those who would approach the Dragon from the south. The Lion have never forgiven the Dragonfly, and more than once have used a conflict with the Dragon as an excuse to attack the Dragonfly lands.

The Return of the Unicorn

The return of the Unicorn in the year 815 was one of the most significant events in the Lion Clan's history. Although the Lion met the Unicorn with suspicion and hostility, the arrival of Shinjo's descendents may have actually benefited them in some ways. The Lion had long desired a foe truly worthy of their skills. Though the Crab could theoretically match them, the duty of fighting the Shadowlands fully occupied the descendents of Hida—and in any case there was rarely cause for conflict between the two clans. The Unicorn, however, challenged the Lion not only with unpredictable gaijin tactics and powerful cavalry but also with military acumen that rivaled their own.

Of course, the Unicorn Clan's return also meant the lands of the Lion were cut in half. The Unicorn quickly laid claim to the Ki-Rin ancestral lands which the Lion had held for seven hundred years, severely depleting the formerly vast wealth of the Lion and placed them on a more even footing with clans they had formerly viewed as their lessers in every way. This greatly increased the border tensions and skirmishes between the Lion and their neighbors over subsequent centuries.

The Lion lost much with the Unicorn's return, and there have been several major wars between them since (particularly during the twelfth-century reign of the ambitious Khan, Moto Chagatai). However, the Lion have also been forced to offer grudging respect to their new western neighbors. The Unicorn finally gave the Lion what they needed, a worthy challenge against a foe who fights on the glorious fields of battle rather than in palaces and courts.

The Second Day of Thunder and the Modern Era

The twelfth century was a time of strife and difficulty for the Lion Clan. A few short years into the new century, the entire Akodo family was cast from the clan in shame during the aftermath of the failed Scorpion Clan Coup. Not long after, the second Day of Thunder imposed a severe test on the Lion, for their duties to the Emperor and to the Empire itself were put in direct conflict when the last Hantei was possessed by the soul of Fu Leng. Where did the Right Hand's duty truly lie—with the Emperor, regardless of his corruption, or with the Empire? Matsu Tsuko, who had become Clan Champion after Akodo Toturi was exiled, was torn by this conundrum. Her vows to the throne held her more securely than bands of steel, and her chief aides Kitsu Motso and Ikoma Ujiaki were torn between devotion to the Empire and the throne respectively. Ultimately, Tsuko committed seppuku, and Toturi returned from exile to finally unite the Lion in the face of the dark god's threat.

The years afterward were hardly any easier for the Lion, for the twelfth century was an era of great turmoil throughout Rokugan. Though the Akodo family was finally restored after the destruction of the Lying Darkness, the Lion found their position as Right Hand threatened by the military strength of the Unicorn Clan and their moral purity compromised by the foul acts of traitors such as Kitsu Okura. The establishment of the position of Shogun, with an army to match, seemed to call into question the Lion Clan's duty and relevance to the Empire. Nor did the clan enjoy stable leadership during these turbulent years. Tsuko's death and the subsequent wars led to a succession of regents and one-time leaders, with the office of Clan Champion migrating between the Matsu, the Ikoma, and the Kitsu before finally returning to the Akodo near the end of the century.

One of the few real bright spots in this time was the first real abatement in the millennia-old feud with the Crane Clan, although given the Lion Clan's long memory for ancient feuds it remains to be seen whether this peace will last. And after the ascension of Rokugan's third dynasty, the Iweko, the Lion Clan's position within the Empire seemed to stabilize; although the Unicorn still rivaled them as the premier military force in the Empire, the Lion retained considerable clout in the new dynasty, especially with the selection of one of their own, Akodo Setai, as the first Empress' consort.

Families of the Lion Clan

Unlike some clans, the Lion have not added new families to their ranks in the years since the dawn of the Empire. All four Lion families—Akodo, Matsu, Ikoma, and Kitsu—can trace their lineage back to the earliest days, to their clan's founding Kami and his three most famous followers. This should not be all that surprising, for the Lion are by far the most traditional and conservative of clans, even more so than the Phoenix and Crane.

The Akodo Family

"No path is so narrow that a man must walk it alone. Be one with your brothers, and stand by them. In their strength, you will find your own."

– Shinsei's last words to Akodo

The Akodo family, descended from the Lion Clan's founding Kami, has led the clan for almost its entire history. Like many things about the Akodo, this was seen not as privilege or individual right but simply as their proper place in society, an expectation they would never dream of failing. Only twice in the thousand years before the Second Day of Thunder have there been verified Clan Cham-

The Time of Shame and Akodo Rule of the Clan

During and after the reign of the last Hantei Emperor, the Akodo family was officially disbanded by the Emperor in punishment for Akodo Toturi's failure to prevent the Scorpion Clan Coup. Most members of the family swore fealty to the Ikoma or Matsu families rather than forsake their service to the Empire. Those unwilling to abandon their family name became ronin, and many of these new wave-men later joined Toturi's ronin army to fight for the Empire against the forces of Fu Leng.

The loss of the Akodo was a heavy blow to the Lion Clan; many samurai felt as though a vital element of their clan had been cut out, as though they were out of balance. The Akodo had always been venerated as the core leadership of the Lion Clan's armies, and without their presence those armies seemed to falter. Even after Toturi himself slew Fu Leng and became Emperor, the Akodo were not immediately restored and the Lion Clan continued to struggle to fulfill its duties without them.

In the aftermath of the defeat of the Lying Darkness, however, the Akodo were finally restored—not by political decree but by divine mandate. The new Lady Moon, Hitomi, named the Lying Darkness "Akodo," taking away its power and giving form and identity to most of its faceless minions as new-born members of the Akodo family. In the face of such a decision the Empire quickly acceded, and both the Akodo ronin and most of those who had joined the clan's other families were permitted to reclaim their name and to teach their ways to their thousands of newly-made brothers and sisters.

The restoration of the Akodo to overall rule of the Lion Clan, however, did not immediately follow. The new Akodo saw their new role as being more fluid. While an Akodo Clan Champion did eventually emerge in the form of Akodo Shigetoshi, the Akodo family was now more willing to accept individual clan leaders from other families based on a sort of meritocracy, in which the clan entrusted leadership to the one most likely to rule the Lion with skill, merit, and honor. The Akodo remained the family's foremost military commanders, but now saw their role as more supportive, not necessarily as standing always at the forefront of clan leadership.

pions who were not Akodo: Matsu Itagi and Matsu Zaruko, both reigning during highly unusual periods for the clan. An apocryphal record suggests an Ikoma regent also served for some years, but this is not verified in the clan's official histories. Not until the family's time of shame in the twelfth century did their consistent leadership of the clan come to an end.

Regardless of era, the Akodo do not readily fit into the assumptions and stereotypes that rivals often apply to Lion Clan samurai. They are not prone to brashness or foolhardiness, nor do they relish combat overmuch for its own sake. Rather, the Akodo are a family of warrior scholars, driven to seek the perfection of the artistry of war. The family might be viewed by an outsider as artisans of war and leadership. They hone and perfect the concepts behind leading soldiers, managing land and logistics, and maneuvering into battle in the same ways a sculptor crafts the finest of stonework. Each action, whether it be a chisel-stroke or the movement of a legion, is based on time-honored principles that are tested, re-tested, then considered and selected based on the specific situation. If the fiery Matsu are the clan's backbone, the Akodo are its mind and its eyes.

The Akodo are known as the most ascetic and self-denying of the Lion families. They tend to refrain from considering themselves strongly in individual terms, for their greatest achievements—battlefield victories—are only achieved through collective and careful work, borne up by the assistance and strength of their brothers in arms from the other Lion families. Moreover, the Akodo feel driven to give nothing but their best at every single occasion. For an Akodo a thing that is worth doing must be done without flaw, limitation, or weakness. (In this, they share a strong similarity with the Kakita family in their traditional rival, the Crane Clan.) To produce an imperfect or flawed result is a shame to the ancestors, to one's sensei, to one's family, and to one's lord. To act without preparation or fore-

The Akodo Family Mon

The Akodo mon depicts a golden lion's face, stern and reserved, full of dedication. It symbolizes the Akodo family's dual nature as warriors and educated thinkers.

thought is a recipe for disaster, so the Akodo eschew the fierce aggression of their Matsu cousins. No Akodo worthy of his name will charge forth wildly or go into battle unprepared. Indeed, their fighting style is noted for its focus on precision and self-control, and some among them—the so-called kensai or "sword saints"—pursue the ways of the sword in a manner so piously artistic that some might consider it more appropriate for the Crane.

The Akodo are also known to be highly pious and honorable men and women, holding their ancestors and the Code of Bushido in equally high regard. To fail their ancestors would be to fail to uphold the place they hold in the Lion Clan and indeed in the Celestial Order itself. As for the Code of Bushido, it was their founder Akodo One-Eye himself who created the Code in his book *Leadership*; to put aside any aspect of the Code would be to deny all that they are, ever have been, and ever must be. It would deny the very reality they are devoted to protect and make a mockery of the nobility and perfection they seek to create. Thus the Akodo are rigid traditionalists who seek to adhere to each and every tenet of Bushido with absolute fidelity. No tenet can be considered more pivotal than another, for each is a lesson from Akodo, a god who dwelled among men. Although any Lion may become a paragon of Bushido, such notable men and women have probably appeared more often among the Akodo than anywhere else.

The Ikoma Family

"Every scar has a story, son. That's why the Fortunes gave them to us. You can forget the pain, but you'll never forget the scar it left behind."

– Ikoma

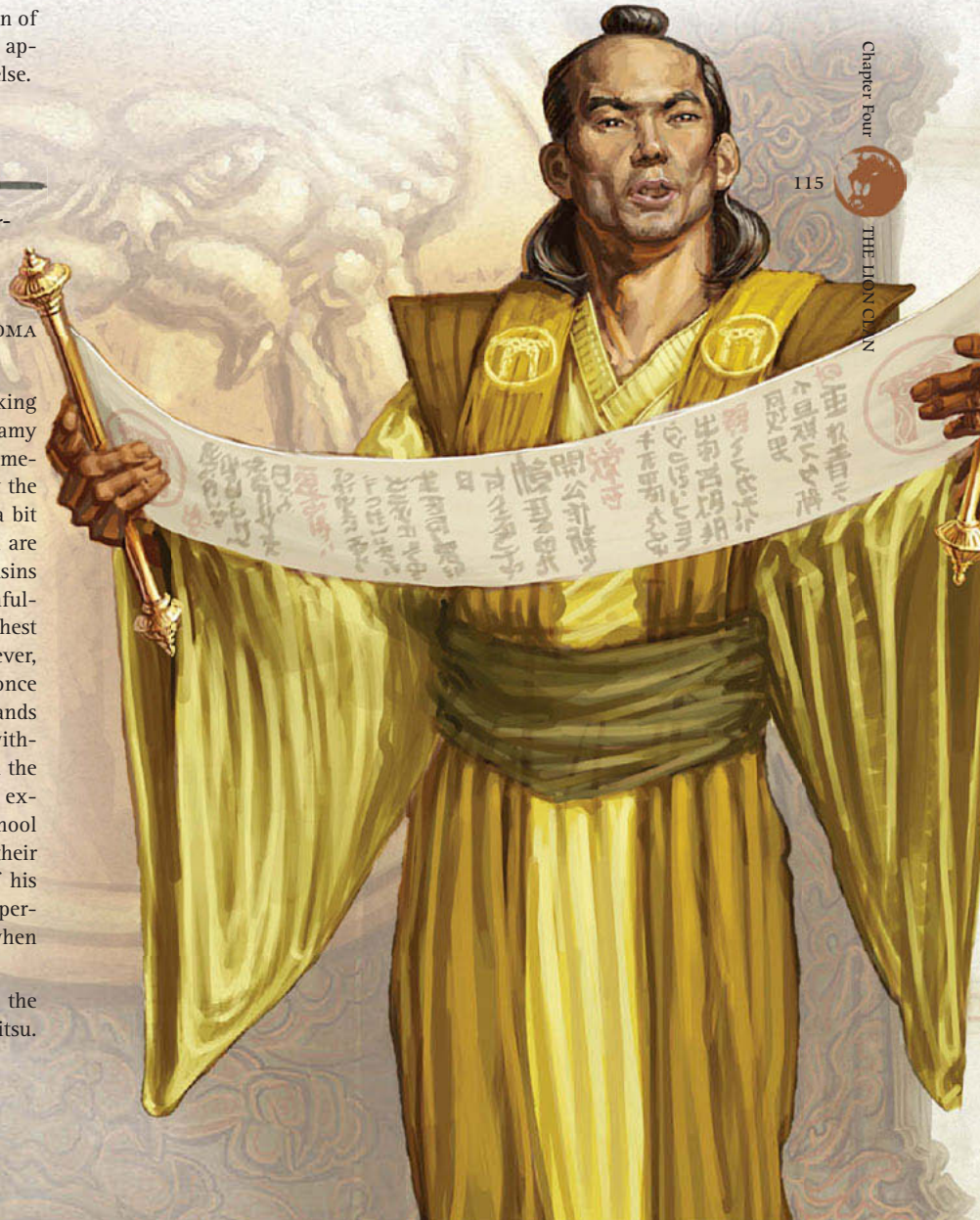
The Ikoma were founded by a womanizing, hard-drinking old braggart whose deeds earned him far more infamy than glory. Unsurprisingly, the modern family is a somewhat pragmatic group; although they deeply abide by the tenets of Bushido, they also tend to treat them with a bit more fluidity than the other Lion families. The Ikoma are men and women tasked with being what their cousins cannot, fulfilling roles which would otherwise go unfulfilled. Sometimes this requires a heart of the staunchest iron and the most tempered honor. Sometimes, however, this requires invoking the spirit a drunken lout who once told a Kami he'd happily fight the man with his bare hands until one of them called their mother's name. It goes without saying that the former are far more common than the latter; very few in the family follow Ikoma's personal example, and with the exception of the Lion's Shadow school they prefer to uphold what they see as the spirit of their founder's teachings rather than the literal reality of his words and deeds. But the Ikoma never shirk from performing whatever task their lords need, especially when nobody else can.

The Ikoma serve as the clan's heart and soul, as the mortar between the bricks of the Matsu, Akodo, and Kitsu.

The Ikoma Family Mon

The Ikoma mon depicts a torii arch against a black background. The Ikoma see the open portal of the arch as symbolizing the never-ending quest for knowledge and discovery.

They are the Lion who are permitted (and even in a sense required) to express what honor dictates a samurai not express: the emotions of the heart. They are the Lion who impart passion into words that must otherwise remain serene and calm. They are the Lion who mourn and shed tears when the clan's greatest heroes have passed on. They are the Lion who record the deeds of their comrades, who see to it that no act of heroism or of disgrace is ever forgotten. They are the Lion who undertake the pragmatic actions which the other families deny themselves. Though not all Ikoma follow the path of the Omoidasu, the bards of the clan, all of them are accustomed to serving as the living memory of the Lion.



As a rule the Ikoma are not the front-line fighters of the Lion. They tend to look on all of life, and on battle in particular, as one might look on a vast shogi board; they view things from the broader and more pragmatic viewpoint of a thousand years of written and oral history that they have been immersed in for all of their lives. They do not eschew combat when it is required of them, however. Many Ikoma serve as scouts or wardens, putting their pragmatic attitudes to use for the clan. At times they have also served the clan as battlefield tacticians. Ultimately, even the most scholarly Ikoma historian knows there is no greater way to witness one's lord's deeds of glory than to pull out a blade, stand at his side, and shout defiance as the enemy draws near.

The Ikoma are not only the historians of the Lion Clan but also assist the Otomo in maintaining the official histories of the Empire itself. However, unlike the Otomo they believe history is meant to not only be recorded but also to be shared, to be passed down to one's children so as to teach them the lessons of honor and duty. This abiding philosophy is seen even in the image of the Ikoma family mon, a torii arch: a portal into wisdom and enlightenment. Through each door, each portal, there is one more vision, one more truth to be experienced, to be stored up and to be shared with the Empire for the glory of the Lion.

The Kitsu Family

"It is an ancient tale, yes, and even after death, its call rings true in our hearts. Would you hear it, my son? Would you know of our ancestors? For certainly, they know of you..."

– Kitsu Soseniku

The Kitsu are the most unusual family within the Lion Clan and, arguably, one of the stranger families in all the Empire. They are also easily the smallest of the Lion families, and their numbers have never grown particularly large in any era of history. Superficially, the Kitsu serve as the clan's priests and spiritual advisors, guiding the Lion in worship not only of the kami but also and especially of the ancestors. However, there is much more to the Kitsu than first appears. In truth, they are descended from a race of ancient spirit creatures, sentient lion-like entities who far pre-dated humanity.

The family which was created by the union of the last five kitsu with Akodo's daughters follows almost incomprehensibly rigid traditions. Their attitudes on honor, on warfare, on worship, and even on daily life are virtually unchanged since the generation born of Soli Tendo and his brethren. The teachings of the original kitsu and their first children are the basis for all life within the family, and if there is ever a problem or question whose answer cannot be found amongst these most ancient writings and teachings, the family will extrapolate from what they have to create an answer in keeping with those traditions. This traditionalism is especially important given their spiritual work, for the Kitsu use the power of their ancestral bloodline to travel the various Spirit Realms and to seek the wisdom and placate the anger of Lion ancestors in Yomi. Only the Kitsu can do this perfectly, and thus they guard their traditions with fanatic traditionalism.

The Kitsu keep their secrets closely guarded. Their power is drawn from their connection to a non-human race, something easily misunderstood even in the modern Empire, and even their fellow Lion seldom know the truth. Furthermore, only a minority within their own ranks possess enough of the ancient bloodline to use these powers. These special elite shugenja are known as Sodan Senzo, and outside their ranks the Kitsu family teaches only the traditional spellcasting and religious rituals common to shugenja throughout the Empire. The Sodan Senzo spend most of their lives cloistered within the Kitsu Tombs, communing with the honored ancestors and observing other worlds, seldom emerging to view the world of men. Rarely and reluctantly, how-

The Kitsu Family Mon

The Kitsu mon depicts a lion's head with a flaming mane—in effect, a portrait of the spiritual beings from whom they are descended. Their mon symbolizes their dedication to remembering and maintaining the past, especially the past of their clan and family.

ever, the Sodan Senzo will come forth to serve as spiritual advisors to Akodo and Matsu lords in need of their unique expertise.

This isolation often causes the leadership of the Kitsu to develop a myopic view of the universe. The more numerous family members who cannot participate in their secret ways (usually due to the deficiency of their bloodlines) are shunned and sent forth to serve the greater needs of the Lion Clan. The isolated and obsessive ways of the Sodan Senzo grant them great power and authority in matters relating to the spirit realms, but their insular attitude combined with the Lion Clan's limited use of magic on the battlefield means the Kitsu family often appears almost irrelevant to daily life in the clan. Still, the Lion Clan would never ask to do without them, for their spiritual understanding upholds and bolsters the clan's worship and veneration of the ancestors, a tradition more important to the Lion than to any other clan.

The Matsu Family

"In my sword, the wind. In my heart, courage. In my eyes, death. I am Matsu."

– from Kakita Morushijin's play *No Man's Bride*.

Many samurai in the Empire, especially Crane and Scorpion, tend to stereotype the Lion Clan as a mass of brash, temperamental warriors, blindly honorable and obsessed with battle. This view of the clan doubtless stems in large part from the fact that the largest Lion Clan family has always been the Matsu. In fact, for most of Rokugan's history the Matsu are the largest single samurai family in the Empire, though certain eras of tumult and loss have altered this for a time. The sheer numbers of the Matsu ensure they comprise the bulk of the Lion Clan's armies. Thus, much of the other clans' understanding of the Lion is influenced by their frequent encounters with the Matsu, both on and off the battlefield.

The Matsu are the backbone of the Lion's armies, the muscle attached to the clan's sinews, the meat on its bones. Without the Matsu the Lion would never have the manpower to serve as the Emperor's Right Hand. Without their ferocity the enemies of the clan would not quake at the sight of a Lion charge, for no enemy has ever faced a Matsu attack and emerged unscathed.

To the Matsu battle is everything. It is the core of their being, the blood that pumps in their veins, the defining essence that fills their very souls. They are almost religious in their devotion to waging war, although it would be unwise to suggest this to their faces. Certainly they feel called to achieve excellence in combat, and like their founder they embody the fierce and pure rage of an honorable warrior who will brook no weakness or cowardice. Most samurai families eschew the call of battle lust, and the Crab embrace it crudely and heedlessly; the Matsu harness the rage of war, hone it, sharpen it, and turn it to their own ends. War is the perfect contest of life and death, in which one must either succeed or be returned to the Celestial Wheel.

The combination of this philosophy with rigid traditionalism makes the Matsu a rather touchy family. They are passionate about everything, hurling themselves into battle or court debate with equal ferocity. A Matsu never walks tentatively into any venture, no matter how long the odds, instead plunging in headlong with teeth bared and swords drawn—or ink-brush in hand, as the case may be. They do nothing lightly or casually or quietly. To be meek or flippant or hesitant defames the memory of Matsu

The Matsu Family Mon

The symbol of the Matsu family is a lion's clawed paw clutching the hilt of a katana. The sword is raised heavenward, symbolizing the family's defiance of all who stand against the Lion Clan.

herself, and no descendent of the Lady of Lions would even imagine doing something so shameful.

The Matsu have few rivals they consider worthy of their time. Only their fellow Lion family, the Akodo, truly seem to merit a special place in their hearts, although whether they regard the Akodo as respected commanders or frustrating rivals seems to change with the seasons. The Matsu would never deny the effectiveness of Akodo generals, but the Akodo way is so concerned with exactness and perfection that oftentimes the Matsu bristle and rage, demanding a simple charge in place of elaborate maneuvers. Matsu herself often bristled at Akodo One-Eye's methods even as she followed him unswervingly, and this same mixture of rivalry and admiration is played out a thousand times in every modern Lion army. The Matsu offer proper respect to the other two Lion families as well, but regard all non-Lion samurai with little more than contempt; through most of the Empire's history they reserve a special hatred for the Crane in remembrance of their founder's grudge with Kakita.

Between their lust for battle and their impatience with the elaborate rituals of society, the Matsu can sometimes draw comparisons with the Hida family of the Crab. However, one thing sets the Matsu firmly apart from the Hida: their devotion to Honor. The Matsu are fanatical in their dedication to Bushido, and for all their love of battle and violence there are many tactics they will never use because they consider them cowardly or dishonorable. Unlike the Akodo, who seek to venerate all tenets of Bushido equally, the Matsu focus on the martial aspects of the Code, and take a slightly different view of certain tenets such as Compassion, Courtesy, and Sincerity. Though each of these virtues is valued, the Matsu see them as carrying certain conditions. Courtesy goes to those who have earned it. Sincerity is treated not as conflicting with Honesty but rather as complementing it, allowing the Matsu to express the truth openly and without hesitation. Compassion is exercised by protecting the common folk, not by empathizing with them—though no honorable Matsu will go out of her way to be cruel, to a commoner or to an enemy. Thus in Honor as in so many other things, the Matsu are strictly traditional but nevertheless distinct from other Lion.

The Matsu are often described as a matriarchal family, but this is not quite accurate. Unlike the Moshi family of the Mantis, where all positions of authority are held by women, or the Utaku family of the Unicorn, where only women are permitted to rule and fight on horseback, the Matsu do not place any restrictions on men in the normal ranks of their family—indeed, due to the demands of child-raising it is usual for the majority of Matsu soldiers to be men. However, in the top leadership positions of the family it is customary for women to be given pride of place in inheritance. Only if the Matsu daimyo has no daughters will the eldest son be allowed to rule. Although this is rare, it has happened more than once during the Lion Clan's history. In those periods when the Matsu have also held the Clan Champion's position, it has often been customary for the eldest son to rule the clan while the eldest daughter rules the family itself.

Heroes of the Lion Clan

The following section offers an assortment of notable Lion heroes, men and women who had a lasting impact on their clan or Rokugan as a whole, from the earliest days of the Empire all the way up to the tumultuous events of the twelfth century. GMs may use these heroes as NPCs in their games, or simply as inspiration for stories involving the Lion Clan.

Ikoma

the First Lion Bard

In the history of Rokugan there has only ever been one Ikoma, and perhaps the Empire is better off for it. The first Omoidasu remains an enigma of whom very little is written and even less is known for certain.

Ikoma was a veteran warrior, a man who had fought literally tooth and nail through innumerable enemies long before he met Akodo. He was at least fifty years old when he joined the Lion, his body covered with an intimidating collection of scars, each with a tale of its own. By tradition the two are said to have met in a sake house where Akodo sought recruits for his armies. Ikoma was the one man who would not bow to the Kami, and even threatened him right back when Akodo expressed rage. Yet when they conversed Akodo soon warmed to him, listening avidly to the tales behind every battle Ikoma had ever fought. When they left the sake house it was as comrades, and soon Ikoma could boast of being one of the few mortals Akodo might call a friend. Certainly there was no other man Akodo would trust to serve as his *hatamoto*, personal retainer.

A generous soul might have called Ikoma a man of passion, but in truth he was a drunkard and a lecherous old man, one who had seen more death than most army legions but who never lost his enthusiasm for life. He had a natural and almost inescapable charisma that could persuade even his most hated rivals to listen to his stories. Many of Fu Leng's monsters fell before his weapons and fists, foolishly thinking him nothing more than a doddering old fool.

Ikoma was not the man who founded the Lion school of Omoidasu (bards), though he was doubtless the first and greatest of the Omoidasu. Ikoma was not the man he was because of formalized training, but rather because of his raw abilities in storytelling and combat—not to mention the wealth of tales he had personally experienced. It was his first disciples and followers who created the actual school, especially Ikoma Noritobe, the founder of the Ikoma Library. Though the sometimes-sordid reality of their founder has often been downplayed in later years, every once in a while his spirit smiles from Yomi on some young upstart in the Ikoma family, helping keep alive the spirit of a bard as he saw it.

Ikoma, the First Lion Bard

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 4 Void: 3
Awareness: 7 Stamina: 2 Intelligence: 8 Perception: 6

Honor: 4.2 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 7.0*

School/Rank: True Ronin, Insight Rank 9 (No Paths)

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 6, Athletics 4, Battle 5, Calligraphy (Cipher) 5, Commerce 2, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation, Rhetoric) 7, Defense 5, Etiquette (Conversation) 7, Games: Fortunes and Winds 5, Hunting 4, Intimidation (Bullying, Control) 8, Investigation (Interrogation) 5, Jiujutsu (Grappling, Improvised Weapons) 8, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History (Lion Clan) 5, Lore: Underworld 5, Perform: Storytelling (Bragging, Formal, Hyperbole, Improvised) 10, Perform: Oratory 6, Sincerity (Honesty, Deceit) 7, Sleight of Hand (Conceal, Escape, Prestidigitation) 5, Staves 6, Stealth (Shadowing, Sneaking) 7, Temptation (Bribery, Seduction) 8

Advantages: Allies: Akodo One-Eye (4/4), Clear Thinker, Great Potential (Perform: Storytelling), Seven Fortune's Blessing (Jurojin), Social Position (Great Clan Family Founder/Great Clan Family Daimyo/Hatamoto to Akodo), Voice

Disadvantages: Compulsion: Sake (TN 25), Compulsion: Tobacco (TN 15), Lechery, Overconfident

Kitsu Chiyoko

the First Sodan Senzo

Outside of the Kitsu family's private histories and a few small references to her birth and death in the Ikoma records, Kitsu Chiyoko is a name largely forgotten by the Empire. However, the Kitsu themselves have never forgotten her or her teachings. She was the first child born of the Kitsu by Akodo's daughters, the daughter of Soli Tendo himself.

Rokugan's histories have largely passed over Kitsu Chiyoko because she was performing the task her father required of her. Mortal minds, even those with the blood of the Kitsu, cannot always understand the wisdom of ancient spirit creatures even when they take human form. Rather than allow the kitsu's secrets to die with them, Tendo and his brothers set their first children to the task of recording, deciphering, and re-apportioning literally millennia of kitsu learning into a form humans could understand. To Chiyoko herself he gave a special charge. Rather than take leadership of the family after Soli Tendo's death, she was to explore—not the mortal world, but the spirit realms. It was a task that suited her well, for she shared her father's distrust for most of humanity.

Kitsu Chiyoko was the first mortal to explore the spirit realms. She spent almost all of her adult life travelling through them, sometimes with her father but more often alone. Among the Kitsu it is said her power within the realms was so great she was often indistinguishable from a true-blooded kitsu, and her command of the kami and of the spirits alike remains unsurpassed even in the present era. She traveled in realms where men had never before set foot, sought out dangers and risks that lurked around every corner, and returned to her people time and time again with more secrets, more warnings, and more precious pieces of information. Without her discoveries, the Kitsu Sodan Senzo might never have come to be. In modern times, Kitsu preparing for lengthy journeys into the spirit realms often pray to Chiyoko for guidance.

Chiyoko was never rewarded in her life for her work, nor did she ask for such a reward. The finest gift she could ever receive was knowing the family's descendants would walk forever in the path she and her father began. The Ikoma records say she died at the age of forty, but in reality Chiyoko simply sloughed off the burden of Ningen-do forever. Her tasks and duties completed, she travelled into the depths of Yume-do on one last voyage, seeking its farthest extent, and never returned.

Kitsu Chiyoko, the First Sodan Senzo

Air: 2 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 3
Reflexes: 3

Honor: 8.9 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 3.0*

School/Rank: Kitsu Shugenja 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 1, Calligraphy (Cipher) 1, Defense 3, Divination (Kawaru) 1, Etiquette 2, Hunting 3, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 3, Lore: History 2, Lore: Kitsu Culture 3, Lore: Spirit Realms 5, Lore: Theology 2, Meditation 3, Perform: Dance 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 3, Spellcraft 2

Spells: As the daughter of Soli Tendo, Chiyoko has access to any spell she can cast, as well as many unique spells reflecting her unusual training and upbringing.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Friend of the Elements: Water, Higher Purpose (map the Spirit Realms)

Disadvantages: Antisocial (4 points), Compulsion: Wanderlust (TN 25)

Special Ability: Chiyoko's legacy as the daughter of Soli Tendo allows her to sense and enter spirit portals of any kind.

Ikoma Arimi

Paragon of Bushido

The name Arimi is not commonly taken by Lion children. Few actually recall why this unspoken prohibition exists, and almost nobody remembers Ikoma Arimi by name. Samurai throw rocks at the one statue in her honor, a statue so generic in design it looks nothing like her. Arimi's spirit in Yomi accepts this is as it should be.

Arimi lived in the second century. She was a rare woman: young, attractive, brilliant, successful in both battle and court. She served a provincial daimyo named Ikoma Masahiro. Arimi was not vain or arrogant, reserving her praises for her lord and his retainers. She served him without question for the first years of her career, and her rise to prominence from the lesser ranks of the Ikoma was the subject of much talk in the courts. However, her success soon drew the jealousy of rivals, jealousy made bitter by her seeming perfection. They found a weapon to use against her: Arimi had a secret lover, Matsu Makoto, and met him during trips to a neighboring province. Her rivals exposed the secret and the resulting scandal rocked the entire Lion court. Accusations of debauchery, deviancy, and all manner of heinous behavior fell not only on her but also her lord by association. Mortified at the shame she had brought to Ikoma Masahiro's repute, Arimi begged in open court for the chance to cleanse her family's honor by committing seppuku.

Ikoma Masahiro was furious at his underling's failings, especially since he had trusted and relied on her so strongly. He granted her permission to commit seppuku, but then gave her a wooden sword to perform the ritual, implying she was not sincere in her plea. Never before in history had a lord so publicly scorned the act of seppuku. Shocked murmurs ran through the ranks of assembled courtiers, and her enemies smiled in silent glee behind their fans. But Arimi proved her detractors wrong. While the court watched in stunned awe, she performed the three cuts with the wooden sword, shaming all those present despite the severity of her own crimes.

In death, Ikoma Arimi was so successful in cleansing her sin that her name, her lover's name, and even her lord's name are all but forgotten—indeed her own name was stricken from the Ikoma family records. Ikoma Masahiro retired in shame to a monastery, leaving his son to manage what would become the Gisei province of Lion lands. In honor of her noble death, the city in which Matsu Makoto had lived was renamed Toshi no Meiyo Gisei, the City of Honor's Sacrifice. Her last act remains to this day a lesson of the strength of honor, and her forgotten life a reminder of the constant need for samurai to maintain vigilance against the Three Sins—especially Desire.

Ikoma Arimi, Paragon of Bushido

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3
Willpower: 4 Intelligence: 4

Honor: 7.1 *Status: 4.7 (Karo)* *Glory: 7.2*

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 2/Lion Paragon

Skills: Battle 2, Calligraphy (High Rokugani) 1, Courtier (Rhetoric) 3, Etiquette (Courtesy) 4, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Law 4, Lore: History (Lion Clan) 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 4

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty, Paragon (Duty), Social Position (Karo), Strength of the Earth, Voice

Disadvantages: Bad Fortune (Unknown Enemies), Dark Secret (Lover—Matsu Makoto)

Matsu Itagi

Brash Lord of the Lion

Prior to the last Hantei Emperor's edict disbanding the Akodo, there were very few Lion Clan Champions not of the Akodo line. Matsu Itagi was one of the rare exceptions, a man who rose to this posting for no other reason than his own merits as a general, a warrior, and a leader. In the history of the Lion there have been few warriors quite like him, men so capable that literally no foe could stand against them. In the end, the Lion historians judge the only foe who defeated Itagi was Itagi himself.

Matsu Itagi was a man justly proud of his accomplishments, a warrior par excellence, the ultimate expression of what every Matsu sought to be. He had defeated and indeed humiliated one clan after another in a long series of small border wars. Not once had he known defeat; in fact, he had never even been seriously challenged. With the passage of years, Itagi came to hold the Empire in contempt for what he perceived as its weakness, weakness in defending the name and repute of the Emperor he loved so much and to whom he was unquestioningly loyal. Eventually his ire settled on the Crab. He saw them as weak compared to the might of the Lion, as petulant, always pleading for help against the Shadowlands. If the Lion were at the wall, he reasoned, the Shadowlands horde would have been beaten back to oblivion long since. In a fury of brash courage, he proclaimed he would take his finest hand-picked men into the Shadowlands to complete the task the Crab could not accomplish. Crab Champion Hida Tadaka was incensed but politically unable to stop Itagi; he had no choice but to sullenly permit the Lion Champion to pass into the Shadowlands.

When Itagi did not return, the Lion threatened war against the Crab. To avert such a disaster Tadaka entered the Shadowlands alone to find the Matsu lord. After much struggle, he found Itagi alone, fighting to stay alive against the monstrous beasts of Jigoku. Even as his men had broken, defeated, turned by the Taint and then killed again, Itagi had never once wavered, never stopped, never lost heart or succumbed to the Taint. The two Clan Cham-

pions fought side-by-side, slowly retreating to the edge of the Crab lands, where they finally died within moments of each other. Their combined acts of sacrifice and heroism forestalled conflict between their clans and gave birth to a (sometimes begrudging) respect between Lion and Crab lasting into modern times.

Bishamon Seido, the shrine to the Fortune of Strength, was constructed in Itagi's honor and stands as a testimony to the blessing of the Fortune of Strength that he enjoyed in life.

Matsu Itagi, Brash Lord of the Lion

Air: 4	Earth: 6	Fire: 4	Water: 6	Void: 4
Reflexes: 5		Agility: 5		

Honor: 8.8	Status: 8.0 (Lion Clan Champion)	Glory: 9.3

School/Rank: Matsu Berserker 4/Akodo Tactical Master 3

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle (Mass Combat) 7, Defense 1, Etiquette 1, Heavy Weapons 6, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 1, Investigation (Notice) 5, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 6, Lore: History 2, Sincerity 3, Spears 6

Kata: Disappearing World Style, Reckless Abandon Style, Strength of Purity Style, Striking as Fire

Advantages: Inheritance (Shori), Kharmic Tie (Hida Tadaka—1 Point), Seven Fortune's Blessing (Bishamon), Social Position (Lion Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Brash, Driven (prove the Lion Clan's superiority), Overconfident

Matsu Hitomi

Paragon of Bushido, Legendary Lion Hero

Matsu Hitomi is perhaps the most famous samurai-ko in history; her name is synonymous with a warrior's vows and the fulfillment of duty no matter the cost. Sadly, hers is also a cautionary tale about the care with which warriors must guard their tongues, lest stray words or hasty proclamations be used against them. Passion must be tempered with judgment and wisdom. Hitomi had both passion and honor in abundance, but her judgment was sometimes lacking.

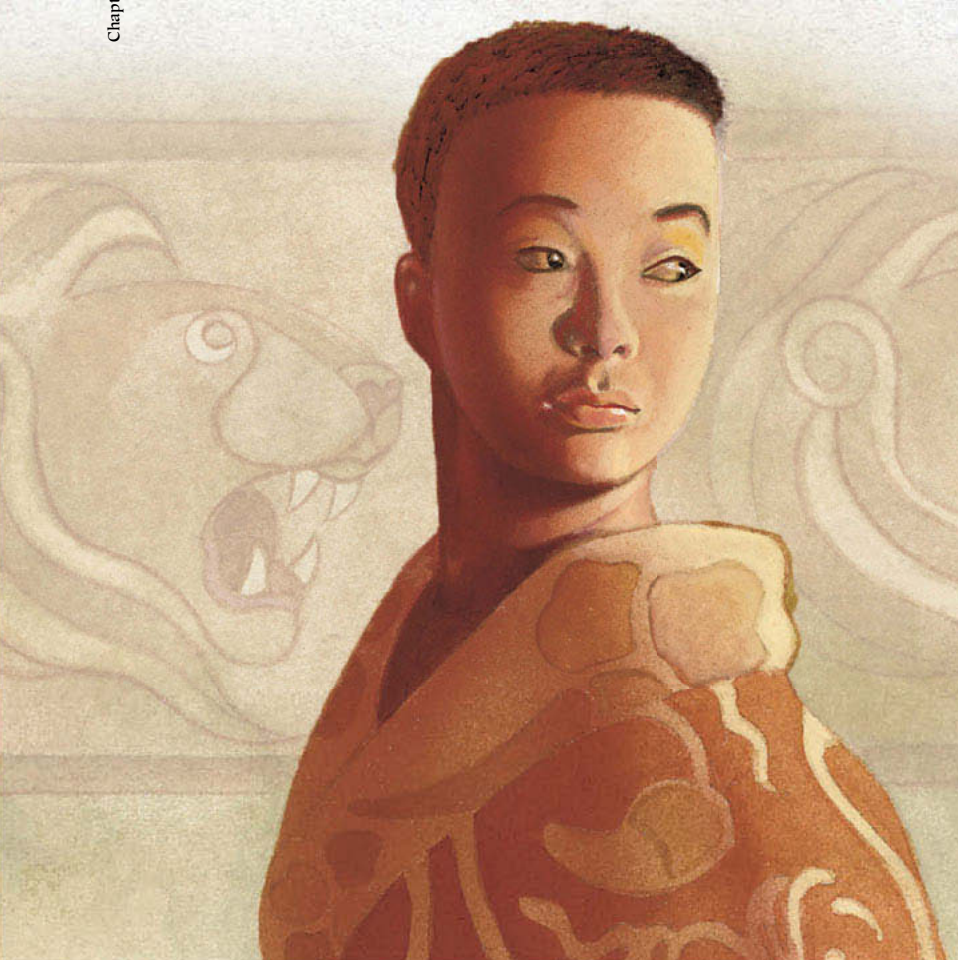
Hitomi was a Lion warrior of the fifth century, betrothed to Akodo Godaigo, a man she was fortunate enough to love. She served in the ranks of her older brother's troops at the City of Remembrance, a settlement later to fall into Phoenix hands. Her lord, Akodo Hatsu, was indebted to an unscrupulous and overly aggressive Mirumoto lord by the name of Turan. When war broke out between the Dragon and a coalition of the Scorpion and Crab, Turan called in the favor Hatsu owed and requested military aid. Hatsu sent the unit commanded by Hitomi's brother, and she boldly proclaimed she would perform any duty placed before her.

Though the Lion were successful during the battle against the Crab, Hitomi's brother fell in battle. She took up his armor and sword, leading his troops, and her passion and fury inspired them. They followed her thereafter without question.

In the wake of victory, however, Hitomi and her men were betrayed by Mirumoto Turan. In an act of unbridled stupidity and naked ambition he ordered them to turn on their own lord's castle and sack it for him, citing Hitomi's earlier promise to perform "any duty." Naturally, no honorable Lion would ever do such a thing, and Hitomi attacked Turan's forces. The Mirumoto had under-estimated her troops' strength and died at her hands, but the results of this incident ultimately led to her own downfall.

Kitsu Uragiri, an aide to Akodo Godaigo, had succumbed to the Shadowlands Taint. Consumed with hatred for Hitomi's purity, Uragiri poisoned Godaigo's mind with false words and subtle maho, blaming Hitomi for the shame she had brought to the Lion through her hasty promises to an unscrupulous Dragon. In the grip of Uragiri's lies Godaigo hunted down his betrothed and the two Lion fought at the City of Remembrance; Godaigo won the day, but Hitomi cursed him in her moment of death, a curse made real not only by her own pure spirit but also by the corruption which Uragiri had subtly foisted on Godaigo. Consumed with remorse, Godaigo built the Castle of the Faithful Bride in Hitomi's memory; soon after, the curse consumed him and transformed him into an undead monstrosity. He disappeared from public sight to wander the Empire, hunting for the traitor Uragiri.

Strangely, the tale of Hitomi does not entirely end with those famous events. Centuries later during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Hitomi returned to the mortal world to fight in the defense of the Empire against the Lying Darkness. She remained in the world of the living and resided again in her old home, the City of Remembrance, which she defended until death claimed her once more.



Matsu Hitomi, Paragon of Bushido, Legendary Lion Hero

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 2
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 5	Strength: 5	

Honor: 8.6 *Status: 5.5 (Taisa)* *Glory: 5.7*

School/Rank: Matsu Berserker 4/Lion Paragon

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 5, Games: Go 4, Horsemanship 2, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: History 4, Polearms 5, Sincerity 3, Spears 5

Advantages: Irreproachable, Leadership, Paragon (Honor), Social Position (Taisa)

Disadvantages: Brash, Gullible, Lost Love (Akodo Godaigo), Sworn Enemies (Akodo Godaigo, Kitsu Uragiri, Mirumoto Turan)

Kitsu Motso

Lion Clan Champion

Born at the end of the eleventh century, Kitsu Motso was not a man favored by the kami or the Fortunes. In fact, he was forsaken by his ancestors, bereft of even the slightest drop of true Kitsu blood and thus useless to the traditional duties of his kin. Being of too high a birth to simply be cast out of the Kitsu family, he ultimately joined the Lion armies and found solace, comfort, and kinship amongst the warriors of the Matsu. There his pent up rage at the apparent injustice of the kharmic curse that plagued him was purified and focused into a terrifying weapon on the fields of battle.

During the Clan War, Motso rose to the rank of *taisa* (captain) under Matsu Tsuko, the Champion of the Lion. However, when the Emperor was revealed to be possessed by the soul of Fu Leng, Motso balked at further obedience, claiming the Lion Clan's true duty was to the Empire and not the Emperor himself. He sought allies and many other Lion listened to his pleas; ultimately, Motso's faction nearly came to blows with the opposing side, led by Imperial Legion commander Ikoma Ujiaki, on the Second Day of Thunder. The two would likely have killed each other and plunged the Lion into destructive civil war, but the ronin Toturi intervened, revealing Matsu Tsuko's seppuku and reading out her death-haiku to the assembled Lion. The conflict ended and the two armies joined with Toturi's ronin forces to fight against Fu Leng.

Kitsu Motso was an ambitious man, but despite his unquestioned skill in war and his brilliant tactics, when the Lion Clan selected a new Champion after the Clan War he was passed for leadership in favor of Ikoma Tsanuri, Toturi's cousin and former protégé. This choice was driven in large part by Motso's unorthodox attitudes, especially his open disrespect for the ancestors who had forsaken him. However, he did win appointment as a *rikugunshoken* (general) of the Lion armies.

A few years later during the chaotic era known as the War Against the Darkness, the new Jade Champion Kitsu

Okura fell to the Taint and bargained with Akuma no Oni for power. Kitsu Motso returned to the lands of his family and lent his name and strength to his kinsman Kitsu Toju's fight against the corrupted Okura. As the true nature of the threat from the Darkness came to light, Motso fought in all the climactic battles against the Nothing, ultimately leading an army of the Lion south to Volturnum while Ikoma Tsanuri sacrificed herself to distract the forces of the Shadowlands. With Tsanuri's death, Motso stood as the unrivaled leader of the Lion and was finally accepted as the clan's Champion. He served in that role until his death during the War of the Spirits seventeen years later.

Despite his occasionally unorthodox behavior and his almost shocking attitude toward the ancestors, Motso was a pre-eminent example of the Lion Clan's spirit and ideals. Never once did he flag in his determination to defend the Empire against all enemies. Faced with impossible odds, he fought alongside his men to the last breath no matter how terrifying the foe. Motso knew neither fear nor failure. Although he was considered a poor example of the Kitsu family's traditions, he was a hero to the Lion nevertheless.

Kitsu Motso, Lion Clan Champion

Air: 3 Earth: 5 Fire: 4 Water: 5 Void: 2

Reflexes: 4 Agility: 5

Honor: 6.4 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 9.1*

School/Rank: Matsu Berserker 5

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 8, Defense 1, Heavy Weapons 3, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation (Bullying) 5, Jiujutsu 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History 1, Sincerity 4, Spears 4

Advantages: Inheritance (Shori), Social Position (Lion Clan Champion), Tactician

Disadvantages: Consumed (Determination), Cursed by the Realms (Yomi), Disbeliever

Akodo Ginawa

Akodo Family Daimyo

The story of the Clan War and the War against the Lying Darkness would be woefully incomplete without the tale of Akodo Ginawa. Indeed, his life is almost impossible to tell in full, and Ginawa himself did not remember all of its lengthy details. Akodo Ginawa was one of a mere handful of men and women who lived under three entirely separate dynasties; he saw the fall of the Hantei, stood beside Toturi the Black at the Day of Thunder, rode into the Shadowlands to wage war against the Lying Darkness, saw the creation of the Toturi Dynasty and even, as a retired monk, witnessed the fall of the Toturi and the birth of the Iweko Dynasty.

Ginawa began his career as a promising young *taisa* in the ranks of the Akodo, raised to such a prominent rank at the age of only seventeen. However, his meteoric rise came to an abrupt end when he encountered a bandit corrupted by the Lying Darkness and gained the enmity of that dark nihilistic force. A Goju shapeshifter used a series of tricks and deceptions to goad him into dishonor, arranging for him to gain possession of the Bloodsword Vengeance. The dangerous artifact slowly gnawed at Ginawa's mind until he turned on his own lord, thinking him the real shapeshifter. Made ronin for his treasonous actions, he swore to hunt down the creature responsible.

The road of vengeance was a long one, fraught with more perils than Ginawa could ever have imagined. He fell into the depths of despair and alcoholism more times than he could count, and a trail of blood stretched behind him across the whole of the Empire. It would be almost two decades before it came to an end, well after a normal samurai would have retired. Ginawa joined the ronin army of Toturi the Black and later fought against the forces of the Lying Darkness, unwilling to stop his quest even after Toturi became Emperor. When the Darkness kidnapped Toturi, Ginawa was among those who sought him out, fighting the Empire's nameless enemies with almost obsessive resolve.

Ginawa's journey ultimately led him to the great spirit gate at Volturnum. There he stood and fought, destroying the Darkness' spawn until he lost track of their numbers. Somewhere in those long years he had finally destroyed the thing that had tricked him into killing his lord. He had seen friends and comrades die, seen the Empire driven

Shori, the Lion Clan Ancestral Sword

Shori was the katana carried by Akodo himself at the dawn of the Empire. Because Akodo offered fealty to Hantei, the sword was traditionally kept in the Emperor's palace, placed on display in the Imperial throne room. The blade appears rather unremarkable, a piece of dull steel, but its hilt is of carven jade and wrapped with brass and gold wire. The tsuba bears the carving of a great palace.

By long-standing tradition, the Emperor only bestowed the Lion Ancestral Sword on the Champion of the Lion Clan when he made war on behalf of the Empire. This happened a mere three times in the thousand-plus years of the Hantei Dynasty. Although the tradition was carried over into the Toturi Dynasty, it was never used, and at the end of the War Against the Darkness Shori was carried into the Heavens by Shinjo, removing it from mortal hands... perhaps forever.

Shori is a potent nemuranai despite its rather ordinary appearance. Any true-blooded Lion who wields Shori at the Emperor's command gains the ability to attack with the sword as a Free Action; this Free Action may be taken a number of times each Turn equal to half the wielder's Honor Rank (rounded down).

more than once to the brink of destruction. But in that moment as he stood at the gates of the afterlife, waiting for the end, it was he who saw Toturi struggling to return through the portal, and it was his hand which brought the Emperor back from the lands of the dead, purified and free from the Darkness' power.

Afterward, Toturi reinstated the Akodo family and named none other than Ginawa as its new daimyo. Forged and hardened by his years of wandering, Ginawa set aside the blade called Vengeance and brought wisdom and mature judgment to the rule of the Akodo family. He served Kitsu Motso ably, and after him Matsu Nimuro and many other great leaders and generals. Ginawa's life had granted him a powerful understanding of human nature and the true power and weight of Bushido, and his leadership and counsel served the Lion well. Finally, at over sixty years of age, he stepped down as daimyo and retired to a monastery. Even then, under the monastic name of Heihei he went on to advise the shogun Kaneka.

The mechanics presented here represent Ginawa late in life, during his reign as Akodo daimyo.

Akodo Ginawa, Akodo Family Daimyo

Air: 4 Earth: 5 Fire: 5 Water: 4 Void: 5

Honor: 6.5 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 9.0*

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 2, Claws of the Wolf Ronin Path (Insight Rank 6)

Skills: Battle (Mass Combat) 7, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Hunting (Tracking) 4, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation (Search) 4, Jiujutsu 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: History 2, Lore: Shintao 4, Lore: The Lying Darkness 5, Perform-Storytelling 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth (Shadowing) 2, War Fans 4

Advantages: Forbidden Knowledge (Lying Darkness), Heart of Vengeance (Lying Darkness), Inheritance (the Bloodsword Revenge), Social Position (Akodo Family Daimyo), Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Brash, Compulsion: Sake (TN 25), Driven (defeat the Lying Darkness)

Ikoma Otemi

Ikoma Family Daimyo, Finder of the *Deathless*

Ikoma Otemi was born the nephew of Ikoma Sume, the Ikoma family daimyo in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Otemi initially seemed headed toward mediocrity, a man destined only to tell the tales of the great rather than make them, but his soul yearned for a martial path. In defiance of his uncle he chose the sword, the way of his Akodo-born mother, and trained as a soldier. Despite his determination he spent many years in relative obscurity, lingering (as many Ikoma did) in the shadow of greater men.

This changed when Otemi discovered a map to the fabled Island in the Mist, the long-lost lair of the infamous pirate Yasuki Fumoki. Together with the young Matsu heiress Matsu Kenji he traveled to the island and discovered not only Fumoki's gold but also his ship, the *Deathless*, an ancient vessel of great strength. Together with Kenji he defeated Fumoki's lingering vengeful spirit and struck down a terrible monster known as the King Orochi, ultimately returning home with great fame, not to mention great wealth for the clan. He also won the unexpected friendship of a nezumi, and eventually granted the *Deathless* to the aquatic ratling tribe known as the Chipped Tooth.

In other clans, this would most likely have been the ending of Otemi's story. Instead, Otemi proved a lesson in a Lion's sacrifice. He and Kenji felt a burgeoning love for each other, but he was married at his uncle's order to a Scorpion, Shosuro Yasuko. Both Kenji and Otemi chose never to pursue their passions for each other, instead remaining far apart to ensure neither could fall to dishonor. Rather than capitalizing on his accomplishment to seek further fame or power,

Otemi returned to a life of service to the Lion, and was eventually named as a military advisor to his Clan Champion, Matsu Nimuro.

A few years later, Matsu Nimuro died and Otemi found himself unexpectedly named regent to the lord's young son Yoshino. This made Otemi the Lion Clan Champion, as least for a time, but he did not view this as a chance for personal fame or glory. It was the role of the Lion to serve the Emperor and the Empire, not to raise up selfish heroes who thought only of their own glory. Otemi continued to forsake love and personal gain, and stepped down as soon as Matsu Yoshino came of age. By then, his uncle Sume had finally passed and Otemi took his place as lord of the Ikoma family. Yoshino ordered him to remain an advisor and frequently called on his services as a trusted general.

Throughout his life Otemi served nobly in the armies of the Lion as a general of excellence, rarely failing to accomplish his goals. However, the loss of true love was hardly the last time he would pay a heavy price for his loyal service. During the battles with the Unicorn Khan Moto Chagatai in the Winter of Red Snow, Otemi was severely wounded and had to miss the majority of the fighting while he recovered. However, even in wake of his severe injury and advancing age, he remained devoted to the cause of the Lion above all else, making him an invaluable asset to all he served.

The mechanics below depict Otemi late in life, after his injury in the Winter of Red Snow.

Ikoma Otemi, Ikoma Family Daimyo, Finder of the *Deathless*

Air: 4 Earth: 5 Fire: 5 Water: 5 Void: 5
Reflexes: 5 Perception: 7

Honor: 6.4 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 8.1*

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 5/Akodo Tactical Master 3

Skills: Animal Handling (Horses) 5, Athletics 4, Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 7, Courtier 4, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 6, Iaijutsu 5, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Heraldry 5, Lore: History (Lion Clan) 6, Perform: Storytelling (Bragging) 2, Sincerity 4, Sailing 3, War Fans 5

Advantages: Ally: K'Chee (1/4), Language (Nezumi), Leadership, Social Position (Ikoma Family Daimyo), Tactician

Disadvantages: Bitter Betrothal (Ikoma Yasuko), Lame, Small, True Love (Matsu Kenji)

Matsu Kenji

Paragon of Bushido, Matsu Family Daimyo

Born the daughter of Tsuruchi Kenji and Matsu Atsuko, Kenji was a strong-willed and determined young warrior who trained not only in the ways of the Matsu but also in her father's traditions of archery. She respected her father but did not allow her sense of honor or her duty to the Lion to be influenced by him. Her fame and ferocity quickly drew the attention of the Lion's Pride, the family's elite all-female unit, which welcomed her into their ranks.

Early in her career Kenji was honored to travel alongside Ikoma Otemi in search of the lost lair of the infamous pirate Yasuki Fumoki. The two Lion fell in love in the midst of their travels and adventures, but refused to give in to their passions, remaining rigidly loyal to Bushido and their duties. Kenji went on to serve with valor in several other conflicts, including the Battle of the Rich Frog against the Unicorn Clan. Her service was so exemplary that she caught the attention of Matsu Ketsui, the daimyo of the Matsu. Ketsui believed all her own children were dead, and named Kenji as her successor. Soon after Ketsui's daughter Satomi returned home corrupted by the Taint and murdered the daimyo. It was Kenji who in turn avenged Ketsui by slaying the Tainted abomination Satomi. In the wake of these events none in the clan raised any objection to her ascension to Ketsui's office as family daimyo.

Kenji was also one of only three Lion to ever directly commune with the spirit of the first Lion Thunder, Matsu. The clan's great ancestor gave both dire warnings and small praise to those present, preparing them for the difficult times ahead.

After she became family daimyo, Kenji sought in every way to put aside her own personal wishes for the sake of the clan, to be a paragon of selfless duty and honor at all times. Although the pangs of unfulfilled love remained, she acknowledged her duties as daimyo and sought a husband. When political duties required her to work with those who had earned her enmity or taken much from her, she put aside petty jealousies and bickering in the name of the greater good of the Lion. Perhaps this is what Matsu's spirit recognized in Kenji, that she almost never thought of herself but rather of what her lords and her people needed.

The mechanics here represent Kenji after she became family daimyo.

Matsu Kenji, Paragon of Bushido, Matsu Family Daimyo

Air: 3 Earth: 5 Fire: 4 Water: 5 Void: 3
Agility: 6 Strength: 6

Honor: 8.3 *Status: 7.0* *Glory: 6.5*

School/Rank: Matsu Berserker 3/Lion's Pride 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Skirmish) 5, Defense 1, Etiquette 3, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 6, Lore: History 4, Sailing 3, Sincerity 4, Spears 4

Advantages: Ally: Ikoma Otemi (4/4), Paragon (Honor), Social Position (Matsu Family Daimyo)

Disadvantages: Idealistic, True Love (Ikoma Otemi)

Iweko (Akodo) Setai

The Deathseeker Who Could Not Die

Akodo Setai was arguably one of the most famous heroes in the era of the Four Winds and the Race for the Throne, but would never have wished for such recognition. In fact, he wanted only to die and be forgotten, but somehow the Fortunes had other plans for him.

Setai's early life was plagued with failure. He was complicit in one of the few Lion military defeats during the War of the Spirits. After spending a night drunk and brawling with a ronin, he was unprepared to defend a neighboring village, leading to the death of a higher-ranking Lion's son. Setai was denied seppuku and instead joined the ranks of the Deathseekers, seeking to purge his shame in battle. Even in this he failed, for he seemed unable to die no matter how insurmountable the odds. His "career" as a Deathseeker spanned over twelve years, leaving a veritable mountain of corpses behind him. Eventually, after he saved the Imperial Herald from a bandit attack, the Clan Champion proclaimed he had purged his sins. He was restored to the clan's normal ranks and found himself with the unexpected task of representing the Lion in the Imperial capital.

In Toshi Ranbo, Setai gradually became a respected figure, even venerated by many courtiers for his calm demeanor and extensive experience—not to mention his keen skill in the game of Go. The experience of twelve years in the Deathseekers had purged the anger and impulsiveness from his character and left him calm and centered. He even became fast friends to a Crane, Doji Seishiro.

His peaceful days, however, were short lived. When the Unicorn Khan Moto Chagatai assaulted the Imperial capitol, Doji Seishiro died in the fighting. Some of the old fire and fury of the Deathseeker returned to Setai, and he joined the military campaigns against the Khan. Later, he fought with suicidal courage against the invasion by the Army of Dark Fire. At the end of that war it was Setai who, at the cost of grievous injury, slew the foul leader of the Army.

In the wake of these heroic deeds, Setai faced a challenge he could not escape. The Empress Iweko proclaimed he would be her consort, and they were married in the year 1171. His days of heroism and waging war were over, but his service to the Empire continued in a new form. Though he took the name Iweko Setai, his loyalties to his kin remained strong and he stood as an honorable example of the heroism and selfless devotion all Lion seek to attain.

The statistics presented here represent Setai at the end of his service in the Imperial Capital, shortly before the Khan's attack.

Akodo Setai, the Deathseeker Who Could Not Die

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3
Stamina: 5 Agility: 5 Perception: 4

Honor: 8.2 *Status: 4.5* *Glory: 9.5*

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 4/Deathseeker (Insight Rank 5)

Skills: Battle (Mass Combat) 4, Courtier 3, Defense 6, Etiquette 3, Games: Go 6, Heavy Weapons 2, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Bushido 4, Lore: History 2, Perform: Storytelling 3, Sincerity (Honesty) 4, Tea Ceremony 2

Advantages: Ally: Doji Seishiro (influence 2/devotion 4), Clear Thinker, Daredevil, Great Destiny (to become Empress' consort)

Disadvantages: Bad Eyesight (eye injured while in the Deathseekers), Unluck (2 points)

Lands of the Lion Clan

The L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook contains a brief guide to the most prominent castles and other locations in the Lion lands. Here we describe a few other notable locations, ones of significance to the Lion but not quite as prominent in the Empire as a whole.

The Ikoma Plains

The plains of the Gunsho and Ikota provinces lie south of Toshi no Meiyo Gisei and north of Kyuden Ikoma. Populated by minor villages and small castles, the plains are one of the major agricultural zones in the Lion lands. Strategically the region is of little importance, since armies passing through the area usually maneuver along the two rivers to the north and south. Anyone who presumed the region to be defenseless, however, would be in for a rude awakening.

The plains are dotted throughout with small towers, interspersed with more widely spaced stronger fortifications. Squadrons stationed in each of these strongpoints protect the area from any bandits or other local problems, and in the event of a large-scale military attack they dispatch both messages and signals to each other, enabling swift mobilization and counterattack. The only time this defensive system was unsuccessful was during the Winter of Red Snow in the late twelfth century, when the Unicorn Khan Moto Chagatai sent a massive force through the Ikoma lands in deep winter to attack Toshi Ranbo. Aside from this one anomalous incident, the defenses of the Ikoma Plains have stood undaunted against the enemies of the Lion both within and without.

Toshi no Meiyo Gisei

This City of Honor's Sacrifice was renamed in the late second century in honor of Ikoma Arimi's seppuku with a wooden blade (see her description earlier in the chapter). Meiyo Seido, the shrine erected in memory of her deed, contains an anonymous statue of a samurai-ko, and pilgrims are encouraged to pelt it with small stones, showing disapproval for her former deeds even as they respect her final honorable sacrifice.

In modern times the city itself serves what the Ikoma consider a necessary but distasteful purpose: it is a place of trade with the Unicorn. Toshi no Meiyo Gisei stands at the edges of Lion lands, along the western edges of the Drowned Merchant River near the City of the Rich Frog.

The city has also long served as a respite for Lion samurai who cannot live up to a life of ascetic self-denial. It is home to the House of the Morning Dew, one of the most famous geisha houses in Lion lands, and those Lion who need to take off their face and be merely human for an evening or two prefer to visit this city for that purpose.

Rugashi

Located in the north-central region of Lion lands, between the Castle of the Swift Sword and Ninkatoshi, Rugashi is a pivotal point of trade for the clan. It stands at the crossroads of the Lion lands, roads fanning out from it like the spokes of a merchant's wagon wheels. Almost all trade for the Lion lands passes through here, and a merchant

can buy almost anything in the city's markets, though the local Kitsu magistrates permit no illegality or smuggling. The city also serves as the main location for trade negotiations with the Lion, and is home to embassies for every clan that pursues commerce to a meaningful extent.

Rugashi is at its most busy during the spring and fall. Courtiers and merchant patrons come to negotiate and set the season's prices during the spring, and in the fall Imperial tax collectors and other agents of the Treasury are always present. The city is kept strictly and pointedly peaceful at all times, and armed conflict is never permitted within its walls; this is upheld even during times of war.

Kenson Gakka

Humility's Lesson was once known as the Castle of Honor; it was conquered by the Scorpion during the sixth century and briefly renamed Lion's Shadow. The Lion renamed it after recapturing the city and slaughtering every Scorpion in the castle.

The fortress occupies an important tactical position, located just northwest of Shiro Matsu and southeast of Lookout Mountain and Shiranai Toshi, with connections to the Yogo lands through the various small mountain passes known as the Shadows of Beiden. It serves as a strategic waypoint and eases the transfer of troops throughout the southern Lion lands, and the garrison here is well positioned to respond to almost any threat at a moment's notice. Attacks on the city were infrequent through most of the Empire's early history, but ever since the Scorpion capture and Lion recapture of the city they have watched carefully for any renewed Scorpion aggression. After the destruction of Beiden Pass in the year 1150, the castle's importance if anything increased, since the Shadows of Beiden became the only way for Scorpion forces to cross the Seikitsu Mountains.

Otori's Shame

The ruins of Shimizu Toshi lie forgotten to the northeast of Tonfajutsen, in empty plains which are not patrolled... because nobody will dare to enter, not even the original inhabitants. The castle was burned to the ground in the year 917, and not one stone stands on another where it once existed. Once, Shimizu Toshi was the core holding of a small vassal family of the Akodo, one that fell into the darkness of maho. (See Appendix Two: Vassal Families for more information on the Shimizu.) The Lion Clan purged the Shimizu, burned and salted their lands, and left them empty.

The lands of the Shimizu are said to be haunted, deadly to travel at night; some claim the spirits of those who died in the cleansing reappear should anyone be present after sunset. Whether this is true or not, the Lion see no need to patrol these lands. The home of the Shimizu remains lonely and forgotten, which is just as the Lion would prefer.

The Lion and the Art of War

It is a simple and abiding truth that the Lion are a clan of soldiers. They field the one of the largest military organizations in the Empire, rivaled only by the Crab and Unicorn, and have spent the better portion of twelve centuries perfecting the art of war as they perceive it. Understanding the Lion requires understanding how they approach the task they believe is their divine purpose as the Right Hand of the Emperor.

The Lion have enjoyed great military success over the centuries, far more than any other clan. Curiously, however, for the vast majority of the Empire's history they have employed almost no new strategies. Within the first two centuries of Rokugan's founding, Lion strategists and sensei became almost universally convinced that with proper understanding and refinement of Akodo's *Leadership* they could use his original theories and stratagems against any possible new circumstance or opponent. Lion tactical teachings and battlefield superiority became a sort of extended game, verifying what circumstances were in play in a given battle and how best to respond to them from the set of strategies and approaches which Akodo pioneered.

On the surface this sort of approach might seem to be counter-productive, since it locks the Lion into a predictable set of strategies and tactics. However, in reality this is not the case. The Empire is for the most part an unchanging place, and the Lion Clan's assessment of the other clans' military capabilities is generally quite accurate. Aside from the constantly shifting and changing threat of Jigoku (which is the duty of the Crab, not the Lion), the entire history of the Empire has seen only three occasions on which the Lion have truly been required to make a significant shift in their understanding of tactical and strategic thought. These were the publication of the *Book of Sun Tao*, the return of the Unicorn in the early ninth century, and the Lion Clan's twelfth-century acquisition of a book of gaijin military lore called *La Bellis Yoditarum*. Though each of these events had differing impacts on the clan, each was also undeniably a challenge to the old ways of tactics and strategy.

The Lion Clan's response both to these events and to lesser challenges (such as their rare battlefield defeats) is telling. Rather than changing their basic approach, they simply refined their perceptions and approaches, considering how to use these new teachings and challenges within their original framework. In the Lion view there is no other possible response. After all, they rely on the teachings of a Kami, a god among men, and centuries of refinement of his teachings by their greatest leaders, all now revered as ancestral spirits. To admit any flaw in their underlying approach is not merely foolish but actual blasphemy. The only possible approach the Lion could take to such

challenges was to assess each of them in the context of existing Lion strategic thought, to approach them as challenges to their ability to interpret and apply Akodo's original teachings.

Clearly this approach has worked, since the Lion have remained victorious through the centuries despite these occasional upheavals. Why have they been so successful?

In truth, the Lion Clan's approach to strategy and tactics actually depends on a keen understanding of human nature—at least human nature as the Rokugani understand it. The other clans have often accused the Lion of having an overly rigid view of both honor and Rokugani society; in fact, while the Lion retain their rigid hierarchical traditions, they fully recognize that other samurai live in different ways. They watch the other clans carefully and constantly refine the basic insights Akodo gave them at the dawn of the Empire. In effect, the Lion re-consider their potential opponents in the same light over and over again. They believe this is effective because they believe human nature does not change quickly or easily. The foes they fight are the same samurai they were yesterday, the century before, the millennium before; they bleed as they always have, fight and plan and sin in the same ways they always have. To change the entire basis and framework of military strategy and tactics would be to imply the threat itself had changed, which is impossible.

Only the Shadowlands—and perhaps the gaijin—cannot be approached in this way, and thus only those outside forces with their unholy and seemingly ever-changing ways truly require a rethinking of tactics. It is not a coincidence that two of the three major challenges to Lion strategic thought came from outside the Empire: the Unicorn and *La Bellis Yoditarum*. Within the Empire, however, the basic framework of Lion military strategy has remained constant for over a millennium.

Part of the reason the Lion can view the human creature as so consistent is that the Ikoma histories allow them to review the entire history of their military endeavors. The Lion Clan's War College is the Empire's foremost school of military leadership, and any Lion who trains there will read and reread the accounts of hundreds or even thousands of battles, observing and identifying the strategies at work in each. They learn to consider battlefields and terrain at a glance, seeing which maneuvers can be used on each such landscape. They are taught the full range of tactics used by each clan over the course of hundreds of years, how their ancestors responded, and especially how they failed.

The Lion study failure as much or more than they study success. Each time a Lion army is defeated, the sensei of the War College return to their texts, poring over the records and asking themselves what their generals viewed incorrectly about the battle or campaign. They review their tactical models to see what was mis-applied and which different teachings should be applied in a similar future situation. An outside observer might be tempted to describe this approach as nothing more than trial-and-error, but in fact the Akodo War College—and the Lion at large—have developed an almost uncanny ability to draw on their incredible breadth of military understanding to re-apply tactics as old as the Empire itself to the most recent of battles. It also helps that Akodo and the clan's other early tactical theoreticians sometimes wrote in axioms and general principles rather than iron-clad specifics, making their insights easier to apply over time.

Of course, the Lion Clan's long tradition of studying war and their opponents in war is not the sole reason for their success. They also are able to call on the same resource which strengthens the Crab Clan to the south: constant experience. Most samurai in the Lion Clan spend their entire lives in the midst of an ongoing military campaign, for even during periods of peace the Lion armies engage in constant maneuvers and deployments to ensure they never lose their fighting edge. Most Lion samurai serve in their army for years, gradually being promoted into veteran and elite units as their experience mounts. The core elite units of the Lion armies are composed almost entirely of highly experienced men in their mid-twenties or older.

The Ten Orders

No part of Akodo's *Leadership* is studied more assiduously by the Lion than the section known as the Ten Orders, a set of directives and principles for all samurai soldiers to follow and uphold.

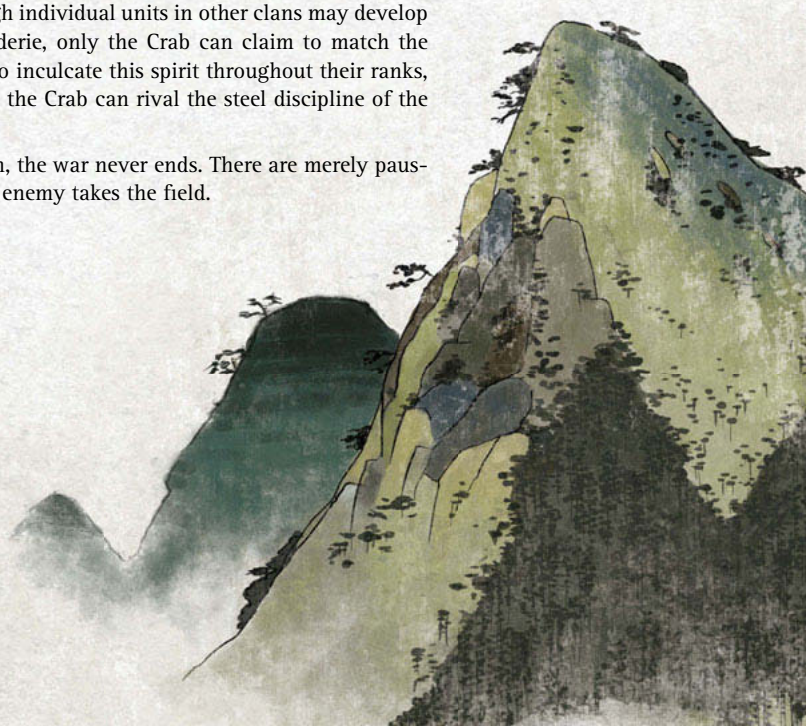
1. Always carry a text with you. When you have nothing else to do, read. The mind must be exercised as well as the body.
2. When your lord calls to you, run to him, fall at his feet and speak his name loudly and proudly. Proclaim your loyalty to him with a shout that is painful to the throat. Be convinced in your loyalty, for if you are not, your lord will not be convinced either.
3. Keep your sword close and ready and clean. Failing your sword is failing your lord.
4. Keep servants if you must, but only if you must. If there are repairs to be done on the house, make them. If there are rooms to be cleaned, clean them. Idleness is an enemy, and it is always best for a samurai to understand a thing before he asks another to do it for him.
5. Lady Sun and Lord Moon made us with a left hand and a right hand. In the left hand goes the text, and in the right hand goes the sword. Remember this.
6. When you come before a superior, drop your hands at your sides and bow lower than they. Dropping your hands away from your sword shows your trust. Bowing your head does this as well. These two actions say: "My life is yours to take if you wish."
7. Rise in the morning before your servants and have half their duties done before they have even bathed. Men follow the example of those they admire.
8. Assassins creep in the late hours, so go to bed early. Then, when they creep in at midnight, you will be fresh and rested and ready.
9. Wash. A dirty man must itch and scratch. An itching and scratching man is slow.
10. Be ready to die.

While such practices are not uncommon in other clans, the scale of military service in the Crab and Lion Clans is far greater. Moreover, political appointments within the Lion officer ranks are quite rare; even the children of the Kuge nobility are usually raised with the expectation they should work their way through the ranks normally. A Lion *gunso* almost invariably has served effectively for years and can fulfill his duties without question. A Lion *riku-gunshoken* is usually a man of long experience, his hair going gray, his skin showing the wrinkles and scars of long years and many battles.

The constant training and long service of Lion soldiers and the demand that every officer rise on merit imbues their armies with a powerful sense of discipline and order. Like their other military traditions, the primacy of discipline in Lion warfare dates back to the founding ancestors of the clan, especially Akodo and Matsu. They saw that without strict and rigid discipline, troop maneuvers were little more than a chaotic mass of men charging into each other. It was Akodo who created the basic structures of the Rokugani army and the command systems to move such an army swiftly and reliably; it was Matsu who demanded these systems be applied with the most ruthless discipline and obedience, including methods for the promotion of skilled officers and the demotion (or in many cases lethal punishment) of those found unfit. Although the other clans have copied Akodo's methods and structures, none have applied them as efficiently and consistently as the Lion.

Where there is discipline and order, the armies of the Lion thrive. Commanders have time to organize their troops, to observe the movements of the enemy, to respond to attacks and issue new orders. With complete discipline, logistics can be controlled to ensure an army never marches hungry or ill-equipped. With discipline, scouts can offer proper reconnaissance and Lion generals know when and where it is possible to engage the enemy with consistent success. Above all, when troops always know their place and their role, when they are trained to follow orders without hesitation or doubt, a Lion commander knows his men will never break no matter the situation. Lion soldiers trust each other completely and have absolute faith in their comrades, and this makes their courage and obedience on the battlefield nigh-unbreakable. Although individual units in other clans may develop such camaraderie, only the Crab can claim to match the Lion ability to inculcate this spirit throughout their ranks, and not even the Crab can rival the steel discipline of the Lion.

To the Lion, the war never ends. There are merely pauses before the enemy takes the field.



The Deathseeker Tradition

The Lion Deathseekers are military units comprised of those who have been dishonored, whether personally or by the fall of their house. Rather than commit seppuku, they are offered the chance to restore their honor by dying fearlessly on the battlefield, sacrificing their lives for the greater good of the Lion Clan. The traditions which drive the Deathseekers are not entirely unique to the Lion Clan; occasionally similar oaths have been taken by samurai in various other clans. The Crab, for example, sometimes allow dishonored samurai to go "looking for Hida," entering the Shadowlands to die fighting, taking as many of Fu Leng's creatures into death with them as they can. Such individuals are usually a source of notoriety and shame to their clans throughout their often-brief lives. Among the Lion, however, they are treated differently, for the clan boasts far greater numbers of Deathseekers than any other, enough to form entire military units. Lion Deathseekers live in near-anonymity, their individual identities almost lost in the midst of their collective service and the pride with which they fight. The Lion Clan's embrace of the Deathseeker concept speaks much to their unique attitude towards honor, and indeed most clans consider the word "Deathseeker" to be synonymous with "Lion."

The Deathseekers originated with an incident involving a minor vassal daimyo of the Matsu during the third century. Hayameru Shibai, a vassal of the Matsu, was a general of some renown who controlled one of the small castles guarding the approaches to Shiro Matsu from the Beiden Pass. Threatened by a superior Scorpion army, his honor broke and he prepared to betray the Matsu daimyo to save his own life. His men, however, turned on him; after reporting his treachery and presenting his head to the Matsu daimyo, they begged for the chance to commit seppuku. Due to the practical needs of the impending battle, the Matsu daimyo instead commanded them to seek purification of their honor in battle. Their ferocity and recklessness helped turn the tide of battle for the Lion. The Deathseeker tradition was born in that battle and has continued uninterrupted from that time.

The extensiveness of the Deathseeker order can be something of a shock to outsiders. After all, the Lion are the clan of Akodo, whose words built the foundation of Bushido itself. He was one of those who formed the very foundations of Rokugan's society, along with Lady Doji and later the second Emperor, Hantei Genji. It is through Akodo's view that Honor is de-

fined and understood. There is little doubt the Lion are a clan deeply devoted to Bushido, with a profound understanding of its nature and precepts—although other clans might argue with various particulars of the Lion viewpoint. So how can the Lion possess—or need—an entire military order composed of dishonored souls seeking to cleanse the shame of their misdeeds in glorious death?

There is no immediate or obvious reason why the Lion possess so many Deathseekers. However, the reason may in fact be the very influence of Akodo himself. While other clans may argue how well they adhere to the various tenets of Bushido (and claim how much better they understand them than the Lion), the fact remains it was Akodo and no other who penned these principles and inculcated them in his followers. As a result, the Lion adhere to a brutally rigid understanding of honor, one whose demands exceed those found in the other clans in many ways. Issues a Lion daimyo may see as a slight of honor upon his house might not even be noticed by a lord from another clan, and what constitutes a grievous offence may vary greatly. Since the Lion are deeply trained in their own history and traditions, they have little to no mercy on those who transgress against Bushido in even minor ways; after all, their samurai have been trained and brought up to know better.

As a result of such rigid adherence to tradition, a considerable number of Lion are disgraced for succumbing to relatively minor character flaws, things which might be overlooked or punished in a milder or more merciful manner in other clans. Some of these incidents might strike outsiders as trivial, the punishments harsh or vindictive, but to the Lion their response is entirely proper. Since they believe they are the only true conservators of Bushido, in their minds only they truly understand the need for proper punishments when honor is breached. The Deathseeker tradition is essentially a side-effect of this exceptionally rigid attitude, brought about in part through the practical necessities of war. Where the shame is great in Lion eyes, but not so extreme as to demand execution or expulsion, the Deathseekers provide an alternative to seppuku, a sort of middle road. To the Lion, the presence and numbers of the Deathseekers demonstrate their true understanding of Bushido.

It should be noted that Lion Deathseekers view themselves as having already been punished for their sins. The Deathseeker's path is one of atonement, and they have been granted what they see as a unique and great privilege to do so. They are now living icons of Bushido, embodiments of the tenets of Courage and Duty, destined to perish in glorious combat protecting their clansmen. The sacred white cords and headbands they wear may be seen as badges of shame, but they are also religious symbols, showing a spiritual dedication of the soul to death. Such an attitude is uniquely Lion.

The Deathseeker order holds a position of particular importance in the Lion military. The Deathseekers serve as shock troops, though in a different way from the ronin who also serve such a role in Lion and other clan armies. Ronin are usually hired in large quantities to serve as grist for the grinder of battle. If they survive enough to become capable veterans, they might be offered less lethal tasks, but for the most part they are treated as disposable troops to spare more valuable Lion lives. The Deathseekers, on the other hand, are considered privileged to be in the vanguard of a great charge where they can shatter an enemy's defense. Their ferocity borders on madness, since they have no concern for their personal survival but retain the martial prowess of any Lion bushi. Consequently, Deathseekers are considered a valuable element of a Lion army, and are always present in the front lines when the Lion enter the field of war. After all, to hold them in reserve would defeat the purpose of their sacred calling.

Because of their numbers, Deathseekers are fielded in their own separate units. These units are self-contained—even their officers are Deathseekers—but rank within a Deathseeker unit is purely a matter of function and military order. When not in the field, Deathseekers hold no social status and a *taisa* is treated no differently from a *hohei*. Since every samurai in a Deathseeker unit is dedicated to honor at all costs, discipline and obedience are usually absolute. Deathseekers are usually formed in *Kaisha* (companies), comprised as usual of seven *Guntai* (squadrons) but without archer units. Though most Deathseekers are trained in archery, they do not generally carry bows with them into battle—they are entering the field to confront the enemy and die gloriously, not to snipe at their foes from a distance. Most are armed only with a spear and their daisho, the one easily replaceable and the other their very honor and soul.

Ultimately, the purpose of any Deathseeker unit is to be an expendable asset. However, while they are lightly armed and armored, they are not simply thrown into battle without strategic purpose. Lion commanders are universally aware of the strengths and capabilities of the Deathseekers, and use them specifically to break the morale of enemy units and to shatter strong defense positions. Thus, although Deathseekers are usually given exceptionally dangerous and even suicidal assignments, these are tasks which must be performed for the rest of the army to prevail. When a wedge is needed to force a breach in a seemingly impenetrable enemy line, when a unit must be sacrificed in an all-important delaying action... these are the times when the Deathseekers are unleashed.

The Deathseekers can also impact a battle in less tangible ways. Their extreme dedication serves to strengthen the spirit of those around them, and their presence on the front lines—a unit without flag or banner, with only the sacred cords around their arms and the white headbands on their foreheads to denote their identity—is often more than enough to intimidate many opponents. Few in the Empire are unaware of their ferocious and well-earned reputation. Their mere presence forces less experienced opponents to re-calculate their strategy, often leading to mistakes the Lion can exploit. Thus, the Deathseekers play a key role in almost all Lion battles.

The Lion and Ancestral Worship

Rokugani religion comprises three elements: Fortunism, Shintao, and Ancestral Worship. Although all three aspects of faith are accepted universally, the Lion spend relatively little time on the teachings of Shinsei—every Lion dojo contains a copy of the *Tao*, in respect for Hantei's command that all the Empire venerate the words of the Little Teacher, but all of those copies are unopened. The Lion are proper Fortunists, of course, and pay special veneration to Bishamon, the Fortune of Strength, whose chief shrine is in their lands. But while Ancestral Worship is universal in Rokugan, no clan can claim to follow it as strongly and with such dedication as the Lion Clan. Indeed, it is only the Lion whose worship of the ancestors can be found to diverge in any significant way from the average of Rokugani practice.

Most Rokugani venerate the ancestors throughout their lives, although the degree and focus varies. A family's closest ancestor (a parent or grandparent) is generally worshipped without fail throughout the lives of those in the household, but older ancestors often see such veneration fade after a generation or so. Their lessons are still taught to children as guidance, and those who have performed notable deeds may have local shrines dedicated to them, but day-to-day veneration drops off as their lives fade into history. (Of course, truly notable figures such as family founders and the Kami continue to be worshipped and venerated in annual celebrations.) Devout samurai will also pay special reverence to such notable ancestors by undertaking a pilgrimage every few years to visit the main shrine dedicated to that figure. A truly pious samurai (as most Lion are) will make this pilgrimage every five years or so.

No Rokugani house, whether eta, peasant, or samurai, is complete without an ancestral shrine venerating their immediate forebears. Only in extremely rare and infamous cases will such traditions be violated. Usually, this shrine is found in the main room of the house, although the wealthy may place it in a separate building or shrine on their holding.

A family ancestral shrine is usually quite simple, a small open-faced wooden cabinet shaped like a miniature temple. A shelf inside houses the spirit tablet, sometimes supplemented with a small statue or painting. A spirit tablet stands no more than a foot in height and about four or five inches in width. The exact form and design of the tablet varies depending on how closely the household venerates the teachings of Shinsei. In a devoutly Shintaoist household, the spirit tablet is a black-lacquered wood with painted or inlaid images of the sacred lotus flower along with the names of the deceased ancestors. In a house that does not closely follow Shinsei's teachings (such as most of the Lion) the tablet is instead a dark-stained wood with just the ancestral name and no other markings or Taoist references. Regardless of form, the tablet—called the *mitami-shiro*—is considered the physical representative of the ancestor's soul, and thus a focus of any prayers directed to that ancestor.

Prayers and offerings to these household shrines are the central focus of ancestral worship. Most samurai perform these rituals each and every day, and the lives of the most devout revolve around the remembrance of their family and bloodline. Symbolic offerings are placed each morning at the shrine, often as the very first act of the day. These typically include small portions of rice or fish, a cup of sake, and the lighting of incense, accompanied by clapping hands and a short prayer of thanks for the ancestor's guidance and presence. Each evening, the offerings are disposed of and the shrine is cleaned carefully to ensure the ancestor is not offended by slovenly disrespect.

Lion households are even more focused on remembering and respecting their ancestors, and make special note of the anniversary of any notable ancestor's death. This may not necessarily be a famous ancestor, but rather one whose standing and protection over the family is notable and specially felt. In fact, Lion households often maintain special tablets just for such ancestors, showing them particular reverence. Celebrations involving generous offerings and extensive prayer are performed on the monthly anniversary of the ancestor's death, a day known as the *kimichi*. The yearly anniversary produces an even larger ceremony attended by friends of the family, with extensive rituals by a shugenja (preferably from within the family if such is available). These annual reverences are called *sho-tsuki*, and are usually a time of celebration rather than mourning. Offerings of silk and sake, dances, and a small feast are made for the ancestor to honor his ser-

The Bon Festival

Aside from a few special cases like the Imperial line and the major clan and family founders, most ancestral veneration takes place in the home. However, there is one noteworthy exception: the Bon Festival. Performed on the 28th Day of the Month of the Dog, the Bon Festival is dedicated to honor the dead of the last year, and aside from a few special cases (like the city of Ryoko Owari) is celebrated in a fairly uniform fashion by all clans.

During the Bon Festival, extended families will gather at their primary holding, where a special altar is erected with a spirit tablet that represents the ancestors of the entire extended family. After dark, each member of the family bears colored paper lanterns to the sites where the ashes of their ancestors are interred. Similar lanterns are placed outside the house and all over the town to guide the worshippers on their way. A ceremonial meal is presented to the ancestors at their grave, and the local shugenja and monks travel about performing a slow ceremonial festival dance at each local house. At the close of the evening, additional paper lanterns are placed on small boats in the nearest lake or river—one for each family member who has died within the last year. This is believed to help guide the spirits to the afterlife, ensuring they do not become angry ghosts.

vice and continued guidance. Afterward the family and friends gather to eat and celebrate, in a manner befitting the clan—among the Lion, these celebrations are always quite dignified, since not even an Ikoma will dishonor the departed with drunken revelry.

It may also be noted that the Lion are far less likely to allow the worship of their ancestors to fade with time. The Lion take special care to celebrate the first, fifth, tenth, fiftieth, and hundredth anniversaries of every major Lion samurai's death, relying on special calendars kept meticulously by members of the Ikoma and Kitsu families working in tandem. In addition, every Lion family keeps meticulous records of its own bloodline, often all the way back to the clan founders. While most samurai households contain no more than one or two spirit tablets, Lion houses will maintain shrines devoted to their entire ancestry. In a wealthy house each former head of the family has a separate spirit tablet within its own shrine, while smaller or humbler households will prepare temporary 'stand-in' tablets for the veneration of each noteworthy ancestor in their line. This can result in a Lion being forced to set aside his duties many times each year in order to pay respect to various ancestors, but given the importance of ancestral veneration in Lion culture this is never considered a dereliction of duty.

Of course, the most famous example of the Lion Clan's special veneration of its bloodlines is found in the great temple known as the Hall of Ancestors. This huge complex is the single most sacred site in the Lion lands, and is traditionally administered and defended by the second child of the current Matsu family daimyo; if that is not possible, the duty is assigned to a hand-selected individual of the utmost honor and purity of character. The Hall is the final resting place for the urns housing the actual bones and ashes of hundreds of the Lion Clan's greatest heroes. Statues in the likeness of these heroes, depicting their most noble characteristics, are erected before each of these urns. For those heroes whose bodies were not recovered (such as Lady Matsu), a statue is still erected and an empty urn is placed to honor their deeds. Most heroes are also remembered with placards listing their name, lineage, birth and death, and deeds of worth and note.

The Hall of Ancestors seems, outwardly, to be not only regal but deathly silent, tended by quiet and pious Kitsu. However, those Lion who visit the Halls claim the place is anything but silent; they say the Halls echo constantly with the song of their ancestors, speaking to them from Yomi. Lion come here regularly not only to show piety but also to seek the wisdom of those who have gone before for important choices in their lives. Very few Lion do not visit the Halls at least once, but only a handful of non-Lion have ever been permitted to visit. Usually this is due to Lion ancestry or Imperial blood, and such visitors are always accompanied by a careful guard of honor.

The Lion Beastmasters

The Beastmasters are a military tradition unique to the Lion, hailing from the earliest days of the clan at the end of the First War. The newly-emerged Kitsu family had an instinctive empathy for the fierce predator cats who roamed the central Lion plains, and several members of the family were able to form bonds with the great cats and fight alongside them in battle. With the passage of time, the early instinctive Beastmasters developed a training regimen to pass on their talents to the clan as a whole. The Lion Clan has maintained the school ever since, but nurtures it largely in private, allowing the Beastmasters free reign only during times of major war or crisis. After all, the rest of the Empire is likely to look more than slightly askance at a military tradition that involves forming an empathic bond with dangerous predator animals.

In modern times, the Beastmasters are primarily Matsu and the school is maintained under the auspices of that family. However, they are far from its only students. The number of samurai who are suitable as Beastmasters is small, and the training is long and arduous, performed through private tutelage by senior Beastmasters rather than in the formal structure of a dojo. Beastmasters are not trained so much as they are born and nurtured. Potential recruits are selected in childhood for their natural spark and affinity for animals, a talent easily recognized by those who already possess it. Only those who have the gift can avoid dangerous false steps that can easily cost the life of students and animals alike.

Beastmasters live among the half-tamed warcats who are their charges, and form their own pride of lions by raising cubs from infancy, imprinting them with loyalty and devotion. They are notorious for having a wild and uncivilized nature, and even the brash Matsu are wary of allowing Beastmasters into civilized venues such as court.

The Beastmaster units, called prides, can sometimes be quite troublesome for opposing commanders, since their unique nature makes them a source of both mystery and frequent surprise. The number of generals who have faced the Beastmasters successfully is, in fact, quite few. None of Sun Tao's writings go into detail on their unique nature, and most tacticians and strategists do not consider their plans with quarter-ton fanged beasts in mind. Only the Crab, with their long and bitter experience fighting the monsters of the Shadowlands, can claim to be accustomed to facing this sort of opponent. Moreover, there are no consistent banners to designate Beastmaster units, so they are often a nasty surprise to those who meet them. That being said, it is fairly rare for Beastmaster prides to serve as frontal attack units. Trained warcats are few in number even in the best of times, and their specialization is not in shattering enemy formations. Rather, they serve as reserve units, used for armed reconnaissance, raids against enemy rear areas, sundering an already weakened enemy position, or defending the reserves against enemy raids—even the boldest Crane, Unicorn, or Scorpion scout will hesitate to attack a supply train guarded by ferocious predators who weigh twice as much as a man.

New Game Mechanics

The following section contains new Lion Clan mechanical options for the Legend of the Five Rings role-playing game. GMs and players can use as many or as few of these mechanics as desired to add more depth and variety to their campaigns.

New Advantage: Heartless (4 points) [Mental]

You have a heart of stone. Attempts to woo you or sway your heart—whether through love, courtesy, compassion, or mercy—fall on deaf ears. You gain a +1k0 bonus to rolls made to resist any Courtier, Sincerity, or Temptation roll made for the purpose of persuading you, seducing you, or otherwise changing your mind.

New Basic School: The Matsu Beastmasters

The Beastmaster organization is completely unique in its approach to war and to animals. Many other clans train animals for combat, but the Matsu Beastmasters take a personal approach to each beast. The lion is a savage crea-

ture that fights as part of a group called a pride. The Beastmaster adopts lion warcats into his own pride, bonding emotionally and spiritually to each warcat that charges into battle beside him. The Beastmaster treats his warcats as equals, fostering a sense of family and belonging.

The communication between Beastmaster and warcat borders on the mystical. Once a warcat has trained with her Beastmaster, she can sense what he wants without any words or gestures. However, this intense empathy between human and predatory animal can sometimes hinder the Beastmaster's social abilities among humans. Most Beastmasters tend to stay amongst their own kind rather than share the company of "normal" samurai. Some Lion generals have raised concerns the Beastmasters may become too feral, to which the Beastmasters retort that they are still Matsu above all. Only the Matsu, they say, are strong and proud enough to maintain their hold on Bushido and human traditions under such pressures.

New Basic School: Matsu Beastmasters [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Animal Handling 2, Battle, Defense, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, any one Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 4 koku

Techniques

Rank One: One with the Pride

You have trained in the highly secretive dojo of the Matsu Beastmasters and have forged a bond with one of the legendary Lion warcats. The lion will accompany you wherever you go and follows basic commands without question. No lion will ever attack you without being compelled to do so in some way. You may direct one of your warcats to Attack as a Complex Action. Any one warcat who is not attacking will use the Guard Action to protect you.

Rank Two: Heart of the Beast

Your training with the warcats has increased your physical abilities as well as your mental bond with your lions. An additional lion joins your pride. You and your companion lions gain the creature trait of Swift 2 (as described in the L5R 4th Edition core rules, page 320), and all of your lions gain an additional Wound Rank that changes the end of their progression from a normal lion's to: 36: +15, 60: Dead.

Death of a Cat

The Beastmaster constantly puts his beloved animals in harm's way. The death of a warcat is a sad occasion and one that occurs with more frequency than any Beastmaster would like. The Beastmasters constantly maintain a pool of young lions for such occasions, allowing fallen beasts to be replaced after only a few months of training and bonding with a new warcat.

The GM should decide exactly what tests are appropriate to replace lost lions, but time with the new beast and several Animal Handling rolls should be required.

Rank Three: The Ferocity Within

You strike as fiercely as the lions with whom you have trained. When wielding a katana, wakizashi, magari-yari, nage-yari, or any knife, or when fighting unarmed, you may make melee attacks as a Simple Action. Additionally, you may direct one of your warcats to Attack as a Simple Action.

Rank Four: All as One

The fury of the beastmaster and his pride is a whispered legend among your clan's enemies, and for good reason. Members of your pride may make two claw attacks per Round instead of the normal one. You and all members of your pride gain a bonus of +2k1 on all damage rolls made when fighting alongside one another. Finally, when you direct a warcat to Attack (a Complex Action for lions), the warcat may also make a Simple Move Action during the same Round.

Beastmaster's Claws

A unique weapon crafted only among the Matsu Beastmasters, the Beastmaster's Claws is a small bar of metal that fits within a closed fist. Small flat metal rods extend from this bar between the fingers of the Beastmaster's clenched fist, each ending in small curved blades that resemble a lion's claws. This allows a Beastmaster to fight in a manner similar to his pride. The weapon is considered a Knife for rules purposes and has the Small property, with a DR of 0k2.

This weapon is considered highly unconventional by the Empire as a whole, and is not seen outside the ranks of the Beastmasters (even within the Lion Clan). Anyone outside of the Lion Clan using the weapon loses one point of Honor per skirmish for doing so, as well as probably giving grave insult to any Lion who witnesses its use.

Rank Five: With the Soul of a Lion

United by your leadership and companionship, your pride has become fearsome indeed. An additional lion joins your pride. All of your warcats gain +10 Armor TN, +2 Reduction, and +2 Fear.

New Advanced School: Akodo Tactical Master

"An army led by an Akodo general has never lost a battle."

So it is often said in courts across the Emerald Empire and even in the battle tents of the Lion's fiercest enemies. While the statement is not completely factual, the sentiment behind it is undeniable. The Akodo Tactical Masters are the greatest strategists of Rokugan, second to no others. Only a truly unique commander with a powerful destiny can challenge the Tactical Master in his own realm and hope to compete.

The Akodo Tactical Master studies every notable battle in Rokugani history. He examines how the Lion have handled every situation—and just as importantly, how the enemy attempted to find weakness in the Lion Clan's traditional plans. He learns to adapt, react, and change his battle plans to meet every eventuality. Even knowledge from outside Rokugan's borders is not wholly anathema to him, since he can use such intelligence to plan against future incursions from the hateful foreigner.

New Advanced School: Akodo Tactical Master [Bushi]

Requirements

- **Rings/Traits:** Water 4, Intelligence 5
- **Skills:** Battle (Mass Combat) 5, Games: Shogi 4 or Games: Go 4

Techniques

Rank One: The Eyes of the General

The Akodo Tactical Master spends his entire life studying the teachings of Lion generals from centuries past. He benefits from the wisdom of all of his ancestors and hones himself into the perfect general. You may reroll any one of your dice in each Battle Turn of Mass Combat. You may also reroll any one of your dice during an attack roll in which you called at least one Raise.

Rank Two: Malleable as the Sea

The Tactical Master can navigate the sudden changes in the battlefield, adapting and reacting so his army can benefit. You may spend a Void Point to choose any one Heroic Opportunity from the core rulebook to perform during a Mass Battle Turn. (This choice is subject to GM approval, since not all options will be suitable for the situation and the characters involved.)

Rank Three: The Soul of the Army

The Tactical Master knows he is responsible for his army, and directs its strength where it may do the most damage. You may spend a Void Point to gain a +5k1 bonus to any Battle Skill Roll (rather than the usual +1k1), or to gain a +2k2 bonus to any Bugei Skill Roll (rather than the usual +1k1).

New Alternate Path: Akodo Kensai

The samurai of the Lion Clan value tradition above all else, and many Lion warriors follow directly in the footsteps of their ancestors. While other weapons may be better suited for the battlefield, the katana remains the icon of samurai culture. The Akodo Kensai focuses exclusively on this weapon until he can overcome its deficiencies. He pours thousands of hours of practice into kata, kenjutsu, and iaijutsu until he has a profound connection with the weapon. When he is ready, the Kensai can move and attack as if the katana were a very part of his body. He strikes with almost supernatural ease, with a grace and beauty that enthralls any who watch him.

New Alternate Path: Akodo Kensai [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 4
- **Replaces:** Any Lion Bushi 4
- **Requirements:** Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Prodigy Advantage
- **Other:** You may ignore the Prodigy Advantage requirement, but if so you must increase all other requirements by 1.

Technique: The Heart of the Sword

The Akodo Kensai navigates the battlefield with his katana in his hands. He remains untouched by the enemies around him, for he can direct the flow of combat with his own attacks. While using a sword and in the Attack Stance, you may increase your Armor TN by your Honor Rank against the first melee attack each Combat Round. Additionally, once per skirmish you may activate a Kata as a Free Action.

New Alternate Path: Lion Scout

Akodo's treatise on warfare emphasized the necessity of knowledge. He knew a skilled corps of scouts could determine the result of battle even before it began. Hiding is considered a dishonorable act, but the Lion Scouts are willing to swallow their pride and accomplish what must be done. The Akodo and the Ikoma both train scouts to be adept at avoiding the enemy and surveying the terrain, working to garner even the slightest advantage against their enemies.

New Alternate Path: Lion Scout [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Any Lion Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Battle 2, Hunting 3

Technique: Shadow Unseen

The Lion Scout cultivates all the skills required to fulfill his tasks, setting aside his own honor for his clan. You may move at a normal rate while using the Stealth Skill, and you gain a +1k0 bonus to Stealth Skill Rolls and all Agility-based Bugei Skills.

New Alternate Path: Lion Paragon

The samurai class lives by the Code of Bushido, but the stresses and temptations of everyday life makes strict adherence to Bushido nearly impossible. The Lion Paragons persevere through these obstacles, striving to be ideal samurai. The Paragons follow an ancient technique that benefits from their focus and strength of will, and pass it on to those who possess the same qualities. The Paragons are not a military unit within the Lion Clan, but their ideals are well known to all Lion and their technique continues to be passed down from one generation to the next.

New Alternate Path: Lion Paragon [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Any Lion Bushi 3
- **Requirements:** Void Ring 4, Kenjutsu 5, Honor Rank 7

Technique: Pure and Dedicated

The Lion Paragon lives by the tenets of Bushido, and the strength of his devotion allows him to push himself beyond his physical limits. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action. However, if you choose to do so, you may only make one attack that Turn. (This prohibits you from making any additional attacks, even with the Extra Attack Maneuver.)

Once per skirmish, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to activate this Technique. Your Honor Rank is considered to be double for the purpose of your other School Techniques. (For example, if you are a Matsu Bushi, you add double your Honor Rank to all damage rolls from your Rank 1 Technique.) This effect may increase your Honor Rank above 10, but does not stack with any other effects that modify Technique bonuses; in such a case, choose the highest modifier. The effects of this Technique end when the encounter ends.

New Kata: Strength of the Lion

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Schools:** Any Lion Bushi
- **Effect:** One per Round during the Reactions stage, you may add +3 to the Initiative Score of one ally in a skirmish. This effect can stack, but the kata's benefit disappears immediately if the kata is no longer active.

New Lion Ancestors

Kitsu [6 points]

The spirit once known as Soli Tendo, Kitsu took human form to found the Kitsu family and died in defense of the human clan he joined so reluctantly. A true-blooded descendent of Kitsu who gains his favor can detect the presence of spirits and spirit portals. (This is a Perception roll, normally TN 25, although the GM may raise it for obscure or well-hidden spirits or portals). In addition, Kitsu's guidance grants you +1k1 to all Lore: Spirit Realms rolls.

- **Demands:** Kitsu abandons you if you ever willingly harm a non-corrupted member of the five ancient races (or one of their descendants), or if you ever willingly cooperate with a Tsuno.

Matsu Hitomi [7 points]

Hitomi was one of the greatest heroes of the Lion Clan, a woman of faultless honor and courage. If you are honored with her guidance, her unshakable faith in Bushido grants you a +1k1 bonus to all rolls to resist Temptation, Intimidation, and Fear effects.

- **Demands:** Hitomi abandons you if you ever knowingly betray your daimyo or the Lion Clan, or if your Honor ever drops below 5.0.

Chapter Five

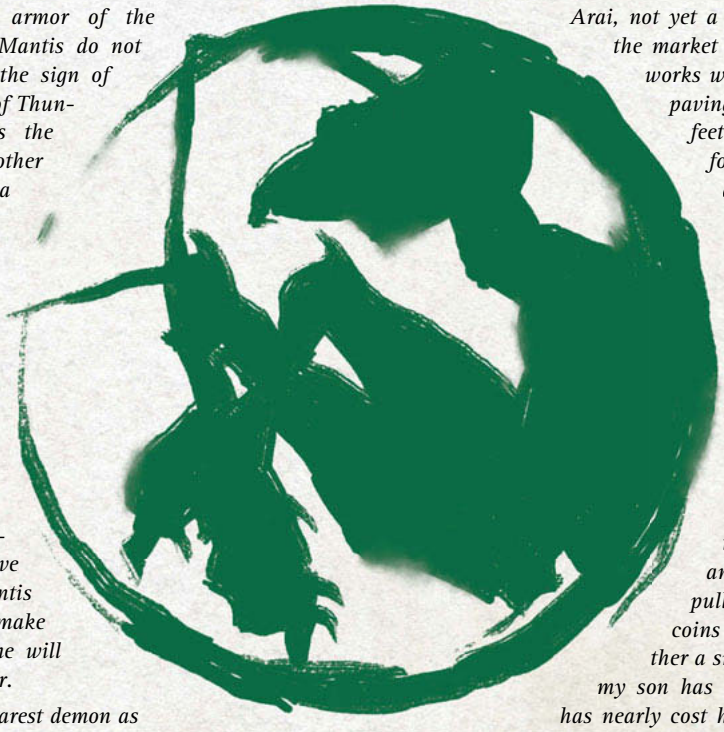
The Mantis Clan

"Yoritomo!"

The war cry is shouted in unison as Yoritomo Arai and his three dozen marines leap from the rail of the Snapping Turtle onto the pitching deck of the strange gaijin vessel. The enemy vessel is crowded with the foe, living and dead, armored men standing alongside the strange demonic creatures the Empire has learned to call Destroyers.

The Tsuruchi contingent aboard the Snapping Turtle has done well, slaughtering the gaijin rowers and disabling their boat. The Turtle's Moshi navigator lies dead, her body shifting as the boat pitches up and down the storm-raised swells; she gave her life to kill the sorcerer aboard the enemy ship. Now it is time for steel to meet steel.

Arai barks orders, and the marines charge. Lightning flickers overhead, illuminating the strange glistening insectoid armor of the Destroyers, but the Mantis do not flinch. Lightning is the sign of Osano-Wo, Fortune of Thunder, he who favors the Mantis above all other clans. Arai howls a wordless challenge and rushes forward, his legs automatically flexing with the deck's roll and pitch. The Destroyers are less sure of their footing, and Arai feels his lips pull back from his teeth in a predator's grin. These abominations should never have ventured into Mantis waters. Now he will make sure not a single one will live to regret the error.



Arai tackles the nearest demon as it raises its sword for a high strike. The deck booms and flexes beneath them as Arai rebounds off the stunned monster and drives one of his sai into its chest, finding a gap between alien armor plates. The beast jerks and shudders, its convulsions snapping off the knife blade. Arai bounds forward without pause, drawing another knife from his bandolier, rolling past a gaijin man clutching a ridiculously large shield. The knife slashes back and severs the man's tendons, dropping him with a cry.

The deck is slick with blood and rain, the air echoing with the sounds of combat and the howl of the storm. Arai squints against the slashing water and spots what must be the gaijin commander. It is a huge entity, two heads taller than all others on the boat, covered in a shining silvery armor. A long purple cape whips around it in the roaring wind, and its head boasts a silver helmet topped with a crimson mane of horse hair. But where its face should be is only a strange blackness pierced by two luminescent ruby-red orbs. They glare at Arai with a hatred that is beyond anything human, beyond any dream of honor or mercy, a hatred that seeks only the death of all that lives.

"You," the thing howls... or perhaps it does not speak, but merely makes the words from its thoughts. Somehow Arai knows it is not speaking Rokugani, yet he understands the meaning clearly. "You leader of warriors. I see what you truly are! Your hand shall fall and your courage shall die!"

The demon strides across the long deck of the vessel, ignoring the heaving of the storm, ignoring also the Tsuruchi arrow that bounces off its armor. Its strange red eyes flash and a sudden wave of nausea washes over Arai...

He is a child, running through the streets of Samui Kaze Toshi, the coastal Crane trading village where he was born. It is a day he remembers so clearly, the one always at the back of his mind. He is Taro now, not yet Arai, not yet a man. He runs toward the market stall where his father works weaving nets. The loose paving stone turns under his feet and he falls, pitching forward onto the back of a large samurai. Taro reaches out, reaches out knowing what will happen and unable to stop himself. His hand closes on the samurai's sheathed blade as he falls...

His father trembling, the angry looks on the faces of the Crane magistrates, and the Mantis calmly pulling out a string of coins and handing his father a small fortune. "It seems my son has been clumsy today. It has nearly cost him his life. I will depart with him now for my home."

A blur—and he is thirteen, training in Dojo Raiden, his muscles aching as he pulls himself to his feet and wipes the blood from his face. The sensei smiles without kindness and gestures for him to assume stance again. In the back of the room his new father watches with grim approval...

Arai shakes his head, spitting to clear the gummy taste of vomit from his mouth. "You think this will weaken me, demon?" he shouts. "You think I don't know what I am? I am Yoritomo Arai, son of Yoritomo Han-Ku. I am a Yoritomo, follower of the man-become-Kami, and he guides my hand. You are nothing!"

The gaijin demon utters a roar of fury and slashes with a pair of huge curved swords. Arai lunges forward, stealing momentum from the roll of the deck, flinging himself between the demon's wide-set legs and then bouncing to his feet. The gaijin blades smash into the deck, and the demon loses two precious seconds wrenching them free.

Arai smashes the hilt of his sai into the back of the thing's neck, below the curved lip of its strange helmet. Its knees buckle and Arai yanks back on the horse-mane helmet, exposing the throat.

In instant later the armored hulk collapses to the deck, the head within the helmet dissolving into nothingness.

The battle ends moments later, the remaining Destroyers and their human servants growing less effective without their monstrous leader. Cheers go up, the Mantis brandishing their weapons, slapping each other on the shoulders. Two men lift Arai onto their shoulders, laughing raucously as the ship pitches again and he grabs their topknots for balance.

The voices of the Children of the Storm echo across the waves, and perhaps even the dark goddess who leads these demons hears them, and for just an instant, trembles.

"YORITOMO!"

History of the Mantis Clan

"I know my place in history. My destiny is to defeat you."

– Kaimetsu-Uo

The history of the Mantis Clan is a rocky and turbulent one, far more so than many of the Great Clans—which is perhaps not surprising, since while the other clans were born from the efforts of the Kami to prevail in the First War against Fu Leng, the Mantis Clan emerged from the struggle of a mortal man to make his own destiny and to earn the respect of his fellow samurai.

In the year 80, Crab Clan Champion Hida Osano-Wo named his illegitimate son Hida Kenzan as his heir, passing over his legitimate son Hida Kaimetsu-Uo, scion of both the Hida and Matsu lines. Osano-Wo's decision (discussed in the Crab Clan chapter elsewhere in this book) was a controversial one, and he did not make it easily. He spent many hours afterward speaking with young Kaimetsu-Uo. The next day, the boy went to see his mother, announcing neither of them could remain in a clan where they no longer had a place. "I do not know what I am," he said as he picked up his daisho. "But I know what I am not."

Kaimetsu-Uo renounced his status as a Crab and departed to find his own destiny, taking with him a dozen samurai who were sworn as his personal vassals. They sailed west, leaving the Empire behind, and eventually landed on what would become the Isles of Silk and Spice, then an untamed and unknown wilderness. There they settled and built a small town, a tall palace on a rocky ledge, and a port to trade with the mainland. In time, this first settlement would become the City of Lightning, one of the two largest Mantis holdings.

Kaimetsu-Uo instituted a rigorous training program for his samurai and their ashigaru supporters. He taught them to be as strong as their Hida counterparts and to fight with the courage and ferocity of their Matsu cousins. However, they remained largely unknown to the rest of the Empire, which did not recognize them as a Minor Clan—indeed the very concept of a "Minor Clan" still lay in the future.

A few years later, this training saw its first deadly application when Kaimetsu-uo set out to take revenge for the murder of his father Osano-Wo. Ten ships followed him to Phoenix lands in search of the assassin, and the handful of men who crewed those ships cut a bloody swath to the very gates of Kyuden Isawa. As recounted in the Crab chapter (see page 21), Osano-Wo answered his son's call with a strike of lightning on the castle gates, and the awed Phoenix stood aside and handed over the murderer.

A decade later, Osano-Wo visited Kaimetsu-Uo and his followers in a dream. The new Fortune showed them a vision of the Mantis spreading across the Isles of Silk and Spice and even back into Rokugan, becoming a great military force and eventually ruling the Empire. "From the City of Lightning will the Mantis grow," Osano-Wo proclaimed, and then a great bolt of lightning smote the ground, waking the dreamers.

Ever since those early days, the Mantis have felt themselves to be under the special protection and guidance of Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Thunder and patron of heroes. They believe it is their destiny to rise to heights rivaling or exceeding any other clan in the Empire. Osano-Wo's heart may have remained with the Crab, but his soul stands with the children of his true-born son.

Gusai and the Emperor

"Following another man's footsteps only leads you to another man's destiny."

– Gusai Ihonbo

For much of their early history, the Mantis focused on exploring their islands, building ships, and establishing trade networks. However, even in those early centuries the Mantis showed a willingness to involve themselves in

Unmei and the Mantis

The Mantis claim that soon after Kaimetsu-Uo arrived on the Isles of Silk and Spice, he sensed the secret of his destiny lay somewhere in the heart of the jungle. Accompanied by several followers, he forged his way inland, hacking through the dense forest with a parangu—a practical tool that in time would became a favored Mantis weapon. Several of his followers accompanied him, but only one of them—a man named Kindari—stayed at his side as the journey grew difficult and deadly.

Deep within the jungle, Kaimetsu-Uo found what he sought: an ancient koumori spirit named Unmei. The spirit had known Hida personally and recognized Kaimetsu-Uo as a child of Hida's bloodline. He told the young samurai tales of the dawn of the Empire and the brave and desperate deeds of the Seven Thunders, flawed and imperfect mortals who nonetheless prevailed against the terrible power of Fu Leng.

Supposedly, it was after this experience that Kaimetsu-Uo told his followers they would call themselves the Mantis Clan. The mantis was a creature known for its ferocity and its refusal to back down from a fight, even against creatures many times its own size. In this the mantis epitomized the strength of mortals, the same strength demonstrated by the Seven Thunders. Kaimetsu-Uo declared this strength would henceforth be his symbol.

questionable activities such as smuggling, earning them a dubious reputation. The rest of the Empire saw them as little more than mercenaries—or, when they felt less charitable, as grubby merchants or treacherous pirates. To be sure, the Mantis' ability to send ships all over the Empire, not to mention the exotic products of their island home, quickly made them astonishingly wealthy—much to the irritation of some of the Great Clans.

The Mantis Clan's official status remained vague and uncertain until a remarkable incident in the year 429. A man named Gusai was the ruler of the Mantis at the time. He was the first Mantis leader to be summoned to the Imperial Court, where he patiently waited for the chance to address the Son of Heaven, Emperor Hantei Kusada. The Emperor's courtiers regarded Gusai so poorly that he was left to wait while many others gained audience. Finally, after many days, Gusai got the chance to present tribute to the Emperor in person. He took the chance to express his distaste at the court's flowery ways and endless talk. "Speech and action are the basis of governing," he told the Emperor. "They can move heaven and earth... but they are not as strong as steel." The Emperor smiled at Gusai's wit, and said, "Show me that steel is stronger and I will make you a lord of my court."

At that, Gusai swiftly drew a hidden dagger and touched it to Kusada's throat. The court gasped in shock, but the Emperor smiled. "Very good, Gusai-san," he said. "You have proven your point. Steel is strong enough to make you a lord." He proclaimed Gusai the first Champion of the Mantis Clan, lord of the Isles of Silk and Spice, and the founder of a family which would bear his name. But as Gusai stepped back with a smile and a bow, the Emperor continued, "Lord Gusai, before you go, let me show you how much stronger a man's words may be." And with that he signed the order for Gusai's execution. The new lord of the Mantis was carried away and beheaded, his body cast into the sea for the sharks. However, the word of a Hantei is law, and so Gusai's son Mori became Gusai Mori, the second official Mantis Clan Champion.

The Gaijin and the Battle of White Stag

In the year 440, the Empire had its first and most traumatic encounter with gaijin, an incident in which the Mantis Clan was heavily involved. Although the Mantis were now an officially recognized clan, the Empire still paid little respect to Minor Clans and the Mantis were seldom admitted to the Imperial Court. However, they were able to use their initial contacts with the overseas gaijin called Merenae to leverage a stronger position in Imperial politics. The Merenae had first arrived at the Isles of Silk and Spice, and the Mantis Clan Champion Gusai Mori quickly forged an alliance with Teodoro Cornejo, the leader of their expedition. Mori sponsored the gaijin's arrival in Rokugan in exchange for preferen-

tial treatment in future trade agreements. The arrangement worked to the benefit of both groups—the sponsorship of the Mantis made it much easier for the Merenae to gain access to the Imperial capital, while the Empire's fascination with the foreign newcomers put the Mantis much in demand within the Imperial Court.

The arrangement soon came to grief, however. The gaijin delegation was split between the Merenae and an ambitious Thrane, Garen Hawthorne, with each group plotting against the other. Garen was a buccaneer who had joined the Merenae fleet after it became lost on the way to Rokugan; he hoped to murder Teodoro Cornejo during the return journey and claim all the wealth of the Merenae expedition for his own. The Mantis Clan's friendship with their gaijin guests allowed them to uncover the plot, and they cooperated with Teodoro to expose Hawthorne in the Imperial Court. Unfortunately, this incident led to Empress Yugozuhime denouncing all the gaijin and demanding their immediate expulsion from Rokugan.

Gusai Mori's schemes had come to naught, and in the ensuing fighting the Empress perished. Her heir demanded the death of all gaijin and in true Mantis fashion Mori made the best of the situation, loyally committing his fleet to destroy the escaping gaijin at the Battle of the Raging Seas. Only Hawthorne's two ships managed to fight their way free and escape southward, not to be seen again.

Not only had the gaijin visit to the Empire ended in disaster, but it also gave rise to the Minor Clan known as the Tortoise, a clan specifically tasked with maintaining covert trade with the gaijin to gather intelligence and prevent any further unpleasant encounters. Relations between the Mantis and the Tortoise have varied between friendly and discordant over the centuries, especially given the two clans' mercantile rivalries—in both public trade and private smuggling activities.

Gusai Family Game Mechanics

If a GM is running a game during the era when the Gusai ruled the Mantis Clan, the Gusai name will be available to the senior members of the clan—the ruling house and its closest sworn vassals. Due to the relatively short history of the Gusai name, it never had the chance to spread throughout the entire clan in the manner of a more typical Great Clan family name (or the Mantis Clan's own later Yoritomo name).

The Gusai family awards a Trait bonus of +1 Willpower, reflecting its founder's determination to win Imperial recognition to matter what the cost.

The Fall of the Gusai

Although the Mantis had won a great victory by claiming a family name and official Imperial recognition, their sense of ambition remained unquenched, and the Gusai continued to dream of higher things—perhaps driven, in part, by the ancient prophecy that a Mantis would one day rule the Empire. In the year 510 this excessive ambition brought the clan to the brink of destruction.

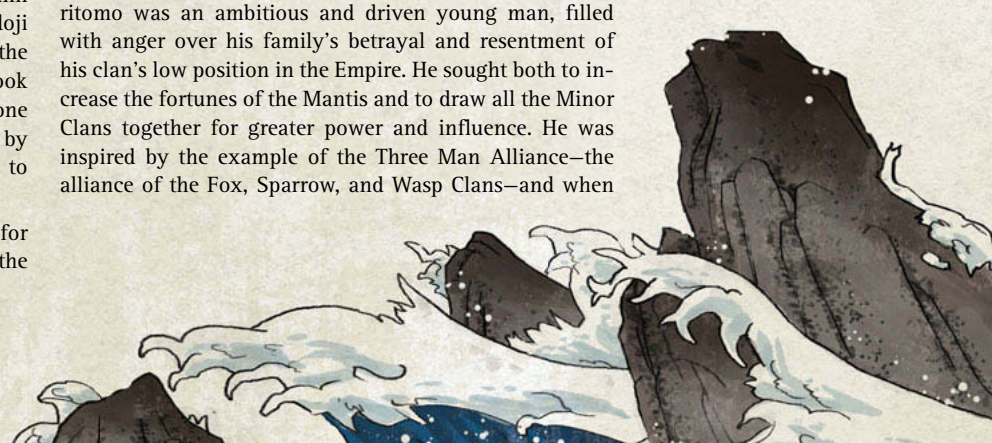
In a bid to seize power (and perhaps to gain revenge for Gusai's execution), the Mantis took the Emperor's son prisoner, holding him as a "guest" on the Islands of Silk and Spice. The gambit backfired spectacularly. Within days, Lion armies gathered on the shore of the Daidoji peninsula, preparing to board Crane ships to invade the Mantis Isles. Realizing his clan was doomed unless he took radical steps, Clan Champion Gusai Rioshida ordered one of his own samurai, Yohihotsu, to "betray" the clan by rescuing the Imperial Prince and delivering him back to the Empire.

As Rioshida had hoped, the Emperor was grateful for Yohihotsu's apparent loyalty and believed it showed the loyalty of the Mantis Clan as a whole. He ordered the Gusai family to commit *seppuku* and appointed Yohihotsu as the new lord of the Mantis Clan. The Gusai line was thus exterminated, and most records of its existence were stricken from the Empire's official histories.

The modern Yoritomo, the rulers of the Mantis after they finally become a Great Clan, are descended from Yohihotsu. Although the Mantis officially accept the Empire's judgment that the Gusai were traitors, in their own councils they remain unrepentant and individual Mantis will not endure an insult to the Gusai name. There are persistent rumors that Gusai's bloodline survives secretly within the Mantis Clan, and a few gossips have even suggested Yohihotsu himself was an illegitimate son of Gusai Rioshida.

The Rise of Yoritomo

As mentioned in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*, during the eighth century the Mantis Clan established covert trade with the Ivory Kingdoms, a gaijin realm located on the far side of the Shadowlands. By the end of the eleventh century the Mantis had garnered considerable wealth from this secret trade but had also earned enemies within that distant land. In the year 1100 Ivory Kingdoms assassins attacked the Mantis Isles and killed almost the entire ruling family. Ultimately, the only survivor was the Clan Champion's son, Yoritomo. (See Yoshitsune in the Heroes section later in this chapter for more details.) Yoritomo was an ambitious and driven young man, filled with anger over his family's betrayal and resentment of his clan's low position in the Empire. He sought both to increase the fortunes of the Mantis and to draw all the Minor Clans together for greater power and influence. He was inspired by the example of the Three Man Alliance—the alliance of the Fox, Sparrow, and Wasp Clans—and when



The Secret War in the Ivory Kingdoms

During the reign of Toturi I, much of the Empire was convulsed by the conflict known as the War of the Spirits, pitting Toturi against the returned spirit Hantei XVI. The Mantis, however, did not participate in the conflict and seemed to largely withdraw from the affairs of the Empire. In reality, the Mantis were very busy waging a conflict of their own... outside the Empire.

The rulers of the Ivory Kingdoms, under the growing influence of the Cult of the Destroyer, had turned malevolent eyes toward the distant land with which they had been trading for centuries. Intelligence reached Emperor Toturi that war might be brewing with these sinister gaijin, and he secretly commanded Yoritomo Aramasu to make war against them. The Mantis took ship for the Ivory Kingdoms, infiltrating them and waging a deadly struggle far away from Rokugan. All three families participated in the conflict, fighting as a united clan for the first time in their history.

Officially, the war ended when Aramasu agreed to leave the Ivory Kingdoms in peace and return to Rokugan; however, his campaign had purged the Cult of the Destroyer from influencing the Kingdoms, at least for a time. The Mantis had also gained friends and allies who would prove crucial in later generations.

the Clan War erupted he forged all the Minor Clans together into the so-called Yoritomo Alliance, a force strong enough to rival even the Great Clans. The Alliance served as mercenaries in the ranks of several clans over the course of the Clan Wars, even assisting the Crab Clan in its bold amphibious invasion of the Imperial Capital, Otosan Uchi.

When the Day of Thunder arrived, Yoritomo undertook a desperate gambit in the tradition of his ancestor Gusai. As the clan armies assembled for the final battle, Yoritomo boldly stated that if the Mantis were not recognized as a Great Clan by the rest of Rokugan, they would sail away and abandon the Empire to its fate. Needing every soldier for the ensuing battle, the Great Clans reluctantly agreed. After the battle and the Empire's victory, the new Emperor Toturi kept the agreement and officially recognized the Mantis as a Great Clan. Moreover, Yoritomo was given permission to found a new family and pass his name on to his vassals and descendents.

In the aftermath of the Mantis Clan's ascension, two other Minor Clans closely allied to the Mantis chose to join the new Great Clan as separate families—the Centipede and the Wasp. This gave the newly expanded Mantis Clan three families, as well as limited territories on the mainland of Rokugan. Yoritomo had accomplished more than any of his predecessors, elevating the clan to a position that had too often seemed an unattainable dream.

For all his accomplishments, Yoritomo's life was not without failures and tragedies. In the aftermath of the Clan War, he attempted to take advantage of the Phoenix Clan's greatly reduced state. His attacks on Phoenix lands were ultimately unsuccessful and left a legacy of enmity that would last for a generation and more. He also adopted a former Scorpion, Bayushi Aramasu, as his son and heir. Aramasu was a capable leader who ultimately succeeded Yoritomo as ruler of the clan, but his choice of loyalties won the enmity of the Scorpion, another legacy that would haunt the clan in future. Seeking to perpetuate his line more properly, Yoritomo married Moshi Wakiza, daughter of the Moshi daimyo (much to the displeasure of traditionalists within the Moshi), but she became Tainted during the later battles against the Lying Darkness. At the climax of the War Against the Darkness, Yoritomo joined the battle against the Shadow's avatar, Goju Adorai, and perished.

The Ascension of Yoritomo

Although the Mantis Clan was proclaimed a Great Clan by Emperor Toturi I, they lacked one thing all the other Great Clans could claim: a founding Kami, dwelling in the Celestial Heavens and keeping watch over the clan's fortunes. This absence doubtless contributed to the mixture of fierce ambition and uneasy defensiveness with which the Mantis interacted with the rest of Rokugan.

After his death, Yoritomo's spirit ascended to Yomi, watching over his descendants and his clan. A few years later, however, a Mantis and a Unicorn shugenja, Moshi Amika and Horiuchi Rikako, jointly entered the spirit realms aboard a powerful relic known as the Heavenly Kobune of Suitengu. They were on a quest to locate the spirit of Otaku Kamoko, who had become lost among the stars. Yoritomo's spirit joined them and was instrumental in their success; as a reward, he was permitted to enter the Celestial Heavens, becoming the Kami for his clan. This granted the Mantis Clan greater legitimacy among both the Fortunes and mortal men.

The Celestial upheavals that followed the Race for the Throne ultimately led to the expulsion of all mortal souls from Tengoku, but the Thunder Dragon refused to see Yoritomo disgraced in this manner. The Dragon left the Heavens and became mortal (albeit still immensely powerful), allowing Yoritomo to take its place in the Heavens and continue to serve as the Kami of the Mantis. .

The Mantis in the Age of the Four Winds

Many believed Yoritomo's bloodline had ended with him; unknown to all, his wife Wakiza gave birth to a Tainted daughter, Kumiko, before her death. Kumiko was placed into the care of the Brotherhood of Shinsei and grew up in secret, learning techniques of meditation and self-discipline to keep her Taint under control.

Yoritomo Aramasu ruled the clan after his adopted father's death, and despite his Scorpion background he seemed to fully embrace the Mantis Clan's ways. The legacy of his Scorpion past came back to strike when an ambitious Mantis pirate captain, Yoritomo Kitao, arranged for Aramasu's assassination by Scorpion agents. She assumed the position of Mantis Clan Champion, leading the clan on a path of ruthless piracy and profiteering that created significant tensions with the Tsuruchi and Moshi families.

Eventually Yoritomo's daughter Kumiko emerged from hiding to challenge Kitao for rule of the clan. A short but bitter civil war ensued, ending with the defeat and exile of Kitao. Yoritomo Kumiko, the Daughter of Storms, restored unity and respect to the Mantis Clan, but her reign proved short-lived.

During the infamous Rain of Blood in the reign of Toturi III, Kitao became Tainted and joined forces with the Lost gaijin Garen Hawthorne, using his cannon-armed ship to sack the City of Remembrance and provoke a new war between the Phoenix and the Mantis. The War of Fire and Thunder, as it was popularly known, was brief but violent, and showed the Mantis Clan had grown strong enough to stand toe-to-toe with another Great Clan. At the climax of the war, Kitao's Tainted fleet finally showed itself, and Kumiko died to kill Kitao and end the threat.

Kumiko was succeeded by Yoritomo Naizen, a former bandit who had been recruited into the clan during Kitao's reign. Naizen's ascension broke the line of Yohihotsu that had ruled the clan for six hundred years, and at the end of the twelfth century it remained to be seen whether he would be able to found a new line. However, the clan prospered under him, and when danger threatened the Minor Clan of the Fox, Naizen offered them protection and a home within the Mantis, adding to the Mantis Clan's considerable magical ability. Given such accomplishments, the pragmatic Mantis seemed willing to accept such a rogue and former bandit as their leader... for a time, at least.

Families of the Mantis Clan

The families of the Mantis Clan present an unusual situation inasmuch as they were all separate Minor Clans up until the early twelfth century. Consequently their traditions and histories are far more diverse than in the other Great Clans, and inter-family tension often troubles the clan even in the best of times.

The Kitsune Family

"Fall down seven times, stand up eight."

– The Fox Clan Banner

The Kitsune are descended from those of the Ki-Rin Clan left in Rokugan after the Kami Shinjo led most of her followers into the Burning Sands. As discussed in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire* (page 85), this small band of samurai was eventually driven out of its lands by the Lion and forced to resettle in the Kitsune Mori. There the struggle for survival led them to forge an alliance with the kitsune spirits who dwelt in the forest, and the family took the name Kitsune in honor of this friendship. Meanwhile the Emperor, disturbed by the fate the Kitsune had suffered, issued a decree restricting the Great Clans in their warfare against Minor Clans.

The Kitsune Family Mon

The Kitsune Mon depicts a fox in profile, springing forward in the hunt. Traditionally the silhouette of the fox is rendered in the clan's favored red-brown while the background is silver, although some versions of the mon reverse the color scheme. Due to the agreement made when the Fox joined the Mantis Clan, the mon is still rendered in these colors even after the Kitsune become a Mantis family.

The Kitsune founded a shugenja school based on the techniques and spiritual gifts they acquired from the kitsune spirits, and came to understand Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals, like no others. Those Kitsune who did not speak with the kami became scouts or hunters, and frequently provided funds for their clan by serving as guides to the other clans. A few Kitsune also followed the path of artistry, inspired by the natural beauty of their forest home.

During the Clan War the Fox Clan served loyally in Yoritomo's Alliance. Indeed, many considered the Fox Clan Champion, Ryosei, to be the true heart of the Alliance, inspiring the other clan leaders to feats of cooperation and bravery. However, the Fox retained a very independent spirit, and Ryosei famously spurned Yoritomo's marriage proposal. She did not want her clan to become servants to the Mantis, and after the failed marriage the Fox left the Alliance.

This independent spirit finally came to an end two generations later, not through desire but from necessity. A powerful prophetess had come of age within the Fox Clan. Her spiritual power and purity attracted the attention of the sinister Shadow Dragon, who unleashed a force of Shadow-corrupted ronin to attack the Fox lands. The Fox appealed for help, and the Mantis answered, driving away the sinister warriors and saving the Kitsune from extermination. Nevertheless, the Fox had suffered severe damage, and when Mantis Champion Yoritomo Naizen offered them a place within the Mantis Clan they felt compelled to consider the offer. Naizen's terms were very generous, including allowing the Kitsune to retain their clan colors of red-brown and silver rather than adopt the Mantis teal-green and gold. Fox Clan Champion Kitsune Ryukan grudgingly accepted, and the Kitsune joined the Mantis in the year 1169.

For the most part, the Kitsune found their new home in the Mantis Clan tolerable. They enjoyed exchanging knowledge with the Moshi family, and the Kitsune's bushi could now train in the Yoritomo or Tsuruchi schools without the need for exchanging political favors or hard-won wealth. Some malcontents did remain, however, who remembered their former clan's cherished independence and longed for it to return. Further, the Kitsune as a whole remain worried that the Shadow Dragon's minions might yet return to threaten their survival once more.

The Moshi Family

In the early fourth century, a minor Isawa lord discovered a beautiful remote valley in the Seikitsu Mountains, located atop a cliff overlooking the Sea of Amaterasu. The man wanted nothing more than to study and teach in peace, and with the agreement of the Phoenix Clan he claimed the remote valley and moved there with his family and students. He died leaving no son but eleven daughters, and thus by default the rule of the family passed to his eldest daughter—an unusual event in Rokugan's early centuries. Within three generations the family had become a de facto matriarchy. The sheer isolation of their valley made this easier, for there was only a single narrow pass that allowed landward access, while visitors from the sea had to scale the sheer cliffs. Aside from an annual visit from their distant Phoenix lords, only the occasional adventurous Mantis braved a visit to the obscure settlement.

It was the founder's granddaughter, Isawa Azami, who truly defined what would become the Centipede Clan. She

The Moshi Family Mon

The Centipede mon, which the Moshi family brought with them into the Mantis Clan unchanged, depicts a centipede curled into a circle, its head approaching its tail. The mon was traditionally rendered in the clan colors of orange, black, and brown, but after the Moshi joined the Mantis they often rendered it in Mantis colors as a show of respect to their new clan.

had a vision of Lady Sun, descending from the Heavens dressed in shimmering golden robes. Smiling benevolently, Amaterasu said, "Mine is the only voice you shall hear, for my wisdom requires it." Filled with joy, Azami set about remaking her family school into one dedicated to the veneration of the Sun goddess.

In the wake of this event, the Emperor bestowed the family name of Moshi on Azami. The Centipede were officially recognized as a Minor Clan in the year 347. They remained a tiny and obscure Minor Clan, all but ignored by the rest of the Empire, until the Clan War eight centuries later. Yoritomo respected the Moshi family's power despite their peculiar matriarchal traditions, and at his urging they joined the Alliance and fought alongside the Mantis. After Yoritomo married Moshi Wakiza, the daughter of the Clan Champion Moshi Juiko, the Centipede Clan drew even closer to the Mantis Clan, finally joining it at the end of the War Against the Darkness.

Despite their admission to the Mantis, the Moshi continued to follow their tradition of being a family ruled by women, and while Moshi men now had the option of serving the Mantis in other schools and pursuits, the Moshi Shugenja School remained exclusively female. The family grew considerably in the generations following its admission to the Mantis, but in modern times it remains by far the smallest Mantis family. The Moshi mixture of female rule with strictly traditional etiquette and social custom likewise makes the family an odd fit with the rest of the Mantis, and there have been frequent tensions between Moshi traditionalists and the rest of the larger clan. On the other hand, the Moshi are excellent intermediaries in those situations when the Mantis must negotiate with highly traditionalist factions like the Phoenix (from whom the Moshi are descended) and the Imperial families. They have also found ways to aid the larger efforts of the Mantis Clan by studying the kami of wind and water, learning skills at navigation and ship-handling that the clan finds invaluable.

The death of Amaterasu at the end of the War Against the Darkness was a significant blow to the Moshi, and may well have contributed to their decision to give up their independence and join the Mantis Clan. The ascension of Hida Yakamo to the position of Lord Sun filled them with apprehension, since Yakamo was a man and in life was not known for piety or devotion. When the Jade Dragon deposed Yakamo two generations later, the mood within the Moshi family was one of quiet jubilation, followed by a powerful sense of emotional and spiritual renewal.

The Tsuruchi Family

"A Tsuruchi does not abandon the hunt until he or his quarry is dead."

– Rokugani proverb

The Wasp Clan's unique origins, resulting from the complex personal story of the man named Tsuruchi, are described in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire* (page 103). The clan which Tsuruchi founded remained quite small through its first generation despite his program of recruiting ten new members each year. By the time of the Clan War, however, the Wasp were numerous and skilled enough to make a powerful contribution to Yoritomo's Alliance, and their lucrative work as bounty hunters ensured the clan's coffers were always filled. Tsuruchi himself even managed to spend some time in the Imperial Court, dazzling the assembled courtiers with impressive displays of kyujutsu.

For all their fame, Tsuruchi and his followers also had many enemies, and the personal code which Tsuruchi created for his family—the so-called Wasp Code (see sidebar)—drew much criticism from traditional adherents to Bushido. However, these same problems drew instinctive sympathy from the Yoritomo, who were likewise accustomed to enmity and sneering contempt from the rest of the Empire. When the Wasp joined the Mantis after the War Against the Darkness, the Yoritomo welcomed them with open arms. Not all were equally pleased, however; the Moshi (and later the Kitsune) frown on many of the Tsuruchi family's peculiar practices.

The Tsuruchi are one of the youngest of Great Clan families, and it shows. Whereas an Akodo or Shiba may seek guidance from his ancestors, a young Tsuruchi looks to himself and his brothers and sisters in the family. Combined with their peculiar attitudes on the value of the bow versus the sword (many Tsuruchi still refuse to carry or use swords) it should not be surprising that others see them as arrogant, disrespectful, or impious.

The Tsuruchi Mon

The Tsuruchi mon depicts a hovering wasp in profile, ready to sting its prey. The symbol (and indeed the name of the Wasp Clan) came from Tsuruchi's nickname as "the little wasp." When the Emperor granted Tsuruchi the right to found a clan and choose a mon, he returned home to find his followers had already chosen one, a symbol that seemed to them the perfect reflection of their fledgling clan.

The traditional Tsuruchi colors are black and gold. After they joined the Mantis they switched to wearing clothing in the Mantis colors, but many Tsuruchi (especially those who continue to serve as bounty hunters) wear an armband in the Wasp colors to show their heart truly lies with their founder.

In the generations since they joined the Mantis, the Tsuruchi have adapted their ideals somewhat to their new place as part of a Great Clan. Some among the younger generations forsake the Wasp Code in favor of Bushido, or even study swordsmanship in place of the traditional archery. Thus far such internal disagreements have remained mostly non-violent, in part because the family remains so small. Indeed, for one Tsuruchi to kill another, even over the bitterest personal feud, is extraordinarily rare. The family founder taught his followers to stand as one against all threats, and this is a lesson they hold close to their hearts.

The Yoritomo Family

"We are the children of the Storm."

– Yoritomo family motto

The Mantis are unlike any other Great Clan in that they do not have a family named for their founder, Kaimetsu-Uo. The family he created went without a name until the time of Gusai, and the subsequent disgrace of Gusai's line left the Mantis again without a family name until the twelfth century. The modern Yoritomo family takes its name from the Clan Champion who led the clan during the Second

The Code of the Wasp

When Tsuruchi founded the Wasp, he rejected the life of a samurai and with it the traditional Code of Bushido, breaking his own sword and swearing he would only fight with the bow thereafter. Nevertheless, he saw the value in a code of ethics to bind his followers together, and created the Code of the Wasp from his own personal ideals to fulfill that role. Although the Code of the Wasp is still venerated in the modern Mantis Clan (one sensei even wrote a treatise on it in the style of Akodo's meditations on Bushido in *Leadership*), not all modern Tsuruchi follow it—many in more recent generations have adopted Bushido instead, especially given that they now belong to a Great Clan, creating obligations of loyalty and duty.

The Code of the Wasp has six tenets, moral and philosophical principles which are expected to bind all Tsuruchi:

Honesty: Samurai lies nearly destroyed Tsuruchi and his followers, but a true Wasp knows there is always a price for falsehood.

Loyalty: No true Wasp will break an oath, cheat an employer, or break a contract with an honest employer. Although the Tsuruchi often work for money (especially when serving as bounty hunters) their purchased loyalty is as reliable as any samurai's—so long as the employer does not deceive or cheat them.

Mercy: A Wasp will only kill those who deserve it. The innocent in particular must be protected.

Justice: The Emperor's word is law, and the law must be upheld. Samurai twist and exploit the law, but Tsuruchi uphold it.

Brotherhood: Every Tsuruchi is brother, sister, parent, and child to every other Tsuruchi. It is this belief which has prevented disagreements within the family from escalating.

Judgment: Indecision is the greatest weakness. When the Code cannot tell a Tsuruchi what to do, he must act as his heart thinks best, accepting the consequences as required.

Day of Thunder, elevated them to Great Clan status, and gave his life for the Empire at Oblivion's Gate.

Like their namesake, the Yoritomo are renowned for physical prowess and courage in battle. Originally descended from the lines of Hida and Matsu, the Yoritomo are generally strong and fast, and their life at sea tends to make them rough-skinned and heavily tanned. They are cheerful and gregarious, generous to those weaker than them, but also share in full part Yoritomo's tendencies for ambition, bullying, and ruthlessness. Their combination of small size, large ambition, and a self-perception as outsiders who must take what is not granted them also causes them to be highly pragmatic and to freely disregard conventional Rokugani attitudes toward things like commerce or courtly manners. Since the Mantis became a Great Clan, the Yoritomo have sometimes been forced to moderate these tendencies in order to survive the Empire's politics, but their underlying instincts remain unchanged.

The average Yoritomo spends much of his life at sea, trading, waging war, or otherwise exploiting the clan's unique legacy of naval excellence. Piracy is a frequent Yoritomo vice, as is smuggling of gaijin goods or other contraband. Not a few Mantis started their lives as pirates or bandits before being recruited into the clan, and conversely on those occasions when the Mantis feel the need to showcase their law-abiding nature they may purge their less reputable elements, leading to sudden eruptions of ronin pirates. Their sea-going life also makes them intensely superstitious; the ocean is dangerous and the wrath of Suitengu can fall on a ship for the most trivial of offenses.

The Yoritomo are the leaders of the Mantis Clan and their daimyo is also traditionally the Mantis Clan Champion. They do their best to try to maintain good relations with the other Mantis families, although this can be a significant challenge given their divergent traditions. Here too, however, they seek to uphold the legacy of Yoritomo, a proud man who realized the other Minor Clan Champions who joined him would be just as proud of their own legacies. This is doubtless part of the reason why the Yoritomo make a policy of giving the other Mantis families a great deal of autonomy.

The Yoritomo have a long-standing tradition of marrying early and bearing many children in order to grow their small clan. Yoritomo families tend to be close and tight-knit, and threats to one member of the household

The Mantis/Yoritomo Mon

The mon of the Mantis and of the Yoritomo family is interchangeable, a fact which is sometimes slightly irritating to the other families. It depicts the upper body of a mantis in profile, the clawed forearms poised to strike—symbolizing the courage and defiance of a clan and family which carved out its own destiny by its own strength.

The mantis is usually depicted in teal-green against a background of gold—the Mantis Clan colors.

are threats against all. This closeness is also present in the clan's military, especially the vast navy. Ships often have entire families serving together in their crews, ensuring loyalty and dedication.

The Yoritomo take great pride in their lineage from Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Thunder, and believe the Fortune's soul is with them. The family has a collective fascination with thunder and lightning, dating back to the early vision which gave the City of Lightning its name. Many Yoritomo holdings, ships, and military units are named after storms or other such phenomena associated with Osano-Wo. Younger Yoritomo (or those who are young at heart) sometimes run wild through the lands or across ship decks during storms, howling back at the thundering heavens in tribute to the raging father of their founder. Lightning strikes are always considered auspicious signs, and it is said a Mantis fleet launched during a tempest cannot know defeat.

Outside their clan, the Yoritomo find few friends, but they do maintain a certain kinship with the Crab and the Unicorn, both of whom are likewise outsiders and frequently looked down on by the rest of Rokugan.

The Storm Legion

The Storm Legion is the most elite military unit in the Mantis Clan, and is only open to those Yoritomo who have proven undying loyalty to the Clan Champion. The honor is passed down from parent to child, and as each child comes of age he is taken into the palace at Kyuden Gotei and shown the hidden caves and tunnels beneath. The secret passages run for miles, connecting the dozens of small coves where Mantis smugglers venture forth to seek profit for the clan.

Members of the Storm Legion are expected to place duty to the clan above all else (even the Empire), and in return they can rely on the absolute loyalty of all members of the Yoritomo family. For a Yoritomo to betray a member of the Storm Legion is impossible. In fact, a Yoritomo PC who wishes to merely lie to a member of the Storm Legion must spend a Void Point in order to do so.

When one of the Storm Legion dies, their helmet is carried into the caves beneath Kyuden Gotei and enshrined in a special room lit with a sacred undying flame. Those who come of age and join the Legion are also brought to this room, where they are told a few of the stories which lie behind the hundreds of helmets preserved there.

Heroes of the Mantis Clan

Although the Mantis, Wasp, Centipede, and Fox Clans were all Minor Clans until the great tumult of the twelfth century, they can still boast a legacy of great heroes who have changed the face of Rokugan more than once.

Kaimetsu-Uo

Founder of the Mantis

Kaimetsu-Uo, born the grandson of Hida and the son of Hida Osano Wo and his wife Matsu Kyoda, was a man of sterling resolve, incredible skill, and relentless fortitude. Unfortunately, he was also born with a half-brother, Hida Kenzen, a child of a peasant woman. At their gempukku Kenzen was declared heir to the Crab, shaming Matsu Kyoda. After listening to the advice of his father, Kaimetsu-Uo took his mother and departed to found a new clan.

As described earlier in this chapter, Kaimetsu-Uo eventually settled on the Islands of Silk and Spice. There he met Unmei, a koumori spirit and master storyteller who had lived during the time of the First War. Umei recounted the tales of the early Empire and the skeins of destiny that held all men. By the end of their conversations, Kaimetsu-Uo realized it was not his destiny to be lord of the Crab. All jealousy vanished from his heart and he set out to forge his own destiny, creating the Mantis Clan from the loyal Crab and Lion who had accompanied him and his mother to the islands. He also began to develop a new style of fighting, the foundations of what is now called the Yoritomo Bushi School.

Though the Mantis would not be acknowledged as a Minor Clan until centuries after the death of their founder, their deeds of greatness began within his lifetime. It was they, not the Crab, who avenged the murder of Osano-Wo, pursuing his killer to the gates of Kyuden Isawa. It was Kaimetsu-Uo whose voice called down the blast of lightning that marked his father's ascension to the Celestial Heavens.

Even in death, Kaimetsu-Uo was a man of peerless power. Well into his seventies he finally passed leadership of the Mantis to his son and sailed from Kyuden Gotei to the east. When his vessel was later found, tied to its side was a ronin pirate ship. The founder of the Mantis lay dead, alone, surrounded by his enemies' bodies, a grin of triumph on his face. The Mantis set his ship ablaze, sending him to Yomi along with his slain foes, and built a shrine to his memory on the first island they sighted. In his dying breath as throughout his lifetime, his resolve and drive inspired the Mantis Clan for all time.

Kaimetsu-Uo, Founder of the Mantis

Air: 5 Earth: 6 Fire: 5 Water: 6 Void: 3

Honor: 5.7 *Status: 0.0 (Clan Ronin, Founder of the Mantis Clan)* *Glory: 8.1*

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 3, Yoritomo Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 6, Battle 4, Commerce 2, Defense 5, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 7, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 5, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 7, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Knives (Kama) 7, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History 1, Lore: Shadowlands 1, Sailing 5, Sincerity 1

Advantages: Allies: Unmei (1 Influence/1 Devotion), Hida Kenzen (4 Influence/2 Devotion), Great Destiny (found the Mantis Clan and reveal Osano Wo's divinity), Multiple Schools, Prodigy

Disadvantages: Overconfident, Social Disadvantage (Clan Ronin)

Moshi (Isawa) Azami

Founder of the Centipede

The founder of the Moshi family and the Centipede Clan was outwardly very much a typical dedicated Isawa shugenja, albeit one born to unusual circumstances. Her family had settled in the remote Tani Shishio, the Valley of the Centipede, two generations earlier. Her grandfather had only daughters, so rule of the family passed to his eldest girl-child, and from her to Azami, her eldest daughter. It was in Azami's lifetime that the remote location of the valley and the bureaucratic difficulty of assessing taxes to the Isawa for a holding halfway across the Empire led the Otomo family to suggest the idea of naming Isawa Azami founder of her own minor clan, ruling the valley she lived in. This would simplify matters considerably.

The idea was upsetting to Azami and she felt lost, the harmony of her soul broken. Unsure of her purpose or the purpose of such a Minor Clan, should it indeed be proclaimed by the Son of Heaven, she climbed the highest mountain surrounding the valley and meditated there.

After three days alone, she was blessed with a vision from Lady Amaterasu, proclaiming Azami's family would be devoted to the Sun as her personal acolytes.

Azami was transformed by her vision and gladly accepted the Emperor's proclamation of the Centipede Clan in the year 347. She devoted her family and followers to the worship of Sun, establishing the tradition that has defined the Moshi family ever since.

In her later years Azami was blessed with many daughters but no sons, continuing the trend in her family's line. Though she arranged good marriages for all her daughters, she refused to allow their husbands—mostly Phoenix, and all from outside her bloodline—to hold authority in the Centipede Clan. She felt it would defame the memory of the Sun's blessed vision to do so. As a result, the de facto matriarchy that already existed in the family became one enshrined in tradition and clan law.

Azami was a warm-hearted woman but also incredibly distant, as though she listened more to the voice of the Heavens than to any mortal. She accepted her duties as a daimyo only with great reluctance, and her first concern was always the worship of the Fortunes and the proper veneration of the Celestial Heavens. Highly orthodox and traditional, she nevertheless made many unorthodox decisions due to her unique experiences, adapting to the demands of Amaterasu's blessing as best she could without losing her sense of self. Her legacy is the Moshi family, which continues to uphold the traditions she created.

Moshi Azami, First Daimyo of the Centipede

Air: 4 Earth: 2 Fire: 5 Water: 2 Void: 4
Willpower: 5

Honor: 8.3 *Status: 7.5 (Minor Clain Daimyo, Founder of the Centipede)* *Glory: 4.2*

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 3/Isawa Tensai (Fire)

Skills: Athletics 2, Artisan: Gardening 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Defense 2, Divination 5, Etiquette 3, Investigation 1, Lore: Elements (Air, Fire) 5, Lore: Law 1, Lore: Omens 4, Lore: Theology (Fortunism, Ameterasu) 5, Medicine 2, Meditation 7, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft (Spell Research) 5, Staves 2, Tea Ceremony 3

Advantages: Enlightened, Higher Purpose (promote the worship of Ameterasu), Social Position (Minor Clan Daimyo/Founder), Touch of Tengoku

Disadvantages: Antisocial (2 points)

Spells: (Sense, Commune, Summon and all Air and Fire spells memorized) Sense, Commune, Summon, Reflections of P'an Ku, Elemental Ward, Earth's Protection, To Seek the Truth, Legacy of Kaze-no-Kami, Whispering Wind, Call the Spirit, Extinguish, Fires of Purity, The Fires from Within, Mental Quickness, Ward of Purity, Shining Light, The Mending Forge, Symbol of Fire, Light of the Sun, Wings of the Phoenix, Beam of the Inferno, Globe of the Everlasting Sun

Gusai

First Mantis Clan Champion

"Linger when you study art, history, and war. Take time to contemplate the Fortunes, the Masters, and Shinsei's Tao. But always remember, each day of your learning: If it is time to strike, strike. The moment does not last."

Gusai was raised in the tradition of pride and pragmatism that characterized the Mantis Clan. He was born the only son and heir to the ruling family of one of the largest ronin bands ever to exist in Rokugan. Although they called themselves the Mantis Clan, they had not yet been recognized as such by the Empire. Gusai claimed direct descent from Kaimetsu-Uo, and sought to fulfill his ancestor's dreams by winning official recognition from the Emperor. He made sure his clan hired its ships out to whoever could pay the most, and worked to expand their already formidable network of merchants. The clan's economic influence finally brought them to the attention of the Emperor in the year 429.

Gusai's famous meeting with the Son of Heaven is described on page 144. The Emperor made Gusai a lord that day, granting his family the right to use the Gusai name, and inducted them into the ranks of the Minor Clans. He also had Gusai executed. Although much of the Empire remembers Gusai as a near-criminal who threatened the Son of Heaven, and the family name was purged three generations later after a failed coup, the Mantis Clan still reveres his memory and permits no ill to be spoken of him in their hearing.

The following statistics reflect Gusai immediately before his death. At the time, the Mantis Bushi School (what would eventually become the Yoritomo School) still had only three techniques—the fourth one lay at least a century in the future and the fifth and final one would not be perfected until Yoritomo's own lifetime, a half millennium later.

Gusai, Mantis Clan Champion

Air: 5 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 4 Void: 4
Willpower: 5 Agility: 6 Strength: 6

Honor: 2.6 *Status: 7.0 (after appointment as Clan Champion)* *Glory: 7.0*

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 3 (Insight Rank 5)

Skills: Commerce 5, Defense 5, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 4, Kenjutsu 4, Knives (Kama) 5, Sailing 6, Sleight of Hand (Conceal) 5, Lore: Mantis 3, Lore: Crab Clan 3.

Advantages: Crab Hands, Quick, Social Position (Minor Clan Champion), Wary, Wealthy (7 ranks).

Disadvantages: Brash, Contrary, Consumed (Strength).

Yoshitsune

False Lord of the Mantis Clan

The man called Yoshitsune was not well known by the majority of the Empire, for he was the final Mantis Champion to rule entirely over a Minor Clan. He was known to be skilled and ruthless, a man who would protect his own with a tenacity few had ever seen, but he was not ambitious and seemed content with what the Mantis already possessed. Perhaps this characteristic would have been passed on to his children as well, for he had three sons, but an assassination attempt by emissaries from the Ivory Kingdoms prevented that.

In the year 1100, the ancestral estate of the Mantis Clan was infiltrated by strange red-handed assassins from the distant Ivory Kingdoms. Yoshitsune had recently rebuffed the lords of that land when they approached him regarding revisions to their trade arrangements. The assassins killed his wife Kirei and their two older sons, both skilled warriors in their own right. Yoshitsune was badly wounded but fought ferociously and managed to save the life of his youngest son Yoritomo. The event seemed to break Yoshitsune's spirit; many said that he was never the same afterward. The impact on his son was equally as great. The young man was filled with a rage that never seemed to truly abate. Yoshitsune raised his son at great expense, sparing nothing to ensure he had the finest teachers and the best training. When Yoritomo was only a few years past his gempukku, Yoshitune took him to the great cliffs overlooking the sea near their home... and told him the truth.

The real Yoshitsune died the night of the assassinations. Another man, one whose name is lost to time, had been trained to impersonate Yoshitsune as part of an elaborate scheme to ensure contact with the gaijin caused no dishonor to the Mantis. When the Ivory Kingdoms assassins appeared and killed Yoshitune, his impersonator took his place in order to save Yoritomo, then continued the ruse so the young heir's reign was not threatened before it had truly began. With Yoritomo grown to one of the Empire's most powerful and ambitious adult warriors, there was no need for the false Yoshitsune any longer. He handed his blades to the man who was not his son and hurled himself from the cliff. Some claim he also confessed to betraying Yoritomo's family to the gaijin, saving the boy out of remorse, but such tales cannot be confirmed. Other stories suggest the man who impersonated Yoshitsune was not a man at all but rather some form of supernatural entity. Yoritomo himself believed the man was a Goju agent, while others have posited he might have actually been a *rakshasa*, one of the shape-changing tiger demons from the Ivory Kingdoms. The truth may never be known for certain.

Yoshitsune, the False Mantis Lord

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 3
Awareness: 4 Intelligence: 4

Honor: 4.3 *Status: 7.6* *Glory: 4.8*

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 4

Skills: Acting 6, Battle 3, Commerce 4, Defense 4, Intimidation 3, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 2, Kenjutsu 2, Knives (Kama) 5, Sailing (Navigation) 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 5

Kata: Striking as Earth, Striking as Water

Advantages: Magic Resistance (2), Quick Healer

Disadvantages: Cursed by Yomi, Dark Secret

Kitsune Ryosei

Lady of the Fox

Kitsune Ryosei underwent her gempukku ceremony at the age of sixteen, not an unusual age for youths of the Kitsune family. What was unusual was that Ryosei, encouraged by her father, indulged in an old tradition and undertook a quest as part of her gempukku. While those who normally indulged in such things chose relatively simple tasks relevant to their family history, Ryosei vowed to recover the Ancestral Sword of the Fox Clan, an artifact missing since the rule of Hantei Genji more than a thousand years before. The task was seemingly impossible, yet in a few short months Ryosei discovered the blade hidden in the mountains not far from the Imperial City of Otosan Uchi. It was destiny, the celebrating Fox Clan claimed. How else could she have discovered it so quickly? Ryosei returned to her people a hero of unprecedented stature.

Ryosei presented the sword to her beaming father Gohei, delighted to have pleased the normally distant man. He unwrapped the hilt of the blade and removed a blackened scroll from within. It was none other than one of the ancient Black Scrolls, stolen from the Scorpion Clan and concealed for millennia. Gohei longed for immortality and believed the Black Scroll could grant it to him; he had sent Ryosei on her quest for that reason and no other. The foul energy of the Scroll's spell did indeed make Gohei immortal—by transforming him into the Walking Horror of Fu Leng. (See *Enemies of the Empire*, pages 277-278.) The monstrosity promptly attempted to sacrifice his daughter, but she fought him off with the help of a courageous fox spirit and he disappeared into the night. At sixteen years of age, Ryosei was the Fox Clan Champion.

Leadership did not come easily to Ryosei. She was a strong-willed woman but was far more comfortable being responsible for her own life than having others' lives depend on her. She was much beloved by her people, however, and their devotion made her go to great lengths to preserve the freedom and independence of the Fox Clan. The Mantis Champion Yoritomo courted her, but she ultimately rejected him; she knew marrying him would mean the merging of the Fox into the Mantis.

Ryosei never married and had no children. Her memories were haunted throughout her life by the abomination which was once her father, and many years later she entered the Shadowlands in search of him. She did not find him, but she did succeed in retrieving one of the Black Scrolls from the City of the Lost; indeed, some accounts suggest she was the first Rokugani to see Daigotsu's terrible city and survive. She retired soon after and died of old age in the year 1158.

In the modern Empire, Ryosei is regarded as the last true Champion of the Fox, since her successor (her cousin Kitsune Ryukan) eventually was forced to oversee the transition of the clan into the Mantis. The stats below depict Ryosei in her youthful prime, when she led the Fox Clan through the Clan Wars.

Kitsune Ryosei, Lady of the Fox

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3
Awareness: 5 Intelligence: 4 Perception: 4

Honor: 6.4 *Status: 7.6* *Glory: 4.2*

School/Rank: Kitsune Shugenja 3

Skills: Animal Handling 2, Athletics 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Hunting (Survival, Tracking) 4, Lore: Theology 4, Medicine (Herbalism) 4, Meditation 2, Polearms 2, Spears 2, Spellcraft 3

Advantages: Friend of the Brotherhood, Inari's Blessing, Paragon of Courage

Disadvantages: Dark Fate, Driven (destroy the Walking Horror of Fu Leng)

Spells: In theory, her position as daimyo of the Fox Clan grants Ryosei access to any spell available to the entire clan. In reality, she limits herself to practical and useful spells, albeit of a more militant flavor than those used by most Fox.

Tsuruchi

Founder of the Wasp

The founding of the Mantis Clan and its elevation to Great Clan status are stories all Mantis samurai recount fondly as reflections of their tenacious nature. The story of Tsuruchi is one much less well known to the Mantis as a whole, though it carries no less significance to the clan's ideals.

The son of Bayushi Uchinore and Akodo Tameko, born in love rather than duty, Tsuruchi was a highly controversial figure. Some hated and reviled him while others applauded him as a hero and savior of the Empire. The full story of his birth, childhood, and youth is told in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*, page 103. After defying both the Lion and the Scorpion and winning the favor of the Emerald Champion, Tsuruchi founded his Archery School and with his followers—less than fifty men—formed the Wasp Clan to carry forth his own moral vision.

Tsuruchi's life was driven by his hatred for the hypocrisies of others. He created his own variant moral code, the Code of the Wasp, to reflect his rejection of the hypocrisy and dishonesty of Bushido. His specially trained bounty hunters and magistrates won koku for the Wasp Clan while upholding his ideals, and he recruited ronin and even commoners to swell his family's ranks. Ultimately the Wasp Clan's hired services were of great benefit to the Minor Clan Alliance during the Clan Wars. After that day Tsuruchi saw his

peoples' continued survival as requiring a stronger ally, and he remained within Yoritomo's Alliance and eventually joined the Mantis Clan.

During the time of the Hidden Emperor, Tsuruchi played a key role in discovering and recovering the missing Emperor Toturi. However, he suffered a near crippling wound during the War Against the Darkness and retired from the position of daimyo, passing the mantle to his chosen successor Tsuruchi Ichiro. Perhaps the oddest twist to his life was that though the Lion and Scorpion had both painted him as a villain and his own followers had often struck against them, Tsuruchi lived out a full life and retired in peace. The Scorpion never found the means to finish what they had started with his defiant parents, and the Lion never reclaimed the castle he stole by force of arms. Tsuruchi joined the Brotherhood of Shinsei and took the name Tanari, offering advice and counsel to any who came seeking it. Until his death he continued to study his Code and to consider its implications for the Way of Shintao.

The stats presented here represent Tsuruchi at his peak during the War Against the Darkness.

Tsuruchi, Founder of the Wasp

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 7			Perception: 6	

Honor: 5.5 *Status: 7.5* *Glory: 8.3* *Infamy: 4.2*

School/Rank: Tsuruchi Archer 5

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 4, Courtier 2, Craft: Bowyer 6, Defense 5, Etiquette 1, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 5, Intimidation 2, Investigation (Interrogation, Notice, Search) 5, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 3, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 9, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History (Lion, Scorpion) 3, Medicine 3, Poison 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 4, Stealth 5

Advantages: Ally (Yoritomo, Influence 4, Devotion 2), Clear Thinker, Great Potential: Kyujutsu, Heart of Vengence: Lion, Social Position (Minor Clan Champion).

Disadvantages: Driven (Vengeance), Infamous ("Shame of the Akodo"), Unluck (one Rank)

Yoritomo

Son of Storms, Champion of the Mantis

Born during the most violent typhoon to strike the Mantis Isles in generations, the boy who would become Yoritomo seemed fated for greatness. However, every step he advanced through his life proved to be a struggle. His family was massacred while he was still a boy and when he reached adulthood he learned his father, Yoshitsune, was actually a deceiver and possibly a traitor.

Yoritomo was a highly ambitious young man and was determined to elevate the position of the Mantis Clan no matter what the cost. He dispatched Mantis ships and troops to serve as mercenaries whenever there was work to be found, and spoke endlessly of the clan's position as favored by Osano-Wo; this dedication to the Fortune of Thunder and his own angry, temperamental disposition earned Yoritomo the nickname "Son of Storms." It was also during these early years that Yoritomo's tireless training and study allowed him to develop and perfect the fifth and final technique of the Mantis Bushi School—which now bears his name.

When the Clan Wars erupted, Yoritomo saw his chance. At great effort he forged an alliance of all the Minor Clans, uniting them into a military force which could gain the respect of the Great Clans. On the Second Day of Thunder, he gambled the future of his own clan and of Rokugan in a bid for Great Clan status... and succeeded. Yoritomo achieved what no other Mantis leader had ever done.

But just as his early achievements were not attained without great effort, now he faced tremendous struggles to maintain the position his clan had attained. The chaos unleashed on the Empire by the Lying Darkness seemed to offer many opportunities for further Mantis gains, but Yoritomo's ambition and temper often proved his own worst enemy, such as when he plunged into a misguided war with the Phoenix Clan. At the same time, however, he was determined only to take what he had earned through his own skill and strength. After Emperor Toturi committed seppuku to purge the Lying Darkness from his soul, the Kami Shinjo offered the throne to Yoritomo. He refused, unwilling to take the throne as a gift and recognizing that to do so might make him Shinjo's pawn.

In the final days leading up to the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Water Dragon emerged from the Heavens and appeared to Yoritomo, telling him to gather his twenty strongest men to face the power of the Lying Darkness. Yoritomo replied, "I am my twenty strongest men." The Water Dragon bore him directly to the final battle, where he faced the Darkness' immensely powerful avatar, Goju Adorai. Yoritomo was outmatched, but when Adorai demanded he submit and give his name to the Shadow, he refused: "I have already given my name to my followers." Enraged, Adorai slew the Son of Storms. Yoritomo died as he had lived, refusing to submit to anyone.

The stats listed below depict Yoritomo late in life, during his reign over the Mantis as a Great Clan.

Yoritomo, Son of Storms, Mantis Clan Champion

Air: 3	Earth: 5	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 5	Strength: 6	

Honor: 5.0 *Status: 8.3* *Glory: 9.5*

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 5, Minor Clan Defender 1

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle (Mass Battle) 6, Commerce 4, Defense 6, Etiquette 1, Jiujutsu 5, Intimidation (Bullying) 7, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Knives (Kama) 9, Lore: History 2, Lore: Theology 4, Sailing 7

Kata: Son of Storms

Advantages: Great Destiny, Quick, Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Mercenary), Brash, Insensitive

Yoritomo Aramasu

Adopted Son of Yoritomo

Were it not for the Lying Darkness framing the Scorpion for the sudden disappearance of Emperor Toturi I, the young man named Bayushi Aramasu would have led a very different life. Aramasu was the son of Bayushi Aramoro, a supremely skilled shinobi and brother of the Scorpion Clan Champion. When the Scorpion were exiled to the Burning Sands, Aramoro arranged for his son to be fostered to the Mantis Clan under the care of Yoritomo. In truth, the Scorpion intended Aramasu to be a spy who would win the trust of the Mantis and ferret out their secrets. Unfortunately, his bitterness toward his father had already led him to join the Kolat conspiracy.

But it was the charismatic appeal of Yoritomo that truly changed Aramasu's life. He quickly grew close to the formidable Mantis lord, who represented everything he had wanted in a father, everything Aramoro had denied him. Aramasu decided to cut his ties with both the Scorpion and the Kolat, pledging himself entirely to Yoritomo and the Mantis. He fed false or useless information to his Scorpion handlers, then bought his freedom from the Kolat by giving them a vast array of Scorpion hidden ports. This second betrayal was facilitated by a Mantis Kolat, Yoritomo Masasue, who became a close friend of Aramasu. It was partly at Masasue's urging that Yoritomo unexpectedly decided to adopt Aramasu as his son and heir.

Aramasu devoted himself to the Mantis Clan and even forsook his Scorpion martial training in favor of mastering the Yoritomo Bushi School. He lived in Yoritomo's shadow, following and learning from his new father. When Yoritomo fought and died against Goju Adorai at Volturnum, Aramasu was at his side. And when he returned to the Mantis Isles with Yoritomo's ashes, the clan accepted him as its new leader.

Aramasu's reign was for the most part successful. It was during his rule that the Centipede and Wasp were fully absorbed as families of the expanded Mantis Clan, and it was also his efforts which saw the Yoritomo Courtier School (barely a school at all when he took power) expand to its full range of techniques. Ironically, the high point of his reign was largely unknown to the rest of the Empire: a secret war waged in the Ivory Kingdoms against the sinister Cult of the Destroyer.

However, Aramasu's Scorpion past could not be wholly left behind. The Scorpion Clan never forgives or forgets a traitor, and during the Four Winds era they found an opening in the ambitions of the Mantis pirate Yoritomo Kitao. She betrayed Aramasu, who died on the blade of the Scorpion warrior Bayushi Kamnan. Aramasu, like his adoptive father, had no heir of his own blood—thus Kitao was able to usurp rule of the clan after his death.

Yoritomo Aramasu, First Lord of the United Mantis

Air: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 5	Water: 4	Void: 5

Honor: 2.4 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 8.0*

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 1/Yoritomo Bushi 5

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics (Climbing, Swimming) 6, Commerce (Mathematics) 4, Craft: Explosives 4, Defense 5, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 6, Knives (Kama) 3, Ninjutsu 3, Sailing 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Stealth (Sneaking) 4, Sleight of Hand (Conceal) 4

Advantages: Multiple Schools, Forbidden Knowledge: Gaijin Pepper, Forbidden Knowledge: Kolat, Languages: Ivory Kingdoms, Social Position (Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Bad Fortune: Yogo Curse, Sworn Enemies (Scorpion Clan)

Yoritomo Kumiko

Daughter of Storms

Yoritomo Kumiko was, in life and in death, a picture of the stalwart defiance with which the Mantis perpetually face the world. Confronted with what others would have considered impossible, she adapted and rebounded, stronger each time. No one who met her could ever doubt she was her father's daughter.

Kumiko was cursed at birth in a two-fold fashion. Her legendary father Yoritomo was already dead, slain at Oblivion's Gate, and mother Wakiza passed away in childbirth, leaving the Taint as her only gift. Under ordinary circumstances a child born to a Tainted parent would have been killed as an act of mercy, but Kumiko's adopted brother Aramasu so loved her father that he was unwilling to let Yoritomo's line die out. He hid Kumiko in a remote temple under the care of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, visiting in secret and only rarely. Kumiko grew up learning the ways of combat and spiritual purity from the monks, using meditation and prayer to keep at bay the Taint that constantly threatened her soul.

After Aramasu's betrayal by Yoritomo Kitao, leading to his death at the hands of the Scorpion, the young Kumiko decided she must come out of hiding and claim her birthright. She waged a bitter civil war against the usurper Kitao, while also seeking some way to purge the Taint from her body—for she knew she could never lead the clan so long as she was touched by Jigoku. Help came from a most unexpected source: the mysterious woman called Akasha, the legacy the sleeping Naga race had left with the Unicorn Clan. With the help of Akasha and her husband Moto Chen, Kumiko found a secret technique that allowed her to purge her Taint by defeating a powerful creature of the Shadowlands, the Onisu of Larceny, Settozai.

Kumiko's search for justice and redemption came to a head in a direct confrontation with Kitao. There, Kumiko

revealed the manipulations of the Onisu Settozai and slew the beast, purifying herself. Acknowledged as the "Daughter of Storms" and rightful leader of the Mantis, she spared Kitao's life—an act of compassion which would come back to haunt her. A few years later Kitao was corrupted in the Rain of Blood and struck back at her former clan with her pirate fleet, the Dark Wave.

Kumiko's later years seemed for a time as though they would be a sad epilogue to the great deeds of her youth. Freed of the Taint and the rigorous self-discipline it had required, she became more erratic and was drawn into the reborn Gozoku Alliance as it conspired against Emperor Toturi III. Her aggressive embrace of piracy also alienated many former friends on the Empire's mainland. However, when Kitao manipulated the Mantis into a war with the Phoenix, Kumiko rose to greatness once more. She died slaying her nemesis Kitao, exposing the Dark Wave fleet to the wrath of Phoenix and Mantis alike. Out of the war's end was born a new island that bore her name thereafter, a testimony to her greatness.

The stats presented here depict Kumiko as Clan Champion after her Taint was purged.

Yoritomo Kumiko, Daughter of Storms

Air: 3 Earth: 5 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 4

Reflexes: 5 Willpower: 7 Intelligence: 5 Strength: 4

Honor: 4.2 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 7.5*

School/Rank: Temple of Kaimetsu-Uo Monk 3/Yoritomo Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 6, Battle 4, Commerce 2, Courtier 1, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Intimidation 4, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 5, Kenjutsu 2, Knives (Kama) 7, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 3, Lore: Underworld 2, Meditation 5, Sailing 6, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Staves (Tonfa) 5, Stealth 2

Kata: Striking as Water, Spinning Blades Style, Son of Storms

Kiho: Chi Protection, Flee the Darkness, Channel the Fire Dragon, Rest My Brother, Ride the Water Dragon, Slap the Wave, Waves in All Things

Advantages: Allies (Brotherhood of Shinsei), Kharmic Tie: Yoritomo Kitao (1 Point), Multiple Schools, Social Position (Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Brash, Contrary, Nemesis: Yoritomo Kitao

Lands of the Mantis Clan

The Mantis Clan's lands are widely scattered and encompass many different regions and climates—a legacy of their history as four different Minor Clans. The main Mantis holdings have already been discussed in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook, pages 346-348. This section describes several lesser-known but still significant holdings.

Kaimetsu-Uo Seido

The shrine to the founder of the Mantis Clan is located on the eastern side of the Isles of Silk and Spice. The small island which is home to the shrine was the nearest point of land to the pirate ship where Kaimetsu-Uo's dead body was found. One of the Mantis who found the body shaved his head the moment he set foot on this island, dedicating his life to building a shrine in remembrance of his clan's founder.

The modern shrine is a large complex with seven buildings, and monks from both the Order of Kaimetsu-Uo and the Order of Osano-Wo reside there. Supposedly all the monks who reside in Kaimetsu-Uo Seido are formidable masters of unarmed combat, and every Mantis who lays claim to being a great warrior is expected to make a pilgrimage to this shrine and challenge the monks to unarmed non-lethal combat. Defeating one of these monks is a deed worthy of boasting, and the shout, "I have prevailed at Kaimetsu-Uo Seido!" will gain immediate attention and respect from any Mantis warrior.

Maigosera Seido

Located in the southernmost isles of the Mantis, the Shrine of Lost Sailors is dedicated to the memory of all those who perish at sea—a constant reminder that Suitengu's power is not to be mocked, even by the master sailors of the Mantis Clan. The shrine itself is small and simple, little more than a torii arch and a stone obelisk. Next to the shrine, however, is a huge stone tower standing ninety feet high. The caretakers of the shrine light a massive bonfire atop the tower every night.

Although the fire—visible for many miles over the night-darkened waters—is sometimes helpful to living sailors, its true purpose is spiritual. It is meant to guide the souls of those lost at sea, helping them find their way back home and thus to free them from their earthly attachments.

Maigosera Seido is considered a sacred site to all Mantis, since every family has lost kin to the sea. Violating the sanctity of the shrine in any way is a lethal offense.

Village of the Grand Song

This small village in the southern islands is actually one of the older settlements on the Islands of Silk and Spice. It was created to honor a singer, a most unusual occupation in the violent and pragmatic Mantis Clan. The founder of the village, Kinei, lived during the reign of Gusei. He was a man wholly ill-suited to the rough-and-tumble lives of other Mantis samurai, incompetent at every skill which the clan prized. His only talent, singing, struck the Mantis as wholly useless. Unable to figure out what to do with him, his sensei sent him on a musha shugyo (a warrior's pilgrimage) to try to discover his purpose in life.

Five years later, Kinei return to the Mantis Isles... laden with the hundreds of koku he had earned while entertaining the other clans' Winter Courts with his singing. Gusei was impressed with Kinei's accomplishments, as well as his loyalty, and granted him permission to found his own village.

In modern times, Kinei's settlement is home to the Dojo of the Grand Song, a small school which teaches only one skill: singing. There are seldom more than a dozen students, although in the twelfth century the admission of the artistic Kitsune family to the clan somewhat increases the dojo's popularity.

Quiet Stream Village

A small and unassuming village in Tsuruchi lands, modest even compared to Shaiga. Despite its minimal size and remote location, Quiet Stream Village is actually quite important to the family, for it is here the Tsuruchi manufacture most of their bows and arrows. The nearby small forest of Chinsei Mori produces wood of exceptional quality, and Quiet Stream is home to many skilled fletchers, both commoners and samurai. The forest itself houses a shrine to Kuroshin, the Fortune of agriculture.

After the Tsuruchi join the Mantis Clan, Quiet Stream Village also becomes home to the family's only dojo to teach the Yoritomo fighting techniques. Although most Tsuruchi continue to uphold their family's traditions of archery, a few embrace the Yoritomo melee style, and they come to the Dojo of Dancing Steel to learn such ways of fighting.

Matamori no Tokoro

The Place of Unity was built near the Mantis capital of Kyuden Gotei after the Centipede Clan gave up its independence as a minor clan and joined the Mantis as the Moshi family. The Moshi and the Yoritomo both knew such a union of disparate traditions would be difficult, especially given the Moshi family's matriarchal ways and customary pacifism. This holding was intended to facilitate the smooth integration of the Moshi into the overall clan by housing an emissary of the Moshi daimyo immediately adjacent to the Yoritomo seat of power. The Moshi delegate in charge of the Place of Unity is always a man, thereby easing the Yoritomo family's unease with the matriarchal Moshi.

The Place of Unity is a large compound surrounded by an eight-foot stone wall. The many single-story buildings within are all built on four-foot stilts, protecting them from flooding during the typhoons which frequently strike the Mantis Isles. Ironically, despite the spiritual nature of the Moshi this holding also serves a significant mercantile purpose, functioning as a clearing-house for trade and tax arrangements between the far-flung lands of the Mantis families.

The Mantis and the Heimin: Heroes of the People

Throughout Rokugan, the Celestial Order holds the common folk in a position of subservience and not inconsiderable fear, constantly bowing and scraping lest an offended samurai take their heads. The samurai, for their part, are raised to consider peasants as little more than tools—to be protected, certainly, but not worthy of real emotion or concern.

There are exceptions, of course. The Crab are known for arming their peasants in the war against the Shadowlands. The Phoenix make efforts to educate their peasants in the ways of the Tao in order to facilitate their progress on the Celestial Wheel of reincarnation. The Unicorn believe in using the law to protect all Rokugani, samurai and peasant alike. But the Mantis take things a step farther than these other clans. Since their earliest years, in fact, the Mantis have been remarkably appreciative and courteous to their peasant population. This generosity is so widely known that when the Mantis absorb additional territory, the local peasants often hold open celebrations, anticipating improvements in their lives and treatment. Many of the other Great Clans view this Mantis attitude with scorn or derision, unable to fathom why members of the warrior class would concern themselves so much about those who do not even count as full people. Even the Crab and Unicorn sometimes raise an eyebrow at Mantis attitudes.

What explains this unusual attitude? Part of it seems to stem from the Mantis Clan's nature as a maritime clan. Most clan armies use ashigaru (peasant soldiers), but such lowly forces are kept segregated from the samurai troops. On board the Mantis fleets, however, peasant crew and samurai serve right alongside each other, working together to sail the seas, endure its storms, maintain their ships, and wage war. Furthermore, the small size of the Mantis Clan during its early centuries and the difficult conditions

on the Isles of Silk and Spice meant Mantis samurai and heimin often worked side-by-side simply to survive. In modern times the larger size of the clan no longer requires quite such a close relationship with the common folk, but the Yoritomo retain many of the attitudes they developed as a minor clan.

Moreover, as a clan which single-handedly climbed from the humblest origins to attain Great Clan status, the Mantis tend to have a slightly different overall attitude toward the Celestial Order itself. In their view, one's station in life is never set in stone—it is always possible to better oneself, not just through reincarnation but within the span of a single lifetime. Thus, the very force which drives the relentless (and notorious) Mantis ambition also drives their continued friendship toward the lower castes. Although the Mantis do not go quite so far as the Tortoise Clan (who practically live like peasants themselves), they definitely exhibit a care and brotherhood for their peasants unlike any other Great Clan.

Although these ideas originated long before the Mantis became a Great Clan, they have also spread somewhat to the other families who later joined their ranks. Indeed, in the case of the Tsuruchi family they already existed to some extent. When Tsuruchi foreswore Bushido and established the Code of the Wasp, he not only adopted a closer and more protective relationship toward commoners but also instituted a policy of recruiting any truly capable archer into his new clan, regardless of birth station. Although the active recruitment of new family members halted when the Tsuruchi joined the Mantis, most of the family still follows the Code of the Wasp. Their emphasis on upholding the law and hunting down criminals also frequently requires them to work among commoners or directly protect them, experiences rare for other samurai families.

The Moshi and Kitsune were and are more conventional in their attitudes toward the common folk, but the small size and isolated existence of both Minor Clans prompted a somewhat closer relationship between samurai and heimin. Thus while these families have found difficulty in living harmoniously as part of the Mantis Clan, neither has been overly troubled by Mantis attitudes toward commoners.

It should be noted that for all their reputation as protectors of the common folk, the Mantis will not tolerate insolence or disobedience from their peasants. A disrespectful heimin is just as likely to face execution in Mantis lands as in any other clan, and the Mantis never treat peasants as the equals of samurai. Rather, they simply find it abominable to needlessly oppress the people they have been charged to protect.

Mantis Compassion in Play

A player running a compassionate Mantis character may come into conflict with both his fellow PCs and with NPCs regarding the treatment of the lower classes. Those who adhere closely to Mantis philosophy toward the heimin should be moved to come to the aid of oppressed peasants. While it may not be honorable to challenge a Lion who has ordered a peasant flogged, a Mantis may still be moved to act as a mediator or to make concessions on behalf of the peasant. This sort of behavior carries significant social stigma in much of the Empire, and the GM and other players should not shy away from accurately portraying the social ramifications of Mantis attitudes.

Of course, this behavior carries positive consequences as well as negative ones. A hero of the people can expect help from those same people. A Tsuruchi magistrate may find he has an easier time getting information or cooperation from peasants. A Yoritomo general may find his ashigaru soldiers are more courageous and more willing to lay down their lives for him.

Playing against a stereotype can be just as interesting as playing to reinforce it, of course. A brutish Yoritomo samurai who treats peasants as disposable tools is an amusing inversion of the normal Mantis type. This can also lead to some interesting and entertaining role-playing scenes, since Mantis peasants are accustomed to a certain level of consideration and may find ways to stand up for themselves when their sense of trust is betrayed.

Piracy, Privateers, and the Mantis Navy

The Mantis are known as the best sailors in Rokugan and are universally acknowledged as possessing Rokugan's mightiest navy. This was not the case in the early years of the clan, however. In the beginning the Mantis were a tiny clan with only a few dozen ships and could pose little threat to the might of the Great Clans. Unable to match the other clans in numbers, the Mantis sought to challenge them instead with wealth, pursuing trade opportunities wherever they arose and sending their ships to every port in the Empire—and eventually, to a few outside it.

Naval battles were rare at this early point in history and none of the clans had large fleets. Thus even the small Mantis squadrons could sometimes earn considerable income as mercenaries, hiring themselves out to whichever side offered more koku. This proved such a lucrative practice that the Mantis maintained it long after their fleet had actually become the most powerful in the Empire.

Independent piracy, usually by gangs called *wako*, emerged in Rokugan early on, although their numbers were seldom great enough to threaten the Great Clans directly. As discussed in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire* (pages 167 and 169), pirate gangs were seldom long-lived, but their careers could be quite impressive while they lasted, and the more prominent ones like Yasuki Fumoki could attain a romantic reputation among the common people.

The Mantis often hired themselves out to combat piracy, and of course they were quite ruthless in suppressing any pirates who threatened their own considerable merchant shipping. What they did not publicly admit, however, was that much of the "piracy" which troubled Rokugan's seas was of their own making. Mantis ship captains who caught isolated merchant vessels from other clans often attacked them, sometimes with flimsy pretenses but more often simply because the opportunity presented itself. The oft-heard accusation in Rokugan's courts that the Mantis are "a clan of pirates" holds more than a little truth. Indeed, at times the clan relied just as much on piracy as on trade to fill its coffers.

When the Mantis Clan was elevated to Great Clan status following the Second Day of Thunder, Emperor Toturi issued a clan charter giving the Mantis dominion of all unclaimed territory within Rokugan, including the seas. This effectively gave the Mantis the legal right stop any ship they found, a power which coincided happily with the clan's desire to appear more outwardly respectable. Open piracy gave way to a more legal form of extortion in which ships who failed to pay appropriate fees for traveling under Mantis jurisdiction had their cargos seized. Although this behavior was widely seen as "piracy" by the rest of Rokugan, in fact it was considerably more civilized (albeit also far more open and widespread) than the clan's earlier covert piratical activities. Moreover, the Mantis Clan made an effort to halt unauthorized piracy by its own forces, a crackdown that led to the more incorrigible freebooters leaving the clan for the life of a ronin.

Yoritomo Aramasu generally kept the clan's naval extortion to a reasonable level, but under the rule of his successor Yoritomo Kitao, herself the captain of an infamous pirate vessel called the *Bitter Flower*, the policy became more aggressive. Kitao's successor Yoritomo Kumiko also embraced this policy of pseudo-piracy and if anything made it more brazen, openly bartering with other Clan Champions to let their ships sail in peace for a year at a time in exchange for heavy payments. Although most of Rokugan was already vaguely aware of Mantis piracy, Kumiko's openness shocked everyone and did considerable damage to the Mantis Clan's reputation. Thus it was relatively easy for the deposed Yoritomo Kitao to escalate her own piracy and pin the blame on the Mantis Clan, leading directly to the War of Fire and Thunder.

Kitao and her Tainted ronin fleet, the Dark Wave, took naval warfare to bloody new levels, razing coastal villages

and massacring entire squadrons of enemy ships. The war caused great damage to the Mantis Clan's reputation, and the clan curtailed its extortionist operations in an effort to improve its name. Ultimately, Kumiko's valiant sacrifice at the end of the war, taking Kitao to the grave with her, combined with the destruction of most of the Dark Wave fleet to restore much of the clan's repute.

The ascension of Yoritomo Utemaro to the position of Imperial Treasurer at the dawn of the Iweko Dynasty gave the Mantis Clan far greater economic power than ever before, and seemed to curtail their need for less reputable sources of income. Subsequent military conflicts such as the Kali-Ma Invasion also drew off the attention of the Mantis Clan's fleets, leading to a more lenient and merciful policy toward ships in their waters. Whether this represents a meaningful change in clan policy or merely a temporary adjustment to circumstance, however, only the future will tell.

Pirates and Piracy in Play

A campaign which involves any kind of naval travel can potentially feature the threat of pirates. Piracy is an excellent means of introducing a simple physical threat into a campaign, since pirates can be anything from a rag-tag gang of desperate heimin to a formidable team of skilled ronin. In certain eras a pirate ship may actually be a Mantis vessel, although the GM should be wary of introducing such a threat if there are any Mantis PCs in the group. A pirate attack can be a "one-off" adventure with no further ramifications, or it may lead to longer-term struggles with a powerful *wako* gang, a corrupt merchant or smuggler, or the Mantis Clan itself.

The Storms: Fleets of the Mantis

More than anything else, the Mantis are known for their naval power. By the fifth century the Mantis fleet was already larger than any other save the Crane, and by the ninth century the Mantis became undisputed masters of the sea with more than three times the naval strength of their closest rivals, the Crane.

The Mantis fleets are organized in a manner which bears a loose resemblance to a land army, but with many adjustments for the requirements of naval combat. The basic unit of the Mantis navy is a ship, usually a kobune, and each ship captain has absolute authority on his vessel (Mantis captains have sometimes been half-humorously described as "little daimyo"). Each ship is part of a "Fleet" usually consisting of 12 kobune, three support barges, and

one sengokobune for the fleet commander. Fleets are assigned to one of the three "Storms" of the Mantis Clan, which serve a role similar to armies for land-bound clans. A Storm is traditionally comprised of 12 fleets, boasting over 370 total combat ships.

Most Mantis crews follow a fairly standard crew structure. The captain commands the ship and oversees duty assignments. The first mate serves as an aide to the captain and may replace him if he is absent, incapacitated, or killed. The Mantis try to make sure every ship also has one shugenja, usually an officer, who uses magic to aid in navigation, ship repairs, and combat. The rest of the crew is a roughly equal mix of samurai and heimin; normally they are assigned to specific duties such as carpenter, cooper, quartermaster, cook, sailmaker, rigger, and so forth. When the ship must rely on oars to move (a frequent need due to the relatively poor performance of Rokugani sails), all of the crew rotate through this duty. Likewise, during combat all of the crew are expected to fight with whatever weapons are ready to hand—hence the flexibility and pragmatism of the major Mantis fighting styles.

The effectiveness of the Mantis fleet increased significantly after the absorption of the Centipede Clan and the Wasp Clan. The Moshi lent their potent Fire and Air magic to the ships' crews, and developed new techniques for assisting Mantis vessels navigating the open seas. The Tsuruchi archers, meanwhile, quickly became the greatest marine snipers in Rokugan, allowing a Mantis ship to kill a hostile captain and crew from hundreds of feet away.

New Game Mechanics

The following section introduces new Mantis Clan game mechanics for the L5R 4th Edition role-playing game. GMs and players can use as many or as few of these mechanics as they prefer.

New School: Mantis Brawler

For most of its history the Mantis Clan has included a strong element of disreputable piracy and black-market smuggling. Although the clan has occasionally made efforts to purge these criminals from its ranks (especially after it attained Great Clan status), they have never been fully eliminated. The various efforts to purge them have, however, ensured that their fighting techniques may be found among ronin, commoner *wako* (pirate gangs), and numerous smuggling cartels as well as within the clan's own ranks.

The fighting techniques of Mantis Brawlers are even more unconventional than those of the regular Yoritomo bushi. They are born out of the violence of dirty shipboard fights and drunken bar-brawls, and passed down

Notable Pirate Gangs of the Twelfth Century

The chaotic and often war-torn history of Rokugan's twelfth century was a boon to criminals of all sorts, both on land and at sea. Bandit gangs ran wild in some parts of the Empire, criminal smuggling cartels gained in strength, and Shadowlands beasts infiltrated more than one province. At sea, a number of major wako gangs emerged over the course of the century as well.

The Crimson Dawn

A pirate gang formed by a pair of former Phoenix samurai who fled their clan. The temperamental ronin murdered a Crane merchant captain and used the funds to hire a crew of heimin for his ship, converting it to a pirate vessel. Their depredations drew considerable attention from Crane magistrates and they later relocated north to their old Phoenix home in hopes of starting a fresh career of piracy there.

The Dark Wave

This fleet of Tainted pirates was assembled by the deposed Mantis Clan Champion, Yoritomo Kitao, after she was corrupted by the Rain of Blood. She formed an alliance with the undead gaijin Garen Hawthorne and incorporated his gunpowder weapons into her fleet's capabilities, allowing her to deliver devastating attacks against both land and sea targets. After Kitao perished in combat with Yoritomo Kumiko, the Dark Wave was largely destroyed; its remnants joined the Dark Lord Daigotsu's new "Spider Clan" and remained a threat to Rokugani shipping, albeit far less than before.

The Serpents of Sanada

A powerful pirate gang led by a vain, arrogant, and insufferable—but also highly capable—pirate named Sanada. The gang based itself out of a coastal village in Crane lands called Chibasu, buying the villagers' silence with bribes and threats. The gang was a scourge to Crane shipping, and Sanada considered himself a reincarnation of Yasuki Fumoki himself.

Suitengu's Children

A sea-based smuggling gang, essentially a loose alliance of independent ships who cooperated to deliver illicit goods and shared the profits. The gang was formed by the five survivors of a pirate vessel, the *Twisted Cricket*, sunk by the Mantis during a violent storm. The five founders of the cartel believed they were blessed by Suitengu, the Fortune of the Sea, to survive the battle. They refered to their isolated island headquarters as Suitengu's Throne.

from parent to child through direct instruction (often of a rather unusual kind) rather than in the formal setting of a dojo. Some tales about this fighting form have claimed it is found in the Brotherhood of Shinsei as well, or perhaps even originated among misbehaving drunken monks and spread from there to the Mantis Clan. Whatever the case may be, this unconventional fighting style continues to prosper among Mantis and criminals alike.

New School: Mantis Brawler [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Athletics, Commerce, Intimidation, Jiujutsu, Knives, Sailing, any one Weapon skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Rugged Clothing, any two weapons, Kama, Tanto, Traveling Pack, 4 Koku

Techniques

Rank One: Way of Drunken Fists

The basic techniques of the Mantis Brawlers are based on the need to prevail in chaotic fights on tilting ship decks... or when reeling drunk through a sake house. Brawlers are tough and slippery fighters who evade the grip of their enemies while striking them at every opportunity. If you are Prone, you do not suffer any penalties to your Armor TN or to your attacks with Small weapons (or when unarmed). You still gain the Prone Armor TN bonus against ranged attacks. Also, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to rolls made to take control of Grapples and to your damage rolls with unarmed strikes, improvised weapons, and Small weapons.

Rank Two: Drunk Loses His Sandal

Mantis Brawlers learn to be swift and flexible fighters who attack their foes from unexpected directions, often deliberately offering the appearance of weakness in order to create openings. If you successfully perform the Feint maneuver, you may choose to reduce the extra damage from the Feint by 5 in order to add +5 to your Armor TN until the start of your next Turn; if you were Prone when you performed the Feint, you add +10 instead.

Also, immediately after an enemy attack resolves against you (whether or not the attack hit or inflicted damage on you), you may take a Free Action to become Prone.

Rank Three: Drunk Never Falls

The third lesson of the Mantis Brawler is to win even when exhausted, dead drunk, or clubbed on the head. During a skirmish, you do not suffer any penalties for being Fatigued or Dazed, nor do you suffer any penalties for intoxication. If you become Stunned, you may still take one Simple Action per Round.

Rank Four: Two Drunks Dance

The erratic bobbing, squirming, and weaving of the Mantis Brawler creates additional opportunities for him to attack his foe. You may attack as a Simple Action when fighting unarmed, with an improvised weapon, or with a Small weapon.

Rank Five: Drunk Pounds a Door

The final lesson of the Mantis Brawler is to strike so hard his foe never gets the chance to strike back. When making a melee attack you may spend a Void Point to deliver a fierce shattering blow; this attack gains a bonus of +4k1 to both the attack roll and the damage roll. If you are Prone, the bonus is +4k2 instead.

New School: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter

During the early days of the Tsuruchi family when they were known simply as the Wasp Clan, the vassals of Tsuruchi were well known for two things: their incredible skill at archery and their unwavering tenacity as bounty hunters. The clan was authorized by the Emerald Champion to hunt down fugitives from justice for a fee, and for many years the Wasp survived largely on the income generated by this practice. Although many samurai condemned this mercenary practice, no one could deny Tsuruchi prowess and few clan magistrates refused to employ them.

Since the Tsuruchi family joined the Mantis clan, its two iconic pursuits have separated somewhat, becoming distinct schools which young Tsuruchi may choose between depending on their aptitudes and preferences. The majority choose to pursue a career as soldiers and archers within the Mantis military (the Tsuruchi Archer School), but a select few continue the family's original tradition by becoming members of the small but famed Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School.

Members of the Tsuruchi Bounty Hunters are usually treated as clan magistrates within the Tsuruchi provinces and often within the Mantis Clan's territory as a whole. The contract between Tsuruchi and the Emerald Champion still exists and thus the family can impart authority to a select number of students that is roughly equivalent to an Emerald Magistrate, at least insofar as the ability to apprehend known criminals. The Tsuruchi are extremely cautious in whom they trust such authority, however, since they are keenly aware the contract could be nullified if it is abused or misused.

Tsuruchi Bounty Hunters traverse the Empire in search of fugitives, those accused of crimes by superior authorities who have escaped the justice they deserve. Although they can technically only hunt those decried by an Imperial authority, the Tsuruchi also accept individual bounties from clans or families who wish their assistance. Bounties are usually a number of koku equal to the Insight Rank of the target. This fee is doubled if the target is a violent criminal or a shugenja, and may increase even further if special or unusual circumstances apply.

Ronin Brawlers

Generally speaking, ronin Techniques take the form of Paths like those found in the L5R RPG 4th Edition Core rulebook and the supplement *Enemies of the Empire*. However, there is no universal law that requires all ronin to be trained solely in Paths. In certain circumstances it may be possible for a ronin to train in a School, and the Mantis Brawler—a School maintained by individual teachers, many of whom have been expelled from the Mantis Clan—is a perfect example of this. With the GM's permission, players may make ronin characters who are trained in this School, picking up the Techniques from veteran fighters they meet in a career of hard living and even harder drinking.

New School: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Athletics, Hunting (Tracking), Intimidation, Investigation, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore: Underworld
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Bow or Knife, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank One: A Hunter's Sense

A Tsuruchi bounty hunter is well known as a fierce and terrible opponent of all who seek to evade justice, and even those who are without guilt find them intimidating. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to any Intimidation Skill Roll used against someone of lower caste who you believe can help you find your prey. When interacting with samurai, this bonus is reduced to +1k0 but applies to all Social Skill Rolls, not just Intimidation. Also, when you are hunting a particular target, you may roll additional unkept dice equal to your School Rank on any Hunting or Investigation Skill Rolls used to track the quarry down.

Rank Two: No Prey Escapes

A true master of the Tsuruchi method has an encyclopedic knowledge of criminals throughout the Empire and can use them as tools to capture his prey. You may spend a Void Point to automatically succeed at a Lore: Underworld Skill Roll to identify any criminals in an area who you might be able to press for information regarding your prey. You lose Honor as normal for associating with such individuals, however.

Rank Three: Justice of the Wasp

The Tsuruchi hunters are merciless, but have a reputation for bringing their prey back alive to suffer a proper sentence for their criminal acts. When facing an opponent who has been declared guilty of a crime by an Imperial or a higher Mantis authority, you may make the Disarm or Knockdown Maneuvers for one Raise less than normal. If you successfully execute one of these Maneuvers against an opponent, that opponent is automatically Dazed.

Rank Four: Twin Sting Strike

The justice of a Tsuruchi is swift and without mercy. You may make ranged attacks as a Simple Action when wielding a yumi. Additionally, if facing any target decreed guilty of a crime by an Imperial or a higher Mantis authority, you may also make melee attacks as a Simple Action when wielding a katana or any knife.

Rank Five: Eyes of the Wasp

The worst truth a bounty hunter learns is that anyone can be a fugitive; thus a bounty hunter makes careful assessments of everyone he meets. When you identify a samurai using a Lore: Heraldry Skill Roll, you not only learn his Glory but also his Honor Rank and all Social and Mental Disadvantages. Also, any opponent who may be targeted by your Rank 3 Technique is now automatically Dazed if you successfully hit them with an attack, regardless of whether or not you use a Disarm or Knockdown Maneuver on them.

Yoritomo Shugenja

There are few families in the Empire as diverse and ambitious as the Yoritomo, so it is no surprise the family supports a small number of shugenja. The tradition stems back to the earliest day of the Mantis Clan. Kaimetsu-Uo, the clan's founder, had no capacity to speak to the kami, but one of his daughters did and she married a ronin who possessed the same ability. Thus began a branch of the Yoritomo family that possesses an unparalleled ability to commune with the spirits of the sea and storm.

For centuries, the small number of Yoritomo shugenja have maintained an inexplicably powerful link to the spirits of the sea and to a lesser extent the spirits of wind and storms. The Moshi have proven more capable in the latter since their induction into the clan, but no shugenja in the Empire is at home on the seas as one from the Yoritomo family. The school maintains a number of small temples throughout the Mantis islands, but none are as well known as the infamous Tempest Island, a small island renowned for the battering it receives during storm season. It is here the most powerful among the Yoritomo hone their skills and power, making themselves a force to be reckoned with throughout the whole of Rokugan.

New Basic School: Yoritomo Shugenja

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Athletics, Calligraphy, Knives, Lore: Theology, Meditation, Sailing (Navigation), any one Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 10 Koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Water/Earth

Technique: Child of the Sea

The family line of the Yoritomo who possess the talent for magic have a strong bond with the sea and with weather as a whole. You may expend one spell slot to alter the wind conditions in your current location by one degree. If you also spend a Void Point, you may instead shift the entire weather status one degree. You may expend a maximum combined total of spell slots and/or Void Points equal to your School Rank each Round to enact these shifts. These shifts affect an area a number of miles equal to your School Rank in all directions from your current location.

You gain a Free Raise on all Thunder spells.

- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Water spells, 2 Fire spells, and 1 Air spell

New Alternate Path: Moshi Guardian of the Sun

For much of their existence the Moshi family were without a ready source of bushi to defend their holdings. The family's meager resources permitted them to hire a small number of ronin to supplement the very limited numbers of their own family who were not shugenja, but it was generally agreed that this was insufficient, and only the extreme isolation of the family's holdings prevented it from being a critical problem. This lack of bushi has been less of an issue since the family's induction into the Mantis Clan, since the Yoritomo can supply ample forces to secure the Moshi homelands, but the family still prefers to have its most sacred locations defended by its own.

The bushi unit known as the Guardians of the Sun has evolved over the centuries. It is comprised of the finest Moshi warriors available and specializes not only in the defense of the homeland but also in the protection of the family's shugenja. While not as well known as the Shiba or Daidoji yojimbo traditions, the Guardians of the Sun are nevertheless well regarded for their dedication and prowess.

Wind & Weather

Generally speaking, wind and weather conditions should serve as descriptive aspects of an L5R game rather than taking an active mechanical role. However, if the GM or players desire to incorporate wind and weather into the game mechanically, the following are some suggestions. These rules may also be used as guidelines for the effects of the Yoritomo Shugenja School's Technique.

Degrees of Wind: Still, Breeze, Gusts, Storm

Degrees of Weather: Calm, Showers, Rain, Storm, Torrential Storm, Hurricane

Heavy winds or bad weather will inflict penalties on ranged attacks (and possibly spell-casting, if visibility is low enough), beginning with Gusts or Rain at +5 to the TN and increasing at +5 per degree of severity thereafter.

Wind and Weather effects are not cumulative, as Wind is assumed to be included in a listed Weather effect.

New Alternate Path: Moshi Guardian of the Sun [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 1
- **Replaces:** Any Mantis Bushi 1
- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Lore: Theology, Spears, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Bow or Knife, Traveling Pack, 5 koku
- **Requirements:** None
- **Special:** Prior to the Moshi joining the Mantis, this technique can also replace Insight Rank 1 for a Moshi bushi without a school

Technique: Defended as the Sun

The Guardians of the Sun take an oath to repel all attacks against their sacred charges. When defending a Moshi personage or holding in a skirmish, you may choose to either gain a bonus of +1k0 to your attack roll or to add an additional +1k1 to the Armor TN of a person or object you are defending with the Guard Action. You make this determination at the start of your Turn during each Round of the skirmish.

New Alternate Path: Kitsune Ranger

At their heart the Kitsune are a simple people who have weathered the centuries due to their unique harmony with the forest and spirits around them. Although many of the family possesses the ability to speak with the kami, there are plenty in each generation who are unable to do so. These men and women still serve their clan, however, and still possess the same link their kinsmen enjoy with the wilderness. They are among the finest woodsmen to be found anywhere in the Empire.

New Alternate Path: Kitsune Ranger [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Any Mantis Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Hunting 3
- **Special:** Prior to the Kitsune joining the Mantis Clan, this Technique may be taken as a Rank 2 Path by any bushi-trained Kitsune, regardless of school—including those who do not have a school. This Technique can also be taken as a Rank 2 Ronin Technique for any ronin characters who possess a Ally Advantage associated with the Kitsune family.

Technique: One with the Wild

Although they do not possess an ability to speak to the kami, the Kitsune rangers are at home in the wilderness like few others in the Empire. You gain a Free Raise on all Hunting Skill Rolls and on any Stealth Skill Rolls made while in a rural environment. Additionally, you gain a bonus of +2k0 on any Contested Roll involving detection, whether you are avoiding detection or attempting to detect a hidden opponent.

New Kata: Son of Storms

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Schools:** Akodo Bushi, Shosuro Infiltrator, Yoritomo Bushi
- **Effect:** When attacking with a Small melee weapon, any Reduction an opponent possesses is decreased by 1.

New Kata: Strength of the Mantis

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Schools:** Any Mantis Bushi
- **Effect:** The attack penalty for ranged attacks fired against opponents currently in melee range is reduced by 3.

New Mantis Ancestors

Moshi Azami [6 points]

Moshi (formerly Isawa) Azami received the blessing of Lady Sun and shared her insight with her followers, leading the Centipede to become the most devout followers of the Sun Goddess anywhere in the Empire. Prior to the twelfth century Azami is solely an ancestor for the Centipede Clan. Her guidance bestows the favor of the Sun upon you—you suffer no ill effects from the Sun (e.g. dehydration, sunburn, etc) and gain Reduction of 5 against fire (normal or magical).

- **Demands:** Azami was a profoundly pious woman. She will leave you if you commit any act of impiety or blasphemy against the Fortunes or the Celestial Heavens (deliberately or accidentally).

Osusuki & Akomachi [5 points]

The two ancestors known as Osusuki and Akomachi were actually kitsune spirits who forged an alliance with the nascent Fox Clan. They took human form, one man and one woman, and married into the Kitsune family, bonding the two groups by blood forever. Their guidance will only be bestowed on members of the Kitsune family who can claim a direct blood connection. The attention of Osusuki and Akomachi allows you to speak with animals and animal shapeshifter spirits; furthermore, their wisdom allows you to always find food and water in the wilderness.

- **Demands:** Ososuki and Akomachi remain deeply tied to the animal spirits who birthed them. They will abandon you if you ever voluntarily or knowingly kill an animal or an animal spirit (except for self-defense, which they forgive).

Chapter Six

The Phoenix Clan

Isawa Tadaka adjusts the piece of dark cloth hiding the lower half of his face and sighs softly. The bodies of peasants lie all along the road, the stench of their rotting flesh filling his nose despite his efforts. Their bodies are torn and mauled, and the Master of Earth recognizes the signs of Taint in their festering wounds. He focuses his mind and utters a quick prayer to the kami, seeking knowledge of what did this atrocity. He has been following his prey for weeks, and this may finally be his chance. The kami of the Earth answer him, showing him the way to his foe, and he steps forward with grim determination.

All around the Empire, the Clan War is raging. Men turn on each other and evil of all kinds roams free. The Master of Earth knows his own clan is not free of the darkness, nor is he. He has sacrificed the purity of his body and soul, abandoned the defense of his clan. Worst of all, he has abandoned his yojimbo and beloved, Shiba Tsukune. The thought of her makes him grip tightly at the blessed pendant hanging around his neck. An uneasy prickling runs through his hand, for the Taint he carries is slowly turning his fingers to pieces of rock. He ignores the feeling and focuses on the pendant, sensing its distant twin, the one he gave her as a gift. She is safe, he perceives, wherever she is. It gives him strength to carry on a little farther.

The price of knowledge was high indeed, and he will pay it all in due time. Tadaka has no illusions about his ultimate fate; he hopes only to die before the Taint can claim him. But perhaps he has learned enough, bought enough time, to save the Empire from the growing power of Fu Leng. Let him only accomplish that and he will gladly pass on and let Emma-O judge his soul.

For now he still has work to do. The kami of Earth keep whispering to him, guiding his footsteps towards a cave off the path. Their low rumbling voices are comforting to him; he has often found their company more enjoyable than human beings with all their noise and foolishness. In some ways he has become like the kami he wields: steadfast, direct, resolute. With the kami's help he could raise mountains, bring down his enemies, and resist the Taint that clawed at his soul.

The sound of his sandals echoes off the walls of the cave as he steps inside. He murmurs a prayer to the Fire kami and a small ball of light coalesces in his hand, piercing the darkness within the cavern. There are noises ahead, inhuman mutterings and growls, and Tadaka draws on the strength of the stone around him as he steels himself for the confrontation. While men and beasts never last, you are forever, he prays. Lend me now a small piece of your eternal strength.

The fire kami's flickering light shows him a cavern full of gibbering, snarling goblins. On the far side, looming over them, a demonic form feasts on the flesh of a dead peasant. Three flaming tongues slither from its gaping maw, tearing at its unholy feast.

"Akuma spawn," Tadaka whispers. "You who profane the name of my ancestor." His eyes glow bright green as he snarls prayers and the Earth kami answer him with fury. The oni's three eyes burn with rage as it tosses its meal aside and rises to its full height, its head brushing the roof of the cave.

"Foolish human," the oni snarls, flexing claws as long as knife blades. "You cannot win. The war is as good as over. Soon Fu Leng will walk free among the mortals and all shall bow to his power!"

In answer a kanji of pure green light appears below Tadaka's feet, and rays of light spread from it along the ground. The goblins fry to ash as the power of jade strikes them. Tadaka steps closer to the demon who wears his ancestor's name, and he smiles beneath his cloth mask. His hands clasp into a prayer sign. "You do not understand. I did not come here for victory—such a thing is irrelevant, as you are but a weak shadow of the true monster." His eyes flash green again as huge stones rip themselves from the ground, hurtling toward the demon even as it charges. The rock storm hurls it back and pins it against the far wall. Before it can break free Tadaka shouts a loud kiai, and the stones shed their outer layer to reveal interiors of jade and crystal. The monster shrieks as holy energy spreads over its body, holding it paralyzed.

"As I said," Tadaka murmurs, walking toward the oni, "I did not come here for victory. Although be assured it will come, sooner or later." The demon shivers and twists within the glowing light of jade, flinching away from the small man approaching it. "No, I came for knowledge. So now, demon, tell me everything you know about Fu Leng's return. And tell me where I may find your creator, the Oni Lord Akuma. Tell me all that, and I will make sure your trip back to Jigoku is a quick one."

History of the Phoenix Clan

The Phoenix Clan was founded by the Kami Shiba, widely considered the wisest of the Kami; his intellect was said to be a match for his twin brother Bayushi's wits, and Shiba defeated Bayushi in the great tournament to choose who would become Emperor. He was subsequently defeated by his sister Doji—he could not read her stance and was forced to make a premature attack. But Shiba felt no bitterness at his loss, and willingly swore allegiance to Hantei when he won the tournament. Shiba set about gathering followers to create what would become the Phoenix Clan, handpicking warriors who were also scholars and knowledgeable men. Those tended to be a rare breed in the early days of the Empire, when civilization was newly born and most of its conventions did not yet exist. Still, the clan's size increased and Shiba discovered several notable early followers, especially the lady Asako and her husband Yogo. He explored the borders of the lands that would become the Empire, seeking out free tribes and independent cities, and thus he eventually found the tribe of Isawa.

Isawa was a powerful tribal chieftain, ruling the city of Gisei Toshi and its surrounding lands. He was also a powerful sorcerer, using the power of his blood to call on the elements, smite his enemies, and protect his city. At that time the Rokugani had little understanding of the elemental kami and did not recognize any danger in using blood to power magic; thankfully, they also had not yet discovered that blood could invoke the evil spirits known as kansen. Nevertheless Isawa's magic, while powerful, was a also a crude and unnatural art.

Isawa was unwilling to surrender his independence, but recognized the reality that the Kami would crush any tribe who openly opposed them. He offered nominal allegiance to Shiba's clan in return for keeping full control of his tribe's affairs. Shiba, a man who felt no desire for needless violence, found this compromise acceptable, and the arrangement might have lasted for centuries had not the First War intervened.

The First War, in which the Empire confronted Fu Leng's monstrous legions, was a crucial formative time for the nascent Phoenix Clan. While Shiba's followers fought as bravely as any, the clan's small size made every loss painful. Shiba implored Isawa to join the Empire's struggle against Fu Leng, but the tribe leader refused to leave his community; he felt no higher loyalty to the Kami or the Empire they were trying to build. He did, however, agree to dispatch some of his students to join the fighting and to train talented individuals from other families. One of his best students was Yogo, the husband of Shiba's follower Asako. Yogo single-handedly inflicted a severe defeat on Fu Leng's forces, but in retaliation the dark Kami cursed Yogo and all his bloodline. Full of despair, he fled the

The Symbol of the Phoenix

It is said that in the early days of the Empire, when the followers of Shiba were happy and the specter of the First War had not yet come upon the land, Shiba was nonetheless filled with concern. There was no unity within his clan; his people seemed to lack a single identity that could bind them together as a true clan. There was friction between the Shiba and Isawa, between Asako and Isawa, and even in the most peaceful moments he could sense that underlying tension.

One night, after a day spent meditating on this dilemma, Shiba dreamed he stood atop a mountain. A flaming bird of scarlet and yellow, a creature of unimaginable beauty and power, soared over his head and perched on a tree, staring at him. Awed, he asked, "What sort of creature are you?"

"I am the universe entire," answered the bird. "Fire is my form, but not the totality of my being. I was hatched from an egg, from the fluids of life, so I am from the element of Water. I soar through the skies with the wind under my wings, so I am from the element of Air. I die as ash and rise whole from the ground again, so I am of the element of Earth. And I am all of these things, and none of them, so I am truly from the element of Void."

Shiba considered this answer and then asked how, if the bird was the universe entire, he could be separate from it.

"You are not separate, but one and the same. I am the reflection of your soul and you are the manifestation of mine. We are death reborn, immortality through a thousand lifetimes. We are the cycle of the cosmos spinning in patterns as old as time. We will die in flames only to rise again and again, until the sky itself collapses. We are the Phoenix—the Eye of Eternity."

Shiba awoke from his dream and immediately rushed to ring a great bell summoning all his people. When they had gathered, he told them of the vision and proclaimed they would henceforth be a single people, destined to be forever reborn. They would be the Phoenix Clan.

Phoenix Clan and wandered for months before Bayushi persuaded him to join the Scorpion.

After months of fighting the First War seemed to be approaching catastrophic defeat. The Little Teacher Shinsei appeared at that critical moment to offer his counsel to Hantei. Shiba was fascinated; Shinsei was a mere mortal man, but his wisdom was clearly unique. Shiba recorded every word of the long night's conversation between Shinsei and Hantei, creating the document now known as the *Tao of Shinsei*. When the time came for Shinsei to choose the Seven Thunders, Shiba begged to be allowed to fight, but the Little Prophet shook his head. The champions had to be mortals, he explained, because "fortune favors the mortal man." The man he needed was not Shiba, but Isawa.

Shiba and Shinsei arrived in Gisei Toshi to discover Isawa leading his family in a disturbing magical ritual that bound the soul of his recently deceased daughter into the city's walls, protecting it from Fu Leng's armies. The Little Teacher spoke with Isawa long through the night, showing him the way of the elements and how they might be used in a new form of magic. Isawa was deeply impressed with the prophet's words but still refused to leave the city, insisting the defense of his people came first. Shiba begged him to accompany the Thunders, but Isawa replied, "I am not your subject, and I will not have my people believing I have sold them into slavery."

It was then Shiba performed a simple act that would come to define his whole clan: he knelt. For a Kami, a god among mortals, to kneel in front of a mortal was unthinkable, but Shiba willingly sacrificed his pride for the sake of the Empire. He pledged to protect Isawa and his family forever if Isawa would join the fight against Fu Leng. Stunned by the Kami's sincerity and honor, Isawa agreed, and his tribe joined the Phoenix Clan in truth.

Isawa died alongside his fellows of the Seven Thunders, but it was his magic that captured the Dark God's soul in twelve unique Black Scrolls. And the inspiration of Shinsei's teachings guided his followers in the creation of the true elemental magic that Rokugan practices today.

The Death of Shiba and the Path of Man

Accounts vary as to how Shiba died, and indeed some tales claim his vision of the Phoenix took place years after the end of the First War. However, in modern Rokugan it is now generally believed that although Shiba did not accompany the Seven Thunders he was unwilling to leave them to struggle alone in the Shadowlands, and ventured into that realm to rescue them. There he met Shinsei and Shosuro, the sole surviving Thunder, who were under attack from the terrible beast known as the First Oni. Shiba died to defeat the oni, buying Shosuro a chance to escape and eventually return to Rokugan with the twelve Black Scrolls.

It is said that at the moment Shiba died, his son Shiba Tsuzaki suddenly departed from the family palace, returning with the light of strange wisdom in his eyes. "My father is dead," he declared, "but he will live forever in his descendants." All present felt a powerful wave of energy from the young man, the force of Shiba's very soul. Thanks to his embrace of Shinsei's teachings, Shiba's soul would remain with his clan forever, passing from one chosen heir to the next at the moment of death.

Henceforth, whenever the Phoenix Clan Champion died, his soul joined Shiba's and the previous Champions' in the search for a worthy successor. The chosen heir—who was always of the Shiba family, but seldom directly related to the previous Champion—would soon hear the voices of all the past Champions speaking to him, calling him to rule the clan and imparting their wisdom for his use. Although this granted the Phoenix leadership unprecedented advantages over other clans, it also sometimes made for very odd lines of succession and occasional delays until the next Champion could be located. The Isawa soon developed magical techniques to assist the process, but the fact that a samurai could be promoted from castle guard to ruler of a Great Clan was sometimes problematic. However, the Soul of Shiba never failed to select the correct Champion for the time.

Shiba's discovery and transformation also had a powerful impact on the clan's third family, the Asako. Months after he joined with his son Tsuzaki, Shiba visited Asako and imparted a secret to her. "It is what Shinsei explained to me, there in the Dark Lands," he whispered. "A great secret has sustained me beyond death, and I have chosen you to guard it until humanity is ready." What he revealed is known to the Asako family as the Path of Man. Mortals could not only transform destiny and understand the elements, but they could ascend to godhood itself. Moreover, there were ways to hasten this apotheosis, to literally "trick" nature and the elements into granting this power. Asako was stunned and delighted with this knowledge, and she founded a secretive and reclusive monastic order, the so-called *henshin*, to preserve the secret and to study the ways in which it might be perfected.

Although the true nature of the Path of Man and the henshin order has remained hidden to all but a handful of Rokugani, the Isawa are very much aware that the Soul of Shiba shared some manner of vital secret wisdom with Asako. They demanded she share it with them, and her refusal planted seeds of rivalry and distrust between the two families that have endured ever since.

Isawa's Last Wish

The magical entity known as Isawa's Last Wish was quite possibly the single greatest achievement of magic in Rokugan's history. It was a grand magical artifact originally intended as the wedding gift for the marriage of Isawa's daughter Akiko to Lady Asako's only son Sagoten. Isawa worked closely with several other Phoenix Clan shugenja to craft a unique force of beauty and power, formed from hundreds of kami of all four elements, something the likes of which the Empire had never seen before. However, complications soon arose. When Isawa perished

on the Day of Thunder and Asako's husband Yogo departed the clan, the work of constructing the Last Wish slowed tremendously, and the emerging rivalry between the Isawa and Asako families turned the Last Wish into a source of conflict rather than a demonstration of harmony and unity. The marriage between Sagoten and Akiko was publicly called off, and the unfinished magical construct was hidden away in a remote mountain shrine.

This did not end the matter, however. The Isawa and Asako continued to quarrel over who should have possession of the artifact, often to the point of hurling public accusations in the Imperial Court. Both agreed the unfinished construct was dangerous, but neither wished the other family to be the one to complete or dismantle it. This finally forced the intercession of Emperor Hantei himself. "If there is to be no peace between the families of the Phoenix," he proclaimed, "then they do not deserve the harvest of Isawa's last wish." Hantei ordered the artifact be watched over by the Shiba family, and proclaimed it should be deconstructed immediately.

Unfortunately, deconstructing the Wish proved impossible. Although it was incomplete, its power had already awakened and it had become sentient. It could enter the minds of those around it, reacting unpredictably to their emotions. Those who came near it with intentions of harm were either destroyed or driven mad. Finally the Isawa requested the Emperor rescind his decree and leave the Wish intact, since fighting it could mean the deaths of thousands. Hantei reluctantly agreed, ordering the Wish never be completed. Isawa's notes concerning its creation were destroyed.

The Last Wish lay dormant in its remote shrine for many centuries, slowly driven mad by its lack of human interaction and its frustrated desire to understand the world around it. It learned humanity and the importance of compassion and mercy from Asako, but the war against Fu Leng and the bitter clashes between the families also taught it conflict, sadness, and death. More than one foolish shugenja attempted to use its power, inevitably to their own doom as the Wish's power and madness overwhelmed and destroyed them.

The End of the Last Wish

During the War of the Spirits in the twelfth century, Isawa Sagoten returned from the spirit realm for a time and created guardians for the Wish out of its own essence. The so-called Children of the Last Wish protected it against outsiders during the War of Spirits and were able to help restore its sanity by acting as its eyes and ears in the Empire. A few years later a young Phoenix samurai named Shiba Aikune, a man who heard only silence when he attempted to talk to his ancestors, came in search of the legendary Wish and became the first person to successfully bond to the object.

In Aikune's hands, the Last Wish became an incredibly potent weapon and Aikune himself became a mighty hero. But there was a price for this: the Wish, which for all its power was strangely innocent and child-like, became completely obsessed with Aikune. When he died defending Emperor Toturi III a few years later, the Wish was driven to madness once more. The Phoenix Clan Champion managed to bond with it, but the Wish's insanity made it impossible to properly control and drove the Champion into rash and dangerous actions. Within a few months, the Champion and Wish alike perished in a violent confrontation with Isawa Sezaru, the mightiest shugenja of the age.

The Thousand Years of Peace

Within the first generation after the First War the Phoenix Clan assumed the basic shape it would retain for the next thousand years. The Shiba warriors protected the clan's borders, the Isawa shugenja pursued magical knowledge and religious wisdom, and the Asako scholars recorded the Empire's history and knowledge while secretly pursuing the Path of Man. While the Shiba family officially led the clan through its Champion, the Kami's oath was enforced and the true leaders of the clan became the heads of the Isawa family. The Isawa created an Elemental Council of five shugenja, the mightiest in each Element, who set the clan's true agenda.

The Phoenix Clan flourished in this early time of relative peace, pursuing intense magical research and religious study. The Emperor had proclaimed Shinseism as the Empire's official religion, and the Isawa family was

forefront in the effort to reconcile the *Tao* with the already existing Fortunist religion. The Phoenix Clan was well suited to this task, since they held the original text of the *Tao* and their clan was home to some of the most pious adepts of Fortunism—Gisei Toshi, in fact, housed one of the earliest temples to the seven Great Fortunes. The modern Rokugani religion born out of their efforts also helped them better understand the concepts underlying shugenja magic, establishing the Phoenix as masters of both religious thought and elemental spellcasting

While the Isawa pursued these pious and esoteric studies, the children of Shiba trained as soldiers and *yojimbo* (bodyguards) in order to fulfill their founder's pledge to protect the Isawa family. They quickly became known throughout the Empire for their peaceful ways, a great oddity among Rokugan's bushi families. The Asako, meanwhile, were known to the rest of Rokugan mainly as calm, thoughtful scholars and monastics, so quiet in their ways that they were often overlooked entirely.

Even in the early days of the Empire, however, the Isawa realized some knowledge was simply too dangerous to be allowed into the Empire as a whole. They remade Gisei Toshi into a secret stronghold, shrouded and protected with magic, where they conducted their most dangerous magical experiments and stored potent and hazardous artifacts. Over the centuries all manner of powerful *nemuranai* would find their way to Gisei Toshi, eventually making it a target for dangerous forces such as the Bloodspeaker Cult.

The Phoenix Clan's history throughout the so-called Thousand Years of Peace was marked by repeated efforts to avoid or end wars, even at extreme cost. Pacifism was one doctrine on which all three families of the Phoenix could agree, and they often put themselves in very dangerous or unpopular positions in the pursuit of peace. This gave the clan a bad reputation in many circles, as other samurai felt insulted when the Phoenix interfered in their quarrels and tried to block them from settling matters of honor through strength of arms.

The clan also continued to research and develop its magical expertise, often to such a degree that individual samurai succumbed to the lure of maho or other forbidden practices. Such atrocities were usually kept out of the public eye, and the Phoenix developed their own punishments for those within their ranks who strayed from the path of honor—most notably the Isawa practice known as the Forgetting. In public, the Phoenix maintained a reputation for both piety and power, and continually advanced themselves as the Empire's reigning masters of all things related to magic and the spirits. This led to the progressive decline and eventual disappearance of the office of Jade Champion, since the Phoenix felt it encroached on their

own areas of power and influence. The Jade Championship would not be reinstated until the twelfth century.

The Phoenix generally kept out of the Empire's larger politics, preferring to avoid such mundane distractions. The one notable exception was the rise of the so-called Gozoku Alliance in the late fourth century. Shiba Gaijushiko, an influential Imperial scribe, persuaded the Phoenix Clan to join with the Crane and Scorpion to create the Gozoku, relegating the Emperor to the position of a powerless figurehead. Gaijushiko was convinced the Gozoku was the best way to ensure peace and stability throughout the Empire. Under Gozoku rule the Phoenix handled many of the Empire's bureaucratic functions and enjoyed what many of them considered a time of artistic and intellectual enlightenment—although the rampant corruption of the era suggests their view was misguided. When Empress Yugozohime rose to power and disbanded the Gozoku, however, Gaijushiko repented his earlier choices and actively helped the Empress eliminate his former allies.

The Five Nights of Shame

"Every soldier that enters there must have no fear, and no desire, and no regret, for each glimmer of these makes the Shuten Doji stronger."

– the Master of Void, year 402

The Five Nights of Shame is a dark smudge on the Phoenix Clan's history, marking the end of an honorable family line and an incident of darkness and tragedy that the clan still prefers not to discuss.

The Snake Clan was founded by a Phoenix named Isawa Chuda who saved the Emperor from a group of mahotsukai. Chuda was rewarded with his own Minor Clan; he told the Emperor his family would be Rokugan's serpent, "creeping into the hidden places and striking down your enemies." Thus the new clan took the name of the Snake. The Snake Clan was fiercely devoted to fighting against the dark arts, and Chuda taught his followers to be loyal to Rokugan and the Emperor above all. The Snake seemed a shining example for the Empire of good deeds rewarded, and the Phoenix saw them as close allies. But their tenacious devotion to purity did not save them from a dark fate.

The Clan Champion Chuda Choro fell ill, wracked with pain and weakness. His son Chuda Tamihei wanted desperately to save him. Consumed with fear for his father's life, with desire to help his father, and with regret for his inability to help, he spoke a dark prayer that was heard by a foul spirit called a Shuten Doji, a being attuned to the Three Sins. For seven years the Shuten Doji tried

The Ritual of Forgetting

When a Phoenix shugenja does something that proves him unworthy of calling on the kami, or dishonors himself or his family, the Isawa are known to employ a special punishment known as the Ritual of Forgetting. The shugenja who has committed such acts is brought before the Elemental Council and questioned on his actions, and if the Council finds him guilty, the ritual is performed forthwith. It is an elaborate rite, requiring nearly sixteen hours, and only the combined Elemental Council has the knowledge and power to perform it. It is never levied lightly—typically only one or two persons in a generation are punished this way.

One who is Forgotten loses all power to speak to the kami or even to sense their presence. In effect, it permanently robs the victim of all magical power, with no possibility of ever regaining it. Even the memories of casting magic in the past become hazy and indistinct, as though seen through a heavy layer of gauze. To the Isawa, this is very nearly the most terrible punishment imaginable, and they do not inflict it without the most careful consideration and judgment.

It is believed a person who has been Forgotten also loses all power to speak with the kansen, and thus far no instance has contradicted this view.

In game terms, a character who is Forgotten loses all ability to cast spells and loses all benefits from shugenja Techniques. If Kiho are in use in the game, they also become unusable to the character. A Henshin who is Forgotten likewise loses all School Techniques and associated abilities. It is left to the discretion of the GM whether a Forgotten character can use maho.

The Oracles

Throughout the history of the Empire, individuals have occasionally appeared who exhibited profound magical power and prophetic gifts. These persons are the Oracles, chosen to carry the power of one of the Elemental Dragons. The Oracles serve as a way for the Dragons to express themselves in the mortal realm without intervening directly and thereby creating Celestial imbalances.

When mortals become Oracles, they usually lose most memory of their former lives and become disconnected from normal mortal affairs. (There have been exceptions, and on at least one occasion an Oracle has voluntarily given up some power in order to retain former human connections.) They are now semi-divine beings who exist only to express the power of the Celestial Dragons and share the wisdom of the Heavens with Rokugan. They do not seem to visibly age, and live far longer than normal mortals. Oracles wander the Empire seemingly at random; they no longer need homes, food, or similar mundane things. An Oracle will offer divine guidance and insight to those who seek them out, but their advice is often enigmatic and mysterious, prone to misinterpretation. As this implies, Oracles are immensely powerful—they manifest a portion of a Celestial Dragon's power, after all. In game terms they may be considered Rank 8 shugenja with affinity in their Element and access to all spells in that Element; they cast spells as Simple Actions, regardless of Mastery Level. They cannot be killed by normal mortal weaponry, although powerful nemuranai such as Bloodswords can destroy them. When an Oracle finally dies or the Dragon decides to pick a new representative, a different mortal takes up the mantle.

The true Oracles are sometimes referred to as the Oracles of Light due to their connection with the Celestial Heavens. During the eleventh century a new group of entities appeared known as the Dark Oracles, corrupt and evil counterparts to the traditional Oracles. The Dark Oracles seem to have been spawned as a side effect of the Oracles of Light taking a more active role in trying to protect Rokugan; some sort of balancing effect within the Celestial Order brought the Dark Oracles into existence to counter this. The Dark Oracles are broadly very similar to their Light counterparts in terms of power and capability, but seek to spread violence, destruction, and evil. They also seem to be more willing to act directly to carry out their goals, rather than the advice and guidance which the Oracles of Light usually employ.

Every Oracle, Light and Dark, is connected to the mortal realm through a mysterious artifact known as a Covenant. These items are scattered around the Empire and sometimes appear quite mundane; seeking them out can be a formidable quest. A person who possesses a Covenant gains power over the Oracle associated with it. The Oracle cannot directly harm that person, and the possessor of the Covenant can issue one command which the Oracle must obey.

to get Tamihei to finish his tainted prayers and embrace its power. Tamihei refused, year after year... until his dying father begged him for an end to his misery and pain. Then Tamihei's honor finally broke. He finished his dark prayers, seeking a way to achieve immortality and bring his father back from the dead. The Shuten Doji's power was unleashed and it quickly spread from Tamihei to the rest of the clan, leaping through speech from one to another until all the Snake Clan had been corrupted and overwhelmed.

Somehow the Elemental Masters learned things were terribly amiss in the lands of the Snake. Some say it was the intercession of the Oracles of Light, who told the Master of Void about the Shuten Doji. Some say it was a devout deaf boy who prayed all his life to hear the bell at the Temple of Jizo—and when he rang the bell on the day the Shuten Doji was unleashed, the Masters heard it in Kyuden Isawa. Whatever the truth may be, the Masters soon came to the Snake lands with a massive force of Phoenix samurai. They used their power to defeat the possessed samurai of the Snake, and then they sent their army into the minor clan's village... sent them to kill, for only by destroying every possessed body could the Shuten Doji be defeated.

Attacking at night, because that was when the Shuten Doji was made manifest, the soldiers of the Phoenix Clan killed every man, woman, and child of the Snake. For five nights they killed, until not a single member of the Snake Clan remained, not even an eta or an infant. And then they burned the village to the ground and marched away, never to return.

The Phoenix privately informed the Emperor of the reasons for their terrible actions, but they have never publicly explained themselves beyond saying the Snake Clan fell to the power of maho. They are the Empire's masters of magic, and they will not have their decisions questioned by those who do not understand them. When asked about the incident in public, the Five Masters replied only, "Never again." It was not just a statement of their devotion to protecting the Empire from the terrors of maho. It was also a prayer to never have to take such brutal and bloody action once more.

The Battle of the Broken Daisho

"You would rip the Empire apart for a hundred years with the consequences of this day. Your rage would outlive you both. My men will not live in the world you would make."

– Shiba Toriiko

The Phoenix defense of peace has no better example than the Battle of the Broken Daisho. In the eighth century a feud between Kakita Gosano, lord of the Kakita, and Matsu Tusun, daimyo of the Matsu, had escalated to warfare. The two lords rode out to face each other at the head of mighty armies, each swearing to destroy the other. Poised on the field of battle, waiting for their bloodlust to be quenched, the two generals were stunned when a lightning bolt pierced the skies and a torrential storm appeared out of nowhere. From the haze of rain the Phoenix Clan's single army marched, led by Clan Champion Shiba Toriiko. She

berated the two generals for their maddened bloodlust and placed her army between their forces.

The Lion forces sprang into action immediately; Matsu Tusun feared the Crane had somehow convinced the Phoenix to aid them, and ordered his men to attack. The Lion soldiers charged and cut down dozens of Phoenix samurai in moments, but not a single Shiba so much as drew his sword or made a sound as they were butchered. Awed and shamed by the Phoenix's discipline and courage, the Lion soldiers halted their attack. Many of Matsu Tusun's senior commanders committed sepukku, caught between his order to attack and the bravery of men who would die but not fight.

As the Lion attack faltered, Kakita Gosano rode out to meet Toriiko, demanding she step aside so he could take his revenge against the Matsu family. Toriiko stood unmoving, declaring she would rather die than gaze on a world devoured by pride. She placed her hand on her katana and Gosano immediately drew his sword and cut her down. Toriiko did not even flinch as she died, refusing to draw her blade. Gosano, stunned, could feel his ancestors turning their backs on him for his weak and shameful actions.

A short while later Matsu Tusun received the daisho of Kakita Gosano. The swords were broken in two, and in an accompanying letter Gosano announced he had left the samurai way of life. He would seek to build the world Shiba Toriiko spoke of, a world governed by words and not by blood. Tusun accepted Gosano's defeat as more than sufficient for his revenge and withdrew his own forces; the war ended before it ever began, and Shiba Toriiko is remembered as one of the Phoenix Clan's greatest heroes.

The Phoenix in Modern Times

The Clan War was a terrible time for the Phoenix. The Elemental Masters, sensing the rising power of Fu Leng, succumbed to hubris and decided to open several Black Scrolls the clan had secretly acquired from the Scorpion centuries before. Even worse, they summoned an oni to interrogate for further knowledge. While these dire actions did indeed bring them precious knowledge, the Taint corrupted the masters of Fire, Water, Earth, and Air. In the end Isawa Tsuke, the Master of Fire, became Lost and turned against the Empire. It took the sacrifice of Isawa Tomo (Master of Water), Isawa Uona (Mas-

Akuma no Oni and the Lure of Knowledge

"We are monsters. We are nightmares. In the land of the spiritually blind, we are cursed to see clearly."

—Isawa Akuma

The Phoenix Clan has always sought to learn more about the world, to find forbidden knowledge and new sources of power. Although this perpetual quest has allowed them to accomplish great things, it has also sometimes led them down dark paths. There are good reasons why most Rokugani dare not pursue power too fiercely. No story better exemplifies this than the tale of Isawa Akuma.

Akuma lived in the third century. He was a shugenja obsessed with understanding the power of identity in the mortal realm. He pored over all the libraries at his disposal, even the secret records in Gisei Toshi, but was never satisfied with the answers he found. Eventually he sought knowledge elsewhere: among the creatures of the Shadowlands. Akuma believed his questions could only be answered by the foul entities known as oni, and foolishly thought his power more than sufficient to the task. The Crab offered many warnings but Akuma saw no need to listen to them—they did not possess his power or wisdom, after all.

Isawa Akuma spent much time in the Shadowlands capturing and questioning smaller oni. Finally he summoned one himself, demanding the secrets he had sought for so long. Accounts differ as to whether he performed this blasphemous action while still in the Shadowlands or whether he returned to Gisei Toshi first, but regardless, it was a dreadful mistake. The oni stole Isawa Akuma's name and became Akuma no Oni, one of the most powerful Oni Lords ever to walk the mortal realm. Akuma's own fate is unknown, although one popular story claims he wandered the Shadowlands as a madman and was eventually killed by the very Kuni shugenja who tried to warn him against his quest.

ter of Air), and Shiba Ujimitsu (the Clan Champion) to bring Tsuke down. Of the four Tainted masters only Isawa Tadaka, the Master of Earth, resisted the power of corruption long enough to put his knowledge to use, fighting the armies of the Shadowlands and becoming one of the Seven Thunders. He died facing the reborn Fu Leng.

The Clan War left the Phoenix in tatters, their numbers low and only one Elemental Master (Void) still alive. The clan decided to accept any shugenja into its ranks until it could recover its strength. Indeed, some voices in the courts questioned the Phoenix Clan's continued status as a Great Clan given the few samurai left in its ranks. It would be a full generation before the Phoenix regained its strength.

While the War Against the Shadow was an equally dangerous time for the Empire, it proved to offer an unexpected opportunity for the Phoenix Clan. The vast majority of the Dragon Clan's Agasha family, disgusted by their Clan Champion Hitomi's bizarre actions (the result of influence from the Lying Darkness), left their clan and joined the Phoenix. The leader of the rebels, Agasha Gennai, joined the Elemental Council as the Master of Air and the Agasha became a fourth family within the Phoenix. This event was quite controversial, since many believed the Agasha should have committed seppuku in protest of Hitomi's actions rather than betray their oaths of fealty. Relations between the Dragon and Phoenix, formerly close, became strained for many years to come. On the other hand, the arrival of the Agasha introduced the Phoenix to new ways such as alchemy and multi-elemental magic which they had not previously explored.

After the conclusion of the War Against the Darkness, the Phoenix Clan devoted itself to restoring its traditional place in the Empire, trying once again to uphold its principles of peace and its magical expertise. During the Race for the Throne, the Phoenix did all they could to keep the armed conflicts between the clans as modest as possible, sacrificing great resources to do so and even occupying the Imperial Capital for a time. The coronation of Empress Iweko I was welcomed by the Phoenix, who saw a blissful renewal of mankind's proper relations to Heaven. Despite facing subsequent conflicts with dangerous gaijin invaders, the Phoenix remained secure in the faith that they would always, one way or the other, rise from the ashes again and again.

Families of the Phoenix Clan

For most of its history, the Phoenix Clan had only three families—the Isawa, Shiba, and Asako. Relations between the three were not always harmonious, however; the Asako and Isawa in particular have long quarreled over the Last Wish and the mystical secrets imparted by Shiba at his death. And while the Shiba as a whole readily accepted their role as protectors of the Isawa, the warrior family always included a minority who chafed at the Isawa's pacifistic rule.

The Agasha family did not join the Phoenix until the twelfth century, but its integration into the clan was surprisingly easy—the Agasha had no part in the quarrels between the other families and thus could be friends to all.

The Asako Family

"An untested virtue is not a virtue at all."

– Lady Asako

Lady Asako was one of the early mortal followers of Shiba. She was not a warrior but a peaceful woman who served as a healer during the First War. Her husband Yogo was a shugenja of great power, but after his terrible curse came upon him he left the Phoenix and eventually joined the Scorpion. Asako was deeply affected by Yogo's decision, but she remained a faithful servant of Shiba and her son continued her family line within the Phoenix. Many months later it was Asako who was privileged to hear Shiba's last words from beyond death, revealing to her the secrets of the Path of Man.

The modern Asako family is a great peculiarity. Outwardly they are a calm and likeable family, proud but not arrogant, optimistic without succumbing to foolhardiness, peaceful without being weak. Most of them work as scholars or historians, recording history, geography, customs, and every other sort of knowledge. While some of these loremasters stay in the libraries of the Phoenix Clan for almost their entire lives, others go forth into the Empire to collect knowledge and learn about other clans first-hand. By default these gentle scholars often find themselves serving as diplomats, though they would prefer to hand off political duties to the Shiba or Isawa.

Some of Asako's family do show talent in the shugenja art—after all, her husband was Yogo and his bloodline passed down through their son. Such rarities usually train with the Isawa family, although they rarely if ever reach the higher ranks of magical power. Many of them also serve the clan in the ranks of the Inquisitors, a group of elite monks who hunt for maho-tsukai both inside and outside the clan. Indeed, the Asako name is often directly connected to the Inquisitor order in recognition of their close association.

The Asako Family Mon

The mon of the Asako shows a simple hand holding a quill, the end of the quill wreathed in flames. The flames symbolize the Phoenix Clan, while the quill symbolizes the family's quest for knowledge and wisdom. There are rumors the Asako once used a different and less peaceful mon, but if so that symbol has been lost in the mists of the Empire's early history.

The true heart of the family, however, is the mystical and secretive order known as the *henshin*. From an outsider's point of view the henshin may appear to be little more than scholarly monks, and the Asako prefer to keep them out of the public eye as much as possible—indeed, for much of the Empire's history not even the Isawa and Shiba knew the true nature of the henshin order. Asako's esoteric teachings emphasize the manipulation of the elements through the use of mysteries and riddles; she discovered that even for those who could not hear the kami, the correct words could

allow subtle but deep modifications of the human soul, preparing oneself for apotheosis. Of course, such studies take a lifetime, and it is very easy to make errors and fall into a False Path. The Asako police themselves carefully and constantly watch for such dangers.

The Asako live in beautiful lands, which may explain why they often have the honor of hosting the Imperial Winter Court—a fact that furthered their status as courtiers of the clan. Their lands also offer plenty of space to explore and meditate, which they prefer to do in solitude and in the wild. It is not uncommon for an Asako to be found delving into the mysteries of the soul in a remote forest, on a mountainside, or any similar place.

The Isawa Family

"Power does not come from the heavens, my daughter. It comes from our hands, our minds, and our hearts. Never doubt that, for it is the greatest secret of the universe—we are not the servants of destiny, but the makers of the future."

– attributed to Isawa

The Isawa are truly the heart of the Phoenix Clan. They are the largest and most powerful shugenja family in the Empire and quite possibly outnumber all other shugenja families combined. Uniquely among such families, the Isawa study not only all four Elements—Air, Earth, Fire, and Water—but also the mysteries of the Void, giving them a vast array of abilities and powers.

The family was founded by Isawa himself along with his children, and began as a collection of sorcerers who were also priests of the Fortunes. Shinsei's arrival and teachings allowed the Isawa to seek a more enlightened form of magic, mastering the art of calling on the kami to cast Elemental spells. The wisdom of Shinsei challenged the Isawa's competitive spirit, but once they saw the wisdom and power inherent in his teachings they gladly adopted them and happily accepted the Emperor's command that Shinseism be merged with the worship of the Fortunes. Thus was born a tradition of magic and religion that shaped the role of shugenja throughout the Empire.

The Isawa are also extremely unusual for holding political power. After Shiba's oath to protect Isawa and his family, the shugenja effectively took control of the Phoenix Clan, establishing a council of five Elemental Masters—each the most powerful shugenja in his (or her) Element. The Isawa believed this ensured balanced and knowledgeable leadership to lead the clan wisely and well. The Phoenix Clan's unusual leadership structure shaped the clan in many ways, most notably in its custom of refraining from violence as much as possible. It is not that the Isawa are unable to wage war—in fact, their great control over the Elements makes them terrifying opponents when their anger is roused. Rather, the Isawa believe all human life is sacred, from the lowliest peasant to the Emperor himself. All mortals are born from the divine blood and tears of the Moon and Sun, and thus all lives are precious. Therefore violence and war should be avoided at all costs. This does not always sit well with the Shiba, who are bushi trained for combat.

The Isawa place great value on magical power, and test their children on the very day of their birth for ability with the kami. Some prodigies will even show a predilection for a specific Element at that early age. Once training begins (and it is often at a younger age than in other families and clans) the Isawa also seek to imbue a sense of responsibility in their youth, who will soon have to wield great power and guide the prayers of their people. Typically Isawa students develop a character similar to their Element after a few years of immersion in studying the kami: those with talent for Earth become steadfast and resolute, those of Air quick-witted, those of Fire eager and aggressive, and those of Water flexible and ever-changing. The most talented students later join the ranks of the Isawa Tensai, where they are groomed for the potential to become Elemental Masters. However, even an ordinary Isawa shugenja usually has superior control over the Elements than those from other clans.

Such tremendous power and knowledge tends to impart an attitude of hubris or arrogance—the "arrogant Phoenix" is an Empire-wide stereotype—but the truth is a little more complex. It is unde-

The Isawa Family Mon

The symbol of the Isawa family may be one of the most widely known mon in the Empire, worn by hundreds of shugenja—including some in other clans. It depicts the kanji for the five Elements, symbolizing the Isawa's close ties to the spiritual realm. The kanji form a spiral pattern, showing how all aspects of the world are connected to each other.

niable the Isawa have greater power and knowledge of magic than any other family; furthermore, as guardians of the *Tao* and home to the first shugenja ever to walk the Empire, they have a legitimate claim to their position as the masters of all matters spiritual. They see it as their responsibility to rule and guide the Empire in all matters of priestly concern, much like the Crab believe they should always be consulted about the Shadowlands or the Crane claim authority over the arts.

Life in the Isawa family is full of both complex ritual and everyday wonder. The Isawa follow thousands of ways to entreat the kami and Fortunes, from simple daily gestures to complex festivities that last days. An Isawa shugenja always keeps the spiritual world in mind, giving each of his acts a double meaning. And while it would be an exaggeration to say they use their powers in a trivial way, the Isawa are so accustomed to magic that it is usually their first solution to any problem. Court, battlefield, crafting room, or temple—there is no place where the kami cannot help, or so the Isawa feel. On the other hand, the Isawa believe others are not always prepared for their potent knowledge and secrets, and are often reluctant to share the whole extent of their wisdom and power with the rest of the Empire or even the rest of the clan. (This is also why they so resent the Asako keeping the secret of Shiba's last message.) The Isawa attempt to maintain a balance between keeping their secrets and teaching the rest of the Empire what it needs, a difficult challenge and one which has caused problems more than once.

The Shiba Family

"Choosing between two evils is still choosing evil."

– from the Shiba family war-banner

The Shiba hold a unique position in the Empire: a warrior family founded by a Kami, but one which does not and has never controlled the leadership of its clan. Like his siblings, Shiba gathered warriors around him in the dawn of the Empire, but when he swore to protect Isawa his followers accepted the oath with him, subordinating themselves forever to the Isawa.

The Shiba family maintains a complex and sometimes difficult relationship with the Isawa, one which impacts all aspects of their lives. This is not surprising, since bushi and shugenja are traditionally as different as Heaven and Earth. Learning to kill and to sacrifice one's life creates a very different perspective from those who pray and talk to the spirits. The Shiba often chafe under the Isawa's pacifistic traditions, though of course they always ultimately follow their founder's oath and obey the directives of the Elemental Council. Further, the Shiba family's duty of protecting the Isawa can be very frustrating when their charges are powerful spellcasters who insist on doing as they please.

For all their occasional frustrations the Shiba are still Phoenix, perhaps even more so than some of their brethren. While they are trained as warriors, they also pursue scholarly study of the *Tao* and other religious texts. The

The Shiba Family Mon

The symbol of the Shiba family is a pair of crossed swords wreathed in the flames of the Phoenix. The background is black while the swords and flames are rendered in brilliant gold and silver, symbolizing the dedication of the Shiba to their duties. Those who serve as yojimbo often add the kanji for Void in silver thread between the swords.

family encourages other pursuits as well, such as the various arts. From the perspective of the other clans, these customs combined with their subordination to the Isawa make the Shiba seem weak. A common sneer (perhaps originating among the Lion) says, "Time spent studying the *Tao* is time taken away from learning to fight." Indeed, while the Shiba do not shy away from battle they will always consider other options beforehand. Some rivals make the mistake of assuming the Shiba are poor fighters, but in fact the fighting style pioneered by their founding Kami is as dangerous as any; there are just far fewer occasions when it can be seen in action.

Shiba warriors are respected for their mastery of polearms and have developed several elegant kata with yari and naginata that are appreciated by bushi and artisans alike. They are also famous for their finely crafted armors, since their low numbers allow their artisans to take more time on each piece.

Many Shiba samurai pursue the duty of the *yojimbo*, a personal bodyguard who dedicates his life to the protection of a single charge. Until the ascension of the Mantis, the Phoenix Clan is the smallest of the Great Clans, and while their shugenja are more numerous than in other clans they are still rare enough that every one is precious. Personal bodyguards thus have much greater importance and respect in their clan than they do in many others.

If the Shiba are sometimes sneered at by soldiers, they do enjoy respect in the courts of the Empire. Their calm and self-controlled manner, their tradition of selfless devotion, their knowledge of the *Tao* and other scholarly topics, and their skills in the arts all help make them welcome in other clan courts. However, the Shiba family's relatively low numbers compared to other warrior families make them very busy, with little time to enjoy fame or leisure. They sometimes appear to be a closed group, only able to relax in the company of their kin, but their devotion to duty and tradition includes close attention to the tenets of etiquette—particularly when facing shugenja of any clan, to whom they instinctively offer respect. Rare indeed is the Shiba who is insulting or ill-mannered.

The New Family: The Agasha

"All through the world, the Lady and Lord left us little hidden puzzles. If they did not intend for them to be found, why did they leave them?"

– from the journals of Lady Agasha

The Agasha family did not begin as a Phoenix family. Founded at the dawn of the Empire by the lady Agasha, they took a highly unconventional and inquisitive approach to the kami and the natural world—almost a "scientific" view in some ways—and developed insight into the links between the Elements, allowing them more flexibility in the way they cast spells. They also developed the art of alchemy, brewing potions and other strange substances which created magical effects without actually invoking the kami. Needless to say such abilities were seen as quite odd by the other clans, another of the many mysteries among the enigmatic Dragon.

The Agasha's unprecedented move to the Phoenix Clan took place during the War Against the Darkness in the early twelfth century. The Dragon Clan Champion, Hitomi, fell under the influence of the Lying Darkness through her possession of a strange artifact, the Obsidian Hand. She became a fearsome and ruthless leader, killing those who disagreed with her. Agasha Gennai, one of the senior members of the Agasha family, felt he could no longer serve such a madwoman and led a large majority

of the Agasha in abandoning the clan. The Phoenix Clan, devastated by the recent Clan War, was only too happy to welcome the Agasha into its ranks. Only a few dozen Agasha remained behind under the daimyo Agasha Tamori, forming the nucleus of the successor Tamori family.

This single action has shaped the Agasha family's status and reputation in modern times. For some (especially the Tamori family, of course) the Agasha are traitors, pure and simple. Nothing can excuse their actions. Others take a more charitable view, arguing the Agasha were right to forsake loyalty to Hitomi in the same way the Empire was right to act against the last Hantei Emperor when he was possessed by Fu Leng. Regardless, the Agasha are now faithful servants of the Phoenix Clan and any insult against them risks drawing the ire of the whole clan. The Agasha themselves have conflicted feelings about the whole situation and tend to stay within their clan's lands more than other Phoenix samurai. When they do visit the rest of the Empire, they strive to maintain a positive public image at all times.

Despite having spent several generations among the Phoenix, the average Agasha retains much of the family's old Dragon mindset. They are a quiet and meditative family, prone to individual oddities and mysterious behaviors. The Agasha are intensely spiritual and shy away from politics; they leave the day-too-day managing of their lands to others in the clan. They retain the eagerly curious outlook on the world they have had since the days of lady Agasha, and individuals within the family always seek to improve their knowledge—not to gain power or influence, but rather in search of personal enlightenment. This mixture of introspection and inquiry only makes them stranger in others' eyes.

Another old tradition maintained by the Agasha family is that of tattooing. During their gempukku ceremony young Agasha endure long periods of silent meditation and then acquire their first tattoo. While these are of course not magical like those of the Togashi family, they are still unique to their owner and have many subtle meanings expressing the individual Agasha. The Agasha proudly display their tattoos, sometimes resulting in an exposure of skin judged scandalous by the rest of Rokugan.

Agasha magic is oriented toward Fire. While their techniques are powerful, they are not as potent as the Isawa and the infusion of the Phoenix Clan's pacifism has greatly reduced the martial nature they formerly expressed. However, this does leave them free to pursue their research in magical theory and alchemy. Access to the Phoenix Clan's resources has allowed the Agasha to make tremendous forays into the field of multi-elemental magic, a concept regarded with doubt by the rest of the Empire. The Agasha have thus been able to make a useful addition to the overall knowledge of the Phoenix Clan without offending the ruling Isawa.

Heroes of the Phoenix Clan

Despite their pacifistic traditions, the Phoenix have made a significant impact on the history of the Empire. The following section lists an assortment of Phoenix from different eras who are remembered by the clan or the Empire for their great deeds.

Asako

Follower of the Kami

Born into the tribes from before the Fall of the Kami, Asako was a woman who always sought to learn as much as she could about her people and the world around her. She was both wise and humble and quickly became the head of her settlement. When Shiba discovered her he was amazed at both her vast knowledge and her modest demeanor. For her part Asako was awe-struck by Shiba's wisdom and power, and his words of a peaceful Empire unified under Hantei deeply impressed her. She also found a husband among his early followers: the skilled shugenja Yogo. Together they had a child, Sagoten, and for a time Asako was truly happy.

Then Fu Leng's armies came, destroying all before them. Asako did not flinch from her duties and went from battle to battle using her skills to heal the soldiers in Rokugan's armies. Her deep knowledge of plants and her understanding of the human body made her quite skilled at medicine, and many lives were saved by her efforts. But she could not heal the curse that fell on her husband Yogo. Rather than risk betraying his wife and clan, Yogo left—eventually to join the Scorpion—and a grief-stricken Asako was left to seek solace in her duties and her son Sagoten.

Shiba's death at the end of the First War was another hard blow for Asako. However, soon after Shiba's soul returned and gave Asako a new purpose. The Path of Man was Shinsei's last secret, a way for anybody to unlock humanity's true potential, perhaps even achieve a form of apotheosis and ascend to immortality. The implications of this were nearly too much for Asako, but she refused to abandon her final duty to Shiba. She began teaching the secrets of the Path of Man to a small number of her followers, forming a mystical order that came to be known as the henshin. The Path of Man has defined the Asako family ever since.

The Asako libraries, so comprehensive on so many topics, are strangely silent on Asako's death. It is known that one day she disappeared and her previously designated successor took over the rule of the family. Many within the henshin order believe Asako completed the Path of Man and became a Fortune, ascending to Tengoku. Others believe she still watches over her vassals, gently guiding them along a path she has traveled before. Only a minority

believe she simply died, having finally found the peace she had always been looking for.

Asako, Follower of the Kami

Air: 5 Earth: 3 Fire: 5 Water: 3 Void: 6

Awareness: 6 Willpower: 4 Intelligence: 6 Perception: 5

Honor: 8.2 *Status: 7.4* *Glory: 7.6*

School: Asako Loremaster 2 / Asako Henshin 5

Skills: Artisan: Ikebana 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 5, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 1, Lore: History 6, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 8, Lore: Elements (Air, Water) 8, Lore: Nature 7, Lore: Theology 6, Medicine 9, Meditation 8, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 5

Kiho: Buoyed by the Kami, Earth Needs No Eyes, Harmony of the Mind, The Body is an Anvil, Touch the Void Dragon

Advantages: Balance, Great Destiny (found the Henshin order), Paragon (Compassion), Sage

Disadvantages: Lost Love (Yogo), Soft-Hearted

Shiba Gaijushiko

Redeemed Villain

Shiba Gaijushiko is a demonstration of just how far one man can go, and how much he will sacrifice, to pursue what he believes. Gaijushiko was not a dishonorable man; quite the opposite. His actions were driven by his determination to serve the Empire as best he could. Unfortunately, sometimes it is the very actions intended to cause good which instead create the most harm. Shiba Gaijushiko joined with Bayushi Atsuki and Doji Raigu to create the first Gozoku Alliance, a conspiracy that sought to control the Empire by reducing the Emperor to a puppet.

Gaijushiko wanted nothing but peace in the Empire of Rokugan. All his life, he sought peaceful ways to resolve every conflict he encountered. When Atsuki and Raigu approached him with their proposal, he was swept up by their charisma and dedication. They seemed to share such similar goals. Although he hesitated at the idea of conspiracy against the Emperor, he eventually allowed himself to be convinced the ideals of the group were sound. If they succeeded they would be able to keep Rokugan at peace for countless years to come. That was all Shiba Gaijushiko wanted: an Empire without violence, war, and needless death.

In the waning years of the fourth century the conspiracy unleashed its plans, kidnapping the son of Emperor Hantei Fujiwa. Here as on several occasions, Shiba Gaijushiko initially balked at the conspiracy's plans; kidnapping a child was reprehensible to him. In the end, however, he rationalized such actions were for the greater good. He was sure once the Gozoku had control the Empire would move in a better direction for all.

Gaijushiko did not truly begin to doubt the wisdom of his decisions until Hantei Kusada tried to use the Brotherhood of Shinsei to undermine the conspiracy. When the Gozoku discovered this they unleashed slaughter against the Brotherhood, publicly executing many of their number. This shook the Phoenix scholar deeply. All his life Gaijushiko had sought to protect life, and now he had to watch silently as good, benevolent men were murdered.

When Empress Yugozohime overthrew the Gozoku, Shiba Gaijushiko prostrated himself before her and confessed to everything, seeking only the right to commit sepukku for his dishonorable actions. He offered full and complete information on the leaders and organization of the Gozoku, sharing all the records he had kept meticulously throughout his life. Yugozohime was moved by Gaijushiko's sincerity and pardoned him, allowing him to continue serving her for the remaining days of his life.

Shiba Gaijushiko, Redeemed Villain

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4

Awareness: 6 Willpower: 5 Intelligence: 7

Honor: 6.6 *Status: 5.8* *Glory: 6.7*

School/Rank: Asako Loremaster 4

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Lore: Bushido 5, Lore: Gozoku 4, Lore: History 5, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 4, Meditation 4, Sincerity (Honesty) 6

Advantages: Allies: Bayushi Atsuki (4 Influence/2 Devotion), Doji Raigu (4 Influence/2 Devotion); Clear Thinker, Forbidden Knowledge (Gozoku), Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Gozoku Alliance), Idealistic

Shiba Toriiko

Warrior for Peace

Shiba Toriiko was a noble and dedicated samurai-ko, one of the best to ever grace the ranks of the Shiba family. She believed in Bushido to her core, and even before her gempukku she demonstrated incredible ability with a sword, especially in the art of iaijutsu. She defeated many skilled duelists during her life. However, despite her skills she never killed unnecessarily, and showed compassion to both her enemies and her friends and allies.

Doubtless it was this combination of skill and compassion, not to mention her dedication to her early duties as a yojimbo, which drew the attention of the Soul of Shiba. When the previous Champion died in the early eighth century, the Soul chose Toriiko as its next host. The Soul often had to guide the actions of later Clan Champions, but the serenity and honor Toriiko already possessed made her an excellent leader who only became more skilled with her ancestor's knowledge and guidance. Toriiko is remembered by later generations as one of the greatest—and kindest—leaders in Phoenix history.

Toriiko's life culminated in the event known as the Battle of the Broken Daisho. There she placed her own army between the forces of the Lion and the Crane, declaring she would not allow a war that could tear the entire Em-

pire asunder. Her soldiers died willingly on her command, refusing to flinch from the Lion attack that cut down hundreds. And when the blustering Crane commander faced her personally, Toriiko stood and let him strike her down despite the clear superiority of her own skills. This choice of sacrifice, refusing to abandon compassion even in the face of death, stopped what might have become one of the worst wars in Rokugan's history. Shiba Toriiko's death and the loyalty of her soldiers saved countless lives with a weapon neither Crane nor Lion could defeat: honor.

Shiba Toriiko, Warrior for Peace

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 4
Reflexes: 5

Honor: 9.6 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 8.2*

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 3 / Shiba Yojimbo (Insight Rank 4)

Skills: Courtier 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 7, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shugenja 2, Lore: Theology 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Sincerity 4, Spears 3, Tea Ceremony 2

Advantages: Ancestor: Shiba, Inheritance (Ofushikai), Paragon (Honor), Social Position (Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Low Pain Threshold

Isawa Ujina

The Nameless One

The life of Isawa Ujina was filled with pain and sorrow in equal measure. It is said when he was born a bird flew into the room, circling. It would have been an omen of great fortune had the bird not been the wrong color. Instead it meant Ujina's life would be filled with sorrow and loss. His parents refused to believe the omen and raised their son diligently; Ujina soon showed great skill with the kami and even more with the boundless depths of the Void. When Ujina was still very young the Master of the Void approached his parents, urging them to let Ujina be his student, to learn and master his abilities as an Ishiken. The family gladly accepted such a great opportunity.

After his gempukku Ujina remained with his family, visiting Kyuden Isawa from time to time and especially continuing to visit the Master of Void and take tea with him. Ujina was noted for his friendly relations with all, even servants and farmers. He was a true prodigy of the Void, recognizing that in the eyes of the kami he was no different than a grasshopper, a small stone, or a simple servant who fed and maintained the stables.

A few years later, however, tragedy struck. Ujina was betrothed to Doji Ninube, a beautiful young woman who seemed to truly love and understand him. Before they were to be wed, Ninube was scheduled to come visit Ujina's family. She never arrived, having fallen into the clutches of the Lying Darkness. Ujina set out to find his bride-to-be, assisted by a Dragon magistrate named Kitsuki Kaagi, and the two fought together to rescue Ninube from the Goju. Ujina suffered a terrible wound that ruined his arm, but he prevailed, rescuing his betrothed and bringing her safely home...

...or so he thought.

The Master of Void recognized something was wrong with the woman Ujina married. "I do not know her," he said. "I know each pebble that rolls under the tide of the southern-most ocean of Rokugan. I know each ant that is born and works and dies under the foundation of this castle. And I know each sunrise as it blooms. But I do not know your wife. Do you?"

Not until Ninube gave birth to Ujina's first child, Isawa Kaede, did he understand the truth. Only then did he look at his wife and see not his beloved Crane but a strange and nameless thing, a spawn of the Lying Darkness. It attacked and poisoned him, but he destroyed it. And then he lifted his newborn daughter, her eyes clouded with Shadow, and said, "You are Kaede."

And the darkness was banished from her.

The next morning the Master of Void came to visit again. "You have seen through the last illusion," he said. "You are the Master of Void now."

Ujina lived for many years after this event, years burdened with sorrow and pain. He eventually remarried but

never again found love. His new wife gave birth to Isawa Tomo and Isawa Tadaka, who would join Kaede in ascending to the Elemental Council. Meanwhile the Shadow-corrupted poison of Ninube took a slow and relentless toll on Ujina's body and mind, twisting his figure until he barely looked human, wearing away at his identity until he forsook his former title and became simply the Nameless One, a sinister figure lurching through the shadowy halls of Kyuden Isawa. He dedicated his remaining years to opposing the forces of the Shadowlands, visiting the Tainted realm more than once to ferret out its secrets and destroy its leaders. He even found a way to share his knowledge with a few selected pupils, albeit at the price of also sharing his Shadow corruption with them.

Ujina, the Nameless One, perished in the great battles at the Day of Thunder. The tiny order he had created vanished within a few years, during the War Against the Darkness. But despite his terrible ordeal Ujina's identity was never wholly destroyed, and he died without succumbing to the all-devouring power of the Lying Darkness.

Isawa Ujina, the Nameless One

Air: 3 Earth: 5 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 7
Reflexes: 4 Agility: 5 Perception: 4

Honor: 6.6 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 5.2*

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Void) 5 / Isawa Tensai (Void)

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Defense 3, Divination (Astrology) 4, Etiquette 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Lying Darkness 4, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Lore: Theology 4, Lore: The Void 5, Medicine 5, Meditation 7, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft 6, Tea Ceremony 5

Spells: As Master of the Void, Ujina knows all Void spells and has access to the library of the Masters, giving him access to all spells known to the Phoenix Clan.

Advantages: Elemental Blessing (Fire), Friend of the Elements (Void), Heart of Vengeance (Shadowlands, Lying Darkness), Ishiken-Do, Social Position (Master of Void)

Disadvantages: Bad Fortune, Disturbing Countenance, Lost Love (Doji Ninube), Missing Limb, Permanent Wound

Isawa Tadaka

The Second Phoenix Thunder

Although he was destined to eventually become one of the greatest heroes of the Phoenix Clan, Isawa Tadaka was overshadowed by others during his childhood. His father Isawa Ujina was the Master of Void and his older half-sister Isawa Kaede was also a mighty Void shugenja, while his younger brother Tomo was a prodigy in the Element of Water. Tadaka grew up a happy but reserved child, studying the ways of the kami with dedication. He loved his siblings and especially Kaede, and when he was sent to study for a year with the Kuni family the separation was harsh for both siblings.

However, it was in the Crab lands that Tadaka found his true calling. One night his ancestor, Isawa Akuma, came to him in a dream. Centuries before Akuma had given his name to an oni, foolishly hoping he would be able to control it and extract knowledge from it. The oni eventually stole his name and became Akuma no Oni, a terrible Oni Lord still roaming free in the Shadowlands. Akuma's spirit, bound and gagged by the chains of Jigoku torturing his soul, silently pleaded for Tadaka to free him.

Tadaka set to work on this monumental task. Destroying an Oni Lord seemed near-impossible and no one even knew where in the Shadowlands Akuma no Oni could be found, though his spawn were numerous. Tadaka entered the dark lands alone, over and over again, searching for clues and destroying dozens of Tainted creatures along the way. Rumors soon spread that Tadaka bore the Taint himself, especially since he took to wearing a black silk mask over most of his face.

After several years the Master of Earth, Isawa Rujo, became angry at Tadaka's notorious expeditions and his refusal to return to the Phoenix lands. He came to the Crab lands and

confronted Tadaka on the validity of his research. Incensed, Tadaka challenged Rujo to a magical duel which he easily won. The Elemental Council was shocked both by Rujo's arrogance and by his defeat, and cast him from its ranks in shame. They offered his place to Tadaka. Tempted by the influence and knowledge he could gain, Tadaka accepted, and thereafter divided his time between his quest and helping to rule the Phoenix. He also was assigned a personal yojimbo, a noble and dedicated young woman named Shiba Tsukune. The two felt an instant rapport and soon fell in love.

When the Clan War began and Fu Leng's power began to emerge, Tadaka's obsession with the Shadowlands grew stronger. He became convinced only the Phoenix could save the Empire from the looming disaster. Tadaka persuaded three of his fellow Masters to join him in opening some of the Black Scrolls and summoning an oni; these acts brought great knowledge and power but also ravaged their bodies and souls with the Taint. Tadaka's strength of Earth allowed him to resist the Taint's control, and he continued to roam the land destroying hundreds of Shadowlands creatures. Still, he might have fallen had not Tsukune killed the Tadaka no Oni he had summoned. Almost too late, Tadaka realized how badly the Phoenix had erred in seeking dark knowledge, and led the clan's remaining strength to the final battle against Fu Leng's forces. There he helped defeat the Lost Master of Fire, Isawa Tsuke.

Tadaka was shocked when the heir of Shinsei named him as the Phoenix Thunder. How could a soul as corrupted as his be called on for such a task? Nevertheless, he accepted the duty without flinching and died facing Fu Leng. Freed of the Taint, his soul ascended to Yomi, where he has watched over his clan ever since.

Isawa Tadaka, The Second Phoenix Thunder

Air: 5 Earth: 7 Fire: 5 Water: 5 Void: 5

Reflexes: 6 Intelligence: 6

Honor: 8.4 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 9.2*

Shadowlands Taint: 2.8

School: Isawa Shugenja (Earth) 5 / Isawa Tensai (Earth)

Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Hunting 2, Investigation 3, Intimidation 3, Jiujutsu 6, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: History 6, Lore: Maho 7, Lore: Shadowlands (Oni) 8, Lore: Theology (Shintao) 6, Medicine 3, Meditation 6, Spellcraft 8

Spells: As Master of Earth, Tadaka has access to the Phoenix Clan's vast libraries of spell scrolls. He may be assumed to have any elemental spells found within the core rulebook (those he is capable of casting), and many other Earth spells beyond that.

Kiho: Embrace the Stone; Grasp the Earth Dragon; Rest, My Brother

Advantages: Elemental Blessing (Earth), Forbidden Knowledge (Maho), Great Destiny (Thunder), Prodigy, Social Position (Master of Earth)

Disadvantages: Driven (free ancestor's soul), Shadowlands Taint, True Love (Shiba Tsukune)

Shiba Tsukune

Phoenix Clan Champion

Shiba Tsukune was born into the Shiba family at the end of the eleventh century. She shared a deep connection with her brother, Shiba Norihatsu, from their childhood. Many believed Norihatsu was destined for greatness; he was enrolled in the Shiba school while Tsukune was sent to train with the Lion as part of a treaty with that clan. Despite their seperation the two siblings remained close and sent letters to each other often. However, tragedy was waiting; Norihatsu suffered a fatal accident while riding his horse. Almost immediately, many miles away in Lion lands, Tsukune dropped to her knees weeping and sobbing, feeling her brother's death within her. The Isawa studied the incident and concluded Tsukune and her brother shared two parts of the same soul; with her brother now dead, Tsukune was severed from her soul's other half forever. It took her half a year to find the will to resume training, and when she finally did so she insisted on studying with the Shiba bushi to honor the memory of her brother. She was now a silent and determined young woman who spent every waking hour studying, either in the dojo or the library. It is rumored she also visited the Dragon lands during this time and spent three months sparring with their students. Whether this is true or not, there is no denying she was one of the most impressive students to emerge from the Shiba school in her generation.

Despite her formidable skills Tsukune seemed doomed to a sad and hollow life. However, soon after her gempukku she found something to fill the hole left by her brother's death. She was given the assignment of serving as yojimbo to Isawa Tadaka, a talented young shugenja who would go on to become Master of Earth. Tsukune felt an immediate emotional bond with Tadaka very similar to the one she had earlier shared with her brother, and despite her devotion to Bushido she soon fell in love with him. She realized he too might be taken from her, but having found peace again she was better able to accept this as part of the cycle of life and death. For his part Tadaka cared for her deeply and often tried to shelter her from the darker aspects of his life, especially his expeditions into the Shadowlands.

Just as she had suspected, Tsukune lost Tadaka all too soon. At the Day of Thunder he was severely wounded in battle with the corrupted Master of Fire, Isawa Tsuke, and went on to die fighting Fu Leng. Even as that battle raged, however, the dying Phoenix Champion Shiba Ujimitsu gave Tsukune the Ancestral Sword of the Phoenix, Ofushikai. The moment she touched it, the Soul of Shiba came upon her and she was chosen as the next Clan Champion.

Shiba Tsukune was the Phoenix Clan Champion for many years, eventually marrying from duty and giving birth to a son, Shiba Aikune. She was a stalwart champion of peace and always sought a peaceful resolution to conflict when she could, but her training with the Akodo made her fully capable of using force when it was re-

Ofushikai, the Phoenix Ancestral Sword

The Phoenix Clan's ancestral sword was created by Tsamaru, Shiba's wife, as a gift to her husband on the day of their son's birth. Legend claims Tsamaru came from a kingdom beneath the sea, where Shiba rescued her from a terrible monster that threatened her home; in gratitude, she became his wife even though it meant she would never be able to return to her undersea world.

Whether this tale is true or not, there is no denying the peculiar acquatic nature of Ofushikai. The sword shines with a strange inner light, and it often looks as though water is flowing down the length of the blade. The sword knows its proper owner (the Clan Champion) and always returns to him; when held in his hand, the sword allows him to move and breathe safely beneath the sea.

In the mid-twelfth century Ofushikai, like the other ancestral blades of the Great Clans, was taken into the Heavens by the Kami Shinjo in response to the death of Amaterasu. This imperiled the survival of the Soul of Shiba, whose continued connection to the mortal world was linked to the sword. Shiba Tsukune was able to save the Soul by choosing to ascend into the Heavens as the Fortune of Rebirth, but this left the Phoenix Clan without the Soul's guidance. Several years later, her son Aikune used the power of the Last Wish to instead link the Soul to the Shiba bloodline, restoring it to the mortal world.

In mechanical terms, the Phoenix ancestral sword is a nemuranai which can be summoned to the hand of the Phoenix Clan Champion with a Free Action (regardless of distance). The wielder of Ofushikai may unleash the sword's power by taking a Complex Action and spending a Void Point. The sword unleashes a wave of spiritual energy that halts all violence within 20', preventing all within that zone from attacking, casting offensive spells, or otherwise causing harm. The effect lasts a number of Rounds equal to the wielder's Void Ring.

quired. It was Tsukune who opened the Phoenix Clan to all able shugenja after the devastation of the Clan Wars. During the War Against the Shadow, she personally protected the Elemental Masters while they performed a ritual to send massive reinforcements to the battle at Volturnum, allowing them to combat the Lying Darkness before it could unmake the world. Finally in the year 1158, the Fortune Osano-Wo appeared to Tsukune and told her she must give up her mortal life in order to preserve the Soul of Shiba. She agreed and ascended to the Heavens, where she became the Fortune of Rebirth.

The following stats depict Tsukune in her role as Clan Champion soon after the Day of Thunder.

Shiba Tsukune, Phoenix Clan Champion

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 5
Reflexes: 5 Agility: 5

Honor: 7.6 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 9.2*

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 1 / Shiba Bushi 3 / Shiba Yojimbo (Insight Rank 5)

Skills: Athletics 2, Courtier 2, Defense 6, Etiquette (Courtesy) 4, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 7, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Shugenja 3, Lore: Theology 3, Lore: War 2, Meditation 4, Sincerity (Honesty) 3, Spears 5, War Fan 2

Advantages: Ancestor: Shiba, Inheritance (Ofushikai), Multiple Schools, Social Position (Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Lost Loves (Isawa Tadaka, Shiba Norihatsu)

Agasha Gennai

The Defector, Master of Air

Sometimes a man must walk directly into the open maw of the unknown, doing what he feels is honorable and just without any idea of the consequences. No one understood this better than Agasha Gennai.

Gennai was born into the Agasha family in the late eleventh century when it was still part of the Dragon Clan. He was an honorable and highly skilled shugenja who served the clan with all his heart and soul. When the Dragon Thunder Hitomi took control of the Dragon, Gennai at first accepted her rule without question, for she bore the soul of her predecessor Togashi. But soon Hitomi's rule became tainted by madness, violence, and cruelty. The power of the Obsidian Hand and the corruption of the Lying Darkness that came with it was driving her insane. Many in the Dragon Clan began to feel something should be done, but they hesitated to violate their oaths or to confront Hitomi's immense power. It seemed nothing could be done to stop her from leading the entire Dragon Clan to doom.

It was then Gennai made the choice which would haunt two clans for many years to come. He refused to march blindly behind a leader heading for absolute destruction, but he knew he was in no position to stop her. He chose to act instead by withdrawing all support from her, following the principle that a samurai could leave the service of an unworthy lord. Gennai did not force anyone to join him in leaving the Dragon Clan. He spoke with such moving words, however, that by the time he left the clan the vast majority of the Agasha family followed him out, leaving only a few dozen behind. One of those was the daimyo, Agasha Tamori; Gennai pleaded long and hard for Tamori to join them, but the lord of the Agasha refused to leave his clan.

Gennai and the Agasha were welcomed to the Phoenix with open arms, and Gennai told the Elemental Council everything that had transpired within the Dragon lands. After much deliberation the Masters agreed to accept the Agasha family and name; Naka Kuro, Grandmaster of the Elements, extended the vacant office of Master of Air to Gennai in recognition of his skills and honorable nature.

Agasha Gennai brought a balanced mind and soul to the Elemental Council, offering wisdom much-needed during the tumultuous days of the War Against the Darkness. He served on the Council through the Battle at Oblivion's Gate, but increasingly felt strained and exhausted by the jealousy and rivalry between the other Council members, and finally retired several years later. He had spent his life striving to do what was best, but often asked himself whether he had simply traded one set of problems for another. Still, he did not succumb to regret and died at peace. His family has remained within the Phoenix Clan ever since.

Agasha Gennai, the Defector, Master of Air

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 5 Water: 3 Void: 4
Willpower: 4 Perception: 4

Honor: 6.1 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 6.7*

School: Agasha Shugenja 5

Spells: As an Elemental Master, Gennai has access to a virtually unlimited variety of spells

Skills: Athletics 2, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Craft: Mining 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Dragon Clan 4, Lore: Phoenix Clan 3, Lore: Theology 4, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft 7

Advantages: Leadership, Seven Fortunes' Blessing (Fukurokujin), Social Position (Master of Air)

Disadvantages: Contrary, Infamous

Isawa Hochiu

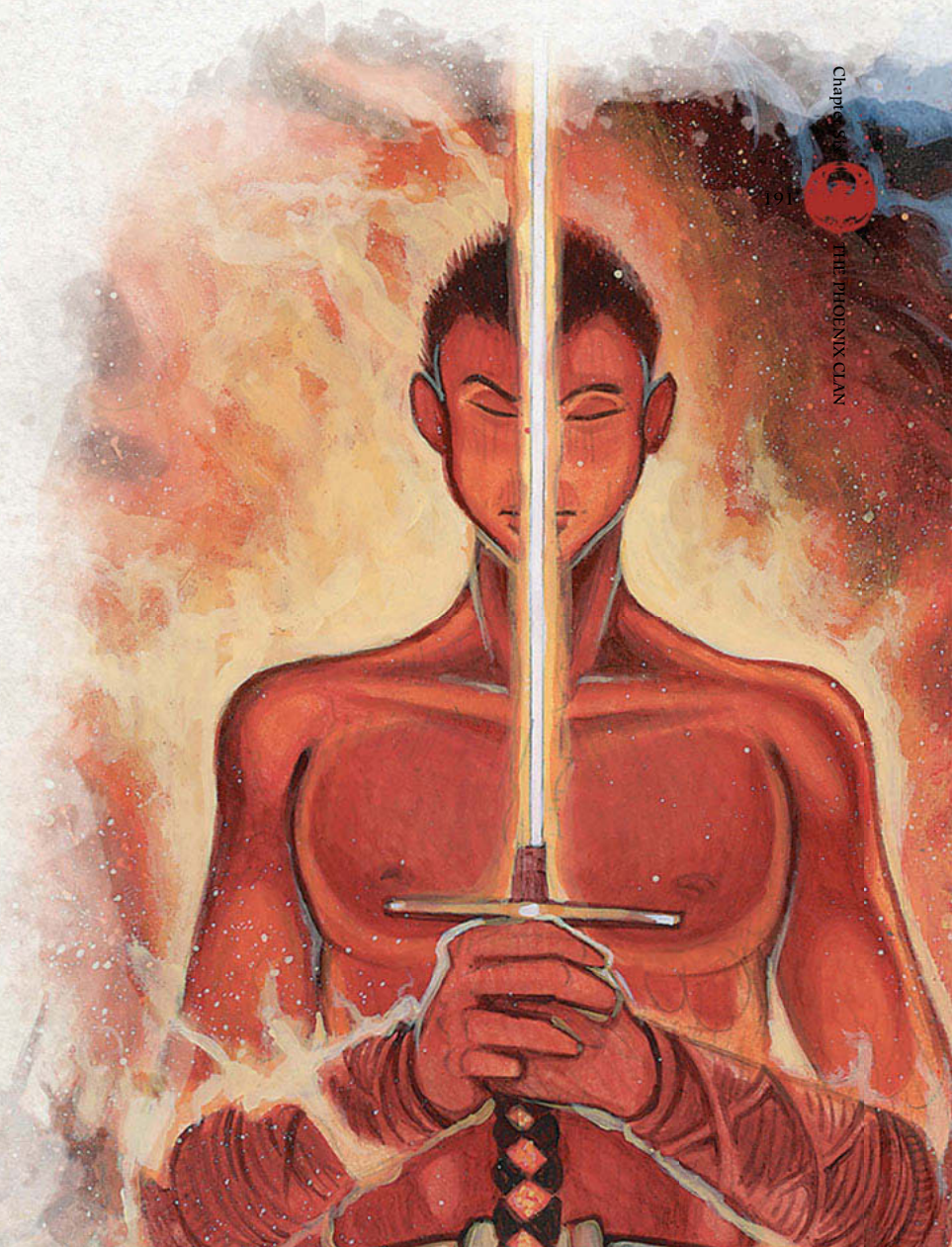
Tragic Hero

Isawa Hochiu is one of the greatest tragic heroes of Rokugan. He was responsible for single-handedly landing the blow that destroyed the avatar of the Lying Darkness, but he also instigated a war that cost countless lives and drew the wrath of the Dark Oracle of Fire. He loved the Phoenix Clan above all else and put his life in harm's way many times to protect the clan. His very willingness to sacrifice everything he had for the Phoenix eventually led to both his death and to a devastating war with the Dragon Clan.

Hochiu was born the son of Isawa Tsuke, the Master of Fire. While Hochiu did take after Tsuke somewhat, he was never as militant, ruthless, or arrogant as his father. From a young age Hochiu showed skill both with a blade (a talent his father shared) and at communing with the Fire kami. After his gempukku he quickly gained admission to the elite tensai school but had little contact with his father, who was busy with the duties of the Elemental Council. This was fortunate, since he was also spared from witnessing his father's corruption by the Taint and final, murderous madness on the Second Day of Thunder.

When Hochiu heard of the evil deeds committed by his father, he swore he would never follow such a path and would instead be a hero for Rokugan. He was offered this chance just a few years later when the Lying Darkness threatened to unmake creation. By then Hochiu's skills had already advanced enough for him to claim his father's old place as Master of Fire. Hochiu accompanied the Kami Shinjo in a major assault on the forces of the Darkness within the Imperial Capital, and later set out to join the battle against the Shadow at Volturnum. The Darkness' threat to the Celestial Order had grown strong enough to inspire intervention even by the Celestial Dragons, and Hochiu rode on the back of the Air Dragon deep into the Shadowlands. There he delivered the death-blow to Goju Adorai, the avatar of the Darkness, weakening the Shadow enough for Hitomi to name it and break its power. In the aftermath, Hochiu destroyed and sealed Oblivion's Gate to prevent any further damage to the spirit realms.

Although Hochiu had made himself a great hero for his time, he soon went down a darker path. He was convinced the Phoenix would become weak without renewed conflict to test the clan's mettle. He conspired with Tamori Chosai to manipulate the Dark Oracle of Fire, Agasha Tamori, in order to incite a war between the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. The war soon spiraled out of control and Hochiu tried to stop the Dark Oracle; he died there, consumed by the Oracle's unnatural flames.



Isawa Hochiu is remembered as a hero, but his actions cost the lives of many and eventually led to Chosai becoming the next Dark Oracle of Fire, a villain who went on to unleash the War of Dark Fire.

Isawa Hochiu, Master of Fire, Tragic Hero

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 6 Water: 3 Void: 4

Reflexes: 5 Strength: 4

Honor: 4.6 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 7.8*

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 4/Isawa Tensai (Fire)

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Iaijutsu 5, Lore: History 3, Lore: Theology 5, Medicine 2, Meditation 5, Sincerity 2, Spellcraft (Fire) 7

Spells: As Master of Fire, Hochiu has access to the entire library of the Phoenix Clan. He may be assumed to have any elemental spells found within the core rulebook (those he is capable of casting, at least), and many other Fire spells beyond that.

Advantages: Friend of the Elements (Fire), Great Destiny (defeat Goju Adorai), Social Position (Master of Fire)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (conspiracy with Chosai), Driven (strengthen and protect the Phoenix)

Isawa Ochiai

Master of Fire

While some Masters of Fire in the Phoenix Clan's long history have been warriors with aggressive tempers, Isawa Ochiai was a very different type: a peaceful, gentle woman who used the energy of Fire for creation and spiritual dynamism. She rose to prominence in the late twelfth century and guided the Phoenix toward a renewed era of peace and enlightenment.

Born to a minor Isawa line, Ochiai did not show strong ability with the kami at first. While her brother Nakamuro quickly secured a position studying with the Master of Air, Ochiai attended a minor temple of the Isawa Shugenja School, filling her time with personal pursuits. Dancing, painting, and other arts caught her attention, and she quickly became a torrent of creative energy. Her blossoming beauty and charming nature made her a favorite pupil despite her occasional lack of attention to her lessons. Nakamuro, as her closest male relative, was responsible for her marriage but did not wish to cage her spirit, and resisted pressure from the rest of the family to make a suitable match.

It was not until barely before her gempukku that her true skill with the kami began to manifest. Her talent with

the arts and her creative mind gave her a subtle but potent control over her spells, and the Fire kami answered her prayers with both enthusiasm and precision. While other students might incinerate a whole tree, she would burn just a few selected leaves while the rest of the tree went untouched. Her burgeoning talent led to her being trained as a Tensai and emerging as one of the clan's most prominent young Fire shugenja.

After the death of the hero Isawa Hochiu, Ochiai was chosen to succeed him as Master of Fire. The appointment came as a shock to her, since she was still quite young, but she quickly adapted to the demands of the position. A true Phoenix at heart, she kept compassion in mind whenever she voted on important matters. Her gentle and artistic nature was particularly suited to court, and she represented the Phoenix with grace on many occasions. It was at one such court that she met her eventual husband, Mirumoto Tsuge. Tsuge was a Dragon samurai consumed by the need for revenge, but Ochiai's influence changed him into a caring man and a devoted husband; their union represented a rare instance of a successful love match in Rokugan. Ochiai also inspired loyalty and devotion in many others, even a violent brutish ronin named Masakazu who became her dedicated and indeed fanatically faithful yojimbo.

After the deaths of several older Masters, Ochiai effectively became the true leader of the Phoenix Clan. It was she who chose to use an artifact called the Egg of the Void to call on the Fire Dragon, using that divine being's aid to save Toshi Ranbo from destruction by the Lion and Unicorn armies. Such a display of power in the name of peace was beyond anything the Phoenix had ever accomplished before, and won grudging respect even from martial clans like the Lion and Crab. For Ochiai, it was simply what she had to do.

Isawa Ochiai, Master of Fire

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 5 Water: 2 Void: 4

Willpower: 5 Intelligence: 6 Perception: 3

Honor: 5.9 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 8.6*

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Fire) 5 / Isawa Tensai

Spells: As Master of Fire, Ochiai has access to the Phoenix Clan's vast libraries of spell scrolls. She may be assumed to have any elemental spells found within the core rulebook (those she is capable of casting, at least), and many other Fire spells beyond that.

Skills: Artisan: Painting 4, Athletics 3, Calligraphy (Cipher, High Rokugani) 4, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 5, Lore: History 4, Lore: Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 5, Horsemanship 3, Medicine 2, Meditation 5, Performance: Dance 4, Sincerity 5, Spellcraft (Spell Research) 6, Staves 2, Tea Ceremony 3

Advantages: Elemental Blessing (Fire), Friend of the Elements (Fire), Social Position (Master of Fire), Soul of Artistry

Disadvantages: Soft-Hearted, True Love (Isawa Tsuge)

Lands of the Phoenix Clan

The major Phoenix strongholds are described in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, pages 348-351. The following section describes several lesser but still significant holdings in their lands.

Shrine of Champions

Located an hour's travel east of Shiro Shiba, the Shrine of Champions is an important spiritual center for the Phoenix Clan's bushi family. The Shrine is not the most imposing in the Phoenix lands, but careful tending by the best artisans of the family make it one of the most beautiful. Despite its impressive looks the Shrine is built to serve as a fortress at need—a tribute to the underlying martial nature of the Shiba family. Only samurai are allowed to pray inside this holiest of places.

The Shrine of Champions celebrates all the Champions of the Clan (with the sole exception of Shiba himself, who has his own dedicated shrine inside the walls of Shiro Shiba). However, this veneration is not quite as simple as it would be in another clan. Due to their peculiar method of succession the Phoenix Clan Champions have come from many different bloodlines over the years, and a significant number of samurai in the Shiba family claim one of the Champions as an ancestor. As such, the shrine sees considerable traffic. To avoid conflicts of pride between different lines, the shrine pays all Champions the same amount of respect and maintains a large collection of relics from all of them.

A small secluded chamber is dedicated to a few Champions who died in obscurity, usually because the burden of Shiba's soul drove them mad. Such Champions are never talked about outside the Phoenix Clan, but they are still quietly venerated here.

Jurojin Seido

Jurojin Seido is the largest temple of the Fortune of Longevity in Rokugan. It is located high in the mountains in the clan's western territories; the main temple is built atop cliffs and reached by a single twisting mountain road, so visitors are rare compared to many similar centers of religion in the Empire. The temple was originally built by the Isawa at the dawn of the Empire, when they first began to venerate the Great Fortunes; they later gave it to the Asako family in a rare gesture of friendship between the two.

Those who make the difficult trek to Jurojin Seido often do so in hope of meeting the legendary Asako healers who reside there. Many members of the family donate their time to help treat the sick and the wounded, regardless

The Prophecies of Uikku

The First Doom: "Of the Crane, a fallen foe will prove to be their undoing. They will be led astray by a deceiver, and the true hero will arise too late to save them."

The Second Doom: "The Lion Clan shall find that blind faith in the Throne leaves you blind to the need of the Empire."

The Third Doom: "The Tao of Shinsei is no guard against darkness. It is their pride that will blind the Phoenix to their downfall."

The Fourth Doom: "At the moment of their victory, that is when the Scorpion Clan shall learn the cost of dark alliances."

The Fifth Doom: "The Unicorn may be the masters of the Four Winds, but when the great wind comes, it shall be the saplings that fall before the great trees with deep roots."

The Sixth Doom: The sixth Doom concerned the Dragon. Its specific nature is unknown, since Togashi apparently acquired the scroll and hid it away.

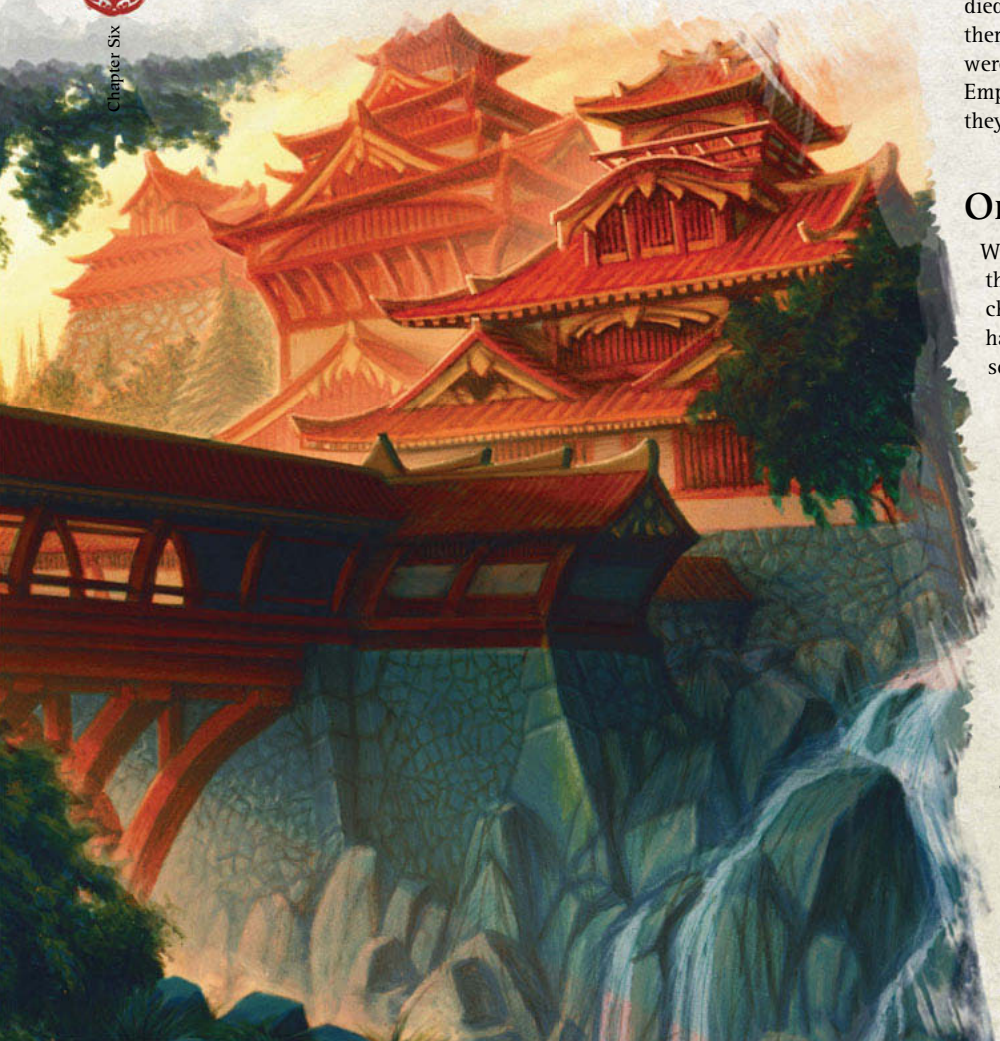
The Seventh Doom: "They believed they have come to the Empire to assist against the Shadowlands, but it shall be this very action that will be their doom." The exact subject of this Doom remain unknown, although the Naga seem the most likely explanation.

The Eighth Doom: "Of the Crab, it will be the return of an ancient hero that marks their doom. He will destroy the Crab Clan and everything for which they have fought."

of allegiance or status. The Fortune notices this continued devotion and on rare occasions has visited the shrine directly, blessing it with miraculous healings. The shrine is also occasionally used for meetings between the Phoenix and the Brotherhood of Shinsei to discuss religious issues.

The Shrine of Uikku

Reihado Uikku is situated in the middle of a large western plain in the Phoenix lands, in a province managed by the Asako. Well off the main trade roads, the modest shrine is dedicated to the memory of the boy for which it is named.



The Defenders of Uikku, an elite group of Phoenix warriors, guards the shrine and its contents from outsiders.

Uikku's true origins were never determined; he was found by traveling heimin next to a bubbling stream coming out of a black rock. Despite not having learned to read, he could quote the *Tao* and understand it at the age of 4, and the Phoenix Clan quickly took him into its care. Many Phoenix believed he was actually a reincarnation of Shinsei; all of his sayings were written down and have been studied intensely ever since.

As time passed Uikku talked less of the Tao and more of the future, issuing a series of dark predictions culminating with eight sentences known to the Phoenix as the Dooms of the Clans. Immediately after issuing the Dooms, Uikku died. The Eight Dooms have been studied at length and there are at least two occasions when it was believed they were coming true, although the continuing survival of the Empire would seem to argue against this... in which case they are still lingering on the horizon.

Orange Flame Village

When the Agasha settled in Phoenix lands, they knew their reputation had been badly damaged by their change of fealty; moreover, the local inhabitants would have difficulty seeing them as their masters. Seeking to solve this problem, the Agasha focused their attention on a minor village that held a resource they treasured: rare minerals. The village was a traditional farming settlement and its former Shiba masters had failed to notice the wealth hidden in the soil below.

The villagers did not at first understand why they were suddenly reassigned to mining, but one year later a giant orange phoenix appeared in the night sky over the town, created with hanabi (fireworks). Soon the village became famous for regular production of fireworks, which they both sold and displayed. The Isawa were greatly pleased by this success of their new Agasha allies and hope someday the village can rival the fame of the Mantis festival center at Tokigo-gachu. While the Agasha feel that might just be too much attention, they are willing to endure it for the sake of improving their repute within the Phoenix.

The Phoenix and the Yojimbo Tradition

Yojimbo is the Rokugani word for bodyguard, and samurai have undertaken this duty since the first century. In the peace that followed the end of the First War, a whole class of samurai developed who could not defend themselves: shugenja, of course, but also courtiers, artisans, and wealthy noblemen. While castles and palaces were safe enough, the roads were still untamed and dangerous. The most influential lords could afford to detach small military units to accompany them, but such resources were only available to a few. A single warrior, however, could be more easily arranged. Thus was born the concept of the yojimbo: one bushi with the sole duty of protecting the life and honor of a single charge. While at first the mission was just to keep the charge alive—a difficult enough job in the rough early days of the Empire—it soon became apparent that defense of honor and reputation was equally important. The emerging system of dueling to settle insults and disputes meant courtiers and their like needed champions, and yojimbo were the obvious choice for this duty, further strengthening the link between guard and charge.

A common misconception is that a yojimbo is always a vassal of his charge. While this can be the case, very often the yojimbo and charge will owe fealty to different families and occasionally even different clans. Further, there is no guarantee the charge will always have higher social status than the yojimbo. The bodyguard has clear orders of his own, and while these always include protection they may not always include obedience. There have been many occasions in which yojimbo have defied the wishes of their charges in order to protect them from harm—although this sort of defiance may lead to disgrace or seppuku afterward.

At the same time, however, the devotion of the yojimbo to protecting his charge is absolute. Rokugani literature and theater is full of tales about loyal yojimbo who stay behind and die to win time, who jump in front of arrows, or who take the blame for an act they did not commit. The ties of honor and duty for yojimbo are as strong as any in the Empire. Indeed, while some may consider a yojimbo's duty to be dull and unrewarding, it is also regarded as highly honorable and thus highly admirable. Most charges realize the importance of their bodyguard and come to respect them, sometimes even to appreciate their company. This can occasionally lead to forbidden romances between guard and charge.

The Phoenix Clan's large numbers of shugenja combined with the Shiba tradition of protecting the Isawa means the clan puts special emphasis on the position and duty of the yojimbo. While Isawa shugenja can command the power of the Elements, they do not have the training, expertise, and armored protection of a bushi. Thus, many Shiba bushi forsake the army to take the path of service as personal bodyguards. Shiba yojimbo are renowned across Rokugan for their selflessness and devotion, and include legendary groups such as the Order of Chikai (who serve as personal yojimbo to the Elemental Masters) and the Order of the Bent Knee (who are taught special methods of diffusing potential conflict before it begins). Shiba are also notorious for the near-paranoia they show when visiting other locations, endlessly asking for minute details that might impinge on their charge's security. The formidable reputation of Shiba yojimbo is actually a political asset for the Phoenix, since many powerful courtiers are willing to trade favors to obtain the protection of a Shiba samurai.

While in theory no samurai is supposed to fear death, they are human and most still try to avert the end of their lives. For the Phoenix, however, death is viewed as nothing more than the ultimate change (see the discussion of Reincarnation which follows). As such, they gladly give their lives away for others. While the Lion and the Crab might mock the Shiba by saying their technique consists of jumping in front of blades, the courage this takes is not to be discounted. Moreover, given how rare the gift of speaking with the kami is even within the Phoenix, the life of a Shiba yojimbo will always be less valuable than his charge. Of course, few shugenja will allow a foe to survive after their yojimbo has been struck down—the few seconds won by a yojimbo's sacrifice can often be more than enough for an Isawa to strike down the enemy.

When a charge dies under the protection of a yojimbo, the bodyguard usually atones with seppuku, although reduction to ronin can happen if the bushi was grossly incompetent. Absent such a catastrophe, an assignment as a yojimbo will often

last a lifetime. In rare cases, such as reassignment by a superior or death from natural causes, a yojimbo may move on to a new assignment, but this is an unusual event given the strong bonds between guard and charge. For the most skilled and dedicated Phoenix bodyguards, the bond grows so close that every detail in the charge's life becomes second nature, as familiar as their own, a strange sort of intimacy that is most unusual in Rokugan's reserved society.

It may be noted that not all yojimbo are clan samurai. Ronin are sometimes hired as yojimbo, and while some of these are faithless mercenaries who betray their charges for the right price, there are also many records of honorable ronin yojimbo who serve as bravely and selflessly as any Shiba. Indeed, working as a yojimbo is seen as one of the rare honorable occupations available to wave men, and for this reason some of them will show even more dedication than a clan samurai in the same duty. Of course, some of the people who hire ronin yojimbo are themselves of a rather unsavory nature, so an honorable warrior may find himself protecting a rich thug or corrupt nobleman with his life and soul. More than one ronin "yojimbo" has ended up as nothing more than an enforcer, the sword arm of a criminal.

Yojimbo in Play

"She died to protect me. Now I must get another yojimbo... how tiresome."

– unknown nobleman, twelfth century

At the gaming table the yojimbo role presents a number of interesting opportunities, but it also creates a few issues players and GMs should consider. On the plus side, it is the perfect way for two characters of different backgrounds, families, and possibly even clans to work together, since yojimbo assignments can be traded for political favors. This can be ideal for a game with only two players, but can also work in a larger group to help forge links between the characters. The presence of a yojimbo PC also eliminates any need for an NPC in the same role, reducing the workload on the GM. The yojimbo/charge relationship is also an excellent starting point for classic L5R stories of friendship, romance, or tragedy. And in deadly situations the two characters are very likely to die together, offering a strong sense of closure to their stories.

However, the yojimbo/charge relationship also ties down both characters. The yojimbo will rarely if ever leave the presence of his charge, greatly limiting the character's actions and choices. While all Rokugani characters have responsibilities that limit their choices, those of a yojimbo can seem particularly burdensome and are liable to exhaust the player's interest. It is also possible for the relationship between the characters to go sour, which could have ramifications between the players in "real life" and damage the success of the game. As mentioned before, it is possible the yojimbo may not be the subordinate of the charge—while this may suit players who don't like being ordered around by their fellows, it can also create conflicts of interest. If the Doji courtier wants to go out for a stroll after midnight but his Shiba yojimbo refuses—and makes sure it is impossible—this could create a good story, but it can also create player conflict. GMs should tread carefully when dealing with such situations. Finally, the paired characters might become too much the focus of the game, monopolizing attention and alienating the rest of the group.

These sorts of issues can potentially be mitigated by giving yojimbo NPCs to the other PCs, or making them yojimbo to NPCs. In fact, making some or all of the PCs yojimbo to NPCs can make for an interesting campaign. In this case the charge can easily exert influence or authority over the bodyguards without unbalancing the game. The characters can all be protecting a single individual, in which case that NPC becomes a living plot hook who justifies stories and journeys across the Empire. A more complex and potentially interesting option is for each PC to have his own charge to protect, leading to many complications and political maneuvers.

Samurai Pacifism

"The arts of peace and war are like the two wheels of a cart which, lacking one, will be unable to stand."

– Shiba

The Phoenix are pacifists, a simple truth that has held true throughout their long history. This is a source of constant friction with the other clans, for in Rokugan pacifism is seen as not merely odd but plainly opposed to both reason and tradition. The vast majority of the samurai caste are warriors, and waging war is both a natural state for them and an honorable and glorious pursuit, one for which they train their whole lives. Many samurai families take this even further and approach all of life's challenges with aggression and violence—the Matsu, Hida, and Yoritomo in particular embrace this ethos. Even for the Emperor, the solution to a problem is often the application of samurai armies until the offender has been crushed. Furthermore, all Rokugani—even most Phoenix—agree the best thing a samurai can hope for is to die accomplishing his duty. Such a death is the final glorious act of an honorable life and carries the hope of admission to Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors. A few warriors will sometimes get disgusted from war, particularly after years of battle, as reality collides with the ideals of Bushido. But they are very much the exception. Ultimately most samurai desire war, and many Emperors agree. After all, a reasonable amount of war keeps Rokugan strong, by trimming the weak and training the skilled. It also keeps the clans at each other's throats, preventing them from uniting against the throne. It is no surprise the Right Hand of the Empire, the Lion Clan, is the most militaristic clan of all.

Although pacifism is best known as a Phoenix belief, it is not solely limited to that clan. The monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei often eschew killing under any circumstances, and it is widely agreed Shinsei thought taking another life was a hinderment on the road of Enlightenment. This attitude is not universal to the Brotherhood, since various orders of *sohei* (warrior monks) have used violence through the ages.

Shugenja can often be more prone to pacifism than bushi as well. They are rarely trained for war and are supposed to at least place some value on their own lives, since their gift is rarer than anything else. Their studies of the *Tao* can also lead to an attitude similar to the Brotherhood's, although once again it is not universal. The Iuchi and Kitsu shugenja often support their bushi brethren with their spells, while the Tamori simply take the field katana in hand.

Diplomats and courtiers can be slow to choose war as a solution, especially since they frequently see their duty as one of solving disagreements through politics rather than violence. The Miya family in particular view themselves as peacemakers and will often undermine the war-making policies of the Otomo family. Of course, most courtiers never see a battlefield except in the most unusual circumstances, so they rarely realize the true implications of their diplomacy one way or the other.

For the Phoenix, however, pacifism is a quite common attitude throughout the clan, from the Elemental Council all the way down to simple bushi. It is important to note that Phoenix pacifism is very different from the Crane Clan's policy of avoiding war, even though the children of Doji have been called pacifists on occasion. The Crane try to avoid war because it is not their forte. As a clan based on political, cultural, and economic power, they thrive in times of peace; during war their armies are usually outnumbered by their more militant foes. However, if war is declared they will fight like any other clan. This is not the case with the Phoenix, whose distaste for violence goes much further than simple practicality. Although the Phoenix are also one of the smallest Great Clans and can ill afford to lose a thousand samurai over a border dispute, their magical power can easily off-set their lack of numbers if they wish to use it. Nor do they suffer from an inordinate fear of death—indeed Phoenix samurai are often less afraid of death than their counterparts elsewhere. Rather it is because the Isawa have deeply imbued the whole clan with the belief that all human life as sacred. Every human being, after all, is ultimately descended from Lord Moon's blood and Lady Sun's tears. Humans are a perfect balance of the five elements, and only human souls can attain enlightenment.

The Phoenix are perfectly willing to put their lives on the line to uphold their beliefs. The famous story of Shiba Toriiko is the most perfect example: a Phoenix general who used herself and her armies as a literal human buffer between the forces of the Lion and the Crane. There have been a number of other instances in which the Phoenix have engaged in this sort of absolute self-sacrificial devotion to their pacifistic ideal, and while not every one has been successful the clan has always considered it a worthy sacrifice. If Rokugan wins more than the Phoenix loose, they will pay the price gladly.

All this being said, it would be dangerous to believe the Phoenix are not capable of fighting a war. The Shiba army is as well trained as any, and able to call on the help of the most powerful shugenja of the Empire. If the Phoenix are attacked or if they believe they have no other option, they will wage war as fiercely as possible, seeking to end the violence quickly. Fighting against the Phoenix is often a horrible experience, as walls of stones erupt from the ground, vast tidal waves wash away entire legions, flame rains from the sky, and cyclonic wind diverts arrows. On the rare occasions where the Elemental Masters themselves take the field, the consequences can actually change the local geography—most infamously during the climax of the War of Fire and Thunder when the Master of Earth single-handedly created the island known as Sachi's Anvil. It is also important to remember that unlike some of the other pacifists in Rokugan, the Phoenix in no way apply their pacifism to the creatures of the Shadowlands, who they always brutally oppose.

Pacifism in Play

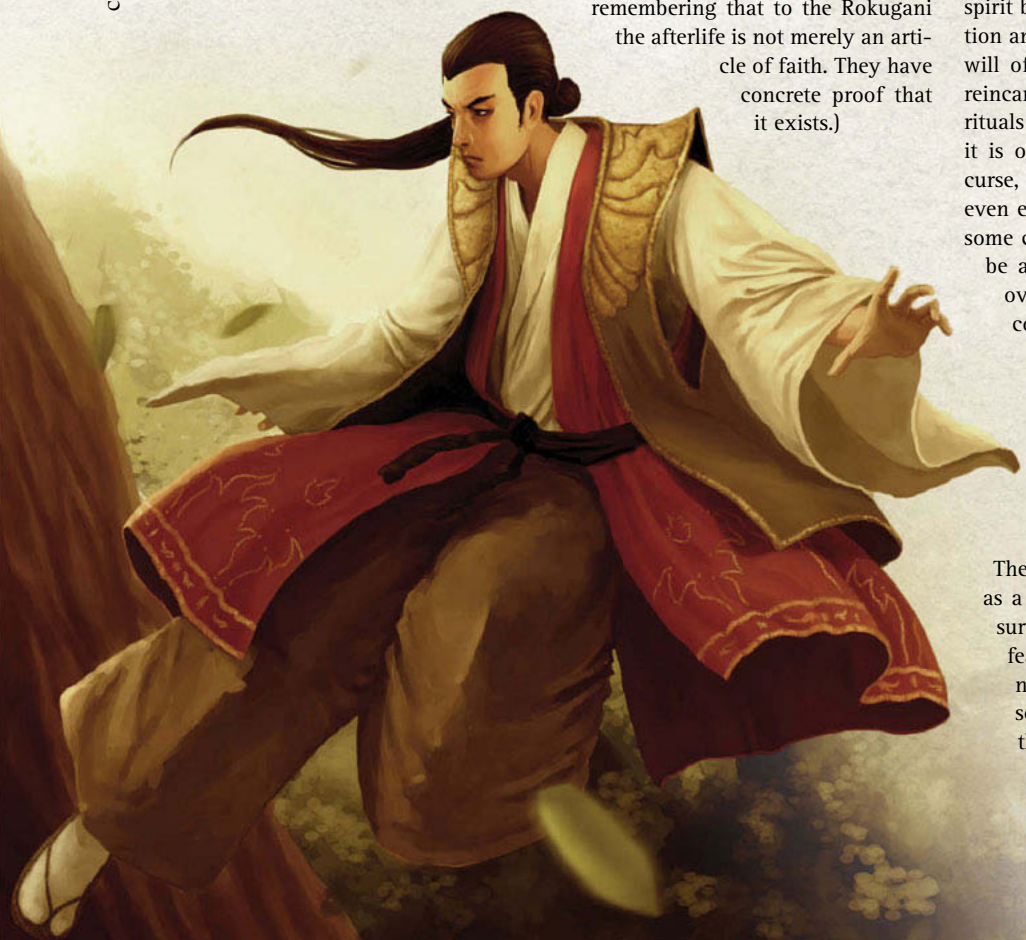
Pacifistic beliefs, whether Phoenix or otherwise, can present the players with some very interesting challenges. It can be a refreshing change from the usual samurai stereotype, and a clever GM can actually use it to help the players get used to Rokugani thinking. After all, pacifism is often closer to our own mentality than normal samurai beliefs, imposing less mental dissonance on players trying to wrap their heads around the harsh demands of Bushido.

For more experienced players, pacifism also offers plenty of opportunities for drama and tragedy. A character who selflessly offers his life to prevent a war will be remembered both in Rokugan and at your gaming table. On the other hand, a pacifist who is forced into war will have to confront all manner of internal emotional conflict. Imagine the pain of a pacifist having to take lives even as honor demands he not show his emotions in public.

In mechanical terms it can be tempting to give any pacifist the Soft-Hearted disadvantage, but this is not always the best choice. Soft-Hearted represents an innate psychological block toward killing others, but the Phoenix are pacifists by conscious philosophical choice rather than due to an internal weakness.

Reincarnation and the Phoenix

Death in Rokugan is never truly the end of a story. All samurai know their soul survives after death and will most likely be reborn into another life. This does not mean they feel no fear of death; they still suffer pain, and while they have some idea of what to expect in the afterlife, the specific reality of it is still a mystery. However, it is far easier for a Rokugani to confront death than it would be for someone who did not share their knowledge and beliefs. (In this regard, it is always worth remembering that to the Rokugani the afterlife is not merely an article of faith. They have concrete proof that it exists.)



Reincarnation into another life is the most frequent judgment placed on human souls by Emma-O, the Fortune of Death. If the sum of a soul's actions is positive and has purified his kharma, he will be reincarnated to a higher status—a system that gives hope to heimin and eta all across Rokugan. If the sum is largely unchanged, he will be reborn into the same station. If the sum is negative, however—if his kharmic burden has become heavier—he will be reincarnated to a lower status, possibly even as an animal. The possibility of reincarnating into a higher station, and the corresponding threat of reincarnation into a lower station, drives much of Rokugani behavior. A minor clerk who performs his duty properly all his life may be reborn as a great and glorious warrior, but if he fails at his lowly task he may be reborn as a peasant. Memories of the previous life are purged at rebirth, of course, but the kharmic weight of the soul's previous journeys remains to deal with. Souls that are closely connected in positive or negative ways—lovers, rivals, enemies—are often reborn together, allowing them to continue to wrestle with their unresolved fate.

The Phoenix pay closer attention to the nature and implication of reincarnation than almost any other clan. It is not insignificant that the clan chose the Phoenix as a symbol. These celestial flaming birds come from Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens, but sometimes visit the mortal realm for their own mysterious purposes. A dead *houhou* will just burst into flames at the next sunrise, then come back to life intact. This is a unique gift, for even Fortunes can die. Only the houhou will come back again and again, unchanging, until the end of the world.

The children of the Phoenix know from a very early age that their clan is named after these mystical and eternal spirit beings. The clan makes a strong study of reincarnation and when a Phoenix child is born the Isawa shugenja will often perform ritual spells to see if the soul is the reincarnation of a previous Phoenix hero. Although such rituals usually fail to provide any answer, when they do it is often accurate. This can be both a blessing and a curse, as the young Phoenix will be expected to equal or even exceed the accomplishments of the previous life. In some cases this is a source of inspiration, but it can also be a heavy burden, especially if the soul must try to overcome the weight of a past failure or fulfill an incomplete task.

All of this means the Phoenix are even less fearful of death than other samurai. They see it as a change, a transformation, rather than an end. Although they are usually in no hurry to meet it, since they know their accomplishments in this life will determine their place in the next one, they feel no need to flee from it.

The meaning of reincarnation also applies to the clan as a whole. The Phoenix believe their clan will always survive no matter what happens to it. Their lack of fear for the future can be seen as both endearing and naïve, depending on who one asks. But it is also a source of strength, for they understand even more than other samurai that their clan lives through the

sum of all its individuals. This makes it easy for them to sacrifice their lives for the greater good. The Phoenix Clan has struggled through very difficult times more than once, but has always come back as strong as before.

Reincarnation in Play

Players and GMs can use the concepts of kharma and reincarnation to add many new elements to their games. For example, the GM can have a character experience dreams or gain strange insights due to a kharmic connection to an earlier life. Although no mortal ever fully remembers a previous incarnation, fragmentary memories and kharmic destinies are common and can provide all kinds of options for plot and character development. Players who wish to actively introduce this element to their characters can choose to play reincarnations of previous samurai or even of notable heroes (or villains), though of course these cannot be ancestors who have ascended to Yomi. Whether they struggle against their past life's demands or fully embrace their destiny, either way the character gains a strong new story element. Of course, no reincarnation lives exactly the same life, and some interesting spice and variety can be added by making a reincarnation who is now in a different family, a different clan, or even has the opposite gender.

New Game Mechanics

The following section contains new Phoenix Clan game mechanics for the L5R 4th Edition role-playing game. GMs and players can add some or all of these mechanical options to their games to flesh out options for PCs and NPCs.

New Advantage: Void Versatility [Spiritual] [4 points]

You have a great capacity for drawing upon the strength of the Void as it exists within other elements. Select any one non-Void Ring. You may expend spell slots associated with that Ring to use Void spells in addition to their normal use. Only shugenja with an Affinity for Void spells may purchase this Advantage.

New Basic School: Asako Henshin

There are few groups in the Emerald Empire as enigmatic and poorly understood as the monastic Asako sect known as the Henshin. Even among the Phoenix, very few outside the Asako family have any real understanding of the Henshin's ways. Most Rokugani believe the Henshin are merely a monastic group of courtiers and historians within the Asako, although their strange behaviors do distinguish them from other Asako and suggest they possess some manner of mystical or supernatural talent. Unfortunately, that recognition does little to assist in understanding the Henshin's ways.

The Henshin follow the Path of Man as revealed by Shiba to Asako. By developing perfect unity with the universe, tricking the Elements and learning their secrets, the Henshin can attain absolute perfection of the soul, which in turn grants divinity. The Henshin are essentially monks of a sort, and as apprentices they are known as *michibuku*. Once they have learned the secrets of the Path of Man, they are inducted into the ranks of the secretive *fushihai*, the true masters of the Henshin order. The *fushihai* hold deep knowledge of the universe and are essentially immortal, able to live far beyond the normal mortal span. Some among the *fushihai* ascend to the Celestial Heavens upon their mortal death, becoming minor Fortunes and validating the Path of Man.

New Basic School: Asako Henshin [Monk]

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Jiujutsu, Lore: Elements (pick an Emphasis), Lore:5re Theology, Meditation 2, any one Skill (must not be a Low Skill)
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Bo, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Four Mysteries

The first lesson of the mysterious Henshin is the relationship between the individual and the Elements that comprise all things. You may, as a Simple Action, increase or decrease both Traits associated with one of your Rings by an amount equal to your School Rank. This lasts for a number of minutes equal to your Insight Rank and may be done a total number of times per day equal to five times your Insight Rank. You may instead increase or decrease the Traits of another in a similar manner, but only by an amount equal to half your School Rank, rounding down (to a minimum of 1). Altering the Traits of an unknowing or unwilling target requires a Contested Willpower Roll. Traits reduced in this manner do *not* affect a target's Rings (and thus do not change Wound Ranks when the Earth Ring is targeted, etc.).

Rank Two: The Riddle of Earth

The stoic and straightforward kami of Earth are the simplest to entertain with one's riddles, and their blessings are potent indeed. As a Simple Action, you may invoke this Technique and gain Earth's blessing; you are immune to all Conditional Effects (excluding Grappled and Mounted) for a number of hours equal to your Earth Ring.

Rank Three: The Riddle of Air

The capricious spirits of Air can be delighted into conferring their blessings upon you. As a Simple Action, you may invoke the blessing of Air. The blessing lasts a number of hours equal to your School Rank. For the duration

of this effect, you cannot be deceived by any illusion or other false images, and can perceive them as transparent falsehoods. If an illusion is created by a spell of higher Mastery Level than your Insight Rank, you and the spell's caster must engage in a Contested Air Roll. If you are defeated, you do not perceive the falsehood of the illusion.

Rank Four: The Riddle of Fire

The wrathful spirits of Fire can be entertained by your riddles, if only briefly. As a Complex Action you may invoke Fire's blessings to increase the number of kept dice on an unarmed damage roll (which is normally 0k1) to your Fire Ring. This effect lasts a number of Rounds equal to your School Rank.

Alternatively, when an opponent strikes you with a melee attack, you may spend a Void Point to force a Contested Fire Ring Roll. If you are successful, the number of damage dice your opponent rolls is reduced by your Fire Ring.

Rank Five: The Riddle of Water

The mercurial spirits of Water can confer their speed and fluidity in exchange for your riddles. You must succeed at a Lore: Elements (Water) / Water Skill Roll against TN 20. If successful, you may take one Complex and one Simple Action per Turn, or you may instead take three Simple Actions per Turn.

The Nature of the Void

The Void is not a discrete Element in the manner of Earth, Fire, Air, or Water. It is everywhere, everywhen, all at once. Void shugenja often describe their initial experiences of sensing and entering the Void as being like stepping into a rushing river, pulling them along through a perpetual flood of sensation. Those who lack sufficient will and focus can even become lost within the Void, swept away by its immense power. Even the most powerful and experienced Ishiken sometimes lose control over the vast power coursing through their bodies, the perpetual flow of sensations as they merge with all and nothing. Mortal senses are usually inadequate to properly describe the Void—those who try have offered many different accounts, such as a constantly-changing kaleidoscope of colors or a black emptiness interspersed with sparkles of indefinable light.

As is apparent from this discussion, there are no Void kami. A shugenja who casts Void spells is directly communing with the Void and calling on a small portion of its limitless power. Since there are no Void kami, does a shugenja still have to read scrolls and speak prayers when casting Void magic? Perhaps not—some witness accounts have depicted Void shugenja simply closing their eyes and meditating to call on the Void's power. On the other hand, from a game balance viewpoint Void magic is already quite powerful. Allowing a Void shugenja to cast his spells without the constraints placed on spells of other Elements may be excessive. Ultimately, it is up to the GM whether flavor or play balance should prevail in his particular game.

New Advanced School: Asako Inquisitors

The Asako are generally regarded as a peaceful and serene family, the very picture of the pacifistic Phoenix. For the most part this is an accurate picture of the family and their philosophy, but there are those who stand apart from it. The Asako are the primary force behind the Inquisitors, the Phoenix order devoted to eradicating the corrupt and blasphemous from within the ranks of the Empire's shugenja. It is a mission they embrace completely and enact at any cost. The order has existed since the Empire's earliest days, long before the creation of the Jade Magistrates, an organization that fulfills much the same purpose. The Inquisitors sometimes work in cooperation with the Kuni Witch Hunters and have even had a few limited contacts with the Yogo family's secretive Kuroiban.

The Asako Inquisitors do not concern themselves exclusively with maho or Shadowlands corruption, although these crimes are among their most frequent targets. They also investigate gaijin magic and any religious groups with heretical beliefs, such as the Bloodspeaker Cult. Members of the Inquisitor order are selected primarily from the ranks of Phoenix shugenja, but many bushi serve with them and a few Henshin and Brotherhood monks have been inducted as well. Those who are inducted into the order and take the necessary vows of duty and secrecy are granted a stylized tattoo of an eye, the symbol of the order, somewhere on their body. The back of the hand is the most common location.

New Advanced School: Asako Inquisitors [Monk]

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Void 4, any two other Rings at 3
- **Skills:** Lore: Law 4, Lore: Shugenja 3
- **Other:** Must be able to cast spells of Mastery Level 4 in one element OR have the ability to make melee attacks as a Simple Action and possess the Phoenix Sacred Weapon (the Inquisitor's Strike). May not be Tainted

Techniques

Rank One: Eye of the Inquisitor

The Asako Inquisitors are taught to focus their will to disrupt the unnatural magic of blasphemers and criminals. You are considered one Rank higher in your original Shugenja School for the purposes of casting spells. Non-shugenja Inquisitors instead gain one Kiho, for which you must meet all prerequisites.

During a skirmish you may use a Complex Action to prepare a disruption of enemy magic. At any point later in the same skirmish when an opponent is casting a spell,

you may as a Free Action force him to make two additional Raises on his spell-casting roll. These additional Raises have no effect other than to raise the TN of the roll. Once this is done, you must take another Complex Action if you wish to ready another disruption.

Rank Two: The Trials of Jade

An Inquisitor finds the weakness in his enemies and exploits it, bringing them the Emperor's justice. When casting any spell, you may spend a Void Point for the spell to count as jade or crystal for the purposes of reducing or defeating your target's Reduction or Invulnerability traits. If you cannot cast spells, you may instead make a melee attack as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when facing an opponent you know has violated the Empire's laws regarding the legal forms of magic.

Rank Three: Conviction of Purity

Those who commit the unpardonable sin of breaking the Emperor's laws concerning magic are unable to stand against you. You are considered one Rank higher in your original Shugenja School for the purposes of casting spells. Non-shugenja Inquisitors instead gain one additional Kiho, for which you must meet all prerequisites. You may now prepare a disruption (as per your Rank One technique) as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action, and opponents whose spells are disrupted require three additional Raises rather than two.

New Alternate Path: Elemental Legions

The most unique and potent force within the Phoenix armies is unquestionably the Elemental Guard, a set of small and highly specialized units consisting primarily of potent Isawa-trained shugenja who specialize in battle. These individuals are capable of battlefield-shaking magic, but they cannot and do not take the field on their own. For each of the Elemental Guard units there exists a highly trained legion from the Shiba family that is uniquely prepared to take the field alongside their shugenja brethren. The Hurricane Initiates are accompanied by the Legion of Wind, the Avalanche Guard by the Legion of Stone, the Firestorm Legion by the Legion of Flame, and the Tsunami Legion by the Legion of the Wave. Each of these accompanying legions are staffed with bushi who have received exhaustive training from both shugenja and members of the Brotherhood in how to properly align their spirits with the Element of their guiding force, allowing them to draw strength from the forces unleashed by their shugenja comrades.

New Alternate Path: Elemental Legions [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Shiba Bushi Rank 3
- **Requirements:** Lore: Elements (appropriate Ring) 2. Must be selected to serve in one of the Elemental Legions.

The Limits of Mysteries & Riddles

The abilities of the enigmatic Asako Henshin are difficult to describe and virtually impossible for outsiders to comprehend. However, the spirits who confer them are limited in their willingness to work together. A Henshin character may never invoke more than one Mystery (e.g. adjust the Traits of one Ring) or Riddle simultaneously, and any given Riddle may only be employed a maximum number of times per day equal to the character's relevant Ring. Additionally, it is strongly recommended GMs consider restricting a Henshin's access to Kiho due to potentially game-unbalancing interactions between the Kiho and a Henshin's Mysteries. Alternately, the GM may wish to prevent a Henshin from benefiting from a Kiho at the same time he is under the effects of a Mystery or Riddle.

Technique: Strength of the Five

Shiba bushi who serve in the four Elemental Legions are trained to draw strength from their shugenja brothers. When you learn this Technique you must select one non-Void Ring. When an allied shugenja within your line of sight casts a spell of that Element, you gain one bonus Void Point. These bonus Void Points may only be spent on rolls which use the Traits associated with that Element. The Void Points may be also used in additional ways (listed below) depending on the Element in question. You may not gain more Void Points in this manner than your

School Rank, and bonus Void Points not used by the end of the skirmish are lost.

- **Air:** Increase your Armor TN by 10 for one Round
- **Earth:** Reduce the number of Wounds suffered from one damage roll by 10
- **Fire:** Temporarily increase one Skill Rank from 0 to 1 for one roll
- **Water:** Exchange your Initiative Score with one other willing participant for the duration of the present skirmish

New Alternate Path: Order of Chikai

The Order of Chikai is among the oldest and most prestigious orders within the Shiba family, and is revered with an almost religious devotion by many of that family. The Order was founded only a few generations after the Empire's formation and bears the name of Shiba Chikai. Chikai was the yojimbo assigned to protect the Phoenix Master of Water; she sacrificed her life to protect her grievously wounded charge from a band of ten assassins, none of whom survived the encounter. Since that time, the Order has devoted itself to providing the finest possible yojimbo to protect all five members of the Council of Elemental Masters. Members of the Order are hand-selected by its leaders and are universally drawn from yojimbo with exceptional records of service. Many have already served with the most elite units of the Shiba army (such as the family's House Guard).

New Alternate Path: Order of Chikai

- **Technique Rank:** 5
- **Replaces:** Shiba Bushi 5
- **Requirements:** Must have taken the Shiba Yojimbo Path at Rank 3 and be selected for service in the Order of Chikai.

Technique: None Must Fall

A member of the Order of Chikai will gladly sacrifice his life to save his charge, but prefers to preserve both lives so that he may live to protect his charge another day. You may designate one individual as your charge at the beginning of a skirmish. When your charge is targeted by an attack or spell you may use the Shiba Yojimbo Technique as normal, making the same Defense / Reflexes roll (TN 25) to absorb the damage instead of the charge. However, at the time of the roll you may choose to spend a Void Point as a Free Action to activate this additional ability: if you succeed in the roll, the damage is negated rather than simply transferred to you.

New Kata: Dance of the Winds

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Schools:** Daidoji Bushi, Shiba Bushi
- **Effect:** When wielding a polearm or a spear, your Initiative Score is increased by 3.

New Kata: Strength of the Phoenix

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Schools:** Any Phoenix Bushi
- **Effect:** Once per Turn when you declare a Guard Action, you may increase the Armor TN of the person you are guarding by an additional +3.

New Phoenix Ancestors

Isawa [12 points]

The man known as Isawa was unquestionably the greatest shugenja in Rokugan, perhaps in the world, at the time the Kami fell to earth. His power over the Elements was of such potency that Shiba, a son of the Heavens, bent knee and pledged to protect Isawa's line for all time in order to gain his aid against Fu Leng. Those who are honored with Isawa's guidance gain +1k1 on all Spellcraft (Spell Research) rolls and learn 1 additional spell each time they gain a Shugenja School Rank.

- **Demands:** Isawa was a proud man who believed his family's magic superior to all others. He abandons you if you ever lose a magical or scholarly competition with someone who is not themselves of the Isawa family.

Naka Kaeteru [10 points]

The man called Kaeteru lived when the Empire was young. His thirst for knowledge led him to wander the Empire as a monk, learning all he could and passing it on to others who wished to learn as well. Although it was never his intention, he gathered many followers and students and became known as a great teacher. Eventually he was invited to the Phoenix lands so they might learn from him as well. Due to his incredible wisdom and experience, Kaeteru was named the first Grandmaster of the Elements by the Phoenix, and awarded the spiritual title of Naka.

The first Grandmaster of the Elements spent much of his life in simple contemplation of the Elements. If you are honored with his guidance, his enlightened insights allow you to use the Meditation skill (two hours, skill roll at TN 30) to regain 1 Spell Slot in each Ring.

- **Demands:** Kaeteru was detached from mortal concerns and will abandon any descendent who becomes too involved in worldly matters. This may be represented mechanically by your character acquiring more than 3 Skill Ranks in Courtier or any Merchant or Low skill. Role-play can and should impact this as well, and the GM should adjudicate whether a character with Kaeteru's guidance is involving himself too deeply in worldly affairs such as politics or money.

Chapter Seven

The Scorpion Clan

Bayushi Ogoe rests his hand on the Ancestral Sword named Itsuwari. It rests in a sword-stand in the chamber high in Kyuden Bayushi, the sheath of lacquered wood warm from the sun shining through the open windows. The touch of the ancient weapon is comforting, and it eases the faint pressure of the song from deep below the castle, the song of another and less loyal blade. He hears it because he is the Champion, just as each Champion for three centuries before him has heard it.

He sighs. The Bloodsword's call is the least of his worries. There are far more immediate demands on his attention.

Like the Lion beyond the Seikitsu Mountains. He can see the peaks in the distance, warming under the same summer sun. His spies report a force of Lion mustering on the far side of Beiden Pass. It is not a large army—yet—but it is growing. Soon it will march south, through Beiden Pass and into the Scorpion lands. Of course the Pass is a choke-point, so it may be possible to contain them...

But Ogoe turns and looks south through another window, toward the Crab lands. An army is assembling there as well, this one facing north. If he blocks the Lion, there will be little left to hold back the Crab. And if he decides to confront the Crab, the Lion will have a clear passage...

A soft scratch at the door. Ogoe closes his eyes for a moment and says, "Enter."

Firm steps behind him, then a rustle of silk, then the soft thump of knees on the polished floor.

Ogoe smiles. "You will never be a shinobi, Tosazu-san."

"I have no wish to be a shinobi, Bayushi Ogoe-sama."

Ogoe turns. Bayushi Tosazu, his most capable general, raises his eyebrows. "Unless," he continues, "that is why you have summoned me, Champion-sama... to order me to become a shinobi. I will obey, of course, though I fear my career will be both brief and humiliating."

Ogoe's smile fades. He gestures Tosazu to his feet. "No, my friend. I have summoned you because we have a problem. A serious one."

Tosazu bows. "How can I be of assistance, Ogoe-sama?"

Ogoe frowns slightly. He knows exactly what he wants from Tosazu; he could simply order it. But he respects his general too much to demand simple obedience for what he is about to ask.

"How would you describe Scorpion fortunes at the present, Tosazu-san?" he asks.

Tosazu blinks. "I would... say our fortunes are good, Ogoe-sama."

"No," Ogoe says, shaking his head. "They are not good. They are excellent."

Tosazu nods but says nothing.

"We are ascendant in the courts," Ogoe continues. "Even the Crane envy the alliances we have forged, the political and bureaucratic power we have accumulated, the favors we are owed. Economically, we are even better off. The rice crop this year is the best on record, such that we have... an embarrassing surplus, suffice to say, even after taxes. Militarily, our forces are strong and organized. And, most of all, we are everywhere." Ogoe glances back out the window. "Look hard enough in any direction and you will eventually see a Scorpion agent. We are in every court, every office, every meeting place... practically in every bed-chamber."

"You are correct, of course, Champion-sama," Tosazu says. "Our position in the Empire is excellent."

"And that, Tosazu-san, is our problem."

Tosazu tilts his head slightly. "My apologies, but I do not understand, Ogoe-sama."

"The Scorpion are not meant to be ascendant. Our place is not in the brightest light at the center of the stage. We are meant to be in the wings, in the shadows, doing what must be done to stage the play, doing the things the audience is not meant to see." Ogoe gestures at his desk and the scrolls stacked there. "You have read the reports, yes? The Lion and Crab muster, while the Crane intensify their efforts in the courts and the marketplaces. We are beset from every side, by forces we cannot ultimately overcome. And if that is not enough, there are these... Unicorn."

Tosazu's face clears and he nods forcefully. "Hai, Ogoe-sama. I have been hoping to speak to you about that very thing. I have been studying this Unicorn Clan and what our agents among them have learned. I find it hard to believe they and the ancient Ki-Rin are one and the same. By all accounts, the Ki-Rin were honorable samurai, not uncouth barbarians like these Unicorn. Do you know, when one

of our agents attempted to broach a matter of blackmail, those gaijin-tainted thugs executed him? They claimed he exceeded the bounds of hospitality." The general's voice conveys the disgust he feels at such a violation of convention.

Ogoe clasps his hands behind his back. "Ki-Rin or Unicorn, they are here, holding lands on our western border."

Tosazu bows an apology. "Yes, Ogoe-sama. As I said, I have been studying them, particularly their approach to war. They make extensive use of cavalry, which gives them certain advantages. But it also entails certain vulnerabilities. Should we ever come to battle with them-"

Ogoe raises one hand. "We will come to battle with them, Tosazu-sama. That is why I have summoned you."

Tosazu smiles. "Ah. I see. Well, we shall need time to prepare the necessary tactics, drill our troops, manufacture and equip long spears to defeat their cavalry charges, but--"

"No."

Tosazu stares. "Ogoe-sama?"

"I do not want you to defeat their cavalry charges," Ogoe says. "I do not want you to defeat them at all." Ogoe meets his general's eyes. "Tosazu-san, I need you to muster your army. We're going to war with these Unicorn. And I need you to lose."

Tosazu keeps staring.

"Not merely lose, Tosazu-san," Ogoe continues. "I need you to lose badly. I need our clan to be humiliated by these Unicorn... by these uncouth barbarians. I need the rest of the Empire to consider us weak, all foolish bluster, to dismiss us and turn their attention elsewhere. Then we can return to the shadows around the stage, where we belong." Another pause. "Do you understand what I am asking of you, Tosazu-san?"

The other man nods. In his eyes Ogoe can see he does indeed understand. Responsible for a humiliating defeat, Tosazu will have no choice but to offer seppuku to cleanse his family's honor.

Tosazu's voice is calm. "With your permission, Bayushi Ogoe-sama, I must prepare the army. I will await your command to march."

Ogoe nods. "Domo arigato, Tosazu-san."

Tosazu bows deeply and leaves.

When he is gone, Ogoe listens for a moment. The song of the Bloodsword is fainter, and he smiles slightly to himself as he takes Itsuwari up from where it rests in the sun. He can return it to the vault where it is kept.

He will not be needing a sword any time soon.

History of the Scorpion Clan

"I will be your villain, Hantei."

– Bayushi, from the play 'Bayushi's Promise'

While the history of the Scorpion Clan, like that of the other Great Clans, can be said to begin with the fall of the Kami, it does not truly start until after the great tournament to determine which of them would rule. Hantei, having won the tournament, sought to turn Bayushi's cunning to the benefit of the nascent Empire. He asked Bayushi to become his Underhand, doing unpleasant but necessary things to ensure the survival of the Empire. Bayushi knew this would make his new clan reviled by the rest of Rokugan, but this also meant if the clans ever united it would be against the Scorpion and not the Emperor. He agreed to Hantei's demand, even though it meant he and his followers would be forever mistrusted and despised.

Like the other Kami, Bayushi began building his Scorpion Clan by seeking out loyal and reliable followers among the mortals of Rokugan. However, he did not look for the same sort of followers as his siblings. The task set before the Scorpion—to combat the hidden threats to the Empire—did not necessarily require strength of arms or magical might. Instead, Bayushi sought the very qualities his siblings shunned: guile, subtlety, and skills at deception, observation, and stealth. The Scorpion Clan thus from the very beginning assumed a very different shape from the other clans. Its members were widely dispersed and often hidden or disguised. In fact, early records suggest the original Scorpion Clan may not even have maintained proper holdings; it was an itinerant clan, pervading the rest of the Empire and mostly invisible to it.

Bayushi's most famous and capable follower was the master trickster Shosuro. Bayushi met a young boy on the road, a boy who subsequently became a female geisha holding a knife in his bedchamber. Bayushi was greatly impressed by Shosuro's cleverness and guile and convinced her to join his new clan. Shosuro soon became his closest confidant and ultimately had almost as great an impact on the Scorpion Clan as Bayushi himself.

Not all of Bayushi's early followers were chosen for their guile, however. During the First War against the forces of Fu Leng, a powerful Phoenix shugenja named Yogo was cursed by the Dark Kami to betray whomever he loved the most. Unable to live with such a burden, Yogo fled the Phoenix and thought to kill himself. However, Bayushi persuaded him there was another path: he could join the Scorpion Clan. When Yogo protested his curse would

One Frog, Two Scorpions

"The Frog and the Scorpion" was a well-known parable in Rokugan before the Kami ever fell from the Heavens. In it, a frog agrees to carry a scorpion across a river after the scorpion promises he will not sting the frog. After all, if the frog dies they will both drown. Nonetheless, halfway across the river the scorpion stings the frog. The dying frog asks the scorpion why, since now they will both perish, and the scorpion replies: "It is my nature."

The Scorpion Clan tells a tale that offers a somewhat different version of the parable. According to this story, Bayushi first meets the Little Teacher, Shinsei, while waiting to compete in the Tournament of the Kami. Shinsei begins to recount the parable, much to Bayushi's impatience, but the climax of the tale is different. As the drowning frog cries, "We will both die now," the scorpion replies: "But little frog... I can swim." After hearing this ending to the story, Bayushi goes forth and loses his match to Shiba—loses deliberately, the Scorpion story claims, to conceal his true strength.

Whether this story is true or not—and the early appearance by Shinsei certainly makes it seem rather improbable—the fact that Hantei subsequently convinced Bayushi to save his poison for the true enemies of the Empire tells us a great deal about both of the Kami.

doom him, Bayushi replied, "But Yogo, you do not love me." Yogo agreed, joining the Scorpion Clan and eventually founding the Yogo family.

Shosuro and the Day of Thunder

Bayushi looked at Hantei, his eyes pleading. "I have lost enough of my children." He turned back to Shinsei, his body trembling with anger. "There must be another way."

The little master shook his head. "There is no other way."

– *from Kakita Uniko's novel* Day of Thunder.

When the First War against Fu Leng reached its crisis point, the enigmatic holy man Shinsei proclaimed the only way to prevail would be to send mortals representing each of the Clans—the Seven Thunders—to confront Fu Leng. Shinsei called forth a Thunder from each of the Clans... except the Scorpion. Bayushi's followers had suffered severely while spying and scouting against Fu Leng's forces, and when Shinsei asked for Shosuro to join the Thunders, the Scorpion Kami refused. This act was widely perceived as treachery, or at least cowardice, and further demonized the Scorpion Clan in the eyes of the Empire. It was also ultimately futile; Shosuro defied Bayushi's wishes and accompanied the Thunders into the Shadowlands.

Fu Leng was defeated and his essence bound into the twelve Black Scrolls. Shosuro was the only one of the Thunders to escape; she delivered the Black Scrolls to the capital and died in Bayushi's arms. The Black Scrolls were entrusted to the Scorpion (and ultimately to Yogo and his descendents) for safe-keeping. Shosuro's body, Tainted by her exposure to the Shadowlands, was burned.

However, Shosuro's death was, like many things involving the Scorpion, a lie. Shosuro falsified her death and assumed a new identity as a shugenja, Soshi, founding the Soshi family. (The Shosuro family was founded by the remaining followers of Shosuro herself, built around the nucleus of an acting troupe who were actually spies and infiltrators.)

Bayushi doubtless felt he had what he wanted—his beloved Shosuro had returned. In truth, however, Shosuro was not what she had once been. During her flight from the Shadowlands she had encountered the sinister otherworldly force known as the Lying Darkness and bargained with it for its help. The Darkness returned with her to Rokugan, a shadowy seed within her soul. As the years passed, Shosuro sensed the power of the Darkness growing within her, threatening to overcome her identity. She fled the clan, eventually seeking the aid of the Kami Togashi, who sealed her within a crystal prison. Bayushi was deeply affected by the disappearance of his beloved Shosuro and vanished from his clan's holdings, leaving behind only a note: "I have lost her."

A Thousand Years of Peace: The Scorpion

The Scorpion Clan's public history for the thousand years of the Hantei Dynasty is dutifully recorded in the Imperial records, but much of that history—like most things Scorpion—is false, misleading, or mysterious.

In the early years of the Empire the Scorpion Clan's leader Bayushi Tangen presented Emperor Hantei Genji with a book called simply *Lies*. Supposedly a treatise composed by the Emperor's command on the topic of treachery and duplicity, the book was actually a scathing attack on Akodo's *Leadership*. It also urged the Emperor to adopt a ruthlessly pragmatic approach to government. Soon after, Tangen himself dropped dead in a Lion court in the midst of defending his book. His final words were, "There is not a single lie on those pages."

Although the rest of the Empire believed this book showed how truly immoral the Scorpion were, in fact Tangen was an honorable man who sincerely believed he was offering good advice to the Emperor. Modern Scorpion seldom speak of the book except to chuckle and imply others place too much importance on it. In truth, the clan leadership puts much more value in Tangen's secret journal, *Little Truths*, which has never been seen by outsiders.

In the late third and early fourth centuries the Scorpion were one of three clans who created the Gozoku Alliance, a semi-secret conspiracy that reduced the Hantei Emperor to a figurehead for two generations. Indeed, the Scorpion member of the Gozoku, Bayushi Atsuki, was its most dedicated and potent leader, and some scholars have suggested he was the true mastermind of the conspiracy. After the overthrow of the Gozoku by Empress Yugozohime, Atsuki was executed and the actions of the conspiracy were largely erased from history—with the full cooperation of the Scorpion Clan. Indeed, the Scorpion have often coordinated with the Empire's official historians to ensure that shameful or destructive events are deleted from the public

Scorpion Masks

All Scorpion samurai wear masks at all times, although their design and purpose varies widely—some of them are truly concealing, while others are decorative or even designed to enhance the wearer's features. The Scorpion claim there is no dishonesty in wearing masks, because the concept of *on* (face) means everyone wears masks—the Scorpion are just honest enough to wear theirs on the outside.

The Scorpion tradition of masks dates back to Bayushi, who concealed all but his eyes with a piece of cloth. A popular tale within the clan holds that Bayushi devised this mask from Shinsei's advice. Supposedly, after he heard Shinsei's tale of the Frog and the Scorpion, Bayushi smiled and claimed he understood the point of the story. Shinsei immediately cracked his walking stick across Bayushi's mouth, drawing blood. He told the stunned Kami he could see the uncertainty in his eyes in spite of his knowing smile. "Your eyes told me one thing, your mouth another, so I rewarded your eyes by striking your mouth," he said. This Bayushi *did* understand. He tore a strip off his kimono and fashioned the crude mask he wore for the rest of his life, covering all but his eyes.

In modern times, the Bayushi family tend to wear ornate and decorative masks, whereas the Soshi and especially the Shosuro favor masks that are relatively plain and unadorned. Only the Yogo wear masks as ornate as those of the Bayushi. It is not unusual to see a Bayushi wearing a mask that could, in its own right, be considered a significant work of art. (Of course there are always exceptions—Bayushi Paneki, Clan Champion in the late twelfth century, wore a cloth mask that was little more than lacy gauze.) However, if a Scorpion mask is ostentatious, it probably belongs to a Bayushi. Bayushi masks are also more likely to be designed to achieve some specific effect on those viewing them, and they may use several different masks to achieve specific effects. For example, a demon-face may be intended to unsettle, while a pleasant, smiling mask may be used to disarm. Soshi and Shosuro masks are more likely to be purely utilitarian, and the Yogo generally don't care what impact their masks have on others, decorating them only to please themselves.

Lies and Little Truths

Lies takes it as a given that all men are base, ambitious, and treacherous, and advocates the Emperor use swift, ruthless, and cruel action to suppress such men and retain power. It argues the absolute moral stances advocated by Akodo in *Leadership* are impractical. Tangen asks: "If a lie were to save the Son of Heaven, and the truth doom him, I would ask the Lion what he might choose. A lie does indeed kill someone in the world, but what if it saved the Emperor? Who would not give his life for the Son of Heaven?" Similarly, he rejects blind adherence to Bushido: "If a man has used fraud against me, I consider him a wretch and a scoundrel, and I will not adhere to rules that he ignores. I will not put myself at the disadvantage of clinging to 'morals' while he takes the advantage of free action. The world is filled with evil men, my lord. To refuse an advantage because it is 'underhanded' is not only disrespectful to those whom you protect and lead, it is also the most selfish act I can think of."

Tangen also condemns generosity and pity, arguing they are foolish and breed contempt from others. "To pause when causing my enemy pain is weakness. He would not do so for me, and if he did, I would smite him for his stupidity."

Perhaps the book's most infamous passage is the one discussing treachery: "Never presume a man is incapable of treachery. If one man is capable of it, all men are capable of it. But you do not need to fear all men. You only need concern yourself with men of cunning, strong heart, will and determination. These men are capable of *true treachery*. Other men are only capable of *low treachery*. Weak men are not capable of true treachery; neither are men of low means. Only those who are brave are capable of it. The cowardly do not have the stomach for it. Men of weakness will always wait for another to take risks."

In what is often considered the most disgraceful part of the book, Tangen argues it is easier to trust peasants than to trust a nobleman of the samurai caste. Peasants, he claims, only revolt because they are fearful of and alienated from their samurai rulers. Ultimately a peasant only wants to eat, making him trustworthy, whereas a nobleman has higher and more sinister ambitions.

Bayushi Tangen's greatest work, however, is not *Lies*. It is his personal journal, entitled *Shinriko*—"Little Truths." Tangen's wife discovered this book after his death, and it has remained in the line of the Bayushi lords ever since; many Clan Champions have added their own observations to its pages. *Shinriko* consists of a long series of aphorisms, succinct comments on the true nature of life, war, and politics in Rokugan, as well as suggestions on how to deal with enemies of the Scorpion. A brief sampling follows:

- Cut off the right arm and the left will be wholly occupied trying to stop the flow of blood.
- Do not fear your enemies. Only a friend can betray you.
- Fools forget. Make certain you do not.
- Enemies you threaten make armies. Enemies you destroy make graves.
- Everyone lies. Even me.
- Life is not fair. That doesn't mean you can't win.
- The only box that can hold a secret is a coffin.
- Injury is more quickly forgotten than insult.
- No enemy is beneath notice.
- A man in love, a man in hate: both are willing to believe anything to accomplish their cause.
- Always be ready to wait.
- When shame falls upon you, share it with an enemy. How readily others will believe a dishonest man.
- A man divided by duty has not a single leg to stand on.
- Always know where your sword is. Always.

record, maintaining the outward image of a serene Empire ruled by an infallible Emperor.

It is known to scholars that in the late fifth century the Scorpion Clan was publicly revealed to have an extensive network of spies throughout Rokugan. At the urging of the Otomo, who were wary of this sophisticated intelligence apparatus, Emperor Hantei X ordered the spy network dismantled. The Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Hajioki, appeared to obey and even had his own brother Aramoro commit seppuku to prove the deed had been done. In actuality, however, Hajioki simply transferred these duties to more covert organizations, chiefly the Shosuro Infiltrators and their associates, the Shosuro Actors. At the same time he ordered his most trustworthy agent, Shosuro Nodage, to create a false image of covert conspiracy to deflect attention away from the Scorpion. The myth of the "ninja," mysterious warriors and assassins with equally mysterious shadow powers, already existed but grew considerably from Nodoge's activities. This fanciful legend provided a very effective distraction which the real Scorpion operatives used to facilitate their espionage and assassinations.

The Scorpion were also involved in the exposure and defeat of Iuchiban the Bloodspeaker. When a strange and unexpected gift sword arrived in Scorpion lands, the daimyo was suspicious and dispatched a clan magistrate, Soshi Takasho, to investigate. Takasho worked together with the Lion magistrate Akodo Minobe to uncover Iuchiban's schemes, leading to the Bloodspeaker's defeat at the Battle of Stolen Graves in the year 510. What was unknown at the time was that the Scorpion carefully retained ownership of the sword—the Bloodsword Ambition—and hid it away in the tunnels beneath Kyuden Bayushi. Ambition would impact later Scorpion history more than once, finally and most disastrously during the Scorpion Clan Coup in the twelfth century.

A quarter-millennium later the clans united to defeat Iuchiban again at the Battle of Sleeping River. Prior to the main engagement, the Scorpion army waged a desperate rear-guard fight at Beiden Pass known as the Battle of Bloody Retreat. Without their effort the Bloodspeaker might have prevailed. It was after Iuchiban's second rampage that the Scorpion created the secretive shugenja order known as the *Kuroiban* or "Black Watch," dedicated to hunting out those who use forbidden magic.

In the early ninth century the former Ki-Rin Clan, now the Unicorn Clan, returned to Rokugan after 800 years of exploring the surrounding world. Deeply suspicious of these barbarian outsiders, Scorpion Champion Bayushi Ogoe decided to confront them at the Battle of White Shore Plain in the year 815. The Scorpion forces were soundly defeated and Ogoe was forced to offer a groveling public apology to the Unicorn. However, Ogoe told his own people this was all according to his plan. The defeated Scorpion were now largely dismissed as a military force in the Empire, particularly by the Unicorn Clan. This, Ogoe claimed, was precisely what he wanted; it gave the Scorpion more freedom to operate without notice from the rest of Rokugan.

The Scorpion Clan Coup

Perhaps the most tumultuous period in Scorpion history occurred at the dawn of the twelfth century. Clan Champion Bayushi Shoju read a series of prophecies which convinced him the "last Hantei" would become the vessel of Fu Leng and doom the Empire. In the year 1123 he launched a coup against the Hantei Dynasty. Prior to committing his crime Shoju placed the Scorpion Clan's ancestral sword in hiding and armed himself with the Bloodsword Ambition; he did not want to profane the Scorpion sword with the blood of the Hantei, and he believed (perhaps foolishly) he could withstand the Bloodsword's influence.

The Scorpion Clan Coup, as it came to be known, was a shattering event that convulsed the entire Empire. Shoju himself confronted Emperor Hantei XXXVIII in the throne room and informed him of a grave threat to the future of Rokugan, asking the Son of Heaven's permission to take whatever action was needed to save the Empire. When the Emperor agreed, Shoju drew Ambition and struck him down instantly, while his soldiers swept through the palace and the rest of the Imperial Capital Otosan Uchi.

The success of the Coup was short-lived, however. The Crab Clan, which Shoju had expected to support him, instead rallied to the army gathering under the banners of the Lion Clan Champion, Akodo Toturi. The Coup ended after only five days, and Shoju perished in a duel with Toturi. In a final act of defiance he slashed Ambition into the Emperor's throne and broke off the blade. His clan fared little better. The new Emperor, Hantei XXXIX, proclaimed the Scorpion disbanded and took Shoju's wife Bayushi Kachiko as his own. The Scorpion Clan was driven underground and waged a guerilla war against the rest of the Empire.

The Clan Coup left the Empire in turmoil and cast the succession of the Hantei Dynasty in doubt, giving rise to the period of civil war known as the Clan Wars. Although the Scorpion remained officially disbanded, their influence on the Clan Wars was significant. Kachiko, now wife to Hantei XXXIX, began slowly poisoning him while she vengefully turned the clans against one another. Even worse, Yogo Junzo—daimyo of the Yogo family and a devoted follower of Shoju—became so obsessed with avenging his lord's death that he began opening the Black Scrolls remaining in Scorpion hands, initiating the return of Fu Leng to the mortal realm. The Dark Kami possessed the body of the Emperor, and Kachiko found her poisoning suddenly acquiring a new meaning as she struggled to keep the returned Dark Kami weak and sickly. Finally the Second Day of Thunder arrived, and Kachiko was revealed as the Scorpion Clan Thunder, striking a key blow against Fu Leng in the final struggle.

In the wake of the Day of Thunder, Toturi became Emperor and officially reinstated the Scorpion Clan, publicly acknowledging that Shoju's actions had been intended for the good of the Empire.

The Scorpion and the War Against the Darkness

The Scorpion Clan's redemption was sadly short-lived. In the year 1130 Emperor Toturi I disappeared. Clues seemed to implicate the Scorpion; unable to answer the charges, the entire clan was exiled to the Burning Sands, while all Scorpion children under twelve were fostered to the Crane. The Scorpion endured misery and privation in the gaijin lands and at one point were enslaved by the Senpet Empire. Two years later, after Toturi was located and restored to the Throne, the Scorpion shinobi Bayushi Aramoro won a tournament and asked a boon of the Emperor: the restoration of his clan to its lands and place in Rokugan.

By then, the Lying Darkness had emerged from hiding to launch a full-scale attack on the fabric of creation itself. The Scorpion Clan finally recognized the danger posed by the Lying Darkness, purging its influence from the Shosuro family and joining the Empire's overall war against the Shadow. A group of shinobi led by Aramoro played a key role in the final showdown at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, and a Scorpion actress distracted the Shadow's avatar, Goju Adorai, at a critical moment. In the aftermath of the Shadow's defeat, the loyalty of the Scorpion Clan was publicly proclaimed by Emperor Toturi and all questions of their involvement in his kidnapping were ended.

The Scorpion Clan in Modern Times

The Scorpion Clan faced difficult times throughout the reign of the short-lived Toturi Dynasty, but also elevated its political power to higher levels than previously seen. The clan controlled the office of Imperial Chancellor for much of the dynasty's reign, and in the year 1169 a Scorpion also won the Emerald Championship. However, the clan also suffered a major peasant uprising caused by the mad monk Kokujin and a bitter famine unleashed by the anger of the Fortune Bishamon.

The Scorpion faced a major interior threat during this era when the spirit of Bayushi Atsuki, one of the architects of the original Gozoku Alliance conspiracy, returned to mortal life at the end of the War Against the Darkness. Atsuki fomented a schism within the Scorpion, forming a sinister group known as the Shadowed Tower which used maho and other forbidden power to undermine the clan's leadership. When this scheme was undone, he launched a second Gozoku conspiracy aimed at the Imperial Throne. The plot was finally halted when Atsuki was assassinated by Scorpion Clan Champion Bayushi Sunetra.

Families of the Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion Clan includes four major families—the Bayushi, the Shosuro, the Soshi, and the Yogo. Like all Great Clans they also have several lesser vassal families, honored for particular service to the clan (these are described in Appendix Two). Unlike some Great Clans, the Scorpion can trace the origin of all four of their major families back to the dawn of the Empire.

The Bayushi Family

"I can swim."

– Bayushi family motto

The Bayushi, founded by and descended from the clan's Kami, are the preeminent family of the Scorpion Clan. The Scorpion Clan Champion has traditionally come from the Bayushi, as have most of the clan's most prominent bushi and courtiers. The members of the Bayushi family tend to exhibit a sinister grace, an inherent quality they cultivate and emphasize through training and practice. The men of the Bayushi are often darkly handsome, with a roguish air, while the women possess a coy seductive quality that inspires dangerous and inappropriate thoughts in other samurai. Deceit and ruthless manipulation are the hallmarks of this foremost Scorpion family, whether on the battlefield, in court, or during everyday interactions.

At the dawn of the Empire the followers of Bayushi were the only family in the Scorpion Clan, and supplied not only the clan's overt military might (such as it was) but also its spies, assassins, and saboteurs. With the founding of the Soshi and Shosuro families, however, these espionage-oriented tasks generally passed to them, leaving the Bayushi free to focus on military and political strategies. From the beginning the Bayushi have also been the public face of the Scorpion Clan, and when a Rokugani thinks of the Scorpion the image that comes to mind is most likely the smooth grace and glib tongue of a Bayushi.

The Bayushi, like most Scorpion, consider the number three to be unlucky, so things that occur in triples are viewed with suspicion and may be considered ominous portents. Children who are triplets are considered especially unsettling. On the other hand, the Bayushi consider the number two to be particularly lucky, since it reflects the twinned relationship of the Kami Bayushi with his brother Shiba. Close examination of a Bayushi's wardrobe may show signs of this superstition leaking through the family's usual carefully controlled demeanor; for instance, ornaments, embroidered designs, netsuke and the like are often worn in pairs.

The Bayushi Family Mon

The family mon of the Bayushi shows a scorpion set against a background of water. Like the family motto ("I can swim"), the mon reflects the tale of the Frog and the Scorpion as supposedly told by Shinsei to Bayushi during the Tournament of the Kami. What few outside the family know, however, is that the water symbol has a hidden meaning (like many things Scorpion). While the scorpion draws the eye, it is actually the water in the background that truly represents the Bayushi. Only its surface is visible in the mon; its depths, and whatever secrets they contain, are invisible and unknown.

The Bayushi are regarded as master manipulators and employ all manner of tactics to keep their opponents unsettled and off-guard. For example, it is a common Bayushi custom to offer guests a bath immediately upon arrival at their home. This may seem to be a simple gesture of hospitality, but sometimes the Bayushi host will check in on his guest in mid-bath, making sure the water is warm enough, the incense pleasing, and the bath-oils sufficiently fragrant. Finding oneself naked in the presence of one's host and his servants can be a highly off-putting experience for guests, making them feel exposed and vulnerable... feelings that linger during subsequent conversations and dealings. Other tactics of this sort include plying guests with food and drink (raising the constant fear of poisoning), always carrying a drinking cup and offering it to guests (placing them at a

disadvantage), and offering gifts of clothing in Scorpion colors but with a guest's clan symbols.

A somewhat crueler Bayushi tactic is sleep deprivation. This is by no means overt; guests of the Bayushi targeted by such tactics are given comfortable rooms and generous access to servants. However, the futon may be slightly too short for the guest in question, or the floor uneven; unusual sounds (usually created by assigned personnel) will intrude often enough to disrupt the guest's sleep; sometimes mild substances may be added to the guest's food and drink, substances that do nothing more than make it difficult to have a restful night. The next day, the fatigued guest is at a disadvantage during discussion and negotiations.

However, the use of such subtle tactics should not cause one to think the Bayushi cannot be overtly dangerous. They form the majority of the Scorpion Clan's field army and operate all the clan's military dojo. The clan's best iaijutsu duelists are generally Bayushi as well and do not hesitate to put their lives on the line when the Scorpion Clan requires it. More than one Rokugani samurai has become obsessed with avoiding the intricate manipulations of the leading Scorpion family, only to find the Underhand also wields a deadly blade.

The Shosuro Family

The Shosuro hold a position of prominence and influence within their clan second only to the Bayushi. In fact, this "second place" appearance is carefully nurtured in public so as to diminish the Empire's attention. To many Rokugani, the Shosuro seem only to provide aid and support to the Bayushi—and perhaps entertainment through their talented artists and actors. But just as the identity of their founder was ultimately a lie, so too is this public face of the Shosuro.

In fact, the Shosuro are responsible for most of the sinister activities for which the Scorpion are popularly reviled. Their duties are primarily those things the first Hantei foresaw as "unpleasant but necessary"—they provide the bulk of the clan's spies, saboteurs, and assassins. As a result, while the Bayushi flaunt their good looks and elegant style in the courts, the Shosuro tend to be rather bland and unassuming. This is partly just in their nature, but just as the Bayushi train themselves to accentuate their charms the Shosuro work at being non-descript and forgettable. This facilitates their work on behalf of the clan.

Paradoxically, the Shosuro also offer some of the most public displays and spectacles among the Scorpion. They are well-known for their playwrights, musicians, and acting troupes, all of which provide useful cover for spies. The family actually originated around an acting troupe whose members were spies, so the tradition of public performance masking covert action is well-established. That said, the Shosuro artists are undoubtedly talented and provide some of the most entertaining work in Rokugan; their performances are highly sought-after by Imperial and Great Clan nobility. The most famous example is the Silken Smile theatre, based in their seat of power at Shiro no Shosuro. Aspiring actors from across Rokugan vie to attend the acting school located there, little guessing the school also trains the clan's most potent spies and infiltrators.

There is another dimension to the clandestine nature of the Shosuro family. All across Rokugan they are known for their skills as apothecaries and herbalists. Indeed, some of the most effective medicines in the Empire, able to treat a wide range of ailments, were created by the Shosuro. Just as with their actors, however, there is a much darker side to this expertise. The Shosuro are the Empire's foremost experts in the creation of poisons. The family cultivates extensive gardens in its capital of Shiro no Shosuro, gardens solely devoted to the growing of strange and exotic plants from which toxic compounds can be derived. The Shosuro Gardens are the subject of whispered conjecture all across Rokugan, further deepening the sinister aura surrounding the clan; perhaps the truth is somewhat less lurid than the rumors, but the Scorpion are content to allow the tales—like their gardens—to grow.

The Shosuro tend to be the most pragmatic family in the Scorpion Clan, doubtless due to the things they do for

The Shosuro Mon

The mon of the Shosuro shows a complex intertwined network of ivy. It is intended to represent an impenetrable maze or unsolvable puzzle. However, like the Bayushi mon, there is more to this symbol than first appears: the layered three-dimensional nature of the knotted ivy suggests hidden depth to the shadow-black background.

The Soshi Family Mon

The mon of the Soshi shows a scorpion with a net stretched between its claws. This is a symbolic warning; the Soshi are able to seize and control all things, no matter how secret or hidden they may be.

the clan. As a result, the usual superstitions of the Scorpion—the number three is ill-omened, the rat is very lucky since it is a servant of the Fortune Daikoku, it is unlucky to wear another Scorpion's mask unless he has shared a secret with you—have less hold among the Shosuro. They are quick to share and exchange masks, for example, since this is an effective tactic for confusing identities. Avoiding detection and notice is an important part of Shosuro training, and a common Shosuro gempukku exercise (for both of their main schools) consists of simply walking through a crowd. If no two members of the crowd are able to give similar descriptions of the student, the test has been passed. This desire to be unremarkable even extends to their masks, which tend to be the plainest and least distinctive of all Scorpion masks.

The Soshi Family

While the Bayushi and to a lesser extent the Shosuro serve as public faces for the Scorpion, the Soshi are far more insular. They are both the spiritual center of the clan and the focus of some of its most insidious secrets.

The Soshi were founded by a shugenja of that name shortly after the First Day of Thunder; however, the shugenja named Soshi was actually the new identity of Shosuro after her return from the Day of Thunder and subsequent 'death.' Shosuro had been contaminated by the Lying Darkness in exchange for its aid in escaping the Shadowlands, and the person named "Soshi" was thus an amalgam of Shosuro and the Lying Darkness. This unnatural symbiosis colored the basic character of the Soshi family, for in addition to studying and manipulating the five Elements the Soshi also studied another substance—"Shadow," the essence of the Nothing itself.

Aside from *tejina* (shadow magic) the Soshi also studied more conventional elemental magic, of course. Soshi tend to have a particular affinity for the element of Air, which they use with great skill for spells of illusion, observation, and communication. Soshi shugenja are not overt or aggressive in their activities; instead they remain in the background—whether on the battlefield or in court—while gathering information about their enemies and spreading disinformation about friends and allies. Soshi shugenja are also skilled at working their magic surreptitiously, further enhancing their ability to remain discreet and unnoticed.

As the most spiritual of the Scorpion families, the Soshi are well-versed in the *Tao* of Shinsei and similar theologi

The Shosuro, the Soshi, and the Lying Darkness

When Shosuro returned to the Empire from the Shadowlands, she brought with her the corruption of the Lying Darkness and a sinister artifact, the Obsidian Hand. In keeping with the bargain she had made with the Darkness, Shosuro arranged for a small number of shinobi students to be "recruited" out of the clan each year. These students were taken to secret dojo hidden in the most obscure corners of Scorpion lands, and each was touched with the Obsidian Hand, exposing them to the power of Shadow. Most of them eventually became Shadowspawn, absorbed into the Lying Darkness forever.

In return, the Shosuro's sister family, the Soshi, was able to study the powers of Nothing and learn a new form of magic called *tejina* or 'shadow-magic.' This in turn led them to create *kage yakiin* or Shadow Brands, sinister tattoos which drew on the power of Nothing. Shadow Brands allowed their recipients to exercise control over Shadow and use it to achieve superhuman feats of stealth and movement, and were often given to the more potent and experienced Scorpion shinobi; their corrupting influence ensured some of these individuals also joined the ranks of the Lying Darkness. The Scorpion Clan as a whole was ignorant of this sinister bargain, of course, and assumed the Shadow Brands were a specialized form of magic created by the Soshi. Only a select few within the Shosuro and Soshi families were aware of the truth, and most of them believed their deal with the Lying Darkness was well worth the price.

When the Lying Darkness finally unleashed its plot to unmake reality in the early twelfth century, the Scorpion Clan realized it had been used and deceived. The clan took immediate action to purge its ranks of all influence by the Darkness, shutting down the secret dojo and executing anyone who showed signs of Shadow corruption. The use of Shadow Brands was likewise discontinued. After the Darkness was defeated at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, however, the Soshi cautiously renewed their study of the nature and use of Nothing, although their new tejina magic was far weaker than the Shadow Brands of old.

More information on the Lying Darkness, and the mechanics of Shadow Brands, can be found in Chapter 7 of the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire*.

cal works. However, while few Soshi would willingly commit blasphemy against Rokugani spiritual beliefs, equally few would hesitate to interpret those beliefs in the most advantageous way possible. After all, if belief in the Tao and worship of the Fortunes and Kami can be used as a means of influencing or even manipulating believers, it is the believers who are weak. Some might consider this cynicism; the Soshi consider it simple practicality.

Like the Shosuro, the Soshi tend to eschew elaborate masks and finery, believing plain trappings better suit their role in the clan. They also tend to share the Shosuro tendency to pay somewhat less attention to the clan's minor superstitions. Of course, as priests the Soshi pay full respect to traditional spiritual duties such as blessing births and marriages or offering prayers at funerals. Even if they regard some of these as unneeded, they would never forsake their duties as samurai—although they remain keenly aware, as always, how such beliefs may be used to their advantage.

The Yogo Family

Even in a clan as infamous as the Scorpion, the Yogo family has a particular notoriety. Their founder, the Phoenix shugenja Yogo, was cursed during the First War against Fu Leng to betray the one he loved the most. Bayushi, recognizing Yogo certainly did not love him, offered him a place among the Scorpion. It appears from the historical records that Yogo himself never actually triggered his own curse. However, the curse passed through his children to his entire bloodline, and its tragic power continues to haunt the Yogo family to this day.

Because of this, the Yogo are viewed with caution not only by other Scorpion but by the Empire as a whole. The family has spent many centuries trying to find a way to undo the curse, so far without success. This research, combined with a bitter desire for justice, has made the Yogo quite dedicated to fighting the Taint of Jigoku, and in the seventh century they founded a secret sect, the *Kuroiban* or Black Watch, to advance their personal struggle against maho and the Taint. It thus should not be surprising that the Yogo alone among the Scorpion have found kindred spirits in the Kuni family of the Crab Clan and the Inquisitors of the Phoenix. The Kuni in particular seem to get along with the Yogo, not least because both families tend to be shunned by many Rokugani. The Yogo and the Kuni Witch-Hunters often work together against Shadowlands threats even when their clans are at odds.

The Yogo Family Mon

The mon of the Yogo shows a mask adorned with flaming feathers, symbolizing the family's origin in the Phoenix Clan. Unlike the other families, the Yogo felt no need to incorporate hidden meanings into their mon.

Yogo magic is different from that of most other Rokugani shugenja. Their extensive research into their own curse—an ongoing supernatural effect—has given them deep insight into how to create lasting magical phenomena. Accordingly, the Yogo excel in the creation of magical wards and protective charms. This is not merely a personal interest, of course, since for almost a thousand years the Yogo were responsible for guarding the Black Scrolls that bound the essence of Fu Leng. Yogo Junzo's betrayal of this duty is considered the family's greatest failing and subsequent generations of Yogo hold themselves to their duty all the more fiercely.

Given all this, it should not be surprising that the Yogo tend to be dour and reclusive. Their facial features are narrow and angular, more evocative of their Phoenix ancestry than their fellow Scorpion, and when their expressions can be seen around their masks they are often haunted and pensive. Since they are reluctant to offer their affection to others for fear of triggering their curse, Yogo are usually introspective and self-centered. Unlike the other families, whose masks and dress are designed to achieve certain effects on the viewer, the Yogo tend to favor garments and masks that reflect the individual. And in contrast to the pragmatic Shosuro and Soshi, the Yogo's long experience with arbitrary supernatural punishment from their curse means they believe in and respect the superstitions of their clan.

Heroes of the Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion Clan has produced many notable samurai through its storied history. Some have, indeed, been heroes. Others might more properly be called villains. All of them, however, have played a key role in shaping the Emerald Empire.

Bayushi Nissho

Master of Horse and Bow

Born with the name Nishkut, the girl who became Bayushi Nissho typifies the earliest followers of the Kami Bayushi. She was a chieftain's daughter from a tribe settled near what would one day become Kyuden Bayushi. When Bayushi travelled among her people seeking followers, she eagerly joined his new Scorpion Clan, swearing her allegiance in a simple ritual that was the ancestor of the modern gempukku.

A samurai of modern Rokugan would find little in common with Nissho, who was a product of her harsh environment. She possessed few social skills and spent much of her life focused on simple survival. Like many early samurai she eschewed the sword in favor of the so-called "Way

of the Horse and Bow," and employed skills of stealth, tracking, and ambush against the enemies of her new clan. The few tales that survive of Nissho tell of her bravery and prowess as both hunter and warrior, and she exacted a terrible toll against her enemies, especially during the First War. Her ultimate fate, like that of many early bushi of the Empire, is unknown.

Bayushi Nissho, Master of Horse and Bow

Air: 2 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 2
Strength: 3

Honor: 2.5 *Status: 1.0* *Glory: 1.0*

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1

Skills: Animal Handling 2, Athletics, Horsemanship 3, Hunting (Survival, Tracking) 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu (Dai Kyu) 3, Medicine 1, Spears (Yari) 2, Stealth (Ambush, Sneaking) 2. (Note that Stealth is not yet considered a Low Skill at the dawn of the Empire.)

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Way of the Land (Scorpion Lands)

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Brash

Soshi Saibankan

Founder of the Emerald Magistrates

Soshi Saibankan was a renowned judge from the Empire's second century, a man with a reputation for being both fair and wise. Unfortunately, this sort of repute was uncommon among Rokugan's early judiciary; judges of the time tended to be arbitrary and inconsistent, relying on a patchwork of legal codes that combined both Imperial edicts and remnants of local tribal customs. The result was a legal system that was cumbersome, unfair, and prone to manipulation and corruption. The Emperor's Champion, Doji Hatsuo, heard about Soshi Saibankan's legendary even-handed and thoughtful approach to the law, and attended his court in secret to watch him render judgments. Saibankan drew on folklore and fables, including stories of his supposed wise uncle Sochoku, to illustrate legal principles in a way even commoners could understand. Deeply impressed with his approach to justice, Hatsuo drafted Saibankan to develop a coherent set of laws and enforcement mechanisms to govern Rokugan.

It was Saibankan who organized the Emerald Magistrates under the command of the Emerald Champion, drafted their Charter, and crafted the general code of laws and judicial practices practiced in the Empire ever since. After many years of service to the Emerald Magistrates, Saibankan returned to the Scorpion as a sensei and spent the last decade of his life teaching his kinsmen the law... and how it could be circumvented.

Soshi Saibankan

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4
Awareness: 5 Intelligence: 5 Perception: 4

Honor: 5.5 *Status: 4.7* *Glory: 4.5*

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 5

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 5, Games: Go 3, Investigation 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 2, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: Law 8, Lore: Underworld 4, Medicine 2, Sincerity (Deceit, Honesty) 4, Temptation 2

Advantages: Ally (Doji Hatsuo, Influence 4/Devotion 2), Crafty, Higher Purpose (codify Rokugani law), Sage, Social Position (Judge)

Disadvantages: Contrary, Compulsion (2 points; Attend hearings and trials)

Shosuro Nodage

"Ninja", Expert Deceiver

In the late fifth century, after Emperor Hantei X ordered the Scorpion Clan's spy network dismantled, the Scorpion Champion Bayushi Hajioki only appeared to obey. To deflect the attention of Imperial authorities from the still-working network, Hajioki ordered Shosuro Nodage to create a parallel but false conspiracy. Nodage exceeded Hajioki's expectations, creating a widespread rumor of a shadowy organization known only as "the ninja."

Nodage and his men drew on existing rumors and their own creativity to establish the standard for ninja, donning black masks and clothing and launching missions that were almost but not quite perfectly covert. It soon became clear that even conducting unsuccessful missions required a significant degree of skill, causing Nodage to greatly refine his techniques and develop the full form of the Shosuro Infiltrator school. It was also Nodage who developed the tradition of the infamous Shosuro "Gauntlet" to test new shinobi before they could become legitimate Scorpion agents. (See "The Ninja Myth" later in this chapter for more details.)

Nodage's efforts were in some ways too successful. Ninja were soon spotted all over the Empire, becoming a pervasive Rokugani legend and leading to a degree of paranoia and watchfulness that sometimes jeopardized real Scorpion missions. Nodage spent much of the remaining years of his life struggling to manage the non-existent organization he'd created, trying to ensure it didn't cause more problems for the Scorpion than it was intended to solve. Of course, he was wholly ignorant of the darker side of his own family and its alliance with the Lying Darkness, and never suspected the ninja myth was driven as much by the Darkness' activities as by his own operations.

Shosuro Nodoge, "Ninja," Expert Deceiver

Air: 3 Earth: 2 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 3
Willpower: 3

Honor: 1.5 *Status: 1.0 (-10)* *Glory: 7.2 (Infamy 8)*

School/Rank: Shosuro Infiltrator 3

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 3, Defense, Investigation 3, Ninjutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu (Han-Kyu) 3, Lore: Underworld 2, Sincerity, Stealth 4

Advantages: Bland, Crafty, Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Insensitive, Infamous

Soshi Takasho

Scourge of the Bloodspeakers

Soshi Takasho was a Scorpion Clan magistrate during the fifth century, a man renowned for his dogged persistence in running down criminals and outlaws. His repute led the Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Rikoji, to dispatch him to the Imperial capital to investigate the source of the mysterious sword gifted to the clan by Asahina Yajinden. Of course, this blade was actually the Bloodsword Ambition, and the other three Clan Champions who received gifts from Yajinden had all died after shocking incidents.

Takasho teamed up with a rival Lion magistrate, Akodo Minobe, to seek out Yajinden and learn what lay behind his strange swords. The two eventually tracked Yajinden to the crypts beneath the Imperial capital city of Otosan Uchi, where they learned Yajinden's master Iuchiban was plotting to animate the bodies in the crypts and overthrow Emperor Hantei XI.

Takasho gathered sufficient information that the clans were able to mobilize and confront Iuchiban at the Battle of Stolen Graves in the year 510. Iuchiban was defeated and taken prisoner, as was his lieutenant Yajinden. If not for Takasho's relentless pursuit of Yajinden, Iuchiban would undoubtedly have slain the Emperor, taken the capital city and begun a reign of terror from which Rokugan might never have recovered.

Soshi Takasho, Scourge of the Bloodspeakers

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 3
Intelligence: 4

Honor: 3.5 *Status: 4.5* *Glory: 4.0*

School/Rank: Soshi Shugenja 3

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Courtier 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Lore: Law 4, Lore: Maho 3, Lore: Theology 2, Spellcraft (Importune) 2, Stealth

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Air: By the Light of the Moon, Tempest of Air, Yari of Air, Mists of Illusion, Whispering Wind, Fire: Biting Steel, Fires of Purity, Water: Path to Inner Peace

Advantages: Fame, Servant (Eta Attendant), Social Position (Clan magistrate)

Disadvantages: Epilepsy

Yogo Itoju

Founder of the Kuroiban

Yogo Itoju was a young apprentice of a Soshi shugenja who bound himself into the Tomb of Iuchiban in order to help imprison the Bloodspeaker's spirit. Crushed by the loss of his beloved sensei and believing his own family curse was responsible, Itoju threw himself into creating an elaborate system of magical wards based on his sensei's notes. This system of ward magic remains in use by the Yogo to this day, and it alone would be sufficient for the Yogo family to revere his memory.

However, Itoju was also obsessed with preventing any new rise of maho; he was not satisfied wards alone would be sufficient to protect the Empire from the depredations of the Taint. Nor did he trust the Phoenix Inquisitors, who only sought to work within the confines of Rokugani law. Itoju feared the most dangerous maho cults would never be exposed by such conventional approaches. The only organization that could defend the Empire against such a threat had to be one that also existed outside the law. Thus was born the Kuroiban, a sect of shugenja assigned to hunt for maho and the Taint without regard to Imperial law—which meant the organization could not officially exist. The 'Black Watch' has carried on the struggle against the forces of Jigoku ever since, delving into the dark corners of Rokugan.

Yogo Itoju, Founder of the Kuroiban

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 3 Void: 4

Willpower: 4 Intelligence: 3

Honor: 4.5 *Status: 2.5* *Glory: 2.0*

School/Rank: Yogo Shugenja 2/Kuroiban (Insight Rank 3)

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Courtier 1, Defense 3, Divination (Astrology) 2, Etiquette 2, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Maho 3, Lore: Shugenja 1, Lore: Theology 1, Meditation 2, Spellcraft (Importune, Spell Research) 3

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Symbol of Air, Symbol of Earth, Symbol of Water, Jade Strike, Armor of the Earth, By the Light of the Moon, Hidden Visage, Secrets on the Winds, To Seek the Truth, Path to Inner Peace, Wisdom and Clarity, Extinguish

Advantages: Great Destiny (found the Kuroiban), Forbidden Knowledge (maho)

Disadvantages: Driven (to fight maho), Lost Love (fulfillment of Yogo curse)

Bayushi Ogoe

Pragmatic Champion

By the eighth century, Scorpion fortunes in the Empire were at their zenith. The clan was wealthy, blessed with fertile lands, and relatively unscathed by war. More importantly, the Scorpion had a network of agents infiltrated throughout Rokugan, their presence and activities well-screened by the illusory threat of 'ninja,' allowing them tremendous covert influence over the Empire. However, this very success threatened to undo everything the clan had achieved. To the north and south the Lion and Crab had begun threatening moves with armies far superior to anything the Scorpion could muster, while to the east the Crane Clan's political and economic power was focused on blunting Scorpion power in the courts and thwarting the clan's trade ambitions. As more and more attention focused on the Scorpion, Champion Bayushi Ogoe found it increasingly difficult to maintain the clan's position and feared the other clans might soon unite to destroy the Scorpion forever.

The recent return to Rokugan of the Ki-Rin Clan, now called the Unicorn, was a further complication—but to Ogoe, it was also a golden opportunity. He immediately set the Scorpion on a collision course with the Unicorn, staging incidents in court and unleashing trade disputes that soon led to war. As the opposing armies marched, Ogoe made sure Scorpion propaganda ridiculed the Unicorn, claiming they would be unable to stand against an army of true Rokugani. Then he directed his most able general, the renowned tactician Bayushi Tosazu, to face the Unicorn in battle—and lose. At the Battle of White Shore Plain in the year 815, the Unicorn handily routed Tosazu's army, reducing the Scorpion to a laughingstock across the Empire. Ogoe watched with satisfaction as the Crane returned to squabbling over their border with the Lion, the Lion focused their attention on the triumphant Unicorn on their western border, and the Crab returned to manning the Carpenter Wall and bickering with the Crane over the Yasuki provinces. The Scorpion, in the middle, were dismissed as ineffectual fools.

Ogoe lost a battle (and spectacularly at that) but won a war its other participants had not even realized they were fighting.

Itsuwari, Ancestral Sword of the Scorpion Clan

From the early days of the Scorpion Clan until the twelfth century, Itsuwari was the Ancestral Sword of the Scorpion Clan. The sword was carried by Bayushi himself and the touch of the Kami awakened powers that have only grown stronger through succeeding generations. In later years the Clan Champion seldom carried the sword personally, instead entrusting it to a chosen underling. Likewise during the Clan Coup, Bayushi Shoju gave the sword into another's keeping and used the Bloodsword Ambition during that doomed undertaking. The sword thus survived the catastrophic failure of the Coup and remained in Scorpion hands until the end of the War Against the Darkness, when all of the Ancestral Swords were taken into the Heavens by Shinjo in punishment for the death of Amaterasu.

The katana Itsuwari is a potent nemuranai and awards a +1k1 bonus to the wielder's attack and damage rolls with the weapon. More importantly, it causes the wielder to appear as if he is standing beside his actual location. As a result, the wielder's Armor TN is calculated as Reflexes x10 (plus 5), rather than the normal Reflexes x5 (plus 5). After the first Round of combat, an opponent can take a Free Action to make a Kenjutsu / Awareness roll at TN 30. If the roll is successful, Itsuwari's deception power is permanently negated for that opponent and the wielder's Armor TN returns to normal against that opponent.

Bayushi Ogoe, Pragmatic Champion

Air: 5 Earth: 4 Fire: 5 Water: 4 Void: 5

Honor: 4.5 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 8.0*

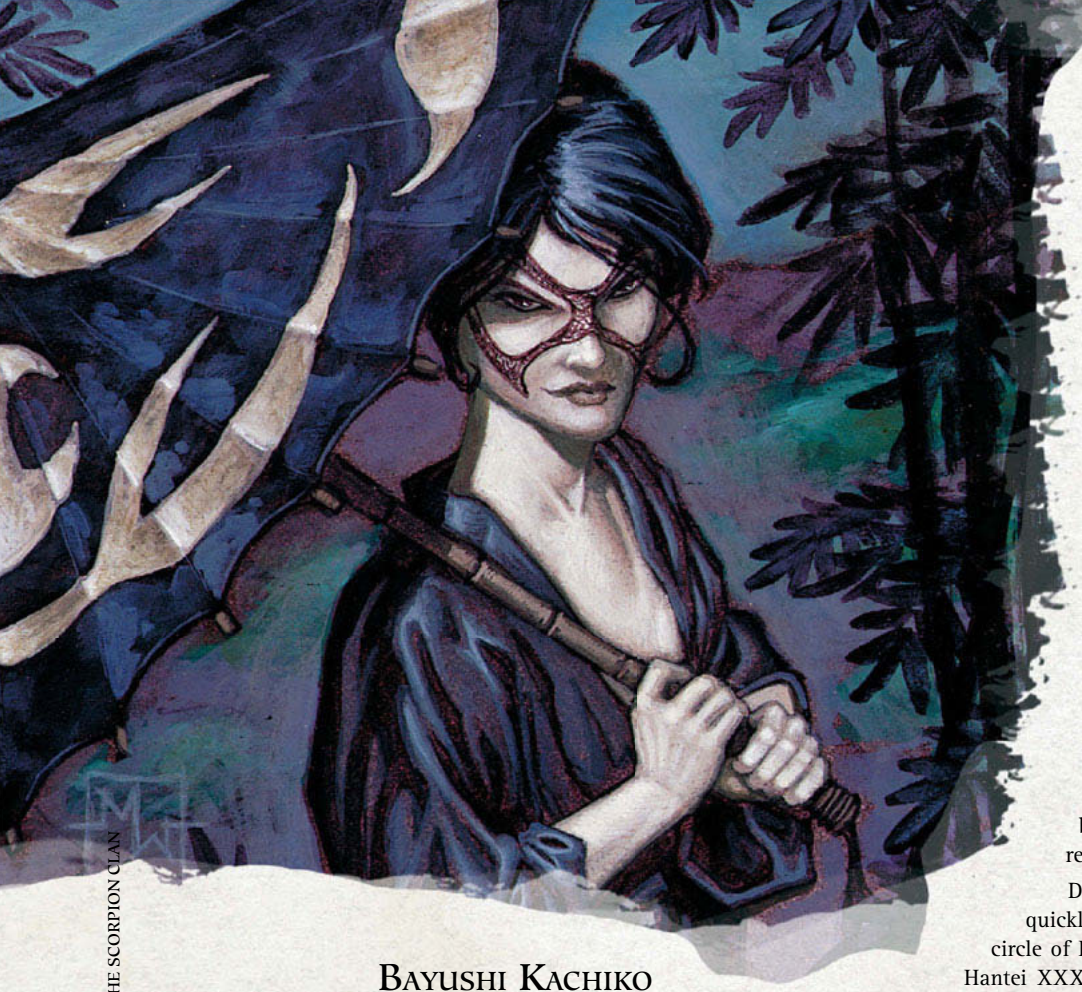
School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 5

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 6, Defense 4, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation) 7, Games: Go 5, Iaijutsu (Assessment, Focus) 7, Investigation 6, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 7, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 4, Lore: Heraldry 6, Lore: Law 4, Lore: Underworld 4, Sincerity (Deceit, Honesty) 7, Temptation 5

Kata: Breath of Wind Style

Advantages: Allies (many), Blackmail (many), Clear Thinker, Inheritance (Itsuwari, Ancestral Sword of the Scorpion), Social Position (Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (many), Driven (further Scorpion interests)



Bayushi Kachiko

Clan Thunder

There are few names more iconic for the Scorpion Clan than Bayushi Kachiko. Besides being the wife of Clan Champion Bayushi Shoju, she was Clan Champion herself, the Empress of Rokugan and, on the Second Day of Thunder, the Thunder of the Scorpion Clan who faced and helped defeat the returned Fu Leng.

Kachiko was born Shosuro Kachiko, the first child of family daimyo Shosuro Koshurin and elder sister of Shosuro Hametsu. Despite being the first born, however, she was not the daimyo's heir—Koshurin was a strict traditionalist who believed only men should rule. Kachiko bitterly resented her father and brother, but her struggle to find her own place soon taught her an important lesson. Men, she found, could be manipulated into doing almost anything she wished with the merest suggestion of an improper reward. Even before she began her formal training as a courtier, Kachiko had mastered the subtle art of seduction to an extent matched by few in all the Empire's history.

Once she began her formal training Kachiko quickly became the most promising student of her school and eventually came to the attention of the Clan Champion, Bayushi Shoju, who decided she would be his wife. However, Kachiko was already betrothed by her father to a Crab, Hiruma Maruku. Kachiko ruthlessly manipulated her way clear of the engagement and, in the process, drew the attention of Doji Hoturi, the handsome son of the Emerald Champion. The two were first rivals and then lovers, continuing their affair even after Kachiko finally married Bayushi Shoju.

Kachiko finally severed the relationship with Hoturi after she became pregnant. She bore a son, Bayushi Dairu, and while Shoju realized the boy was not his, he accepted him as his heir. Ironically, the jaded and calculating Kachiko came to truly care for Shoju in spite of his physical deformities, although she never loved him with the passion she felt for Hoturi.

In the year 1120 Kachiko was appointed Imperial Adviser to the aging Emperor Hantei XXXVIII, a position which made her well-placed to assist the preparations for the upcoming Scorpion Clan Coup. At Shoju's request Kachiko sought to eliminate the Lion Clan Champion, Akodo Toturi, by arranging for him to be poisoned by his geisha lover. Toturi survived, however, and led the united forces of the other clans against the Scorpion, ending the Coup and killing Shoju. Even worse, during the battle Doji Hoturi killed Bayushi Dairu, not realizing he had slain his own son.

Despite her clan's terrible defeat Kachiko quickly secured a place for herself in the innermost circle of Imperial power, convincing the new Emperor Hantei XXXIX to take her as his wife. During the subsequent Clan War, Kachiko manipulated events from the Imperial Throne, slowly poisoning the Emperor, protecting the hidden Scorpion, and wreaking vengeance on the other clans. She gave the Obsidian Hand of Onnotangu to Mirumoto Hitomi, causing turmoil in the Dragon Clan for many years, and used a powerful relic called the Egg of P'an Ku to create an evil duplicate of Doji Hoturi, who she bitterly hated for killing their son.

Matters changed, however, when Kachiko realized the Emperor was slowly being possessed by the Dark Kami Fu Leng. She continued poisoning him to slow the progress of Fu Leng's power. On the Second Day of Thunder, she led the other Clan Thunders into the Imperial Palace to face Fu Leng, helping to bring about his downfall. Doji Hoturi was mortally wounded in the battle, and as he died Kachiko finally forgave him and tearfully bid him farewell. She would never love another.

In the wake of the Day of Thunder, Kachiko assumed the role of Scorpion Clan Champion. She led the clan through its bitter exile into the Burning Sands. Even in gaijin lands her skills at manipulation did not desert her, for she convinced the clan's Senpet captors that she was a reincarnation of their Sun goddess, Selqet. Eventually she led the Scorpion back to Rokugan just in time to confront the rise of the Lying Darkness. Kachiko passed the Clan Championship to the loyal "honest Scorpion," Bayushi Yojiro, ordering him to purge the Darkness from the ranks of the clan. Finally she faced her kharmic ancestor, Shosuro, at the legendary Sleeping Lake beneath Kyuden Bayushi. The spirit of the Kami Bayushi, contained within the lake, distracted Shosuro long enough for Kachiko to seize Shosuro's essence and drown herself, freeing them both.

Bayushi Kachiko, Clan Thunder

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3

Awareness: 7 Willpower: 4 Intelligence: 4 Perception: 4

Honor: 2.5 *Status: 6.5* *Glory: 7.0*

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 5

Skills: Acting 5, Calligraphy (Cipher, High Rokugani) 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 6, Craft: Poisons 4, Defense 4, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation, Courtesy) 6, Investigation 4, Intimidation (Control) 3, Knives 3, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: Underworld 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Sleight of Hand 3, Stealth 4, Tea Ceremony 3, Temptation (Seduction) 7

Advantages: Blackmail (many), Clear Thinker, Crafty, Dangerous Beauty, Great Destiny (Clan Thunder), Kharmic Tie (Doji Hoturi), Seven Fortunes' Blessing (Benten), Social Position (Clan Champion's wife, later Empress, later Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Adultery), True Love (Doji Hoturi)

Bayushi Baku

Vengeful Spirit

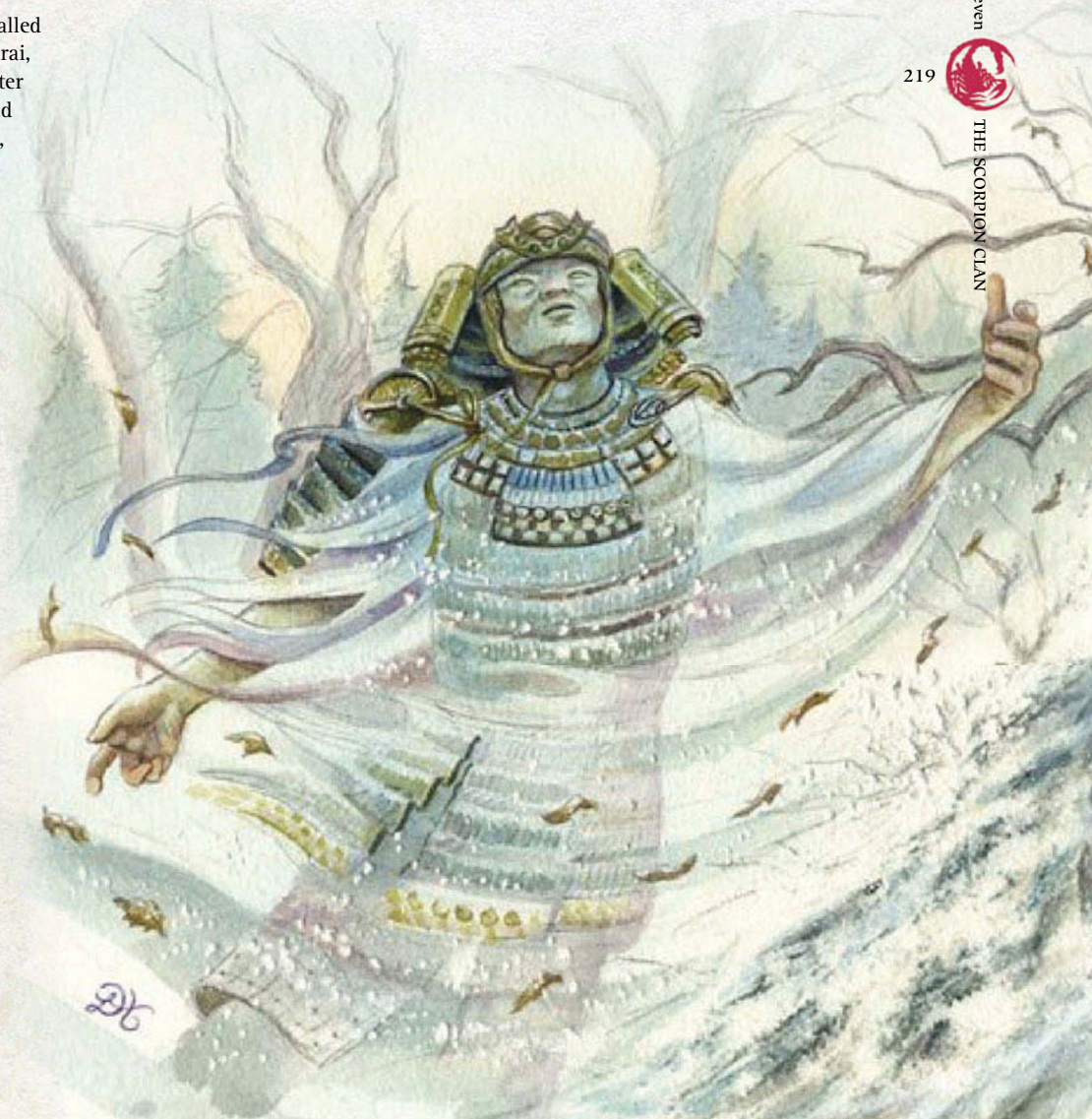
Little is known about the vengeful spirit called Bayushi Baku. He was clearly a loyal samurai, but his memory was erased by an encounter with the Lying Darkness. He knew he did not serve the Scorpion Clan as a whole, perhaps not even the Empire—rather in some fashion he served only the Bayushi family, doing so to such an extent that the bonds of loyalty persisted beyond death and beyond the Darkness' attack. He remained in Rokugan after death, serving the Bayushi, but his Darkness-damaged mind could see only two possible states: loyalty and disloyalty. If he considered someone loyal, he served them or at worst left them alone. However, if he judged someone disloyal, he did all he could to destroy them. There was no middle ground.

So it was that during the Clan War, when the Scorpion Clan was outlawed, Baku roamed the former Scorpion provinces murdering anyone he believed did not belong there. This was particularly true of Imperial dignitaries and soldiers, who he blamed for the dire straits of his clan. Legionnaires, diplomats, and bureaucrats all fell to his sword. Baku became a remorseless figure of bloody terror. His rampage finally stopped when he encountered Bayushi Yojiro, who had been entrusted with the Clan Ancestral Sword Itsuwari by Bayushi Shoju.

After meeting Yojiro, Baku vanished and only appeared twice more, both on occasions when his clan faced critical challenges. During the War of the Spirits, he gained the trust of the madman Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum. As the crazed Hantei's army marched north through the Scorpion lands, intent on seizing Otosan Uchi and the throne, Baku led them into Beiden Pass. Meanwhile Yojiro passed word to Emperor Toturi, who ordered the pass collapsed—crushing the spirit army and ending their threat to Rokugan.

Baku returned again in the year 1159 when the conspiracy known as the Shadowed Tower simmered within the Scorpion Clan. Sensing something was amiss with the Champion Yojiro, Baku attacked him, only to discover he was actually facing a new Champion, Bayushi Sunetra; she was serving as Yojiro's double while he sought out the Shadowed Tower. A few years later the leader of the Shadowed Tower, Bayushi Atsuki, sought to recreate the Gozoku Alliance. Baku assumed the identity of a Scorpion traitor, Bayushi Kamnan, and assisted Sunetra in destroying the new Gozoku from within.

It is not clear when or if Baku may next appear in Rokugan. If he does, it will most likely again be during a time of great distress for the Scorpion—and especially the Bayushi.



Bayushi Baku, Vengeful Spirit

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 4 Void: 3
Agility: 5

Honor: 1.5 *Status: 1.0* *Glory: 1.0*

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4

Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 5, Intimidation (Bullying) 3, Jiujutsu (Grappling) 4, Kenjutsu (Katana, No-dachi) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Polearms (Naginata) 3, Sincerity 2

Kata: Striking as Fire

Advantages: Crab Hands, Touch of the Spirit Realms (Toshigoku)

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Disturbing Countenance, Failure of Bushido (Compassion—only applies to those not of the Scorpion Clan)

Special: Spirit Qualities

Shosuro Higatsuku

Wily Instigator

Shosuro Higatsuku embodied the ideal nature of a skilled Scorpion courtier: a mouth uttering sweet words while the hand holds ready a hidden blade. It was his expertise in turning courtly words into deadly weapons that brought Higatsuku to the attention of the Instigators, the secretive elite academy of the Bayushi Courtier school. There he honed his ability to foment strife among political opponents. Higatsuku soon became a powerful figure within the courts of the Scorpion. It was on his order that Yoritomo Aramasu, adopted son of the Mantis Champion Yoritomo, was finally killed by a Scorpion agent. His death eventually led to a bitter war of succession within the Mantis Clan.

Higatsuku's skills and notoriety eventually brought him to the attention of the Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Yojiro. Yojiro had a task perfectly suited to Higatsuku: join the entourage of Akodo Kaneka, also known as the Bastard, one of the Four Winds. Higatsuku successfully insinuated himself into Kaneka's retinue, but his clever tongue soon earned a brutal reprisal from the Bastard. Kaneka informed Higatsuku he knew about his part in Aramasu's death and would inform the Mantis unless he swore fealty and became Kaneka's personal advisor. Higatsuku readily agreed—after all, this put him in a position of influence while letting Kaneka believe he had pulled the Scorpion's fangs. Later, Higatsuku was suspected of trying to control Kaneka's actions by blackmailing and killing an Imperial historian, Miya Ippei; however, once again he managed to wriggle out by loudly protesting his innocence and breaking his wakizashi, presenting the pieces to Kaneka in emulation of the Kami after the great tournament at the dawn of the Empire.

After the fall of Otosan Uchi, Higatsuku finally left Kaneka's service to help represent the Scorpion Clan in the new Imperial Court at Toshi Ranbo. There he served as an effective aide to the Imperial Chancellor, Bayushi Kaukatsu. However, he found he had developed a certain admiration for the honorable but pragmatic Kaneka, and continued to work on his behalf even after he no longer served as his advisor. If Kaneka had claimed the throne after the death of his half-brother Naseru, Higatsuku would doubtless have bent all the resources of the Scorpion Clan to his support.

Higatsuku's last service to the clan was in keeping with his life of skillful deceit. Scorpion Clan Champion Bayushi Paneki had ordered repeated attempts on the life of the returned Fortune Kisada, but none had been successful and Kisada had launched a damaging war on the Scorpion. With Paneki's approval, Higatsuku misdirected the Crab anger by presenting himself as the mastermind behind the assassination attempts and presenting the Crab with distracting evidence which unleashed the Third Yasuki War. Kisada believed both claims and immediately killed Higatsuku. Even in death, the wily Instigator had managed to provoke one last conflict among the foes of the Scorpion.

Shosuro Higatsuku, Wily Instigator

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 4 Void: 3
Awareness: 5 Inteligence: 5 Perception: 3

Honor: 2.5 *Status: 4.7* *Glory: 2.5*

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 3, Scorpion Instigator 2

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Commerce 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 6, Defense 4, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Forgery 3, Games (Go) 2, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 4, Intimidation (Control) 4, Kenjutsu (Wakizashi) 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Underworld 3, Lore: History 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth 4, Temptation 5

Advantages: Allies (many), Blackmail (many), Clear Thinker, Dangerous Beauty, Perceived Honor

Disadvantages: Blackmailed (by Kaneka), Dark Secret (ordered assassination of Yoritomo Aramasu), Insensitive

Lands of the Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion Clan occupies lands lying between the River of Gold and the Seikitsu Mountains; the River of Gold serves as the clan's primary trade artery, running from its headwaters in the Spine of the World down through the great city of Ryoko Owari and then on to the sea. Their lands are generally quite fertile, particularly in the southern provinces controlled by the Bayushi family. The Soshi and Yogo occupy more barren lands in the north, mostly in the foothills and lower slopes of the mountains, suiting the character of these more reclusive families.

Most of the key holdings of the Scorpion Clan are described in the Legend of the Five Rings RPG 4th Edition core rulebook, pages 351-354. Several additional holdings are detailed below.

Fortress of Blackened Sight

The Fortress of Blackened Sight is an imposing castle located in the southern Scorpion provinces. Its name comes from the infamous Blackened Sight kata, which was developed here by Bayushi Nikute shortly after the castle's construction in the late sixth century. The original purpose of the castle was to protect against incursions by the Crab; to that end it was established on a key hill overlooking the main road traveling northward into Scorpion lands. When the ronin settlement Zakyo Toshi (Pleasure City) was founded, the axis of north-south trade shifted west toward the River of Gold, diminishing the strategic importance of the Fortress. Even so, the castle still proved itself useful. In the late twelfth century, the mad prophet Kokujin fomented peasant rebellions in the southern Scorpion lands, and the Fortress of Blackened Sight served as headquarters for the clan's campaign to quell the uprisings. The Fortress has likewise served as an important center of operations for border skirmishes with the Crab.

Aside from these instances, for the most part the isolated fortress attracts little attention. In modern times this anonymity has proven valuable to its most recent residents, the Dojo of Bitter Lies. The original Bitter Lies Dojo was located in Ryoko Owari, but given the dubious reputation of its violent students the Bayushi considered that location too close to key family holdings to be comfortable. The Fortress of Blackened Sight provided the Bitter Lies Dojo with much more extensive facilities that also happened to be much father away from the family's ancestral home.

Hidden Moon Dojo

The Hidden Moon Dojo is a modern legacy of the Scorpion Clan's long and conflicted association with the Nothing. It was originally established in the Seikitsu Mountains near Shiro no Soshi, and served as a secure location to develop and refine *tejina* Shadow magic. Once the true nature of the Nothing was revealed, the Dojo became the center of the Scorpion struggle against this existential threat. It was also physically dispersed, its handful of sensei and students moving continuously to confound the agents of the Lying Darkness.

After the Lying Darkness was defeated at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Scorpion Clan was tasked to discreetly examine anyone, irrespective of clan, who might have been touched by the Nothing. This effort was coordinated through the Hidden Moon Dojo. Those who displayed the slightest hint of contamination were allowed to commit seppuku, or killed if they refused. Those who sought to avoid such examination generally met with mysterious ends. When this cleansing of the Empire was completed, Yogo Kakatsu, sensei of the Hidden Moon Dojo, falsified his own death along with his students. This wrapped a further veil of deception around the Dojo so that only a few of the Scorpion Clan's leadership knew it still existed at all. The Scorpion leadership believed the Nothing remained a threat and the Hidden Moon Dojo would continue to play a key role in confronting it.

In modern times the physical dojo of the Hidden Moon is located in a remote ravine in the Seikitsu Mountains. It is protected by Shosuro shinobi and by powerful magic incorporating Soshi illusion and Yogo wards. What goes on inside—whether continuing refinement of *tejina* magic, continuing research into the Nothing, or even darker things—is known only to a very few.

Nihai Tower

Nihai Tower stands by the road between Shiro no Shosuro and Yogo Shiro, and is sometimes called "Shosuro's Heart" since it is in such a central location in the Shosuro provinces. It has stood since the time of the earliest Scorpion settlements in the area and for a time was actually the Shosuro family's primary stronghold. When Shiro no Shosuro became the family seat, Nihai Tower instead became the headquarters of the family's military training and operations. It is also home to the Thunder's Dagger Dojo, the only Shosuro bushi dojo. In reality, this school (named in homage to the first Scorpion Thunder) is largely a cover for the training of shinobi.

In addition to protecting a key road network, Nihai Tower also functions as a communications center; a watch-fire here can be seen from both Shiro no Shosuro and Shiro no Yogo. The wardens of the Tower use this signal to pass coded messages between the two castles.

Rumor claims Nihai Tower is also the hub of a vast network of underground tunnels that connect many far-flung Scorpion holdings; no one outside the clan knows if this is true.

Painted Village

This unorthodox city is built as an extension of the Shosuro Butei Academy. The entire city is made up of actors in training. They each play a role for a season, creating a false city for the benefit of unknowing visitors. During winter the entire city is scrapped, redesigned, and re-scripted. The senior actors submit their theme ideas and script to the Shosuro daimyo each winter, hoping to be selected for the upcoming year. Samurai returning from year to year encounter a totally new experience each time.

This city serves three roles for the Scorpion Clan. First, it is a useful rendezvous point for hidden operatives to deliver reports for their superiors. Second, the city's ever-changing nature creates the perfect place for people to disappear. Compromised agents or enemies who must be dealt with immediately can both quietly disappear in Painted Village. Third, it is an excellent training ground for Shosuro Actors to test their skills before venturing out into the rest of the Empire.

Toshi Aitate

For most of history, the city called Toshi Aitate was a small mining community in the southern Scorpion lands named Sekkai Yuri. In the late eleventh century, however, a natural disaster flooded and destroyed the mine along with a good portion of the city. A Scorpion nobleman named Bayushi Zenasaru noticed the ruined town contained many entertainment businesses, especially gambling dens, and suggested the town be rebuilt to exploit these. By creating a city totally devoted to the entertainment of visitors, he created a new source of income for the Scorpion Clan and a source of useful blackmail information on less-than-honorable samurai. Renamed Toshi Aitate, the settlement rapidly grew into a city almost without comparison—the only other settlement resembling it in any way is Zakyo Toshi, the corrupt den of vice which lies on unaligned lands to the south. Unlike that place, Toshi Aitate is carefully regulated and policed by the Scorpion and pays proper taxes to the Emperor and the Emerald Champion. Samurai who sample the city's pleasures depart with no injury save the lightening of their purses.

The gates of Toshi Aitate do not open until the Sun leaves the sky, and all visitors are immediately met by merchants offering to sell them masks. Masks are customarily worn by all within Toshi Aitate, both locals and guests, and it is considered impolite to question other samurai about their identity within the city. In this way the Scorpion essentially create a new face for all the city's visitors, promoting the indulgence of vice without compunction. The city is boomingly prosperous and tax shipments must often be guarded by no less than a legion of Bayushi soldiers to deter bandits.

The Scorpion and Necessary Villainy

"I will be your villain, Hantei." With those words, the Kami Bayushi set in motion the actions and attitudes that defined the Scorpion Clan for the next twelve hundred years. In an Empire that viewed itself as a bastion of honor, based on a strict code of behavior that came to be known as Bushido, it seemed contradictory to style an entire Clan around such aberrant concepts as dishonor and villainy. However, this inconsistency arose from a simple but immutable fact—if the Kami themselves could fall prey to anger, jealousy, and distrust, how could the mortal people of this new Empire be expected to be any less imperfect? The people of Rokugan were vulnerable to the three Great Sins of Fear, Desire, and Regret, along with a multitude of lesser sins; they would eagerly lie, cheat, steal, and manipulate as they lived out their imperfect lives. Some transgressions would be minor; indeed, one could argue small lies and obfuscations are what makes civilized society work at all. But Hantei and Bayushi both knew far darker and more dangerous deceptions and manipulations would inevitably come to lurk within the Empire, and only similar deceptions and manipulations could combat them.

By agreeing to Hantei's request to become the 'villain' he needed to confront such threats, Bayushi set his clan on a tortuous course. Even as they carried out the duty set before them by the First Hantei, the Scorpion made themselves mistrusted, shunned, and reviled by most Rokugani. On the surface, the Scorpion represent all those things which oppose the Code of Bushido. The deeper truth, however, is that the Scorpion remind the Empire that in spite of the demands of Bushido, men lie, cheat, and embrace selfish desire to achieve their own ends.

To the Scorpion, there is a deep and undeniable value in doing dishonorable things for the greater good. They believe by doing things that are selfish and dishonorable they are helping the Empire to ultimately be a better and safer place. To the clan of Bayushi the ends truly do justify the means, even if the means result in personal dishonor and its consequences.

Of course, the path of necessary villainy contains its own dangers and temptations. Samurai raised to play the sinister villain may find themselves adopting the role for its own sake, even reveling in it. The clan as a whole usually finds uses for these sorts of overt villains—if nothing else they can serve as a distraction, drawing the fury of honorable souls who might otherwise notice the Scorpion Clan's real activities. Nevertheless, most Scorpion remain faithful to the clan's strange ideals—not surprising given the degree to which most Scorpion are taught to value Loyalty. The concept of committing dishonorable acts for the "greater good" lies at the heart of the clan's necessary villainy, and the Scorpion embrace this principle. Two historical examples illustrate this.

Bayushi Shoju is one of the most controversial figures in Rokugani history. In the twelfth century he usurped the throne and killed his best friend, the Emperor Hantei XXXVIII. To most Rokugani this was rank treason, naked ambition of the worst sort; to the Scorpion, however, Shoju's act was honorable because he sought to avert a much worse fate prophesied for the Empire. Even accounting for the influence of the Bloodsword Ambition, Shoju's motives were—from a Scorpion viewpoint—pure. Moreover, had the rest of the Empire accepted Shoju's actions for what they were, Fu Leng could have been prevented from possessing the new Emperor and all manner of great tragedies would have been averted. To most Scorpion, Shoju epitomizes the very concept of "necessary villainy" in its finest and truest form.

By contrast, Bayushi Atsuki—who played a key role in creating the Gozoku Conspiracy in the fifth century, effectively seizing power from the Emperor—was not motivated by any concept of a greater good. The Emperor of the time, Hantei Fujiwa, was by all accounts an effective leader; nonetheless, the Gozoku conspirators led by Atsuki kidnapped his heir and subsequently forced the Emperor to relinquish more and more political power to them. By the time Fujiwa's heir came of age, he was nothing more than a figurehead, with Atsuki and his Crane and Phoenix co-conspirators the real power behind the Throne. Atsuki was motivated only by a lust for power, the extent of which he sought to hide behind his puppet Emperor. This was confirmed when Atsuki returned to the Empire in the twelfth century, coming through Volturnum's Gate as an embodied spirit. He sought to undermine the Scorpion Clan and then to re-establish the Gozoku Conspiracy; this time the Scorpion Clan was instrumental in stopping him. Atsuki perpetrated the very sort of selfish acts Hantei had foreseen the Scorpion Clan as being essential to counter—unnecessary villainy, as it were.

Using "Necessary Villainy"

From the perspective of the GM, the principle of "necessary villainy" allows the Scorpion to play several different roles in a campaign. As 'villains,' the Scorpion can readily provide a group of PCs with fully scalable antagonists, anything from a single foe to the entire clan. More importantly, the Scorpion offer a broader range of antagonism than many other clans; in addition to conventional threats such as iaijutsu duels, Scorpion opponents can also be stealthy assassins, underhanded blackmailers and extortionists, cunning politicians, and powerful shugenja.

However, the Scorpion can also play an opposite (though still potentially antagonistic) role—that of the "cops." Scorpion magistrates, whether clan or Emerald, are widespread in Rokugan. This may seem strange, but in fact it makes perfect sense given that much of the Empire's basic legal system was created by a Scorpion, Soshi Saibankan. Scorpion samurai tend to be very effective magistrates because they focus on results and usually have a thorough knowledge of Rokugani law—albeit in part to assist them in circumventing it.

Scorpion NPCs—whether as antagonists or allies—can also serve as gateways to the more shadowy portions of the Empire. The clan's peculiar duty to the Empire means the Scorpion are routinely involved with the criminal underworld, the shadowy world of espionage and assassination, the convoluted intrigue of Imperi-

al politics, and even the primal darkness of the Nothing. The essential point for a GM to remember is that whatever the Scorpion do, they usually believe it is furthering a "greater good" for the Empire (or at least for their clan—many Scorpion allow themselves to believe that benefiting the clan automatically benefits the Empire as well). Of course, this "greater good" may or may not be good for the PCs, their lords, or their clan.

As already mentioned, "necessary villainy" is a moral razor's edge. Just as some real-world police become "dirty cops," some Scorpion follow the path of Bayushi Atsuki and embrace self-serving and destructive villainy. A cunning Scorpion samurai who has become a criminal kingpin, a shugenja who has delved too deeply into the dark mysteries of the Nothing, or any similar type of character can provide a potent antagonist for the PCs—and one which proper loyal Scorpion will have to oppose.

Successful Treachery: Or, Why Are the Scorpion Still Alive?

A newcomer to the world of Rokugan may well question why the Scorpion Clan still exists. After all, everyone hates the Scorpion; they are the most reviled and villainized clan in the Empire, universally regarded as dishonorable and untrustworthy. One might expect the Scorpion to meet with nothing but defeat, if not annihilation, given their reputation and methods. Why have the other clans not united to crush them forever? Why were they able to survive and recover even in the face of catastrophes like the Scorpion Clan Coup?

The most basic answer, of course, is that the Scorpion Clan is divinely sanctioned by Hantei to perform its duties. Those seeking to destroy the Scorpion are acting against the mandate of Rokugan's first Emperor. A deeper answer is that the Scorpion have made themselves indispensable to the Empire. Their friends and allies can always count on them. For all their reputation as liars, they can always be trusted to keep their word. Moreover, the Scorpion are specialists at doing dirty work for others, taking the honor hit to make sure someone else looks good. Scorpion can arrange for a duelist to win a vital match, for an artisan's rival to fall sick on the day of their competition, for a daimyo to marry the woman he longs for. They cultivate an image as the clan which can get things done, no matter what it takes. A samurai who faces an insoluble problem will go to the Scorpion, because he knows the Scorpion can help him when no one else can. They can be relied on to solve problems no one else can solve, to save the day when more honorable samurai are rendered helpless. There is no clan in Rokugan, not even the honorable Lion, who has not called on the aid of the Scorpion at least once.

Although Scorpion are known for their contempt for Bushido, there is one virtue they respect and follow to the bitter end: Chugo, the Virtue of Duty and Loyalty. Thus, gaining the loyalty of a Scorpion can be a valuable commodity, for no matter how treacherous the Clan of Secrets may be, it will not betray a friend. Indeed, the clan makes a point of demonstrating the supreme value of its friendship to those who show it trust or respect. In the mental world of the Scorpion, anyone who is not a friend is an enemy, so they cherish and protect their friends to the very best of their ability. A proper Scorpion will never turn on a friend unless that friend has betrayed him first. Indeed, there are some in the Empire who will privately admit they trust friends from the Scorpion Clan more than they do friends from honorable clans like the Crane or the Lion.

The flip side of this, of course, is that the enmity of the Scorpion is dire indeed, and they have spent a thousand years teaching the rest of Rokugan that meddling with the Clan of Secrets is very, very unwise. However, they do not employ brutish or over-the-top methods to maintain their fearsome aura. The Scorpion are characterized by patience and cunning, often waiting years or even decades to wreck subtle and indirect vengeance on their enemies. This also allows them to project a false image of weakness to lull their enemies into lowering their guard. Scorpion revenge can sometimes be deceptively modest in scale, designed to slowly drain away the victim's reputation in tiny bites. A strutting duelist might be thrown off his form by metal needles in the grip of his katana, subtly changing the weight and balance of the weapon. A samurai who frequents

geisha houses may suddenly find all the *okaa-sans* (madams) no longer welcoming his business. As enmity deepens, however, Scorpion revenge can escalate into much nastier forms: planting forged travel papers that strand a samurai in hostile lands, slipping rusting compounds onto his grandfather's sword, seducing the woman he is pledged to marry, forcing his best friend to commit seppuku, forcing him to choose between a pleasant lie (in which case the Scorpion control him) or a destructive truth (compelling seppuku)—the list is endless.

No samurai antagonizes the Scorpion without cause. No clan goes to war against the Scorpion without need. Thus, it took the Scorpion Clan Coup—an act of genuine and open treason—for the rest of Rokugan to unite against the Scorpion. And when the new Emperor Toturi restored the Scorpion after the Day of Thunder, none were willing to gainsay him.

Scorpions and Honor: The Junshin

The Scorpion Clan as a whole rejects the Code of Bushido, viewing it as a pleasant myth which makes their foes easy to manipulate and control. As already mentioned, the only tenet of Bushido which the Scorpion Clan truly respects is Chugo (Duty and Loyalty). The Scorpion take pride in their absolute obedience to the needs of their clan, and indeed their role as "necessary villains" makes Chugo vitally important to them. A Scorpion will not hesitate to commit any crime, break any promise, destroy his own honor and reputation if that is what the clan requires of him. And because Chugo is valued so highly, the clan reserves a special punishment for those who violate it—the sinister Traitor's Grove, where the souls of traitors are bound into trees to be tormented for eternity.

But for all that the clan regards the rest of Bushido as a joke or a quaint fantasy, there are still a few in its ranks who truly believe in honor and try to follow the Code of Bushido as best they can. Such iconoclastic beliefs seldom remain private, for the Scorpion Clan is just as adept at ferreting out its own samurai's secrets as those of other clan samurai. The clan refers to such honorable samurai as *junshin*, a term which literally means "pure of heart" but which, among the Scorpion, means "not of the blood"—meaning, not to be trusted.

Since the clan does not trust junshin, most of them live out careers of unhappy obscurity—they are given unpleasant or trivial duties, or married off to other clans as part of insignificant treaties. A junshin Scorpion who actually upholds Bushido directly against his clan's interests will be quietly disposed of before he can do significant damage. That being said, a few junshin Scorpion over the centuries have managed to successfully balance their belief in Bushido with serving their clan—most famously Bayushi Tangen, the author of *Lies* and *Little Truths*. In modern times the well-known example is Bayushi Yojiro, the so-called "Honest Scorpion" of the Clan War era, who managed to eventually rise to the position of Clan Champion.

The Ninja Myth

"Ninja do not exist." This phrase is common in Rokugan, but it is spoken in many different ways. Many Rokugani actually do believe ninja are a myth, a peasant superstition, a boogeyman intended to frighten the gullible or to explain away the inexplicable. After all, it is far more comforting to imagine a ninja walked through the walls and assassinated one's lord than to admit a catastrophic failure of security.

Others speak of the nonexistence of ninja more earnestly, trying to convince others it is the truth because they really believe it. For example, the Kitsuki family's investigations of supposed "ninja" attacks have often led them to the conclusion that ninja are merely a deceit hiding more mundane villainy.

Still others speak with irony, knowing the words are both true and false—which is just what was intended by those who conceived of the thing called "ninja."

And fewest of all are those who speak with genuine fear, wishing it was true, but all too aware it is not.

What is the truth about the ninja? Like most things involving the Scorpion, it is both more and less than what is popularly believed.

As already briefly discussed in this chapter, the popular concept of ninja was largely created by the Scorpion Clan in the late fifth century. At that time, tales of ninja were scattered and confused, largely confined to the peasant classes. The Scorpion Champion, Bayushi Hajioki, had chosen to ignore the Emperor's decree to disband his spy network (a classic example of "necessary villainy"); his brother Bayushi Aramoro led a group of agents in appearing to obey the edict by committing seppuku. Meanwhile another skilled agent, Shosuro Nodage, crafted a false conspiracy of shadowy figures, supposedly a splinter group from the disbanded spies. These so-called ninja went around the Empire conducting covert attacks in deliberately conspicuous ways. Black-masked and black-garbed figures would spy, steal, and even attempt assassinations, using a variety of unusual—and generally badly-made and inefficient—implements such as *nageteppo* (egg grenades), *shuriken* (throwing stars) and *fukiya* (blow-guns). Ninja made themselves prominently mysterious, drawing the attention of magistrates across the Empire. Over time they developed a reputation that far out-stripped the reality; stories even began to circulate that these ninja could draw on the shadows themselves to perform superhuman feats of stealth, ambush, and evasion.

For the Scorpion this was ideal. Not only did the "ninja" draw attention away from the clan's actual covert intelligence networks, they also provided an additional benefit: distraction. While black-suited figures climbed and leapt through the shadows, the true Scorpion agents—typically disguised as some unremarkable person—could carry out their own tasks. A corrupt samurai marked for assassina-

The Ninja Myth in Modern Rokugan

One might be forgiven for imagining the defeat of the Lying Darkness at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate brought an end to the ninja myth. In fact this is not the case. Only a small minority of Rokugan's samurai understood the connection between the Lying Darkness and the ninja, and such information was not shared with the public at large—and certainly not with the common people, who knew only that some great cosmic disaster had been averted. Moreover, the defeat of the Darkness did not altogether eliminate the Goju and Ninube Shadowspawn it had created. Many of them were named Akodo and freed from the Shadow's grip, but a minority in each "family" survived and continued to serve the Darkness' successor, the Shadow Dragon.

The activities of the Goju and Ninube continue to reinforce the ninja myth in twelfth-century Rokugan. For that matter, the Scorpion Clan still finds the ninja myth a useful cover for the activities of its shinobi, and the tradition of "the Gauntlet" continues. Those Rokugani who study the War Against the Darkness generally assume the forces of Shadow were permanently defeated there, and thus dismiss contemporary sightings of "ninja" as Scorpion tricks or simple peasant ignorance.

In other words, as far as most of Rokugan is concerned, ninja *still* do not exist.

tion might find his bodyguards successfully fending off an "attack" by ninja tossing shuriken and egg-grenades, only to succumb later to poison dripped into his sake by a house-servant.

Since the time of Shosuro Nodoge, the Shosuro have traditionally bestowed this distraction duty on the younger and less-experienced students of the Shosuro Infiltrator school, equipping them with flashy but ineffective weapons and ordering them to draw off enemy defenders. Shosuro Infiltrator students refer to these hazardous distraction duties as "the Gauntlet," and often resent operating under its constraints. Many of them practice obsessively with their inferior weapons, trying to learn how to actually kill someone with a shuriken or a flimsy ninja-to sword. The Gauntlet also serves as a way of weeding out those students whose skills are not sufficient to serve as true clan shinobi, while still allowing their deaths to serve the clan—Scorpion pragmatism at its purest and cruelest. Those who survive the Gauntlet are permitted to never again wear the ridiculous black costumes of the ninja—some graduates burn them, while others pass their garments on to the next generation of students with a rueful smile. Likewise, experienced shinobi carry out their more important missions without any need for flashy and slightly ridiculous ninja weapons, although some kind of dark clothing is still considered useful, and climbing gear can be a must.

Of course, for much of the Empire's history both the ninja myth and the activities of the Scorpion shinobi hid a deeper and far more dangerous truth than Shosuro Nodage's black-suited trickery. As already noted, the Shosuro and Soshi actually had a secret alliance with the Lying Darkness for over a thousand years. From this sinister bargain the Soshi developed Shadow magic (*tejina*) and the Shadow Brands, whose effects indeed replicated many of the mythical powers associated with ninja.

And lurking behind tejina and the Shadow Brands was the true source of the ninja myth—the Lying Darkness and its Shadowspawn minions. It was the Darkness whose activities had first given rise to vague rumors of dark figures slipping through the night, of faceless men who could walk through walls, of shapeshifters who could wear a dozen faces in a single night. Ironically, by capitalizing on these early tales to create the ninja myth, Shosuro Nodage gave the Darkness much more freedom to operate in Rokugan undetected.

How Many Ninja?

The *shinobi* are a small and specialized group within the Scorpion Clan, numbering at most a few hundred. Most of them are recruited from the Shosuro family (whose two schools train all such operatives), with the remainder coming primarily from the Soshi family. Rarely are shinobi recruited from the ranks of the Bayushi or Yogo.

Ninjutsu: Playing a Ninja

If the GM is going to allow players to run ninja characters, he must consider what the term "ninja" actually means for his campaign. The word and the concept behind it are some of the most easily misunderstood in L5R. "Ninja" can mean the relatively ineffectual would-be shinobi unleashed by the Scorpion to distract opponents; it can mean the skilled professional spies and assassins of the true clan shinobi; it can mean those of other clans who choose to specialize in stealth and dishonorable tactics; and it can mean those contaminated by the Nothing and imbued with dangerous and destructive Shadow powers. The extent to which any or all of these are true is up to the GM. And while the truth may never be entirely clear to the players, it is important for the GM to understand the distinctions.

In game terms, the ninja-as-hapless-distraction is a role probably best provided by NPCs. To be sure, players looking for an unusual experience can choose to run an entire group of young Scorpion trying to pass the Gauntlet—this would involve characters from the Shosuro Infiltrator School, but using the optional rules for Rank 0 characters to reflect their lack of experience.

The ninja which are minions of the Nothing are difficult (to put it mildly) to use as player characters, though they make extremely potent enemies to pit against the PCs. Full discussion of these sorts of ninja are found in Chapter 7 of the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire* and in Appendix One: The Spider Clan elsewhere in this book.

The professional Scorpion shinobi, based on the Shosuro Infiltrator School from the L5R Core Rulebook or the Shosuro Actor School presented in this book, is probably the most common type of "ninja" that may appear in a game and is the kind most accessible to players—especially since such individuals do not have to be constantly running around in black pajamas. In fact the opposite is true: a professional shinobi is rarely, if ever, going to dress as a ninja. A true shinobi is more likely to be garbed as a peasant, a servant, an ordinary ji-samurai, or a similarly unremarkable person. Alternatively, very skilled shinobi may disguise themselves as specific individuals, even including clan samurai, if such an appearance will further their mission. Indeed, this is why the Shosuro family has always been deeply involved in crafts such as acting and oratory; there is great synergy between the ability to convincingly portray others and the ability to infiltrate protected places. The Shosuro Actor School supplies its students as specialized infiltrators for missions where ordinary deceit is insufficient.

Likewise, a PC shinobi is less likely to use the "classic" weapons and equipment of the ninja, such as shuriken, blowguns, and egg grenades, since they are not particularly effective and immediately mark their wielder as a ninja. A shinobi will more likely use weapons and equipment that are commonly seen (for example, swords such as wakizashi or katana, or bows such as yumi), or easily concealed but still effective weapons such as sharp knives. Shinobi do use poison if the situation demands, but the Scorpion make sure to employ poison sparingly and only give it to their most skilled and trusted agents. Otherwise a careless operative might allow poison to fall into the wrong hands, such as those of the Kitsuki or the Agasha, who might be able to develop effective antidotes.

Shinobi Advantages and Skills

Players intending to play effective shinobi will find the following Advantages and Skills useful for their characters:

Advantages: Bland, Crafty, Inner Gift (Foresight), Perceived Honor, Precise Memory, Quick, Read Lips, Silent, Wary

Skills:, Acting, Investigation, Sincerity (Deceit), Forgery, Stealth

This is by no means exhaustive, of course, and true shinobi will make effective use of a wide range of Advantages and Skills. However, shinobi would probably find Advantages such as Dangerous Beauty, Darling of the Court or similar effects that draw attention to them to be detrimental.

New Game Mechanics

The following section contains new options for Scorpion characters in the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition role-playing game. GMs and players may use as much or as little of this material as desired.

The Shosuro Actors

The Shosuro *Butei* (Acting) Academy is a famous acting school, rivaling the actors of the Kakita Artisan Academy, but its students are also taught methods of infiltration and impersonation. The most promising students receive instruction in poison, stealth, and assassination, and are given contacts within the Scorpion spy network to help them to build up the false personas which they use in their later espionage careers. For the vast majority of its students, of course, the Butei Academy is simply a school of the arts—the Scorpion students are aware the school is more than it seems, but are content to ignore such unpleasantness and focus on pursuing their craft.

Dealing With Shosuro Actors in a Game

The Shosuro Actor School offers some unusual challenges to players and GMs. At first glance, the "Face" techniques seem overpowered, since they allow the Actor to create a perfect imitation of someone else. In truth, however, while an Actor's persona may be superficially flawless, it is still vulnerable to being unmasked in a variety of ways. The most obvious of these are simple errors of knowledge. An Actor who claims to be from a particular town or castle had best be deeply knowledgeable about that place, since any native—or even someone who has visited the place—may be able to catch him in errors or misstatements. "Do you remember that trick we all played on Sensei Ashikaga?" Such situations are primarily role-playing challenges with the GM adjudicating whether the Actor is allaying suspicion; if the Actor says the wrong thing or behaves suspiciously, the GM can and should call for Skill rolls of Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness, opposed by the questioner's Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception.

Similarly, an Actor can be exposed if he displays skills, knowledge, or capabilities which his persona should not have, or conversely has to exhibit abilities he lacks such as bushi Techniques or a shugenja's spell-casting. (Only the boldest Actors attempt to impersonate shugenja, naturally.) In some situations this sort of thing may expose the deception automatically, but if the Actor can come up with a clever way to "fake" the appropriate ability, the GM can allow him to make an Acting / Awareness roll (with any applicable Emphasis) opposed by the Investigation (Notice) / Perception of any observers.

Ultimately, the success or failure of a Shosuro Actor's deceit rests on the creativity, quick-wittedness, and role-play of the players involved. The School is by no means an "auto-win," but uncovering a concealed Actor should never be easy or simple. If a player is running an Actor, the GM should play any NPCs intelligently (according to their abilities and knowledge base) and watch for errors or misstatements which might expose the PC's true nature. Similarly, if the GM is running an Actor as an adversary to the PCs, he should remember the Actor, while skilled, is not infallible and may well say or do something that can serve as a warning to alert characters, especially characters from the same clan as the Actor's persona.

The skilled infiltrators who emerge from the Butei Academy are a matter of rumor and supposition to the rest of the Empire. There are fanciful tales of Scorpion infiltrators so skilled they could convince a doting mother to place an entire family's welfare into their hands. These are exaggerations, but the Shosuro Actors are certainly quite skilled and they take their clan's sacred duty to protect the Empire extremely seriously. In their view, whatever decep-

Shosuro Personas

The most essentially aspect of the Shosuro Actors' training is their ability to flawlessly adopt the persona of another. This is not merely acting, but a highly focused full-immersion deceit in which the Shosuro disciplines and focuses himself to fully inhabit the false personality, completely and continually maintaining the persona's character, mannerisms, styles of speech, and body language. Some witnesses have even claimed the actor's facial features subtly shift, as though concentration and focus can change the very structure of the muscles.

When a Shosuro Actor learns a new persona, he or she must decide the persona's basic identity, nature, and personality—for example, "brash Matsu bushi," or "charming geisha." Once chosen, this basic form of the persona cannot change, although the Actor may attach differing names and backgrounds to the persona as needed, embroider its personality in various ways to suit the specific mission, and so forth. The persona knows seven appropriate Skills at Rank 1—for a samurai persona, these are the School Skills of the appropriate school. These "free" Skill ranks do not count for Insight and do not stack with the Actor's normal Skill ranks; mechanically they function in a manner similar to the free Skill ranks awarded by Advantages such as Sage or Crafty. A persona's "free" Skills can only be used while the Actor is inhabiting the persona.

Inhabiting a persona—getting "into character"—requires the Actor to spend ten minutes in uninterrupted concentration, followed by a Meditation/Awareness roll at TN 25. (In difficult or trying circumstances the GM may be justified in increasing the TN.) While an Actor is within his persona, he uses the persona's seven designated skills (including any of these skills he already possesses through his own training) normally. He may also use his own non-persona skills, but this requires extra effort since they are not part of the persona's mind-set; the Actor must weaken his focus on the persona's character in order to use them. Consequently, any such Skill rolls suffer a +10 TN penalty.

Leaving a persona is a Free Action, and is an obvious event to anyone watching—the Actor's body language, posture, expression, and tone of voice all instantly and obviously change. However, so long as an Actor remains within his persona, unmasking his true nature is extremely difficult.

tions they must perpetrate are more than justified, and they are as ready to die for the clan as any other Scorpion.

Shosuro Actor School [Ninja]

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Acting, Etiquette, Knives, Meditation, Sincerity (Deceit), Stealth, any one High or Low skill
- **Starting Honor:** 1.5
- **Outfit:** Fine Clothing, Assorted Costumes and Disguises, Knife, Traveling Pack, 10 Koku.

Techniques

Rank One: The First Face

The Shosuro Actor begins his career by learning the basics of deception and mimicry, and takes his first steps on the path of infiltrating the Empire. You learn one persona. Any time you spend a Void Point on an Acting or Sincerity (Deceit) Skill roll, you a bonus of +3k1 instead of the normal +1k1.

Rank Two: The Subtle Sting

Shosuro Actors are expected to serve their clan as both infiltrators and assassins. You gain a bonus of +2k0 to your attack rolls when wielding a Small weapon.

Rank Three: The Second Face

The Actor's training has now advanced enough to make him a far more flexible and capable infiltrator. You learn a second persona. In addition, you may now spend two Void Points (rather than just one) when enhancing a Skill roll with any of your School Skills. This stacks with the effects of your Rank One ability.

Rank Four: The Viper's Kiss

The Shosuro Actor intensifies his martial training to enable swift and deadly assassinations of his targets. You may attack as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when using a Small-sized weapon.

Rank Five: The Third Face

The Shosuro Actor is now a true master of deception, infiltration, and murder. You gain a third persona. In addition, if you attack a foe who is unaware or does not expect danger from you, your Raises are not limited by your Void.

New Basic School: The Yogo Wardmasters

The school founded by Yogo is known for an unusual style of magic that focuses on special protective charms known as wards. These are similar to the exorcism wards used by the Toritaka, but are significantly more flexible in their use and application. The Yogo guard their methods carefully and seldom allow others to study in their dojo; even their shugenja cousins in the Soshi family know little about the secrets of ward magic.

New Basic School: Yogo Wardmaster [Shugenja]

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Etiquette, Investigation, Lore: Theology, Spellcraft, Stealth, any one High or Low Skill
- **Starting Honor:** 1.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, pack of twenty Paper Wards, 3 Koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Yogo Shugenja do not have an elemental Affinity or Deficiency. Instead, they have an Affinity for all non-Void spells with the Wards keyword, and a Deficiency for all spells with the Travel or Craft keywords. They may treat certain spells as having the Wards keyword—see the sidebar.
- Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Wards spells, 3 other spells (may not be Void spells)

Technique: Way of the Wardmaster

The Yogo are masters at creating wards for later use. When you cast any spell with the Wards keyword, you may Raise a number of times equal to the spell's Mastery Level to instead place the spell into a paper ward. Once this is done, the paper ward will hold the spell "latent" until you activate it (as a Simple Action) by placing it on a target. Only you may activate your wards. The ward sticks to the target and immediately discharge the spell, whose duration is measured normally from that moment. If an area-effect spell is discharged onto a living target, it will only affect that target.

Placing a paper ward on an unwilling target requires an unarmed melee attack using a roll of Spellcraft / Agility. An active ward may be physically torn/destroyed, which instantly ends any ongoing spell effects; this requires a Simple Action.

Yogo Ward Spells

The Yogo have studied their ward magic for countless generations and have become quite adept at using wards to perform magic in unconventional ways. For purposes of spell selection and the use of their Technique, Yogo Shugenja may treat the following spells as having the Wards keyword:

Air: To Seek the Truth, By the Light of the Moon, Benten's Touch, Summon Fog.

Earth: Armor of the Earth, Courage of the 7 Thunders, Force of Will, Wholeness of the World.

Fire: Extinguish, Fires of Purity, Disrupt the Aura, Haze of Battle, Globe of the Everlasting Sun.

Water: Reversal of Fortunes, Rejuvenating Vapors, Wisdom and Clarity, Near to Ice.

You cannot recover the spell slot of a spell which has been cast into a paper ward until after the ward is discharged. If a ward is damaged or destroyed before it is discharged, it loses all power and you may regain the spell slot normally.

New Alternate Path: Kuroiban

The Kuroiban were originally created by the Yogo, and the Yogo family still leads the organization. However, it draws recruits from both of the Scorpion shugenja schools. Only the most trustworthy and skillful shugenja are recruited into the Black Watch, since its very existence is known to only a handful of people. Outside of the Scorpion Clan, only the Kuni family is fully aware of the Kuroiban, although the Asako Inquisitors have a vague realization that something of the sort exists.

Students of the Kuroiban are taught a secret technique to call on their connection with the kami and root out those who are corrupted by Jigoku's touch.

New Alternate Path: Kuroiban [Shugenja]

- **Technique Rank:** 4
- **Replaces:** Any Scorpion shugenja 4
- **Requirements:** Willpower 4, Lore: Maho 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3. Must have been chosen to serve in the secret order of the Kuroiban.

Technique: The Black Watch

You have been taught to sense the presence of the Taint through your connection to the kami. Any time you target someone with a spell (including a benign or helpful spell) you may expend an additional spell slot (in any Element) and take a Free Action to make a Contested Willpower roll with the target. If you succeed in the roll, you can sense whether or not the target is Tainted (e.g. has at least one full Rank of Taint).

Normally this technique can only be triggered with targeted spells that have an instantaneous effect. However, if you are trained in the Yogo Shugenja School you may also use this technique with your wards, activating it when the ward is placed. If the spell has a duration, you may only use the technique at the moment you place the ward.

New Kata: Strength of the Scorpion

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Schools:** Any Scorpion Bushi
- **Effect:** Once per Turn after successfully making the Feint Maneuver, your damage total is increased by +3 Wounds.

The Yogo Curse

The Yogo Curse—represented in game terms by the Bad Fortune: Yogo Curse Disadvantage—appears most frequently in the Yogo family, where many samurai still carry the bloodline of Yogo himself. However, it may occasionally appear in other bloodlines—although no Yogo are allowed to marry into the other Scorpion families, true love rarely listens to rules, and taboo often breeds tragedy. Furthermore, a few Yogo have married out of the clan over the centuries, and the curse can thus occasionally appear almost anywhere in the Empire.

The curse is subtle but deadly: once in your life, you will betray the person, cause, or thing you love the most. Some action on your part, either intentional or unintentional, will cause that person or thing terrible harm. They more you try to avoid the curse, either by delaying it or by trying to "discharge" it on something unimportant, the more painful and complete the final betrayal will be. Ultimately, the resolution of this curse is in the merciful hands of the GM.

New Scorpion Ancestors

Yogo [6 points]

The former Phoenix, originally husband to Asako, who was cursed by Fu Leng to betray the one he loved. Yogo joined the Scorpion Clan and started a new family there, studying the techniques that became Yogo ward magic. Yogo's guidance grants you a +1k1 bonus to the Spell Casting Roll when casting any Wards spell, but due to your blood connection to him you automatically gain Bad Fortune: Yogo Curse for no points.

- **Demands:** Yogo abandons you if you ever fall in love, since this means you will succumb to his curse.

Soshi Saibankan [5 points]

The founder of Rokugan's modern law-enforcement system was a clever and eccentric man who was nonetheless dedicated to maintaining law and order in a fractious Empire. The guidance of this famous judge grants you a bonus of +3k1 (rather than the usual +1k1) whenever you spend a Void Point on a roll using the Perception Trait or the Lore: Law skill.

- **Demands:** Saibankan was a loyal Scorpion but also a man deeply dedicated to upholding law and order. If you ever knowingly break the law or allow another to break it in your presence, Saibankan will abandon you... unless you did so on the orders of your superiors within the Scorpion Clan.

Chapter Eight

The Unicorn Clan

Today will surely be recorded as one of the most glorious days in the history of the Unicorn Clan.

The rumors have been circulating for some time, but only a short few days ago they were confirmed: Lady Shinjo has returned as she promised so many years ago. Celebrations have broken out all through the Unicorn provinces, heedless of the dire news from elsewhere in Rokugan.

Moto Toburo cannot help but feel the same elation as his Shinjo kinsmen. He is a Moto, his family's history stained with darkness, his own demeanor dour and unpleasant like most of his bloodline. But on this day he has seen grown men, men he has known and worked alongside for years, weeping with joy.

Toburo feels proud, as well, to be honored with guarding Shinjo Shono's audience chamber. He is replacing one of the senior Shinjo officers, a man Toburo respected greatly. When the man privately asked Toburo to cover his duty this day, the young Moto was astonished; the honor was so great, and he could not comprehend why the older man would not wish to be on hand to witness the Lady's return himself. But of course Toburo had agreed. How could he deny an honored superior? How could he pass over the chance to see the blessed Lady for himself?

The Lady arrives.

It is beyond anything Toburo could have imagined. She is radiant, clearly divine, beyond anything he would have believed possible. She is all he has dreamed and so much more. Her presence in the court seems to overwhelm most of those in attendance. Toburo is so enraptured that at first, he cannot comprehend what she is actually saying. The words simply do not register in his mind. The governor-sama a traitor? It must be some form of divine humor he is simply too young to understand.

Then she cuts the man in half with a strike so swift he cannot see her blade.

"My family is a disgrace," Lady Shinjo cries, divine tears streaming down her cheeks, lit as if by fire. "So many of them, traitors and blasphemers. I will not have it. I will not have it!" She cuts down another man, one of the senior captains of the castle guard. "My name shall not be carried by criminals and subversives!"

Then she points—not at the Shinjo, but at the handful of Moto who stand around the room. One by one, she gestures to them. Finally she beckons to Toburo, and he feels something deep inside his chest clinch tightly.

The Kami's voice rings like a great bell. "Those of you who are of Moto blood, attend me. We have much to do."

* * *

The wind that blows across the plains is beyond cool. It is perhaps the first true wind of winter, and it cuts to the bone as if it carries a blade the eye cannot capture. Armor and furs barely seem to matter.

Moto Toburo is no longer a young man. He feels the wind sharply, and more ominously he feels an increasingly familiar response from within his joints. It is a buzzing sensation, something he has come to dread as the prelude to greater pain. There were ointments and herbs he could take to help with the pain, but there was little point in that now; riding on the open plains during winter left no time for such treatments, and in any case the pain would simply return tomorrow.

"Do you think it's true?" asks the young man riding at Toburo's right. The old Moto looks at him, noting he is probably only two years older than Toburo had been when he rode at Shinjo's side all those years ago. Now he seems little more than a child. Toburo cannot remember his name.

"Do I think what is true?" Toburo asks irritably.

"The rumors," the youth persists. "They say the Khan will march us to war with the Lion during the dead of winter. They will not expect it, it is said. They will not be able to withstand such a march, not with the Khan at its head."

"The Khan will do as he will and it matters little whether I think rumors of his plans are true or not," Toburo growls. "The Lady Shinjo placed the Moto in charge of the Unicorn Clan, and the Khan is lord of the Moto. We serve. No matter what."

"To march in the winter, though," the youth continues, "such a thing has never been done. I fear for the well-being of our steeds."

At this Toburo find himself chuckling softly. Young his comrade might be, but the boy's priorities were at least partially in order. "We are the Khol, boy," he says, ges-

turing to the boy's shoulder and the badge that marks the largest of the three Unicorn armies. "We make war. We let the Baraunghar worry about things like that. They will not let us down."

"I suppose." The boy fidgets. "They say the Khan will address the Khol at first light tomorrow. I suppose rumor will matter little after that."

"You aren't listening," Toburo says sharply. "Rumors do not matter now. They do not matter, ever. They are meaningless." Despite his tone, despite his assurances, Toburo feels the weight of destiny on their shoulders. It is a feeling he has known only once before. Many years ago.

Tomorrow will surely be one of the most glorious days in the Unicorn Clan's history.

History of the Unicorn Clan

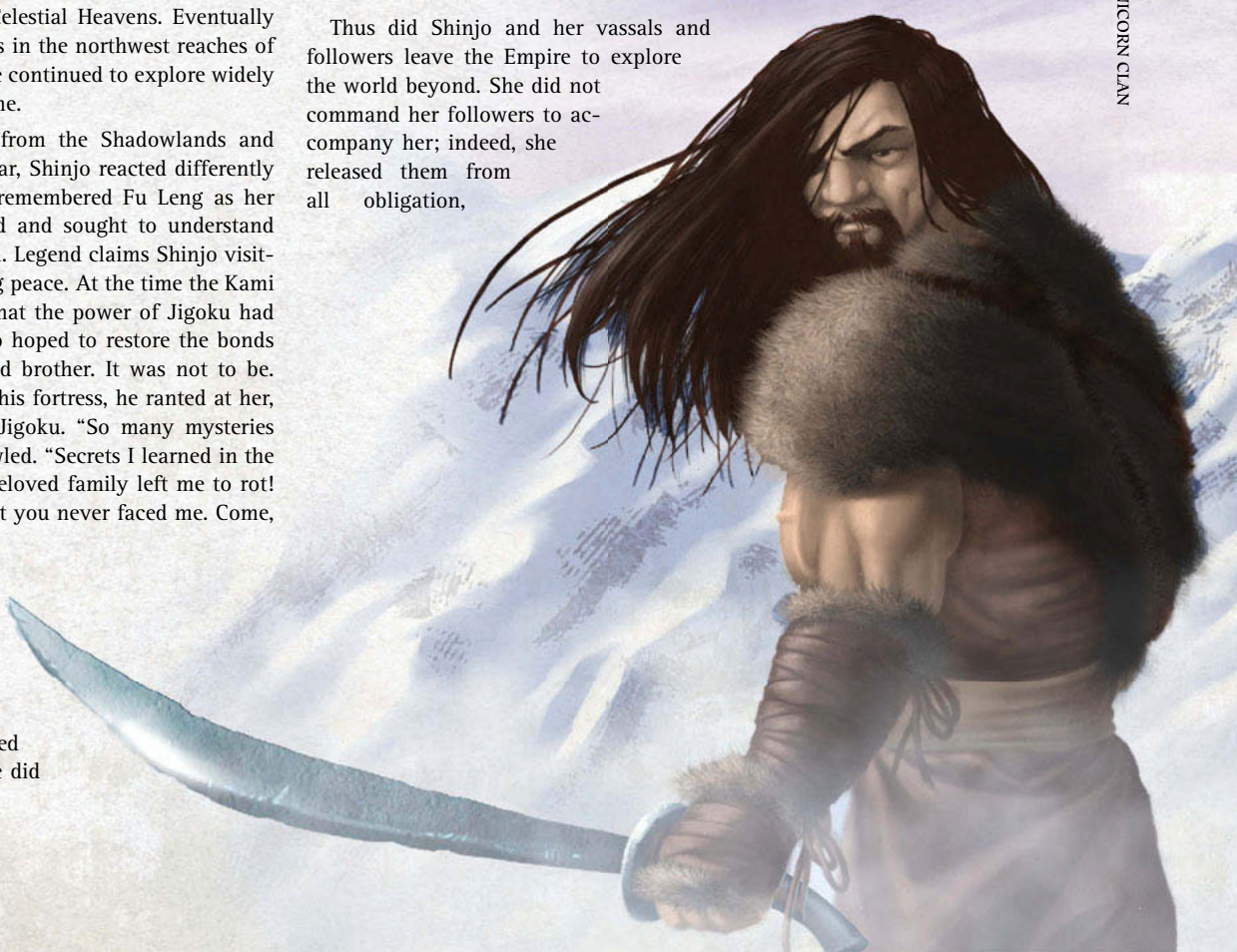
Like all the Great Clans, the Unicorn Clan began with one of the Kami at the dawn of the Empire. In this case it was Shinjo, a woman with a compassionate heart and an insatiable thirst to explore the world and discover its wonders. These qualities formed the core of her clan's philosophy and remain central to the Unicorn in modern times.

Soon after Hantei won the great tournament that made him Emperor, Shinjo began to travel the land, gathering like-minded men and women to her banner. The silent woman named Otaku, the well-spoken man called Ide, and the skilled and inquisitive sorcerer Iuchi were chief among these followers, and each gathered others to follow Shinjo's banner. She named her new clan the Ki-Rin Clan in honor of the fabulous steeds of Tengoku she recalled from her childhood in the Celestial Heavens. Eventually they settled in the vast plains in the northwest reaches of the new Empire, although she continued to explore widely beyond her people's new home.

When Fu Leng emerged from the Shadowlands and launched the terrible First War, Shinjo reacted differently from her siblings. She still remembered Fu Leng as her brother from their childhood and sought to understand him, even to reason with him. Legend claims Shinjo visited Fu Leng in person, seeking peace. At the time the Kami did not truly comprehend what the power of Jigoku had done to Fu Leng, and Shinjo hoped to restore the bonds of family with her tormented brother. It was not to be. When she found Fu Leng in his fortress, he ranted at her, consumed by the wrath of Jigoku. "So many mysteries are mine now, sister," he howled. "Secrets I learned in the depths of the earth, as my beloved family left me to rot! You all held your contest, but you never faced me. Come, little Shinjo, little sister. You were impulsive enough to visit me; now I give you the honor of being the first to fight me!" The two fought, there atop Fu Leng's fortress, and the Dark Kami's magic blasted her again and again. But she did not submit, for her love for her brothers and sisters—even for Fu Leng himself, lost and monstrous—would not permit it. In the end Shinjo escaped her fallen brother's clutches and returned to her siblings, rejoining the battle to save the Empire.

At last the First War ended with Fu Leng's defeat by the Seven Thunders. The Empire set about the work of rebuilding and securing its borders, but Shinjo argued the Emperor needed to expand his knowledge of the outside world, to be better prepared in the event of future conflicts. "We swore to protect the people from evil and we failed. In the end it was the people who saved themselves, for Shinsei and his Seven Thunders defeated Fu Leng, not we. You say we know what peril to expect, but we did not know what to expect when Fu Leng attacked even though he was our own brother. Should another evil arise from beyond the mountains, it would be a new threat of which we would know nothing. Who can say if our Empire could stand against it?" Hantei agreed, and gave Shinjo one of a pair of magical mirrors created by Shiba and Isawa. She would be able to use it to maintain contact with her brother. Doji, for her part, offered her sister a precious sandalwood fan.

Thus did Shinjo and her vassals and followers leave the Empire to explore the world beyond. She did not command her followers to accompany her; indeed, she released them from all obligation,



Kolat Infiltration

Although they did not know it at the time, the Ki-Rin's encounter with the Ujik-Hai also marked the beginning of the clan's infiltration by the secret conspiracy known as the Kolat. It would take centuries, however, for this subtle plot to impact the clan's leadership and beliefs. The Kolat's influence is fully discussed in "The Unicorn Kolat" later in this chapter.

but her vassals Ide, Iuchi, and Otaku Shiko (the daughter of Otaku) and their followers chose to accompany her nonetheless. Shinjo swore never to abandon them, and together they started their voyage west into the Burning Sands. This journey, begun in the year 45 of the Isawa Calendar, would last for nearly 800 years.

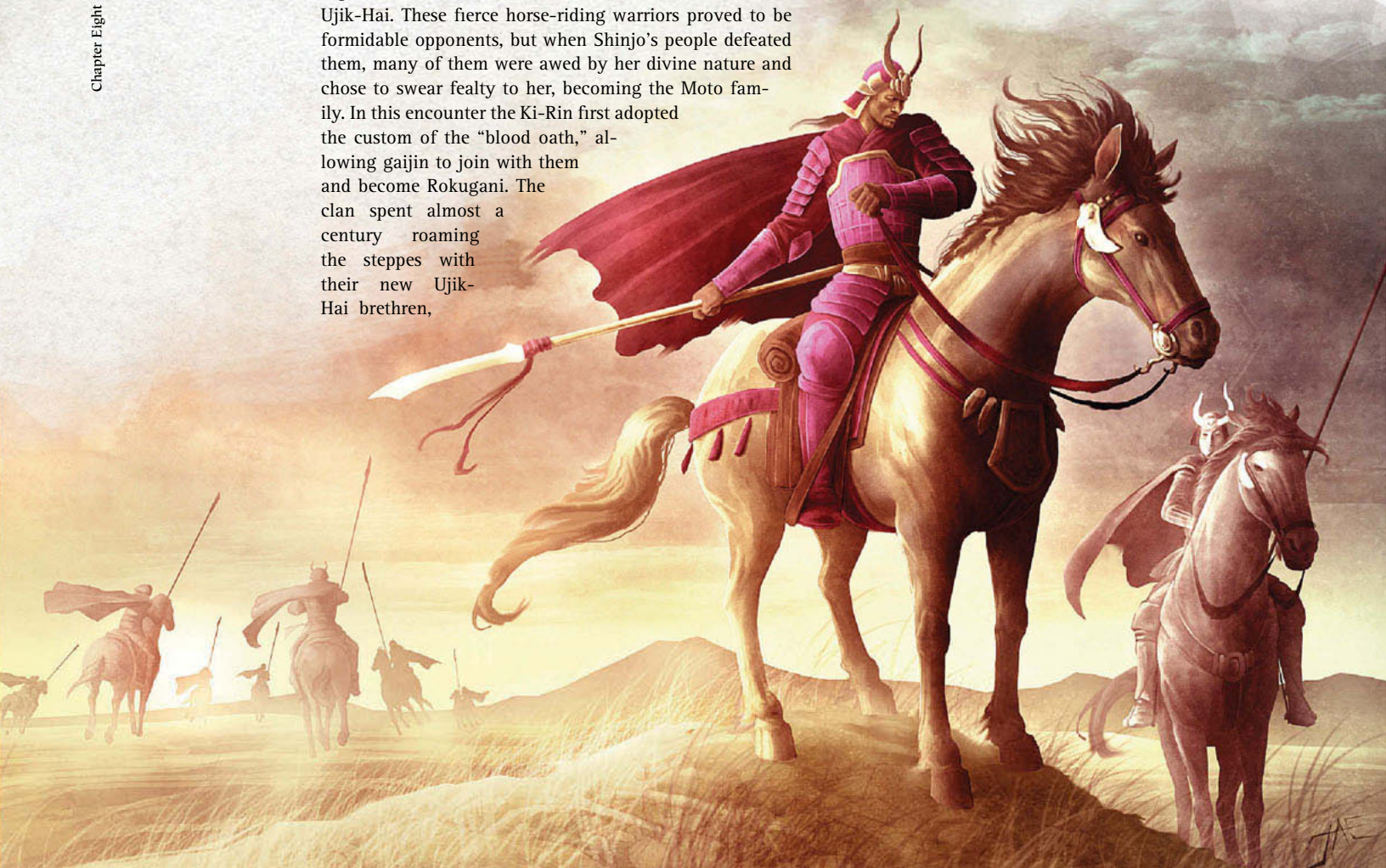
The Ujik-Hai

During their journey the Ki-Rin Clan faced a myriad of challenges, from foreign cultures and peoples to harsh climate, treacherous terrain, and even monstrous beasts. But they also found new allies. Soon after entering the Burning Sands, the Ki-Rin encountered the tribes called the Ujik-Hai. These fierce horse-riding warriors proved to be formidable opponents, but when Shinjo's people defeated them, many of them were awed by her divine nature and chose to swear fealty to her, becoming the Moto family. In this encounter the Ki-Rin first adopted the custom of the "blood oath," allowing gaijin to join with them and become Rokugani. The clan spent almost a century roaming the steppes with their new Ujik-Hai brethren, learning the ways of survival in this dangerous foreign land and discovering new ideas such as saddles and stirrups, which made riding much easier.

Eventually the Ki-Rin resumed their journey west, encountering many other strange sights and threats. At one point they came upon a strange gaijin city populated by sorcerers wielding a previously unknown type of magic, a magic that seemed to ignore the spirits and call directly on the power of the elements. The party sent to explore the city, led by the aging Iuchi, suffered heavy losses at the hands of these sorcerers. However, Iuchi was able to secure one of the sorcerers' books—a strange tome of pages bound together with thread and trapped between hard covers. Iuchi studied the knowledge within the book, which eventually became the basis of a unique style of magic called *meishodo* still used by the Unicorn today.

The Unicorn and the New Oath

In the year 153, the Ki-Rin came to a remote oasis where Shinjo saw a vision of a shimmering radiant spirit: a unicorn, a magnificent white steed with a fiery halo and a single spiral horn adorning its forehead. She followed the spirit and vanished with it, returning a week later. Her followers were furious that she had betrayed her oath and abandoned them, but when she revealed she was pregnant, they spared her life. Months later, Shinjo gave birth to five



The Desert Moto and the Lords of Death

Not all of the Unicorn returned to Rokugan in the ninth century. A sizable portion of the Moto family, the descendents of the Ujik-Hai, remained in the Burning Sands and continued to roam the steppes and deserts. Although their ways remained far more barbaric than those of the Moto who accompanied the clan back to Rokugan, they still considered themselves part of the Unicorn Clan and maintained occasional long-distance contacts with their cousins in the Empire. The Desert Moto (as the rest of the clan called them) stayed much truer to their gaijin ancestors' culture and customs, but like their cousins they forsook the worship of the Ujik-Hai's ancient gods, the Lords of Death, in favor of venerating Shinjo and the Fortunes.

The Lords of Death, also known as the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, had been the patron gods of the Ujik-Hai, and they were outraged by their abandonment. They cursed their wayward people with nightmares, trying to punish their disloyalty. Some Unicorn believe the Moto family's extremely nomadic style of life, and especially the tendency of so many from the family to remain in the desert, was the result of this curse. Some even suggest Moto Tsume's misguided attack on the Shadowlands was brought about by the curse, although this is a matter of some debate. Regardless, the supernatural hostility of these gaijin gods would continue until the late twelfth century.

The Desert Moto continued to roam the Burning Sands until Shinjo returned to the Empire in the year 1132. Having discovered the corruption of her clan by the Kolat, Shinjo summoned the Desert Moto to restore purity and honor to the Unicorn Clan, and appointed them to rule in place of her own bloodline. This change brought about a significant shift in the overall character of the Unicorn Clan, as the unapologetically foreign ways of the Desert Moto made the clan seem even more strange and barbaric than it had before.

The Moto finally made peace with their former gods in the mid-twelfth century. A series of unusual supernatural events enabled the foreign deities to enter the realm of Meido and share power with Emma-O, the Fortune of Death. Moto Chagatai, the third Moto to serve as Khan of the clan, offered renewed veneration to the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang in exchange for the end of their curse, and soon afterward Emperor Toturi III officially accepted them in the Rokugani pantheon as assistants to Emma-O. The harsh but just gaijin gods were only marginally accepted by the rest of the Empire, and even at the end of the twelfth century worship of the Lords of Death remained almost exclusive to the Moto.

children of great mystical power and beauty, gifted with the divine grace of a Kami and the shape-shifting power of their spirit father. Shinjo's followers forgave her for her broken promise, and to replace it she offered a new oath: she would always return to them, no matter how far or how long they might be separated.

As the five semi-divine children matured, their shape-shifting powers faded and they were forced to choose a permanent form. Four of the five chose to take the shape of their father, the unicorn, while the last child, Kemuri, chose a human form to perpetuate Shinjo's bloodline.

Divided Wanderings

In the early third century, as the Ki-Rin finally reached the end of an extremely difficult mountain range, they came under attack from giant birds mounted by pale long-haired gaijin. The creatures, called rocs, were so big they could lift a horse and its rider in their talons. The battle seemed all but lost when the Iuchi family shugenja used their magic to unleash great downward gusts of wind, slamming the monsters and their riders into the mountainsides. This gave victory to the Ki-Rin, but at a steep price: the winds caused a huge avalanche that killed many of the clan and permanently closed the pass they had traversed. The Ki-Rin were cut off from Rokugan and had to find a new path home.

In the face of this problem, Shinjo pondered for three days, then decided to split the clan in four groups. She broke Hantei's mirror and gave each group one piece. The mirror fragments could no longer communicate with the Empire, but Iuchi magic ensured they would let the four groups stay in contact with each other. For over 200 years, the clan remained separated into four bands, each searching for a way back to the Empire.

There are many tales of the different adventures and mysteries which the four groups met as they traveled in different directions. How literally truthful these tales may be is uncertain, for the clan kept no written records through this time—they preserved their history through oral storytelling, and real incidents often became exaggerated or mythical in content. For example, the tales say the Otaku family went northwest and encountered the same City of Sorcerers which the clan had battled so many years before. Supposedly, the city's sorcerous lords had now discovered the secret of removing their hearts to become immortal, and they imprisoned the Otaku for many years. When they finally escaped, the brave samurai-ko Otaku Rumaru freed a mighty stallion named Vata and his herd. Many of these steeds were alleged to be descended from Shinjo's four unicorn children, and the bond between them and the Otaku battle maidens thus became one of blood as well as loyalty.

The Iuchi tell stories of how they encountered the jinn, strange elemental creatures of living fire, with which they first fought and then made peace. The Shinjo went south, where they supposedly found and battled a cult of assassins who worshiped the Destroyer, a murderous god from a faraway land. The Ide and Moto went north, and tell tales of meeting the Ashalan, an immortal race who shared a finite number of souls between their bodies. They also speak of reaching a far northern port city called Aqahba, where a few of them accompanied a merchant captain named Shereid Ibn Shihan overseas to a kingdom inhabited by pale-skinned gaijin called Merenae.

The Lying Darkness and the Return Home

In the mid-fifth century, the scattered Ki-Rin received a warning through the mirror shards: Shinjo was in great danger. It took weeks of relentless riding for the different

groups to reunite, but they eventually reached Shinjo's group, finding them trapped in foul, dark swamps that bore an eerie resemblance to the Shadowlands. The Ki-Rin could not understand the nature of what they confronted: the sinister cosmic force called the Lying Darkness. Faced with a losing battle, Shinjo ordered her clan to flee while she and three of her remaining children stayed behind. "Go!" she called. "Go and never look back!" Reluctantly the Ki-Rin fled, remembering their Kami's promise that she would always return. In the distance behind them, spears of shining white light stabbed amid the darkness... and faded.

The Ki-Rin had survived, but the loss of Shinjo was a terrible blow. Shinjo Yonaru, descendant of Kemuri, became Clan Champion and declared his clan would now be known as the Unicorn Clan, in honor of both his own spirit ancestor and all the changes and trials they had survived.

The Unicorn Clan had reunited and they resumed their exploration of the world, trying to find a way back to Rokugan and to fulfill their founder's duty. For another 150 years they crossed additional lands, meeting strange new things and bizarre monsters. Tales speak of one-eyed giants, four-armed insectoid creatures with skin as black as ink, lizardmen, a race of diminutive plant-people, and even a distant surviving offshoot of the ancient troll civilization. Eventually they reached an immense ocean which barred further travel unless they were willing to build ships. As the clan leaders pondered what to do next, the Iuchi fragment of the mirror flashed and a dim, shadowy image of Shinjo appeared. She urged them to return quickly to Rokugan. When her descendents pleaded they did not know the way, she replied: "Through the dark lands, my child. It is the only way. Great troubles are coming. Thunder..." With those cryptic words the mirror fell silent, never to speak again.

The Unicorn obeyed their founder's command and rode back through the jungles of the Ivory Kingdoms, through the dark lands corrupted by the Lying Darkness, and finally through the northern edges of the Shadowlands, bringing stores of jade to protect themselves. The journey took them 40 excruciating years, and they suffered heavy losses before they finally reached the Kaiu Wall. Unicorn tradition records that during this time they learned much more about the nature of the Lying Darkness and its vulnerability to crystal, wisdom which would serve them well in future years.

It was in the year 815 of the Isawa calendar that the Unicorn Clan finally returned to Rokugan, riding around the Kaiu Wall's western end, charging through an army of Crab soldiers, and pushing on to their ancestral lands—where they would confront a mighty Lion army. At first no one in Rokugan would see the Unicorn as anything other than barbarian invaders. Only when the Unicorn had defeated all opponents and then presented Doji's sandalwood fan at the Imperial Court did the Emperor recognize the "invaders" as the heirs of the Ki-Rin and officially return their lands to them. It would be many years more, however, before the rest of the Empire would come to accept the Unicorn, and some clans remain uneasy with their foreign ways even into modern times.

Adaptation to Rokugan

Once the initial shock of the Unicorn's return passed, it did not take long for the clan to become embroiled in the Empire's politics and internal conflicts. The arrival of a major new military power upset Rokugan's balance of power, and while some clans viewed the Unicorn as interlopers and enemies, others were eager to seek friendship with these powerful strangers.

Soon after their return, the Unicorn suffered a blow when the Moto family, under its leader Moto Tsume, launched a full-scale assault on the Shadowlands. Much of the family was destroyed or lost to the Taint, and the remainder were deeply shamed. Out of this incident arose the White Guard and the Moto Fanatics, elite orders of warriors dedicated to fighting the Shadowlands and destroying their corrupted brethren.

The Moto disaster highlighted the truth that for all their strength the Unicorn were in dire need of friends. Thankfully, the Ide family had developed formidable diplomatic skills during the long centuries abroad, skills which they put to good use in Rokugan's courts. One of their first successes came with the Crab. Despite their rocky start, the Unicorn and Crab quickly found

they had much in common and developed a strong friendship, one which would endure for centuries. Indeed, the Crab had recently suffered a heavy defeat of their own in the war against the Maw, which cost the Hiruma family its ancestral lands and school. The Unicorn offered their own dojo to teach the Hiruma alongside their Shinjo scouts. The friendship between the two clans would be further strengthened in the early twelfth century when Shinjo Yasamura, younger son of the Clan Champion, married Hida O-Ushi and joined the Crab Clan; their children would eventually become rulers of the Crab. Later that century, the Crab Clan's Kaiu family would assist the Unicorn in building the Khol Wall, a fortification designed to protect the Unicorn lands against any possible foreign invasion.

Surprisingly, the Crane Clan was also among the first allies of the Unicorn despite the sharp differences between the elegant, traditional Crane and the often-barbaric Unicorn. It was Crane testimony that ensured the Unicorn could present Doji's fan to the Imperial courts, allowing them to reclaim their lands and status, and the Unicorn did not forget that favor. The Crane, for their part, saw the Unicorn as a valuable counterweight to hostile clans like the Crab and Lion, and believed it was their duty to help "civilize" the Unicorn. Of course the Unicorn did not renounce their gaijin ways so easily, but the Crane still found them very useful as trade partners and intermittent allies in the courts or on the battlefield.

The Mantis Clan was slower to develop friendship with the Unicorn, in part because they did not attain Great Clan status until nearly three centuries after the clan of Shinjo returned to Rokugan. Eventually, however, the Unicorn came to see Mantis samurai as kindred free spirits with a similar love for open spaces and a similar need to prove themselves to the rest of the Empire. Both groups also share a sense of compassion for the heimin. The absorption of the Tsuruchi family (formerly the Wasp Clan) into the Mantis also strengthened the friendship, since the Unicorn and the Tsuruchi share a devotion to upholding law and order.

The Twelfth Century

When the chaotic violence of the Clan War and the Second Day of Thunder descended on Rokugan in the early twelfth century, the Unicorn played a significant role in holding the Empire together by suppressing the roving bandits and Shadowlands monsters who threatened the common folk everywhere. Otaku Kamoko, daimyo of the Otaku family, stepped forward as the Unicorn Clan Thunder, facing Fu Leng in the final victorious battle.

However, for the Unicorn the outcome of the Clan War was in some ways less important than something that happened a few years later during the era known as the War Against the Darkness. In the year 1132 the Kami Shinjo returned to Rokugan after centuries of imprisonment deep in the Burning Sands. The elation wrought by the Kami's return was short-lived, however, for Shinjo had come to purge the Kolat from the ranks of her clan. She promptly executed hundreds of Unicorn samurai, mainly those of her own family, and forced many others into hiding or exile—including the Clan Champion Shinjo Yokatsu, who was actually a Kolat Master. Otaku Tetsuko, the new daimyo of the Otaku, was also a Kolat but confessed her crimes to Shinjo and committed seppuku. The shame of the Kolat's exposure left a deep scar on the spirit of the surviving Shinjo samurai, and Yokatsu's son Shono spent his life trying to atone for his father's sins.

Shinjo had brought the remaining Moto back from the desert, and she named Moto Gaheris, the Khan of the Burning Sands Moto, to be the new Clan Champion. This ended over eleven centuries of leadership by her and her bloodline, and to the Shinjo family it seemed to only further compound their dishonor. The Moto, meanwhile, finally redeemed their own name by destroying the corrupted Dark Moto.

Under the rule of the Moto, the Unicorn became a much more aggressive and ambitious clan. Two generations later, a conflict with the Lion over the border village of Kaeru Toshi escalated into a long war pitting the two most formidable armies of Rokugan against each other. As the Toturi dynasty faltered, the Khan Moto Chagatai grew exceedingly ambitious and ultimately attempted to seize the capital in a daring winter attack, marching his army through the Lion lands. The coup failed due to intervention from the Phoenix Clan, and the Lion Clan's retribution the next year was terrible, resulting in the death of both clans' Champions and the burning of Shiro Moto to the ground. Ultimately, only the ascension of the new Iweko dynasty prevented further conflict.

The Unicorn and the Naga

It may seem odd that the Unicorn and the snake-men known as the Naga enjoy good relations, but given that both are outsiders (albeit far more so in the case of the Naga) perhaps it is not truly surprising. Positive contacts between the two groups began when the Naga and the Unicorn fought side-by-side with the ronin army of Toturi the Black during the Clan War era. When the Naga returned to sleep some years later, they offered a final gift, the so-called Golden Pearl, to the Imperial Palace; it was refused due to a cultural misunderstanding, but the Naga then bestowed it on the Unicorn Khan. In return the Unicorn pledged to protect the sleeping Naga in the Shinomen Forest.

Ten years later, the pearl "hatched" to reveal a young woman who introduced herself as Akasha—the same name as the Naga collective soul. She acted as the Naga's voice in the Empire and quickly became an ally to the Unicorn Clan leadership. Later she married Moto Chen, who became Clan Champion in the year 1170. Their daughter Naleesh possessed a distinct Naga heritage through her mother, making the clan's ties with the Naga stronger than ever.

Families of the Unicorn Clan

For the most part, the Unicorn families grew from very modest beginnings. In the early centuries of their explorations in the Burning Sands, the clan numbered only a few thousand samurai at best. Consequently, connections between the families were close and intermarriage frequent. After the battle against the rocs, when the clan split apart for over a hundred years, the families grew in number and acquired much more distinct identities.

The Shinjo Family

"We are the people of the wind!"

– traditional invocation of the Unicorn Clan Champion at gatherings of the clan

Founded by Lady Shinjo, the Shinjo family ruled the Unicorn Clan for over 11 centuries. The family takes after its founder in embracing the virtue of compassion, especially towards the lower classes. Indeed, centuries of travel in foreign lands where no one understood or even knew about the Celestial Order forced Unicorn samurai to be more flexible in their relationship with the lower classes than the typical Rokugani. They often depended for survival on gaijin, who taught them how to survive and to navigate the mysterious lands ahead of them. Consequently, the Unicorn—and especially the Shinjo—have a sense of humility and even kindness quite uncharacteristic for most other samurai. A Shinjo will never intentionally abuse a heimin, and peasants in Unicorn lands usually have a good chance to have their troubles and pleas heard and acted upon.

The Shinjo are generally an optimistic family and believe luck is a skill that can be improved with practice. Even when faced with a great challenge, they eschew despair and seek a path to victory. In the face of tragedy the Shinjo endure and think of a better tomorrow. This is how they found the strength to go on after they were left crippled and shamed by their Kami's purge of the Kolat from their ranks. Although the family generally displays a much more somber mood after that time, they maintain faith that one day they will redeem themselves and prove worthy of leading the clan once more. The exemplary life of Shinjo Shono, who died heroically defending Shiro Moto against Lion attack, certainly contributed much toward restoring the family's reputation.

The Shinjo have a powerful sense of freedom and independence; they do not like to be contained. It is not uncommon to find a Unicorn riding in the wilderness far away from cities and main roads, and more often than not this will be a Shinjo samurai. This wanderlust finds its roots in the family founder's inquisitive nature. What lies beyond that hill or forest? What wonders does the world have to offer for the man who dares seek them? This attitude also makes the Shinjo particularly well suited for scouting and hunting.

Like most of the Unicorn, the Shinjo care little for the subtleties of Rokugani politics. They embrace Bushido's tenet of Honesty, and their bluntness and directness often complicates their interactions with other clan samurai. Only the Moto are considered more barbaric by the other clans, but unlike their Moto cousins the Shinjo do not have the excuse of being adopted gaijin. The honesty of the Shinjo also wins them some goodwill, and they are generally considered trustworthy even by those who dislike them. Sadly, this reputation for honesty was

The Shinjo Family Mon

The Shinjo mon depicts a ki-rin, the mystical steed of Tengoku for which the clan was originally named. The creature's flaming mane sweeps back in the winds of freedom and it faces west, symbolizing the family's journey. It is traditionally rendered in black on a bright orange background, a sharp contrast to the clan's overall color scheme of purple and white.

seriously damaged by the Kolat scandal in the twelfth century, and remained tarnished for several generations afterward.

The Moto Family

"Moto can die, but never yield."

– traditional motto of the Moto family

The Moto family actually originated outside the Empire on the fringes of the Burning Sands. Their ancestors are entirely gaijin, born from the steppe nomads known as the Ujik-Hai, and this foreign heritage is still obvious in modern times. Even with many generations of intermarriage, the Moto still tend to have taller statures, darker skins, sharper features, and more plentiful facial hair than native Rokugani.

The Ujik-Hai were the first people encountered by the Ki-Rin Clan during its long journey and they had a major impact on the development of the clan's identity. It is likely the clan would have perished without the knowledge, experience, and help of their new Moto brethren, so the family considers it quite natural that Shinjo chose them to lead the Unicorn after her family was disgraced.

Of course, it was not solely their knowledge of the Burning Sands that allowed the Moto to be accepted as equals with the other families of the Unicorn. Their foreign origins and customs retained some stigma even in this most accepting of clans. It was through their daring feats in battle that they ultimately secured their position in the clan, acquiring a reputation as bold and fearless warriors. The Moto are famous for their aggressive cavalry charges, their ferocity and bloodlust in combat, and their reckless refusal to show any fear of death.

After the Unicorn returned to the Empire in the early ninth century, other Rokugani initially saw little difference between the Moto and the rest of the barbaric horse-riding clan. However, the fall of Moto Tsume and his followers to the Shadowlands set the family apart in the view of all. The Moto family's overconfidence and excess aggression had created a formidable enemy for all of Rokugan, and the Moto name became associated with shame, defeat, and the horror of the Shadowlands. The surviving Moto in Rokugan were profoundly changed by this disgrace. They abandoned their traditional family mon of a red chrysanthemum in favor of a grim white kabuki mask, often painting the stark image onto their own faces. They swore to restore their name by destroying their fallen brethren, forming the elite White Guard to pursue this goal, and became more ruthless and determined than ever before, a cold fire of revenge burning in their hearts. Whenever the Clan Champion needed volunteers for a daring mission with little chance of success (and even less of survival), the Moto were always the first to step forward.

The Moto Family Mon

The original Moto mon was a red chrysanthemum. After the fall of Moto Tsume, it was replaced by an image of a white kabuki mask, symbolizing the family's determination to redeem itself or die trying.

When the family restored its honor in the mid-twelfth century, some of them began using the red chrysanthemum design again, but the white kabuki mon also remained in use, especially with the White Guard and the Fanatics.

The Moto family's shame lasted nearly three centuries, and during those dark years many chose to live in self-imposed exile, patrolling the outskirts of the Unicorn lands near the Burning Sands and avoiding all contact with the rest of the Empire. In truth, the Moto Fanatics of this era had much in common with the Lion Clan's Deathseekers, though the Lion would doubtless object to such a comparison.

The arrival of the remaining Moto from the Burning Sands in the early twelfth century brought new blood to the family and strongly bolstered its gaijin ways, which had been slowly fading over the past 300 years. Still, even after Tsume's Dark Moto were finally defeated and the Moto were named leaders of the clan, the rejuvenat-

ed family felt an acute sentiment that it had to prove its worth to the rest of the Empire. The Moto remained fierce and determined, though far less dour.

The Moto abhor stillness and idleness more than any other Unicorn family. Although they are not quite as fascinated by pure exploration as the Shinjo, the Moto have a hard time remaining in one place and when faced with a problem they will act, do something, do *anything* rather than wait, discuss, or ponder.

The Moto are cunning and deadly warriors and hunters, but have little interest in politics or courtly affairs. Most samurai from other clans consider the Moto no better than uncouth barbarians, and this reputation is almost wholly deserved. However, in most eras the Moto care little for such opinions. During their disgrace after the fall of Moto Tsume, they simply avoid other Rokugani. After they rise to rule the clan, they find security in their military might and let the Ide family's diplomats deal with the distractions and unpleasantness of "civilized" life.

The Utaku Family

"Purity is my passion."

– Otaku

For most of its history, the Utaku family was actually the Otaku family, named after one of Shinjo's first followers. The name of the family was changed in the twelfth century to honor the deeds of Otaku Kamoko, the second Unicorn Thunder. (See her story under "Heroes" later in this chapter for more details.)

Otaku was a beautiful woman with a multifaceted personality: she was often peaceful and compassionate, but she did not hesitate to unleash her wrath on the enemies of the clan. While Ide and Iuchi both swore an oath of fealty to Shinjo, Otaku never did and some stories claim she never spoke at all. Nevertheless, she acted in all ways as if she had given her oath and quickly became Shinjo's right hand. The reason for this unspoken oath is a source of many scholarly debates among the Unicorn, although her descendants choose to emulate their founder and say nothing on the topic. Otaku married Ide and they had four children, the founders of the Otaku and Ide families. There might have been many more, but Otaku was also one of the original Seven Thunders, and she died in the Shadowlands fighting Fu Leng.

The Otaku family was founded by her eldest daughter, Otaku Shiko, who was just as devoted to Shinjo as her mother. When the Kami set out to explore the world beyond Rokugan, Shiko followed her without hesitation. Ever since then the Otaku family has been led and ruled by its women, and all family daimyo and lesser rulers have likewise been female. Only the women of the family are allowed to learn the Battle Maiden fighting techniques pioneered by Otaku herself, and only they can ride the family's legendary warhorses into battle. In fact, the women of Otaku's bloodline can sometimes develop a quasi-mystical connection with their horses, making the mount an extension of the battle maiden's body; horse and rider fighting as one. This remarkable relationship helps ensure the battle maidens are unanimously considered the most powerful and elite cavalry of Rokugan.

Like their ancestor, the modern Utaku are people of few words. They choose their speech carefully and dislike idle chatter. In fact, even when an Utaku cavalry legion charges into battle the *shiotome* do so in total and terrifying silence, honoring Otaku.

The Utaku Family Mon

Regardless of which family name is in use, the mon remains the same: a simple circular field of light purple. This is believed to symbolize both Otaku's silence and the purity which her followers have upheld ever since.

Many Utaku possess a natural beauty and grace inherited from their ancestor and if they chose could easily make quite the impression in court. However, the Utaku generally have a low opinion of court life and value their own repute too highly to use their looks for political or personal gain. Although they understand the subtleties of politics better than the Moto and Shinjo, they consider court far too talkative and annoying.

The men of the Utaku family are often regarded with scorn by the battle maidens, and by long family tradition they are forbidden from fighting on horseback. Instead they are given the duty (admittedly not one lacking in honor) of raising and caring for the Utaku steeds, and there are no finer horse breeders in the Empire. For those who insist on serving the clan on the battlefield, hoping to escape the shadows of their sisters' fame, the family maintains a non-cavalry school (the so-called Utaku Infantry). Some of the men are also permitted to train in the other families' bushi schools, although this is rare.

The Ide Family

"Violence is the language of defeat, swords the tongues of the lost."

– from the Ide family standard

The man named Ide was patient, intelligent, self-collected, and opposed to senseless violence. It would be fair to say he embodied all the more compassionate and protective beliefs of Shinjo herself. It is thus no surprise that when the Ki-Rin left Rokugan to travel the world, he became their foremost diplomat, defusing many tense situations and negotiating numerous agreements with the gaijin civilizations the clan encountered. Advocating a peaceful approach was not always easy, but it is a testament to his skills as a mediator that his approach so often prevailed. Ide's disciples and those of his and Otaku's children who continued his family line consolidated his ideas and methods into a philosophy called *wabukan* ("the peaceful path") which eventually became the basis of the Ide Emissary school.

During the clan's long wanderings the Ide family's main duty was to facilitate relations with the peoples they encountered. With the clan almost constantly on the move, this could sometimes prove to be a frustrating task; aside from the absorption of the Ujik-Hai to become the Moto family, no genuine long-lasting agreement or alliance was ever forged. Instead, every negotiation was oriented toward short term needs such as free passage, trading for food and other supplies, or gathering information.

The Ide were also responsible for keeping the clan's Rokugani traditions and identity alive in the face of constant gaijin influence. Thus they were both the most familiar with foreign ways and the most traditional in their own behavior.

Although the Ide family's service during the long centuries of wandering was loyal and exemplary, the family truly blossomed only after the clan's return to Rokugan. The Ide could finally apply their expertise at diplomacy toward long-term goals. Facilitating the Unicorn Clan's reintegration with the Empire was a difficult challenge they faced with honor and enthusiasm. It was an Ide who delivered Doji's fan to the Imperial Court, and it was the Ide who brokered the clan's peace treaties with its neighbors and forged its first alliances with the Crane and Crab.

The Ide Family Mon

The Ide mon depicts a hand open in friendship, set against a green octagon—eight sides for the eight Kami who founded the Empire.

In the three centuries after the Ide arrived in Rokugan they diversified their activities considerably. Although their primary duty was still to represent the Unicorn in the Empire's courts, they also handled trade with other clans and served as masters of the clan's innumerable trade caravans. The Ide also found their way into the Imperial bureaucracy, where their subtle influence permitted numerous Unicorn samurai, especially among the Shinjo, to obtain magistrate positions.

The modern Ide continue to uphold their founder's principles: they are calm, fair, friendly, and well-organized. They serve the vital function of being the Unicorn Clan's face to the rest of the Empire. If there is one lesson they learned above all others in the Burning Sands, it is that conflict often finds its source in simple misunderstanding; they are master negotiators and problem-solvers, able to find unorthodox answers to challenges in the courts, the law, and the intricate dance of commerce. Of course, those answers are usually advantageous to the Unicorn.

The Iuchi Family

"Power is what you think it is."

– motto of the Iuchi shugenja school

Iuchi was the only one of Lady Shinjo's followers with magical talent. Although he was not particularly powerful or experienced, he knew enough to be valuable to the clan when they began their expedition into the Burning Sands. As it turned out, this lack of knowledge proved to be useful, since it meant Iuchi was not already rigidly set in the Rokugani paradigm of magic. When he encountered gaijin mystics and sorcerers, he was open-minded and eager to learn. Beyond Rokugan's borders Iuchi and his children and students had plenty of opportunities to discover foreign magic and integrate it into their own practices. This was not only for curiosity's sake but also out of necessity, as they quickly learned traditional Rokugani magic was much less effective—sometimes even useless—outside of the Empire. Gaijin kami evidently did not know how to respond to standard prayers.

Iuchi had great respect for Shinsei and brought a complete copy of the *Tao* with him into the gaijin lands. The wisdom contained in the *Tao* helped him to understand the gaijin sorcerers' strange magic. Shinsei taught that though everything in the world seems separate, all is truly one. The gaijin seemed to understand this in a crude and intuitive way, and this realization made it easier both to comprehend their magic and to speak with the strange elemental kami of the Burning Sands.

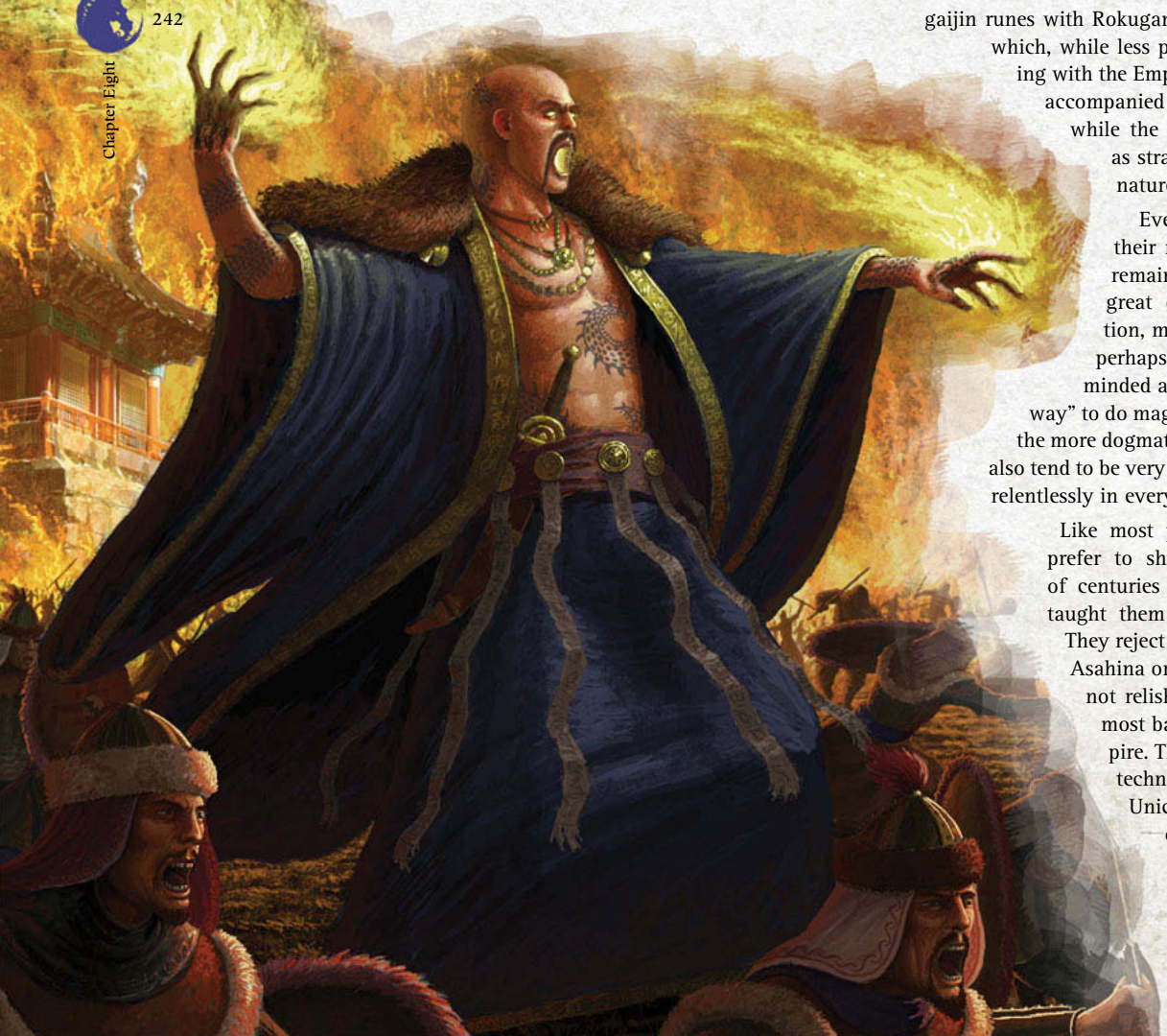
The most significant breakthrough in Iuchi's studies happened late in his life when he managed to acquire a strange gaijin tome of magical secrets. Iuchi spent the remainder of his life studying the book and then entrusted it to his best student, Iuchi Tsubei. Together their work unlocked the secrets of the sorcerers, whose magic called on the power of the elements directly without using the kami as intermediaries. The sorcerers employed ancient words imbued with the primeval power of creation. By inscribing such a word or a combination of such words on talismans, the sorcerers could produce potent effects unlike anything seen in Rokugan. Although such things were blasphemous, any source of power was valuable for the Unicorn and the Iuchi family studied this "name magic" until they could make it their own. They called their new version of the sorcery *meishodo*, replacing the gaijin runes with Rokugani characters to produce effects which, while less potent, were also more in keeping with the Empire's theology. Meishodo magic accompanied the Iuchi back to Rokugan, and while the shugenja of other clans see it as strange they do not realize its true nature and origins.

Even in modern times, long after their return to the Empire, the Iuchi remain a family that engages in a great deal of magical experimentation, more than in any other clan save perhaps the Phoenix. They are open-minded and believe there is no one "true way" to do magic, a view which often unsettles the more dogmatic shugenja of other clans. They also tend to be very ambitious and drive themselves relentlessly in everything they do.

Like most priests of the kami, the Iuchi prefer to shun violence, but the realities of centuries of travel in hostile territories taught them it is sometimes unavoidable. They reject the pacifism of families like the Asahina or the Isawa, and while they may not relish combat they are some of the most battle-ready shugenja of the Empire. They have developed a variety of techniques and spells to support the Unicorn Clan's warriors with increased speed or mobility, or to impede enemies with walls of

The Iuchi Family Mon

The Iuchi mon depicts an open scroll against a deep blue background. The scroll, inscribed with the family name, symbolizes the Tao—the source of all the family's discoveries and accomplishments.



water or torrential rains. After a fight is over, however, it is common to see Iuchi shugenja tending to all the wounded, friend and foe.

When the Moto took control of the Unicorn in the twelfth century and restructured the clan's armies, the third and smallest army was named the Baraunghar and was designated to employ the magical skills of the Iuchi. This drew the Iuchi further down the path of militarism, a duty they undertook loyally but not always with enthusiasm.

The Horiuchi Family

In the year 1119 a young Iuchi shugenja-ko named Shoan saved Clan Champion Shinjo Yokatsu's children from a brutal bandit raid. Grateful to Shoan and impressed by her skill, the Clan Champion granted her the privilege of founding her own family line, and at his request the Emperor soon recognized the family as well. Shoan and the handful of honor guard samurai assigned to her took the Horiuchi name, a choice that reflected her own uncertainty—she did not want to completely abandon her Iuchi heritage. Shoan was never an ambitious woman and does not seem to have really known what to do with her new family. Many expected the family to die out with Shoan herself, but matters changed during the War of Spirits twenty years later. The internecine conflict left many samurai orphans with no family or homes, and Shoan threw herself into efforts to take in and protect these smallest victims of war. Many of the adopted children chose to swear fealty to the Horiuchi out of gratitude to their benefactors, and in this way the Horiuchi family grew and ultimately outlived its founder. A few years later, the slightly larger family was granted another duty by the Clan Champion—he charged them with patrolling the borders of the Shinomen forest close to the Horiuchi lands, contributing in a small way to the protection of the sleeping Naga.

The Horiuchi were never a large family; even at their apex they numbered only a couple of hundred samurai. Due to their varied origins, less than half of them were shugenja, and the family as a whole tended to be mostly ignored by the rest of the Empire. This did give them more freedom to study controversial topics such as the meishodo techniques devised by their Iuchi cousins, and this form of magic became their favored specialty.

Sadly, the Horiuchi ultimately did not endure for long; they were wiped out during the Kali-Ma Invasion of the late twelfth century. During that time a mysterious and virulent supernatural plague struck at the heart of the Empire, and the disease seemed to be centered in the Horiuchi family's lands. Their modest settlements were burned to the ground and the inhabitants killed in an attempt to prevent further spread of the disease. The Unicorn Clan Champion decreed the Horiuchi name had become an evil omen, and the dozen or so Horiuchi who escaped the destruction were ordered to either swear fealty to other Unicorn families or keep their name until death, not passing it to their children.

Heroes of the Unicorn Clan

This section describes several notable heroes from the history of the Unicorn Clan, from the early days of their wanderings in the Burning Sands up to the violent epochs of the twelfth century. GMs may use these as NPCs in campaigns set during those eras, or as inspiration for their own NPCs in other timelines.

Shinjo Kemuri

Heir to Shinjo

Shinjo Kemuri was the one child of Shinjo who took human form. While his brothers and sisters—Hachiman, Takakan, Umakorn and Aranat—chose their final form as unicorns, Kemuri always felt more comfortable in human shape. In his youth he changed his name as often as his form, but when he transformed for the last time, he chose to call himself Kemuri ("smoke") in honor of his father, who was often described as wreathed in ghostly fire. He knew little of his father aside from this, and even his mother Shinjo did not truly know what the unicorn spirit was: an ancient jinn, a mysterious desert shapeshifter, or something else entirely.

Kemuri learned the ways of combat from the Otaku and Moto families, the ways of diplomacy from the Ide, and the ways of magic from the Iuchi. He was naturally skilled in

Hayai, the Ancestral Katana of the Unicorn

Hayai is the original katana carried by Shinjo herself, passed down to her children and from them to the modern Empire. It appears to be a normal katana of superb quality, razor-sharp and mirror-bright, effortlessly light. It does have a somewhat shorter blade than is customary in modern design, however. The hilt was once pearl and ivory, but generations of hands have darkened it almost to black. A white tassel at the end of the hilt is renewed by each warrior to carry the blade.

Only an honorable heir to the Shinjo line can wield Hayai—those of the Shinjo lords who belonged to the Kolat always refrained from carrying the sword, supposedly out of respect for its heritage. Like the other Ancestral Swords, it was carried into the Heavens by Shinjo in the twelfth century—whether it will ever return is unknown.

In the hands of a proper Shinjo, this potent nemuranai is a deadly weapon, its spirit driving the wielder to feats beyond his own mortal capacity. It has a DR of 3k3 and the wielder adds his Insight Rank to his Initiative score during the Reactions Step of each Round. The sword directs itself toward enemy weak points, ignoring Reduction (whether from armor, natural protection, or magical/supernatural effects) equal to 5 plus the wielder's Insight Rank.

all he tried, but it was with magic he excelled, and he liked nothing more than his Iuchi teachers' lessons. His half-spirit/half-divine nature gave him a special affinity with the Spirit Realms, and he would sometimes surprise his tutors by hiding in a neighboring spirit realm and suddenly appearing out of thin air. The research which later produced Unicorn travel magic was to a large degree pioneered by Kemuri.

Kemuri had a generous heart and a flamboyant character. Everything he did he wanted to experience to its fullest. However, while he loved his family and clan he did not feel the same deep sense of obligation to them as his mother did. Since she was divine and immortal, she would always be there for the clan and he would never have to inherit the responsibilities of a Clan Champion. Kemuri often wandered away from the clan for months or years at a time, coming and going as he pleased, though he always found his way back to his mother with grand tales of wondrous adventures. He romanced (some might say seduced) and ultimately married Otaku Ren, who bore him several children. From them would come the future leaders of the Shinjo family.

Kemuri had been wandering alone for over 30 years when he felt his mother call for help as she battled the Lying Darkness. He rode as fast as he could, and as he felt her strength wane and her torment worsen, he cut through the Spirit Realms to find her. Thanks to his extraordinary skills and the unbreakable psychic bond he shared with Shinjo, he reached her just as the Lying Darkness was about to overcome her forever. Without hesitation Kemuri sacrificed himself so Shinjo could survive. She was deeply weakened and ultimately fell into a sleep for centuries, but her soul and her sanity were preserved... and one day, she would awaken and seek revenge.

Shinjo Kemuri, Half-Spirit, Son of Shinjo

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 3
Reflexes: 4 Willpower: 4 Agility: 5 Perception: 5

Honor: 4.0 *Status: 6.9* *Glory: 4.2*

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 4/Iuchi Traveler Path

Skills: Animal Handling (Horse) 4, Athletics 4, Defense 5, Divination 3, Games 3, Horsemanship (Riding Horse) 9, Hunting (Survival, Tracking, Trailblazing) 7, Investigation (Search) 3, Jiujutsu (Grappling) 2, Kenjutsu (Katana, Scimitar) 5, Knives 1, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: Burning Sands 7, Lore: Spirit Realms 8, Medicine 3, Perform (Flute, Song, Storytelling) 5, Sincerity (Honesty) 3, Spellcraft (Importune, Spell Research) 8, Stealth (Sneaking, Spell Casting) 3.

Spells: Kemuri has access to nearly every spell available to the Iuchi shugenja as well as many gaijin spells.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Friendly Kami (Water), Inner Gift (Can sense passages to other Spirit Realms), Quick Healer, Way of the Land (Burning Sands)

Disadvantages: Fascination (Exploring the world)

Special: Kemuri, thanks to his extraordinary ancestry, possesses the creature traits of Spirit and Swift 2, and has the following abilities from Enemies of the Empire pages 244-245: Minor Shapeshifter Abilities (Animal Empathy, Legendary Healing), Minor Shapeshifter Penalties (Cannot drink alcohol, Cannot eat meat). Kemuri also has the ability to make melee attacks as a Simple Action.

Shinjo Kochamon

Unicorn Clan Champion

Shinjo Kochamon, daughter of Clan Champion Shinjo Nishijin, was born during the grueling years that preceded the Unicorn Clan's arrival in Rokugan. Tempered by constant warfare in the jungles of the Ivory Kingdoms and the crossing of the Shadowlands, she grew into a formidable warrior... but she knew in her heart that battle was not her true calling.

When the Unicorn entered Rokugan, Kochamon rejoiced at the promise of peace this land of legends held for her. She was deeply disappointed when her clan was greeted with suspicion and aggression. Kochamon would not abandon her hope for peace, however, and a few years later she suggested her father offer assistance to the landless Hiruma, who needed a place to train their bushi.

A few years after the Emperor recognized the Unicorn Clan, the Kuni demanded the right to test the whole clan for signs of the Taint. Again it was Kochamon, eager for peace, who insisted her clan accept this insulting demand. The process took years, but thankfully the Unicorn had long ago

learned how to detect and deal with their own corrupted kin and none of those who had entered Rokugan were Tainted—save one: Kochamon's father. Shinjo Nishijin's Taint was mild, his judgment not yet impaired; the Kuni recognized the political ramifications for the Unicorn and the Empire should the truth become widely known. In recognition of the help the Unicorn had offered their Hiruma cousins, they agreed to keep Nishijin's secret in return for his prompt retirement.

Nishijin was a fierce warrior, but he understood his clan needed a skilled diplomat to attain co-existence with the rest of the Empire. He sent Kochamon to study for three years with the Ide emissaries. Finally, in the year 820 Nishijin claimed old age and weariness and stepped down in favor of his daughter. He spent his remaining years in a monastery in Kuni lands.

Kochamon oversaw a number of crucial reforms that helped ease her clan into Rokugani society. Obvious gaijin practices were banned at any event where an emissary from the other clans was present. The use of foreign magic was restricted and meishodo research focused more strongly on adapting it to the ways of the kami. Dozens of Ide ambassadors were sent all over the Empire to offer friendship and learn more of Rokugan's peculiarities. Kochamon herself married a Crane, Kakita Tadashi, who became a steadfast spouse and supporter. His insight was invaluable to understanding the other clans and developing ties with the Crane. Of course, this marriage did nothing to improve relations with the Lion, whose continued hostility was Kochamon's sole regret.

When Moto Tsume's legions fell in the Shadowlands a few years later, Shinjo Kochamon's efforts ensured the clan's standing and repute was strong enough to weather the tragedy.

Kochamon ruled the Unicorn with a sure hand for three decades before she finally fell ill and passed away, leaving the clan to her son Ritsuga. She died largely content with her accomplishments, for during her tenure the Empire learned to grudgingly accept the Unicorn. It was not the warm welcome she had once hoped for, but it was a solid foundation on which the clan could build.

Shinjo Kochamon, Champion of the Unicorn

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 3
Awareness: 4 Willpower: 5 Agility: 4 Perception: 3

Honor: 7.4 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 3.4* *Infamy: 5.0*

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 1 / Ide Courtier 3

Skill: Athletics 4, Battle 2, Calligraphy (High Rokugani) 3, Commerce 3, Courtier (Rhetoric) 5, Defense 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 7, Horsemanship 5, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Lying Darkness 4, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Perform: Flute 4, Sincerity 5

Advantages: Balance, Blissful Betrothal (Shinjo Tadashi), Forbidden Knowledge (Lying Darkness, Shadowlands), Higher Purpose, Inheritance (Hayai), Multiple Schools, Social Position (Clan Champion)

Disadvantages: Infamous (Gaijin Diplomat)

Ide Tadaji

Legendary Diplomat

Ide Tadaji was the eldest son of the brother of the Ide family daimyo, and thus seemed destined for great things. However, he was born with a clubfoot, a disability which prevented him from ever riding a horse and made him an embarrassment to his family. There was no chance he might serve the Unicorn Clan on the battlefield, and his obvious disability was thought to also make him unsuited for diplomacy since it would attract mockery and contempt in the courts. He was initially sent to the Iuchi for training, but their sensei quickly realized Tadaji had only the most marginal gift for the spirits, although he clearly possessed a quick and clever mind. However, Tadaji's intelligence and curiosity won him the friendship of the Iuchi daimyo, Iuchi Daiyu, who recognized his talents were best suited for diplomacy. He arranged for Tadaji to visit the libraries of the Dragon and Phoenix lands to learn more about the rest of Rokugan, and later sponsored his admission to the Calm Heart Dojo of the Ide school.

Tadaji was transformed by this training. He developed a powerful speaking voice and a sense of self-confidence that made most observers forget his disability. He also managed to arrange a marriage to a Phoenix maiden, Asako Kaori.

Several years later the Emperor paid a visit to the Unicorn lands, and Tadaji's skills permitted him to attend the court. When the Emperor asked a trick question to Shinjo Yokatsu, the Clan Champion, Tadaji intervened and brilliantly turned a difficult situation into praise for both the Emperor and his Champion, impressing the Hantei and gaining Yokatsu's favor. Yokatsu rewarded Tadaji by sending him to Otosan Uchi as the Unicorn ambassador, making him the clan's official voice in the Imperial Court.

Tadaji proved himself a stalwart advocate for the Unicorn Clan. He was kind without being naïve, peaceful but not weak, calculating but not heartless. As the years passed, his figure became a familiar and beloved one in the Imperial Court, and many came to see him as a caring and endearing surrogate grandfather. Eventually, the club-footed cripple rose to become Ide daimyo after his uncle died and was even appointed as Imperial Advisor to Toturi I. Tadaji continued to serve the Unicorn even after several of his children died in service to their clan, and it is arguably solely through his efforts that the clan kept its place in the Imperial Court during the violent and chaotic era in which he lived. Tadaji forever proved to the other clans that the Unicorn could not be dismissed as uncivilized barbarians.

In his old age Tadaji was known as the "Heart of the Unicorn" for his unparalleled labors on behalf of his clan. Despite growing infirmity his mind remained as sharp as ever, and he was instrumental in holding the Empire together while the Four Winds struggled for the throne. He worked with the Miya family to reconvene the Imperial Court after the destruction of Otosan Uchi, and trained and influenced many promising young courtiers—including his chosen successor as Imperial Advisor, Doji Tanitsu. Tadaji died of natural causes in 1165, going to Yomi with the satisfaction of a life well-lived in service to his clan and the Emperor.

Ide Tadaji, the Heart of the Unicorn

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 5

Awareness: 5 Willpower: 5 Intelligence:6 Perception: 4

Honor: 6.4 *Status: 7.1* *Glory: 6.0*

School/Rank: Ide Emissary 5

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Commerce 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation, Rhetoric) 8, Etiquette (Conversation) 8, Games: Sadane 5, Horsemanship 1, Investigation (Notice, Search) 4, Knife 2, Lore: Dragon Clan 3, Lore: History of Rokugan 4, Lore: Unicorn Clan 7, Lore: Law 8, Lore: Politics 7, Lore: Shugenja 2, Lore: Theology (Shintao) 4, Sincerity (Honesty) 5, Tea Ceremony 4

Advantages: Allies: Doji Tanitsu (Inf. 1, Dev. 4), Allies: Shosuro Taberu (Inf. 2, Dev. 2), Clear Thinker, Social Position (Imperial Advisor, Ide Family daimyo), Voice

Disadvantages: Bad Fortune (Born under a bad sign), Lame

Iuchi Karasu

The Doomseeker

Iuchi Karasu was the nephew of the Iuchi family daimyo and exhibited precocious gifts with the kami from a very young age. He lacked for nothing in his early years and many spoke of him as a potential challenger to the Phoenix Clan's magical mastery. Yet this admiration and talent proved a double-edged blade. Karasu was arrogant and consumed with ambition, continually pushing himself to his limits and beyond. He embraced the Unicorn Clan's wanderlust in full, often exploring the wilderness for days at a time with no equipment but a pair of sai. He sought to learn more of the truth of the world than anyone else. Shortly after his gempukku, he made a fateful decision: to see the infamous Shadowlands for himself. It was a choice that transformed Karasu's entire life.

Karasu was captured within a few days of reaching Jigoku's realm. He fell into the hands of Moto Tsume, the fallen Unicorn and general of the Shadowlands, who tortured and tormented the young man for weeks on end. The exact nature of Karasu's imprisonment and torment remains a matter of secrecy, although a few claim to have read a supposed memoir describing his experience (see sidebar). It is known that Karasu escaped without succumbing to the Taint... but with strips of skin peeled off his entire body, including his face. Hiruma scouts found him barely alive and brought him back to the Crab lands, where daimyo Kuni Yori nursed him back to life. Karasu and Yori became friends, both having seen the horrors of the Shadowlands first-hand.

Although Karasu had survived, he was changed forever. His face and body bore hideous scars, deep and dark, and his lidless eyes glowed like burning embers. Every movement caused him pain but he refused to show it to others. His thirst for exploration was gone, replaced by a single thought: destroy the Shadowlands and its Tainted servants. Yori gave Karasu a special mask to hide his scarred face, a mask painted with the ancient symbols of an obscure order known as the Doomseekers, those who bring death to the undying. The Doomseekers were gaijin in origin, but a few Unicorn had embraced their ways and Yori felt the mask was a suitable gift for Karasu. A few years later, Yori also offered his young cousin Kuni Hiruko as Karasu's wife; she helped her husband deal with the physical and mental scars of his ordeal while watching him for signs of the Taint. They eventually had two children: Yue and Ietsuna.

Karasu returned to the Unicorn lands, living in seclusion and speaking to no one but his wife and uncle about his ordeal. Those few outsiders who encountered him described a grim and disturbing figure, cloaked and hidden beneath the strange mask, speaking in a raspy, unnatural voice. He only removed his mask in darkness, and his glowing eyes seemed to pierce the soul.

Karasu fought valiantly during the Clan Wars, battling the forces of the Shadowlands alongside Otaku Kamoko, the Unicorn Thunder. Together they defeated Yogo Junzo, the undead sorcerer who had opened many of the

Black Scrolls. Karasu was horrified when he learned his old friend Kuni Yori had succumbed to the Taint and become an undead blasphemy. He also briefly became family daimyo when his uncle Daiyu was murdered by a Bloodspeaker, Iuchi Shahai. By then the combination of age and his old injuries made it difficult for Karasu to take the field against the forces of Jigoku, but when he saw a chance to confront Kuni Yori he immediately seized it. Karasu bound both Yuri and himself into a unique enchanted Naga pearl, trapping them both.

The mechanics presented here represent Karasu at the start of the Clan War; by the time of his final confrontation with Kuni Yori he was a considerably more formidable man, as well as holding the office of family daimyo.

Iuchi Karasu, the Doomseeker

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3

Honor: 6.2	Status: 4.0	Glory: 4.5

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Calligraphy (Cipher) 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 1, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 5, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Knives (Sai) 4, Lore: Shadowlands (Dark Moto) 5, Lore: Theology 3, Medicine (Wound Treatment) 5, Meditation (Fasting) 4, Spellcraft 4

Kiho: Cleansing Spirit, Buoyed by the Kami.

Spells: Karasu has access to nearly every spell available to the Iuchi shugenja, but focuses most strongly on Water and Earth.

Advantages: Ally (Kuni Yori: influence 4, devotion 1), Inheritance (Doomseeker's Mask), Prodigy, Quick Healer.

Disadvantages: Bad Fortune (Disfigurement), Disturbing Countenance, Permanent Wound.

The Doomseeker's Mask: The terrifying appearance of Karasu's mask grants him a +1k1 bonus to Investigation and Intimidation skill rolls.

Otaku Kamoko

The Second Unicorn Thunder

Otaku Kamoko is the most celebrated modern hero of the Unicorn, a Clan Thunder who also played a critical role in purging the shame of the Dark Moto from her people. Her life was a difficult one in which one wrong choice could easily have condemned her to dishonor or damnation, but she escaped such fates and died with honor, blessed by Shinjo herself.

Kamoko was born the eldest daughter of the Otaku daimyo (also named Kamoko). When she was twelve, her mother died in battle against the Lion, struck down in mysterious circumstances by a warrior named Matsu Agetoki. Young Kamoko swore to learn the truth about her mother's death and avenge her.

The Ravings of Karasu

For just a moment, he lowers his face and I see what waits beneath. He smiles, that terrible, beautiful smile, and his eyes are lava and ash, and where there should be skin is only wind and void. 'What do you see?' he asks.

'Death,' I say. 'Destruction. Annihilation. All that is terrible in mankind.'

His answer is a stinging slap. 'What do you see?'

I bow. 'My lord. My master. He whom I shall serve in a hundred ways.'

'What do you see?'

I shudder as his fingers turn me towards him and his eyes meet my own. 'I see the future,' I whisper. 'I see my destiny.'

The ronin shugenja Seikansha earned considerable notoriety in the early twelfth century for gathering a huge array of stories, legends, and reports on the Shadowlands and the Taint. A special focus of his studies was the activities of the Lost and he made a point of searching out every possible story about their plots and behavior.

Seikansha claimed that during a visit to the Unicorn lands he met a mysterious cloaked figure with burning red eyes who gave him a lengthy set of scrolls. This document was apparently the memoir of Iuchi Karasu, recounting his horrific experiences as a prisoner of Moto Tsume. The text is extremely controversial, not only for its gruesome and shocking contents but also for a number of improbable and in some cases blasphemous claims about the Lost and the Shadowlands. The most notorious section is near the end, where Karasu claims to have witnessed Hida and his corrupted son Atarasi still fighting deep within the Shadowlands eight hundred years after Hida went searching for his lost child. Since this tale is definitively false (Hida's presence in Tengoku has been confirmed numerous times), many have used it to try to cast doubts on the veracity of the entire document, dismissing the whole thing as a fabrication. However, there is overwhelming evidence the scrolls were indeed written by Iuchi Karasu.

This does not mean anything within the memoir is actually true. Karasu evidently wrote it during his long recovery from his ordeal in the Shadowlands, and the text is erratic and frequently confusing; at times Karasu veers randomly between speaking about Tsume, Kuni Yori, and his own father. However, the descriptions of the Lost, their vile and grotesque activities, and in particular of the nature and behavior of Moto Tsume ring true to the few experts who have perused them.

The central theme of the document is Karasu's struggle to resist accepting the Taint. It was apparently not enough for Karasu to merely become Tainted; Moto Tsume wanted him to embrace Jigoku's corruption willingly. The Dark Moto lord put Karasu through endless torments to break his spirit and make him submit. Tsume is easily the most potent and terrible figure in the document, and Karasu's descriptions remain the most vivid and compelling account of the fallen Moto lord in Rokugan's history.

The tale is also exceedingly horrific. Some sections recount Karasu engaging in cannibalism in order to stay alive, being forced to bathe in the blood of just-murdered Rokugani, stripping the skin from his own body, and weaving a tatami mat from the pieces. There are also extended descriptions of the grotesque revels of the Lost and the torture and corruption of other captured Rokugani. Whatever else it may do, Karasu's memoir undoubtedly convinces any reader of the utter horror of the Shadowlands.

Shortly after her gempukku, Kamoko saved her family's horses when a forest fire threatened their stables. As she guided the mares to safety through the burning forest, the spirit of Otaku appeared and protected her, revealing her kharmic connection to the family founder. Inspired by this experience, Kamoko dedicated herself to her family and clan with great zeal, becoming one of the most prominent and courageous war-leaders in the clan. During the Clan Wars she joined forces with Iuchi Karasu to fight against the bandits and Shadowlands forces ravaging the Empire and its common folk. A year later at the Day of Thunder, she confronted the corrupt undead shugenja Yogo Junzo, crushing him beneath her steed's hooves, before joining the other Seven Thunders to confront Fu Leng. Though she did not strike the killing blow to the Dark God, she narrowly survived the grueling battle and emerged victorious with the other five remaining Thunders.

With the Empire at peace after the Day of Thunder, Kamoko resumed her long-delayed hunt for her mother's killer. When she finally confronted Matsu Agetoki, the Lion was filled with remorse at his former deeds and offered little physical resistance, but refused to reveal the secrets behind his actions. (In truth, Agetoki was part of the Kolat conspiracy and had killed the woman on their orders). In the aftermath of his death, Kamoko realized her selfish quest had accomplished little, and set out to do something greater with the remainder of her life: defeat the Dark Moto once and for all, ending their shame on her clan. She struck a bargain with the Oni Lord Kyoso, an entity which was itself hostile to the Lost and their leaders Tsume and Kuni Yori. Kyoso hid within Kamoko's body, giving her the appearance of Taint but in fact keeping her pure. The deception allowed Kamoko to enter the Shadowlands and join forces with the Dark Moto against her own clan. Leaving their secure home within the Shadowlands, they swept up into Unicorn lands, little guessing they were riding into a trap: a confrontation with the combined might of the Moto White Guard and the newly returned Desert Moto of Gaheris.

As the two armies faced off, Kamoko suddenly broke ranks and rode across the field to stand alongside her own clan, calling on them to destroy the Dark Moto forever. The ensuing battle was a terrible one, and at its climax Moto Tsume struck down Kamoko with a mortal wound. This released the hidden Oni Lord, and Kyoso no Oni destroyed Tsume in a few vicious seconds. The Dark Moto were suddenly leaderless and their pure kin swept them away, ending their blight on the family's name. In the aftermath of the battle Lady Shinjo arrived at the battlefield, claiming Kamoko's soul before Kyoso no Oni could seize it. The Kami carried Kamoko's spirit into the Heavens. On that day, the rest of the Otaku renamed themselves Utaku, proclaiming Kamoko the last to bear the name of their founder, protecting it forever from any disgrace.

The statistics presented below represent Kamoko at the Day of Thunder; she was somewhat more capable in the final days of her life.

Otaku Kamoko

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4	Willpower: 4	Agility: 4	Strength: 4	
Honor: 7.4		*Status: 7.0*		*Glory: 5.4*

School/Rank: Utaku Battle Maiden 4

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 3, Animal Handling (Horses) 3, Battle (Skirmish) 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship (Utaku Steed) 7, Hunting (Tracking) 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu (Dai-kyu) 5, Lore: History 3, Lore: Unicorn 4, Perform: Song 5, Sincerity 2, Spears (Lance) 3, War Fan 3

Advantages: Ancestor: Otaku, Great Destiny (Seven Thunders), Quick, Social Position (Family Daimyo), Voice

Disadvantages: Brash, Driven (avenge mother's death), Lost Love (mother)

Shinjo Tashima

Man of Three Destinies

Shinjo Tashima passed his gempukku just after the Scorpion Clan's failed coup; his father was slain in defense of Otosan Uchi, battling the treacherous Scorpion. Tashima reacted by becoming a stout defender of law and justice, and quickly gained admittance to the clan's magistrates. He made it his mission to track down and execute any Scorpion samurai still hiding in the Empire. His zeal earned him favorable notice and swift promotion, leading to an appointment to the Emerald Magistrates. In the year 1131, he was sent to the Dragon lands to investigate rumors of mysterious deaths among the Togashi order—a fateful assignment that changed his life. He quickly discovered the source of the trouble: the mad monk Hitomi Kokujin. Before Tashima could escape and report his findings, he was captured and Hitomi forcibly tattooed him with her

own blood. This shattered Tashima's personality and he became a devout servant of Hitomi, the Clan Champion of the Dragon. His last letter to his fellow magistrates said only: "I have seen the Lady's Truth".

Hitomi found Tashima a useful servant; she dispatched him to track down and recover an ancient nemuranai called the Obsidian Mirror whose power she needed to challenge the mad Lord Moon. Tashima's mission took him to the Burning Sands, where he encountered the Scorpion Clan living in exile and slavery. His hatred for the Scorpion burned tenfold due to his maddening tattoos, but his loyalty to Hitomi was stronger, and he was forced to help the Scorpion escape from their enslavement in order to acquire the Mirror from its owner, Bayushi Kachiko.

When Shinjo awakened from her long sleep, she gathered every Rokugani she could find to return with her to the Empire. In the face of the divine founder of the Unicorn, the power of Tashima's tattoos broke and his old personality reasserted itself. Madness and hatred were purged from him in an instant, leaving only pure honor.

Although Tashima's mind was now free, his sense of duty compelled him to complete his mission and bring the Mirror to Hitomi. He saw that Hitomi, too, had fought and broken the madness in her soul, and he rejoiced. He went on to join the great march to Oblivion's Gate, where he used the diminished power of his tattoos against the forces of the Lying Darkness.

After the defeat of the Darkness, Tashima was reinstated among the Unicorn and resumed his magistrate duties, this time putting an emphasis on compassion rather than the letter of the law. He died during the War of Spirits, protecting a refuge for Phoenix children from the forces of the mad Steel Chrysanthemum. Standing alone against two dozen foes, he poured his very life force into his tattoos and exploded in dark fire, consuming most of his opponents. The fight was memorialized as the Battle of Rekindled Innocence.

Shinjo Tashima's mechanical description varies considerably over time. The version presented here depicts him after his return from the Burning Sands.

Shinjo Tashima

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 4 Void: 4

Reflexes: 4 Agility: 5

Honor: 7.2 *Status: 1.5* *Glory: 5.4*

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 3 / Tattooed Monk 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Craft: Tattooing 1, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 4, Hunting (Survival, Tracking) 5, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Search) 5, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Burning Sands 5, Lore: Law 7, Meditation 2, Sincerity 2

Tattoos: Blaze, Wolf

Advantages: Higher Purpose (uphold law and justice), Heart of Vengeance (Scorpion), Languages (Mekham), Multiple Schools

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Idealistic, Unlucky

Moto Gaheris

The Khan of the Sands

Moto Gaheris was born beyond the borders of Rokugan, a member of the wild nomadic Desert Moto who dwelled deep in the Burning Sands. Though technically still members of the Unicorn Clan, the Desert Moto had been left to their own devices for so long they bore only a loose resemblance to their Rokugani kin. They showed loyalty to only one man, their Khan, Gaheris.

Gaheris' wife Kara was one of the four mystical avatars who sacrificed themselves to free the Kami Shinjo from her long sleep. When Gaheris met Shinjo, the presence of the Unicorn Clan's divine founder inspired him with deep feelings of duty, honor, and loyalty. He knew the time had come for him to lead his people home. Though Rokugan promised to be a strange land utterly unlike the desert, the Moto were not afraid to face new challenges with Gaheris leading them. Only a handful of tribes remained in the Sands, under the leadership of Ambaghai, son of Gaheris' younger brother Khadiu.

After the horrified Shinjo discovered the Kolat had infiltrated the highest echelons of the Unicorn, she decided the clan needed a new leader, someone whose loyalty and integrity were unquestionable. She surprised everyone by naming the barbaric Gaheris. Yet if there was one thing that could not be questioned it was Gaheris' loyalty to his people, even to the distant Rokugani cousins he had never known. He became the Champion of the Unicorn Clan, though he insisted his followers call him by his traditional title, the Khan.

During the War of the Spirits, Gaheris commanded his clan to defend the Toturi Dynasty at all costs. The Khan's elder son, also named Gaheris, perished in battle against Hida Tsuneo, the legendary general of the Steel Chrysanthemum, but Gaheris felt no regret for the loss and celebrated the victory of the Toturi. In his last years, weakened by age and illness, Gaheris was confined to Shiro Moto—

much to his frustration. He managed to escape his healers from time to time, to hunt or simply enjoy the vista of the windswept plains. His grandson Chagatai handled the clan's affairs in Gaheris' name.

When Gaheris died, his soul confronted the Lords of Death, the ten gaijin gods his ancestors had forsaken a millennium before. The Shi-Tien Yen-Wang still hunted their defiant followers and sought Gaheris' soul for eternal punishment, but he would not give in without a fight. His grandson Chagatai used a magical ritual to join him in the Realm of Slaughter, and they fought the Lords of Death to a standstill. Finally Chagatai offered to honor the ancient gods once more if they would break their curse over the Moto family. The deal was made, the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang were satisfied, and Gaheris' soul was freed to enter the golden fields of Yomi.

Moto Gaheris, the Khan of the Sands

Air: 2	Earth: 5	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 5		

Honor: 3.5 *Status: 8.0* *Glory: 6.8* *Infamy: 6.8*

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 5 (Insight Rank 7)

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 5, Horsemanship (Gaijin Riding Horse) 10, Hunting (Survival) 8, Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 10, Investigation (Notice) 4, Lore: Burning Sands 8, Battle 8, Jiujutsu (Grappling) 5, Heavy Weapons 7, Kyujutsu 5, Intimidation (Bullying) 6, Spears 1.

Kata: Strike as Earth, Strike as Fire, Strike as Void, Strike as Water, Indomitable Warrior Style, Strength in Arms Style.

Advantages: Great Destiny (to become Khan of the Unicorn), Languages (Mekham, Senpet), Large, Leadership, Way of the Land (Burning Sands, Unicorn Lands).

Disadvantages: Brash, Failure of Bushido (Sincerity), Infamous.

Horiuchi Wakiza

Tragic Shugenja

By all rights Horiuchi Wakiza should have been one of the most beloved and well-remembered shugenja of her time. She was a gifted spellcaster, strong-willed, resourceful, and honorable beyond question. She won the Topaz Championship, the first of her family ever to do so, and was one of the handful of Horiuchi in the Empire to survive the purging of their lands. Yet almost no one in the Empire remembers her or her deeds.

Wakiza was not born to a Unicorn family, but to the Lion. However, on the day of her birth her father wronged an itinerant priest. The old shugenja cursed the family to suffer terrible misfortune which would overshadow any glorious or grand deeds they might achieve. A few years later her parents were killed during a border skirmish with the Dragon Clan. She herself was saved from starvation by a peasant woman, but the poor peasant could barely feed herself and gave the child over to a temple as an orphan. There the Horiuchi found her and adopted her into their family.

Wakiza showed exceptional talent as a shugenja, and when it came time for her to undertake her gempukku she was one of a handful of Unicorn honored to compete at the Topaz Championship. Yet the curse remained on her line and her deeds were perpetually overshadowed. She won the Topaz Championship, yet none remember because on that same day the wife of the Crane Clan Champion, Doji Akiko, was revealed as a member of the Gozoku conspiracy. When the Kali-Ma invasion took place and the Horiuchi family had to be purged, Wakiza was one of the few survivors, but everyone remembered Horiuchi Nobane instead. After that tragedy, Wakiza dedicated her remaining years to trying to find a cure for the plague, but it remains to be seen whether history will remember her deeds there any better than those of her promising early life.

Horiuchi Wakiza, Tragic Shugenja

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 4	Void: 3
	Willpower: 4		Perception: 5	

Honor: 5.5 *Status: 2.3* *Glory: 4.2*

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 2

Skills: Battle 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Horsemanship 4, Lore: Theology 5, Meditation 3, Spellcraft 3, Staves 2

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Bo of Water, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Legacy of Kaze-no-Kami, Minor Binding, Path to Inner Peace, Regrow the Wound, Stand Against the Waves, Strike of the Tsunami, Visions of the Future

Advantages: Blessing of the Elements (Water), Clear Thinker, Irreproachable, Prodigy

Disadvantages: Idealistic, Unlucky (Rank 3)

Lands of the Unicorn Clan

The most important settlements of the Unicorn are described in the L5R RPG 4th Edition core rulebook, pages 357-359. The following section adds a few locations of lesser fame which are nonetheless of value to the clan.

Daikoku's Golden Wind

Daikoku's Golden Wind is not a typical Rokugani holding even by the Unicorn Clan's nomadic standards. In fact, it is not a "holding" in any conventional sense: it is a merchant caravan, the first to cross the sea of sand dunes and trade with the gaijin city known as the Jewel of the Desert, Medinaat al-Salaam. It takes its name from Ide Daikoku, a Unicorn caravan master from the Clan Wars era. Daikoku oversaw several caravans within the Empire, but he was the first merchant patron to consolidate the clan's sporadic and informal trade with the Burning Sands into a true commercial route. The process was slow and difficult, and the caravan did not become fully operational until the time of Shinjo's return to Rokugan. Daikoku's son Daijobu and grandson Jidokan made sure the Golden Wind caravan continued to benefit the Unicorn Clan, generating profits for the clan even when the rest of the Empire was embroiled in war.

The Golden Wind's route is roughly 1,800 miles long, connecting Medinaat al-Salaam to Outsider Keep to Mizu Mura. Due to the many threats it faces, it is also one of the largest Unicorn merchant caravans with over 100 wagons. Nearly 250 men and women accompany the caravan, about a third of them bushi, ensuring a painful shock for any bandits who try an attack.

Egami Mura

Located at the heart of the Shinjo provinces, not far north of Dragon Lake, Egami Mura is famous for horses. Almost every species of horse found in the Empire, from the common Rokugani pony to the superb gaijin riding horses favored by the Unicorn, can be found in the vast stables of Egami Mura. There is even one building dedicated to breeding camels for expeditions to the Burning Sands. Only the special Utaku warhorses of the *shiotome* are missing, since those are bred exclusively in the Utaku family stables.

Egami Mura is a relatively small village, much of it composed of tents rather than permanent houses. The Red Eagle Stable is the largest building of the village, as big as a castle (and more fortified than many). Visitors from outside the clan are few, and all requests are carefully screened before being granted travel papers. There is no shortage of such requests, however, for the wealthy and powerful come from all over the Empire hoping to purchase a few of these fine steeds.

Mizu Mura (Lake Town)

Although Mizu Mura is not the seat of power for any of the Unicorn families, it is nevertheless one of their most important permanent holdings. It is also the oldest, founded at the dawn of the Empire by the few Ki-Rin samurai who stayed behind when Shinjo left. For much of the Empire's history the Lion controlled these lands and Mizu Mura was little more than an obscure farming and fishing village, but after the Unicorn returned its importance grew tremendously. Located on the southern edge of White Shore Lake, Mizu Mura is conveniently at the center of the Unicorn lands, and as a result it has become the main depot for the clan's numerous merchant caravans. The Great Caravan Hub, as it is sometimes called, is a vast complex of warehouses and stables.

Mizu Mura is also known for rumors surrounding the nearby lake. White Shore Lake is reputed to house Ningyo beneath its placid surface. These tales have never been proven one way or another, despite the many scholars who have visited the area. The town boasts a library with all sorts of lore on unexplained occurrences and strange myths associated with White Shore Lake. The fishermen who ply the lake's surface, however, do not concern themselves with such questions; they simply leave food and pearl offerings floating on the lake, and are invariably rewarded with abundant catches.

Seikitsu Pass and the City of Night

The Seikitsu Pass is often believed to be the same pass closed by Akodo at his death; it was reopened in the twelfth century by an act of divine intervention. The Beiden Pass, the main route crossing the Spine of the World Mountains, was destroyed at the end of the War of the Spirits, and the new Lord Sun responded by unleashing a divine meteor that cleared the rubble from the pass in an instant. It also created a half-mile wide crater at the center of the pass. The passage is located south of the Iuchi provinces, and the Unicorn quickly laid claim to the pass and imposed a profitable tax on travelers.

The Unicorn samurai stationed in Seikitsu Pass guard the two paths that circle the crater, but they also guard something of great importance: the City of Night. The crater exposed an entrance to this vast underground complex, built entirely of a strange purple crystal and unimaginably old. Iuchi and Moto scholars who studied the city quickly realized it was not of human or naga origins, and some of them—notably an eccentric shugenja named Moto Vordu—eventually suggested it was built by an alliance of five races: the kitsu, the ningyo, the zokujin, the kenku, and the trolls. Whether this is true or not, the substance known as "night crystal" found throughout the city has a variety of unpredictable magical properties. Vordu was eventually driven mad by his discoveries and died in mysterious circumstances, but his successors continued to study the huge underground city, and rumors of its nature continue to circulate in the rest of the Empire.

Strangers in a Strange Land

"You tell me to follow the path of my ancestors and shame me for my ways. But my ways are the path my ancestors laid out for me. They ate meat, they wore skins and leather, they drank blood! Know this: I do follow the ways of my ancestors. I am certain in my cause. Question my ways again, and you question those who guide my hand. And I assure you, you will feel their strength behind my blade if you slight their honor again."

– Shinjo Yokatsu, Unicorn Clan Champion, early twelfth century

Since their return, the Unicorn have often been labeled as barbarians, sometimes even as heretics or blasphemers. This is hardly surprising. While the rest of the Empire was spending eight hundred years building a common culture and shared traditions, the Unicorn were traveling all around the world, constantly immersed in foreign civilizations and foreign languages, constantly working to adapt and survive. It was only after their return to Rokugan that they were able to settle down and take stock of the changes their odyssey forced on them.

Most of the other clans, even those who ally with the Unicorn, cannot help but point at their gaijin customs and complain how un-Rokugani the Unicorn are, how they dishonor the Empire's great traditions and civilization. In truth, the Unicorn have always prided themselves on preserving their Rokugani culture wherever they went. They continued to revere their ancestors, the kami, and the Fortunes even when faced with local deities or powers that were easier to invoke. They required the Ujik-Hai to forsake their gaijin Lords of Death when they joined the clan. They continued to use the language of the Empire throughout their long odyssey, and though they had to learn the basics of many gaijin tongues, the Ide took great care to never let those languages contaminate their clan's Rokugani. In fact, one of the most urgent tasks that Clan Champion Shinjo Kochamon identified when the Unicorn returned in the Empire was to update the clan's speech. The Rokugani language the clan spoke was actually more conservative than the one used in the modern Empire, and sounded archaic and provincial to the other clans.

The Rokugani are not the only people with a xenophobic attitude, as the Ki-Rin discovered first-hand. More often than not the gaijin met them with distrust if not outright hostility. And while their military might was impressive, they knew attrition could wear them down far more quickly than it would their enemies. Quite often survival required the clan to follow Shinjo and Ide's example of humility. Consequently, the Unicorn shed much

of Rokugan's attitude of inherent superiority to foreign peoples, and became far more likely to respect or even admire other cultures.

All of this means that despite their efforts to remain faithful to their origins, the Unicorn are unavoidably different from the rest of the Empire. The massive influx of Desert Moto in the twelfth century only exacerbated the problem. The Unicorn choose to uphold their foreign ways as well as Rokugani traditions, for these alien customs are the legacy of their own ancestors and their long struggles to survive and fulfill Shinjo's duty. Rokugan has always been in their heart, and they love the land and its people—perhaps even more so than other clans who take the Empire for granted. But they remain apart from it in crucial ways.

Language

The Unicorn speak with a distinct accent. In modern times it is not as pronounced as it was when they first returned, but it is still there, especially among the lower ranks of the Buke. To Rokugani who have never had to deal with foreigners the Unicorn accent can sometimes appear to be a different language altogether. Some Unicorn who are actually fluent in standard Rokugani will use their accent to their advantage, subtly excluding non-Unicorn from a conversation... though in general it is wise to avoid such tactics outside Unicorn lands.

Food

When the Ki-Rin left Rokugan it was only two generations since humanity had been unified by the Kami and given the beginnings of a civilization. The primitive Rokugani had few compunctions against eating whatever would sustain them, including animal flesh and its byproducts, so it was not very difficult for the Ki-Rin to adapt to the Ujik-Hai nomads' ways and continue doing so. The clan was frequently on the move and seldom had the chance to sow a crop and wait for harvesting season. Rivers and fish were likewise seldom seen in the steppes, mountains, and deserts the Ki-Rin explored; hunting was simply more convenient and efficient. As a result, Unicorn cuisine tends to feature red meat fairly readily, and while their return to Rokugan has allowed them to grow rice and other crops they continue to supplement their diet with meat on a regular basis. They especially favor beef and pork, as well as the flesh of all sorts of birds.

The other clans do not eat red meat, believing it to be an unclean food that imparts a foul odor to the body. They generally find Unicorn eating practices disgusting, especially since the Unicorn have no hesitation in doing things like grilling meat over a hot iron skillet or using their fingers to hold the leg of a rabbit roasted over a campfire. Unicorn beverages elicit similar revulsion from other Rokugani. Although the Unicorn will drink tea and sake readily enough, they also drink wines and liquors from the Burning Sands and an alcoholic beverage called *kumis* (fermented mare's milk). Guests of the Unicorn often dread mealtimes, especially at the table of a Moto lord.

Gaijin Goods

The Unicorn Clan is one of three clans that supply gaijin curiosities to Rokugan's internal market—the other two being the Mantis and the Tortoise. Although the Empire officially eschews contact with the outside world, in reality there is always a market for strange and exotic trinkets that can be used as conversation pieces at the next court dinner. Herewith are the gaijin items most likely to be found in the wagons of Unicorn trade caravans:

Astrolabe (made from copper)
Boardgames (chess, checkers, backgammon, etc)
Books (cloth-bound or leather-bound)
Boxes, metal or wood (exotic design, engravings, etc)
Carpets (woven, embroidered, etc)
Dried exotic fruits (dates, figs, raisins)
Dried meat (beef, lamb, goat)
Dried nuts (almonds, peanuts, cashews, etc.)
Earthenware (exotic pottery, etc)
Furs
Glass (bottle or goblet)
Ivory (sculptures or jewelry)
Jewelry and gems
Kumis (fermented mare's milk)
Lamp oil (refined petroleum)
Leather bags or shoes
Leather saddles
Metal utensils (forks and spoons)
Oil lanterns (made from brass, with glass panes)
Olive oil
Papyrus paper
Perfume
Spices and herbs (foreign/exotic)
Weaponry (scimitar, katar, kukri, longsword, shield, etc.)
Wine, spiced
Wine, vinegar

Truly rare items could include maps of the Burning Sands, Ashalan crysteel weapons, spyglasses, or pieces of crystal.

Clothing

The rest of Rokugan wears silk, linen, cotton, or hempen clothes. The Unicorn, however, use leather and even furs, which they especially favor for winter garments and riding apparel. They recognized the value of these materials long ago and simply do not understand the other clans' reactionary views. They also make note of the fact that silk is an insect byproduct; if using silk is acceptable, why is leather such a problem?

There is one use of leather Rokugan did adopt: the riding saddle. The generals of other clans quickly realized the value of comfortable and resilient saddles, especially when their armies were defeated by better-equipped Unicorn riders. Leatherwork is now practiced all over Rokugan, but the tanning process is performed exclusively by eta, and all items made with leather are ritually purified by priests before they can be put to use by samurai. The Unicorn find all of this ritual and restriction to be a needless waste of time and effort.

Religion

For centuries the wandering Unicorn continued to worship the same Fortunes they did when they left. In Rokugan, however, the later Emperors elevated various figures to Fortune status, perpetually enlarging the pantheon. When the Unicorn returned they were surprised to find so many new Fortunes and expressed resistance to accepting them. Many Unicorn viewed the expanded pantheon as a corruption of the original, a dilution of its purity. Even in modern times most Unicorn focus their prayers toward the ancient major Fortunes and the founding Kami.

It is thus somewhat ironic that the Unicorn Clan is responsible for bringing a set of gaijin gods into the Celestial Order: the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang. Official worship of the Lords of Death began in the mid-twelfth century after Moto Chagatai brokered a truce with the old gods of the Moto. Despite recognition by the Emperor as a part of the Celestial Order, their worship remains largely limited to the Unicorn lands and primarily to the Moto family, which maintains a priesthood in their name. Only a half dozen temples to them have even been built outside the Unicorn lands.

The ten Shi-Tien Yen-Wang are first and foremost gods of justice, although their view of justice is a harsh one: swift and fair judgment followed by severe punishment. They are not gods of mercy (though they are not sadistic), and worshippers sometimes refer to them as the Ten Judges. They dwell in Meido, the Realm of Waiting, where they share power with Emma-O, the Fortune of Death. Emma-O determines whether a soul may proceed to Yomi or, if not, how long the soul will wait before reincarnation; the Lords of Death decide what kind of punishment, if any, the soul will have to endure before its rebirth.

The Judges limit their influence on the mortal world to the few priests they visit with their blessings. Moto Priests of Death tend to be much more militaristic than the typical shugenja, even among the Unicorn. They often dress in white and paint their face with a grim kabuki mask design which gives them an aura of menace. They dedicate themselves to the pursuit of justice, helping those who have been wronged and ruthlessly hunting those who do wrong or break the law. Their preferred sentence is swift execution so the soul is sent to the Lords of Death for proper judgment. They refer to death as a blessing, for it offers the soul its only true chance at atonement and renewal.

Nomadic Lifestyle

After eight centuries of wandering and exploration it was quite hard for the Unicorn Clan to settle down in Rokugan. Certainly life was easier and less stressful; it was their just reward for their long quest. But the Unicorn could not altogether give up their nomadic ways. Many of them still live in tents, usually their traditional large tents of felt stretched on a wooden dome structure. A normal tent of this sort is called a *ger*, while the largest—reserved for nobles and rulers—are called *chomchogs*. The Khan's chomchog is so large and heavy its components require three wagons, each pulled by eight oxen.

In the other clans a samurai usually grows up living in the same place, moving once to train at a school. Not until adulthood can the typical samurai travel the Empire and see more of the land. Such samurai develop a strong connection to their birthplace, often the birthplace of their ancestors as well. To the Unicorn, their whole territory is their home, and no single place is more important than another. The birthplace of their ancestors is not a location but something they carry in their heart.

Identity Crisis

During the Unicorn's exodus there was no doubt about their identity: they were Rokugani. Rokugan was the place of their origin and the place they would someday return

The Mad Reign of Toturi and the Unicorn Magistrates

In the years 1132-33, the Unicorn Clan's magistrates found themselves in the midst of a dire internal struggle. Emperor Toturi I had been corrupted by the Lying Darkness and unleashed a reign of terror against the Empire. Alienated from his own former clan, the Lion, Toturi decreed the Unicorn would now be his Right Hand and tasked them to police the entire Empire. The Unicorn did their best to carry out his commands while remaining true to their traditions, but it proved a difficult task, especially when Shinjo's return disrupted their ranks. When rumors arose of maho use in the Lion lands, the Unicorn launched a full-scale investigation and found themselves fighting a brief but ugly war with the Lion.

The defeat of the Darkness finally ended the chaos and restored each clan to its proper role, although relations between the Lion and Unicorn remained strained for some time.

to. With no true home and no one they could call kin, their Rokugani origin was a vital certainty, a pillar of strength. Thus it came as a considerable shock when they finally returned to the Empire and found their Rokugani heritage challenged. They had been strangers passing through the lands of others for centuries, but never imagined they would still be treated as strangers in their homeland.

A lesser people might have fractured or collapsed in the face of such a crisis, but the Unicorn did not. Hostility and mistrust were nothing new, after all, and now they had the concrete reality of a homeland to fight for.

Respect my ancestors and be shamed for it, or strive for acceptance and renounce my traditions? This is a question all Unicorn must ask themselves at least once in their life. Most often it is the Ide who sacrifice their heritage to better serve the Unicorn in the other clans' courts. However, a few Unicorn from the other families sometimes become worn down by mockery and shame and abandon their ways to fit into the rest of Rokugan. Such men and women are often left in an even more difficult position, for they may still fail to gain acceptance and now find themselves ostracized by their own clan for their selfish choice.

Unicorn Justice and Compassion

The Unicorn Clan's long journeys through foreign lands taught them many lessons quite different from the norm accepted within Rokugan. In particular, they learned no one individual's contribution to the wellbeing of the clan could be considered unimportant. Everyone, from the lowliest eta to the Clan Champion, played important roles. Thus, the Unicorn also came to understand a peasant who is protected and treated justly will work far better than one who labors under duress. A famished farmer will work less than a well-fed one. Guaranteeing fair treatment and wellbeing to the peasantry is not only an act of compassion but also a sensible way to ensure the strength of the clan as a whole.

Of course, the Unicorn certainly do not challenge the Celestial Order and its social divisions. Unicorn samurai rule and Unicorn heimin serve, as it should be. But while other clans sometimes forget it is also their duty to protect the common people, the Unicorn always remember. Shinjo's compassion was well-known and she set an example for her clan to follow, but she is not the sole reason such a philosophy is common among the Unicorn. The Kolat also think all humans are equal, and their subtle influence on the clan certainly helped, ironically, to preserve Shinjo's legacy.

The Magistrates

The most obvious way the Unicorn put their compassion into practice is through their dedication to justice. Unicorn magistrates are willing to hear the pleas of the peasants, a willingness shared by only one other clan (the Mantis). Even eta can be heard, although their appeals are handled by magistrates' peasant assistants. This is not to say the lower classes always get what they want, or even what they need, but they at least can be heard... and if their grievance has merit, something will usually be done about it.

The Unicorn go out of their way to maintain order and security in their lands. Since Unicorn magistrates are mounted, they are well suited to patrol the land and can easily hunt down bandits or wayward ronin. Indeed, the open plains that cover much of the Unicorn lands make it quite difficult for criminals to escape the fury of Shinjo magistrates.

Thanks to the political skills of the Ide, it is not uncommon for Unicorn magistrates to win positions in the ranks of the Emerald Magistrates. This has spread their reputation into the lands of other clans. To the peasants of Rokugan, a group of Unicorn magistrates is always a welcome sight.

The repute of the Unicorn Clan's magistrates suffered a heavy blow when the Kami Shinjo revealed and purged the Kolat conspirators in her clan. Kolat infestation was especially strong within the Shinjo, who also formed the majority of the clan's magistrates. Overnight the famous Shinjo magistrates became reviled traitors in the eyes of much of the Empire. Although this was damaging, the more clever magistrates found a way to turn their dire new reputation to their advantage. It was useful for criminals to be even more afraid of them, or to imagine them corruptible and thus reveal themselves in misguided bribery attempts.

The Unicorn and the Kolat

When the Ki-Rin set out to explore the lands beyond Rokugan's borders, the disgruntled tribal leaders who founded the Kolat conspiracy had already placed agents among the nomadic Ujik-Hai people. When the two groups met, the Kolat saw a perfect opportunity to infiltrate a Great Clan on a large scale. They encouraged the Ujik-Hai to attack the Ki-Rin, then negotiated for peace with Shinjo. They wooed her with false praise and stories about their supposed need for guidance from a divine entity such as herself. Soon enough, they offered the Ujik-Hai's fealty to the Ki-Rin, and Shinjo welcomed their strength and knowledge. Very slowly and carefully the corruption of the clan began. It was not a simple task to deceive a goddess, and the Kolat remained quite cautious so long as she continued to lead the clan in person.

It was only after Shinjo's disappearance in battle against the Lying Darkness that the Kolat could finally become more active in their subversion, working their loyalists up through the clan's hierarchy. They focused their strongest attention on the clan's ruling family, the Shinjo, and after many generations the Clan Champion himself was recruited into the conspiracy. By the time the Unicorn Clan returned to Rokugan, it had became one of the greatest assets of the Kolat.

It should be noted that even at the Kolat's peak only a small fraction of the clan was part of the conspiracy, and most of those did not truly realize what they served; samurai are taught to obey their lord without question, after all, and the Kolat did not hesitate to discretely abuse this devotion. Only a select few in the highest ranks knew the truth, and they made sure to always pursue what was best for the clan—both to conceal their own motives and on the theory that anything that benefited the Unicorn also ultimately benefited the Kolat. The conspiracy used the Unicorn only when truly necessary, letting the clan walk its own path without interference the vast majority of the time. On the rare occasions when the conspiracy did call on the clan's power to advance its agenda, the Unicorn responded swiftly, reliably, and efficiently.

After the revelation of the clan's corruption, blame fell on the Shinjo family and they were disgraced and ostracized. Although it was true that most Kolat among the Unicorn were Shinjo, other families had been infiltrated as well. However, the Shinjo did nothing to dispel this inaccurate perception; they reasoned it was in the best interest of the clan that the Empire believe a single family, rather than a whole clan, had been compromised. Although they accepted their role as scapegoats, the surviving Shinjo swore their fate would never befall another family, and zealously pursued the Kolat in all its forms. They formed the Vigilant, a special organization whose members developed techniques specifically designed to root out, counter, and destroy the Kolat.

How the Kolat Used the Unicorn

Although the Kolat conspiracy could potentially have brought the whole might of the Unicorn Clan to bear against a large threat, such as another clan or even the Emperor, such drastic measures were never taken. They would have exposed the Kolat's influence on the Unicorn and ended any hope of long-term success. Instead, the Kolat used the Unicorn Clan for smaller operations, and even then sparingly. Most of the time, Unicorn samurai had no idea they acted on behalf of the Kolat; they simply assumed they were working for the benefit of the clan (although the two were not mutually exclusive).

The Kolat relied heavily on the power of the Unicorn magistrates, who were often Shinjo, either by directly controlling a magistrate who was a Kolat agent or by using a superior to dispatch the magistrate on a suitable path. Clan magistrates had the authority, flexibility, and mobility to carry out a variety of small-scale missions, such as protecting Kolat agents, patrolling around a base of the conspiracy, eliminating a ronin or bandit who outlived his usefulness, investigating a location or person of interest to the conspiracy (such as a smuggling cartel or a potential ally), or even acting as a courier, transporting sealed letters or packages to other Kolat agents or to blackmail targets.

The Kolat occasionally used the Unicorn to instigate chaos in the Empire or to create a diversion from their activities. A few samurai would be sacrificed to provoke

Martazera

Martazera was one of the first Kolat agents to enter the Ki-Rin Clan and the first to befriend Lady Shinjo. She was a master storyteller and used this talent to become very popular among the Ki-Rin. For years the old woman played a dangerous game with the Kami Shinjo, teaching her the ways of the Ujik-Hai and advising her while at the same time subtly maneuvering her. She also selected receptive targets within the Ki-Rin for indoctrination into the Kolat philosophy. Martazera suggested having young samurai go alone with her in the desert for training. To most, she simply taught useful survival skills and desert lore. But a few were led into sympathy for the Kolat cause. Her most gifted student, Shinjo Yotoko, eventually joined the conspiracy completely.

When Martazera felt the impending approach of death by old age, she followed an Ujik-Hai sacred tradition, *kurichitai*, in which the old walk away to die alone in the wilderness. Lady Shinjo mourned the loss of her friend, and in her memory proclaimed Yotoko the daimyo of a new vassal family, the Marta. This was a great victory for the Kolat, establishing a power-base for them within the clan. The Marta became the living memory of the Ki-Rin Clan, the keepers of its oral history. They took full advantage of this to manipulate the clan's history, making subtle changes whenever they recounted past tales to present things in a way that promoted Kolat philosophy.

another clan or faction with some minor border conflict or public insult. This was a dangerous gambit, however, since overuse could badly weaken the Unicorn's standing in the Empire. The Kolat had worked too hard to secure control of the Unicorn to squander the clan without dire need.

Finally, the Kolat made good use of the clan's Ide diplomats, who were often well placed in both the courts of Rokugan and the Imperial bureaucracy. Knowingly or not, more than a few of them served as Kolat spies, funneling information to the conspiracy or accessing Imperial documents in order to steal them, alter them, or replace them with forgeries.

New Game Mechanics

The following sections offers a variety of new Unicorn Clan game mechanics for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition role-playing game. GMs and players can use as many or as few of these mechanics as desired.

New Basic School: Meishodo Magic and the Horiuchi Shugenja

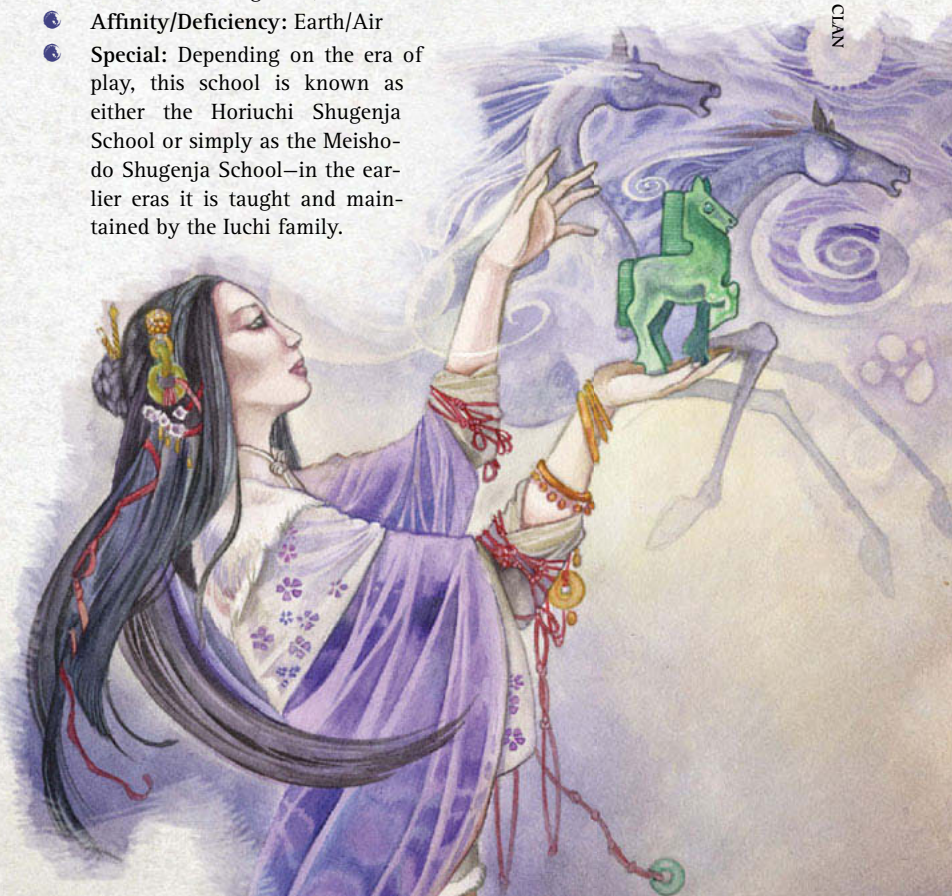
The Horiuchi family was formed late in the history of the Unicorn, but the shugenja school that bears their name in modern times has an ancient history with roots from long before the Great Clan's return to their ancestral home in Rokugan. During their travels outside the borders of the Emerald Empire, the Unicorn discovered many different methods and styles of magic among both their allies and enemies, incorporating them into a single method. After the Horiuchi family was formed they became some of the foremost practitioners of the meishodo method and in modern times the school bears the Horiuchi name.

The original gaijin sorcerers who created name magic could not speak to the elemental kami and had no direct access to the gods. Instead, they forged amulets of power that could simulate magical effects by invoking the true names of the elements. When the Unicorn studied this magic, they realized it trapped a kami into the item, forcing it to reproduce a single effect whenever the sorcerer focused his will into it. The Unicorn changed and adapted the process to fit their own beliefs. Their meishodo amulets no longer trap the kami, but instead appeal to the elements surrounding the amulet to perform the desired magical effects. However, somewhat like the gaijin originals, a Unicorn meishodo amulet contains only one unalterable effect that can be invoked in this manner.

Meishodo is a Unicorn secret, jealously guarded by all of the clan. Meishodo sacrifices power for speed, using a brief incantation rather than an extended dialogue with the kami, and speed has always been an important aspect of the Unicorn approach to life.

New Basic School: Meishodo Shugenja/Horiuchi Shugenja

- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Craft: Meishodo, Defense, Lore: Theology, Meditation, Spellcraft (Spell Research), any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll/Amulet Satchel, Traveling Pack, 4 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Earth/Air
- **Special:** Depending on the era of play, this school is known as either the Horiuchi Shugenja School or simply as the Meishodo Shugenja School—in the earlier eras it is taught and maintained by the Iuchi family.



Technique: Mysteries of Meishodo

Meishodo is a mixture of gaijin and Rokugani magic, resulting in a fast and powerful method of calling the kami. Shugenja studying these methods learn to create meishodo amulets, keyed to invoke the elements in specific ways. You may create a magical amulet by making a successful roll of Craft: Meishodo/Ring, using the Ring for the desired spell. The TN of this roll is equal to 15 plus 5x the spell's Mastery Level. Creating a meishodo requires a number of hours equal to the spell's Mastery Level. If the roll is successful, you create a small charm imbued with the prayer to the kami that will cast the chosen spell. Each meishodo stores only one spell, and is used in place of the scroll normally required to cast the spell.

Casting a spell through a meishodo requires only one Complex Action, regardless of the Mastery Level of the spell. You do not have to make a Spell Casting Roll to cast the spell, but the spell cannot gain any benefits from Raises (not even Free Raises). You expend a spell slot as normal.

You may only create meishodo from spells of a Mastery Level equal or less than your Shugenja School Rank, and can never create meishodo from spells of Mastery Level 4, 5 or 6. Other shugenja may use your meishodo if they are proficient in meishodo magic (e.g. trained in this school).

- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Earth, 2 Water, and 1 Fire.

New Basic School: The Moto Vindicators

The Moto family suffered a great blow to their morale and honor during the ninth century when their daimyo Moto Tsume, fueled by pride and arrogance, rode into the Shadowlands with the majority of his forces. He and his men fell to darkness and became some of Jigoku's greatest tools in its fight against Rokugan. Those Moto who survived or remained behind were deeply shamed and swore to eradicate all those Tainted creatures who bore their name. This oath gave rise to both the elite White Guard and to the Moto Vindicator school. Although the order of Vindicators existed before the fall of Moto Tsume, they did not have an intense personal hatred of the Shadowlands and their Techniques had not yet advanced to form a full school. The disgrace of Tsume's defeat changed everything.

The Dark Moto were terrible creatures. They rode monstrous steeds that never tired, struck with inhuman strength, and used foul magic to destroy their foes. The threat forced the Vindicators to become stronger, strong enough to overcome their fallen cousins. They trained to spot the signs of the Shadowlands Taint and to neutralize their opponents' advantages. The Moto called every favor at their disposal to learn from the best, and the Crab were glad to help, especially since the Shinjo had offered help to their Hiruma family.

The Moto Vindicator School focuses the fury and dedication of the Moto to a destructive point. If a Vindicator spots his sworn nemesis, he will not retreat until either he or his foe is dead.

New Basic School: Moto Vindicator [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Horsemanship, Hunting, Investigation (Notice), Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, any one Bugei skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, Riding Horse, 5 koku
- **Special:** To join this School, you must have either the Higher Purpose (Defeat the Shadowlands) Advantage or the Driven (Defeat the Shadowlands) Disadvantage.

Techniques

Rank One: Purity of the Breath

The Vindicator knows the only way to combat the Shadowlands is to maintain integrity in the face of the foulest corruption. At the beginning of each Round, you may choose one of two effects to apply until the end of the Round. You may reduce your TN penalties from Wound Ranks by an amount equal to your School Rank plus your Willpower. Or, you may instead choose to add a

bonus to your Armor TN equal to your School Rank plus your Willpower.

If you are in a skirmish against creatures of the Shadowlands, the chosen bonus is doubled.

Rank Two: Facing the Dark Within

The Vindicator learns to hone his senses so that he is never surprised by those who serve the darkness. You gain a +2k0 bonus to all Investigation rolls. This bonus is increased to +2k1 if you are specifically attempting to notice effects of the Shadowlands Taint.

Rank Three: Justice of Our Ancestors

The Vindicator's rage at his foes knows no bounds. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank Four: Avenging Our Own

The Vindicator's fury is provoked the most when it is directed at those creatures he once called his brothers. You gain a bonus of +2k0 to your attack and damage rolls against any enemy who has attacked you in this skirmish and against any creature with the Shadowlands Taint whether it has attacked you or not.

Rank Five: Bloodied but Unbowed

The Vindicator can push on past physical limits once his goal is in sight. Once per skirmish, you may choose to keep fighting despite your injuries. Activating this Technique is a Free Action. Once it is active, while making melee attacks you gain a bonus to the total of your damage rolls equal to the TN penalties you are suffering from Wound Ranks. (This uses the default Wound penalties, ignoring modifications from Advantages, spells, or other such effects.) The effects of this Technique last for two full Rounds. You may choose to extend the effects of this Technique for an additional Round by taking ten Wounds.

New Alternate Path: Ide Trader

Commerce is ill regarded in samurai culture, yet it is essential to fuel the engines of war. The few Great Clans that dedicate families to the manipulation of the economy—the Yasuki of the Crab and Crane, the Daidoji of the Crane, and the Yoritomo of the Mantis—have considerable advantages over the others. The Ide Traders carve their own niche into this domain of conflict, utilizing their friendliness and eagerness to help others to facilitate their mercantile activities. Their affability is for the most part only a façade, however, for the best Ide Traders are as cunning and ruthless as the most cutthroat Yoritomo.

New Alternate Path: Ide Trader [Courtier]

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Ide Emissary 2
- **Requirement:** Commerce 3, and must pursue a career as a merchant patron

Technique: Brisk Economy

The Ide Trader is a master of the merchant class, extending his control across the land. You cannot lose Honor or Glory for using the Commerce skill in public. You may attempt to persuade someone to become a new mercantile partner for your clan by rolling Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness with a bonus to the roll equal to double your Commerce Skill Rank. For persuading a commoner the suggested TN is 25, increased by the GM as appropriate if the target is hostile. Persuading a samurai requires a Contested Roll against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower, with the target gaining a bonus equal to double his Commerce Skill Rank. (Some samurai targets may gain additional bonuses or even be immune to this Technique due to unshakable loyalties—the GM has final say in such matters.)

If you succeed in the roll, the target agrees to become a part of your network of connections and commercial assets. You may immediately gain the target as a free Ally with 1 point of Devotion.

If you are using the optional Way of the Daimyo rules found in the L5R RPG 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*, taking this Path earns you a Duty Point.

New Alternate Path: Moto Fanatic

The Moto family prefers an extremely aggressive outlook on warfare rather than the more conservative viewpoint of the Shinjo. Moto warriors use the mobility of their horses to quickly close the gap to their enemy, and the Fanatics fully embrace that ideal of war. They charge the front lines of opposing armies with alarming frequency, often suffering surprisingly few casualties for their brash behavior. It seems these Fanatics survive the harshest battlefields through a mixture of skill and complete disregard for their own safety. They believe an all-out crazed assault disorients the enemy, forcing them to commit mistakes they would otherwise avoid, and their success would seem to prove the point.

New Alternate Path: Moto Fanatic [Bushi]

- **Technique Rank:** 4
- **Replaces:** Any Moto Bushi School 4

Technique: Reckless Abandon

The Moto Fanatic charges into the thick of battle with no thought to his own safety. If you are in the Full Attack Stance, you may spend a Void Point as a Simple Action to activate this Technique. You gain Reduction equal to your School Rank so long as you remain in the Full Attack Stance.

New Alternate Path: Utaku Horse Master

The Utaku family maintains the greatest stables in the Empire. They breed the strongest horses in the land, and their famous Battle Maidens are the only ones allowed to ride their Utaku steeds into combat. The men of the Utaku family are charged with raising and training these horses, and many if them choose to eschew the theatre of war entirely to devote their lives to this duty. The Utaku Horse Master serves as stable master, rider, hunter, and friend to the horses under his care. A popular joke says the Horse Master marries twice in his lifetime—once to his spouse, the other time to his stable.

New Alternate Path: Utaku Horse Master

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Any Unicorn school 2
- **Requirement:** Must be a male of the Utaku family

Technique: Master of the Open Plains

The Utaku men devote themselves to raising and training horses, and are without question the greatest in Rokugan at this task. Indeed, the Unicorn claim that in all their travels across the world they have never encountered better. You gain a +2k0 bonus to all Animal Handling, Horsemanship, and Hunting rolls.

New Kata: Strength of the Unicorn

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Schools:** Any Unicorn Bushi
- **Effect:** While you are mounted, your steed gains a bonus of +3 to its Armor TN and an additional 3 Reduction.

New Unicorn Ancestors

Otaku (7 points)

The founder of the Otaku (later Utaku) family and the first Unicorn Clan Thunder, Otaku was a woman who founded a family led by women. She will only offer her guidance on women descended from her line. Otaku's wisdom bestows an empathic connection to horses, granting you a +1k1 bonus to all Horsemanship skill rolls. Otaku's ferocity and determination grant you a +1k0 bonus to attack rolls against male opponents.

- **Demands:** Otaku will abandon you if you are ever deliberately cruel to a horse or if you ever challenge a man (whether to a duel or a competition) and then lose.

Iuchi (8 points)

Iuchi studied and mastered the ways of foreign magic, enabling the Unicorn to survive in the hostile world beyond the Burning Sands. His insights gave rise to the unique Unicorn style of magic known as meishodo. The guidance of Iuchi is bestowed on shugenja of his bloodline, and allows them to approach Rokugani spells in unconventional ways. While his spirit remains with you, you do not have a Deficient Element.

- **Demands:** So long as you wish to retain Iuchi's favor, you may never pass up a chance to learn more about magic, even dangerous or blasphemous magic. Just because you know about it doesn't mean you'll use it, after all...

Appendix One
The Spider Clan

Sahara tests the edge of his katana with his thumb. It is as sharp as he can achieve considering the quality of the blade. The sword is sturdy enough, decently balanced, but this is no blade of the Kakita or Mirumoto. The young ronin snorts at the thought. His sword may be nothing special, but he has faith in his own skill. He has never faced one of those renowned duelists, but he knows none of them have ever had to train with whatever master they could find. None of them have ever had to use simple tree branches to practice because they could not even afford a proper bokken. He has won his skill through work alone.

Sahara knows there is no point in bemoaning his low birth or cursing the name of the father who left him in such a state. What point to that? Better to find what he could control and focus on that. Besides, railing at the world will not stop the bandits readying their attack on Juujiro Mura this very moment.

Sahara despises the word mercenary. As far as he is concerned, the only difference between himself and a clan samurai assigned to protect a village is the source of the koku required for his upkeep. And anyway, if the Empire took proper care of villages such as this there would be no need for men such as he.

A call rings through the village. Sahara drops his plain saya to the floor of the dreary little room where he lodges and trots through the inn to the door. His fingers tighten on the hilt of his katana as the sounds of battle reach his ears. The alarm cry was late—probably the stupid villager was napping or contemplating the mud at his feet. What was the point of sentries if they couldn't even sound a proper warning?

The bandits sweep into the village, shouting with fury and malignant glee. The first wave are on horseback, but Sahara can see the rest of them coming down the hillside on foot, just as expected. He did not expect the sheer numbers, however.

Some of the peasants have crude weapons, but the bandits cut through the first few who are brave or foolhardy enough to try to use them. Sahara can already see the village will be overwhelmed. And perhaps worse than that, since some of the riders carry torches.

The bandit leader bellows, "Kill any who resist! Kill only half of the others!" He seems a bloated man, all round cheeks and jowls, but his frame is thick and muscular, telling a story of hardship and labor. He holds a curved blade, like the one Sahara saw in a Unicorn's hand when he once tarried in one of their border villages.

Sahara exhales hard and sprints across the open space in front of the inn. The bandit leader sees him, but only after he has passed his left flank, out of reach from the heavy sword. Sahara's katana bites through horseflesh and the bandit's thigh. The horse screams and collapses; the large man tries to dismount from the falling animal, but his wound renders the motion clumsy and futile. Sahara meets him with a deft flick of his blade, and the bandit gang is leaderless.

Sahara doubts it will be enough. There are simply too many bandits, however confused and surprised they may be by his sudden attack. He is no great hero to slaughter a hundred men on his own. The sensible thing would be to run... but he took the villagers' koku.

What is the difference between a clan samurai and a ronin? Just the source of their koku? He turns to meet the bandit charge and shouts defiance.

As if in answer, cries of panic echo through the bandit ranks. Sahara sees a new wave of samurai come over the hill—but this one is different. The newcomers strike at the bandits mercilessly. Their horses are strong and fresh, the warriors astride them powerful and skilled.

Sahara marvels at their brutal efficiency for a moment before he takes advantage of the distraction to continue his own duties against the bandits. The battle is over in minutes, the bandits utterly defeated. Those who try to surrender are killed where they stand, armed or not. It is no more than they deserve, though Sahara feels a shock at the speed of it.

The strangers wear dark, colorless garments with a mon unfamiliar to him. He watches warily as one of them rides up and offers him a respectful nod.

"You fought well. What is your name?"

"Sahara. I am a ronin hired to protect this village."

The stranger nods again. "This village has suffered enough. We will pay your fee." Sahara hides his surprise with a bow of thanks. The stranger continues, "My name is Gyoken. I am impressed with your skill, Sahara-san. I wonder why a swordsman of your talent is serving his purse rather than a greater cause."

"There is more to Rokugan than the clans. I serve as I need to."

Gyoken smiles. "Well said, Sahara-san! What if I told you there is another way to serve the people of the land? A way to do what the great clans cannot... or will not."

Sahara thinks for a moment. "I suppose I would say I should like to hear more."

Gyoken's smile spreads into a toothy grin. "Good. Then let me tell you about the Spider Clan..."

History of the Spider Clan

The so-called Spider Clan is unique among all the clans of Rokugan, Great and Minor, insamuch as it was created completely outside the authority of the Emperor. Thus whatever name it may claim for itself, it is not considered an actual clan by the rest of Rokugan. Of course, the members of the Spider Clan do not consider the Empire to be a source of legitimacy—they derive their sense of worth from their worship of Fu Leng and their obedience to their clan's founder, the Dark Lord Daigotsu.

The roots of the Spider Clan in the Shadowlands have been discussed in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire* (Chapter Four, pages 56-58). As outlined there, the Lost samurai of the Shadowlands became far more numerous after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate and the powerful leader called Daigotsu banded them together into a single group. At his command they created the City of the Lost, which he tried to make a dark reflection of Rokugan—an Empire of his own, inhabited by "samurai" who followed him as loyally as Rokugani followed the Emperor.

Daigotsu's initial forays against the Empire, however, were ultimately not successful. A succession of defeats, including a period in which he lost much of his power and the rule of the Lost was usurped by the Bloodspaker Iuchiban, caused Daigotsu to begin rethinking his goals and methods. In the year 1168 he sent one of his minions, Daigotsu Soetsu, to deliver a shocking demand—a petition for the Lost to be able to form a Great Clan. Naturally this blasphemous demand was rejected, though it caused considerable uncertainty and political upheaval within Rokugan. Some have even suggested it was the precipitating event that sent Emperor Toturi III on his futile and ultimately fatal quest for enlightenment.

Daigotsu and the Dark Oracle of Fire

In the early days of the Spider Clan, Daigotsu made a temporary alliance he would later regret. He swore to help Chosai, the Dark Oracle of Fire, retrieve the Dark Covenant of Fire. Chosai had been expelled from Rokugan and needed the power of the Dark Covenant to return and wreck revenge on his former clan.

At first the attempt to retrieve the Covenant met with failure. The corrupted samurai Megumi, dispatched to find the artifact, was slain by Kakita Kensho-in and the Dark Covenant fell into the hands of the Dragon. Chosai decided to pursue the Covenant more directly by unleashing the Army of Dark Fire to attack the Dragon lands. Daigotsu was angry at the immense destruction the War of Dark Fire unleashed, since he wanted his son Kanpeki to inherit the Empire. He fought against the invasion in secret, but when the opportunity arose to retrieve the Covenant, he did so. One does not recant an oath to a Dark Oracle lightly, and despite his power Daigotsu hesitated to oppose Chosai directly.

Regardless of what the Empire had decided, Daigotsu announced to his followers that they were now a clan, the Spider Clan, and would seek to gain entry to the Empire's society and structure. At his orders the Lost left their city and began infiltrating Rokugan, establishing hidden strongholds in the Empire's remote places.

Daigotsu's motive and intentions for the Spider were mysterious. He told his followers they were infiltrating Rokugan in order to subvert it from the inside, and indeed the Spider began infiltrating the other clans to this end while he plotted a series of assassinations. However, soon after he announced the name of the Spider Clan it was revealed that Shahai had given birth to Daigotsu's son, Kanpeki. It is believed that this son is the true reason for Daigotsu's change in focus. He saw Rokugan as Kanpeki's birthright.

The Methods of the Spider

"We hide among the clans, and use their sins against them. Can they defeat themselves?"

– Chuda Rintaro

The Spider operated through deception, a sharp contrast to the overt and brutal attacks favored by Jigoku's forces in the past. They undertook an extensive program of infiltration, trying to insert their agents into important (or at least useful) positions throughout the courts of the land. The Minor Clans proved especially vulnerable to this sort of approach and the Spider achieved considerable success at slipping themselves into the ranks of the Sparrow and Dragonfly. The Sparrow in particular became a locus of Spider activity, and they used the small clan as a base to observe and interact with the Crane. They also had some success at winning support from the Unicorn Clan, by providing timely aid during a major war between the Unicorn and Lion. Although the Unicorn did not recognize the Spider as a clan, they certainly were willing to accept the aid of what they saw as a friendly and courageous ronin band.

By maintaining the false front of a group of brave ronin trying to win clan status, the Spider were able to win considerable support, especially since they represented an independent source of power during the chaos of the Race for the Throne. They actively recruited ronin and ashigaru into their ranks, many of whom had no idea they were actually joining a Tainted army led by the Lost. They even managed to accumulate enough prestige to send representatives to the Emerald and Jade Tournaments, albeit such competitors were still officially listed as ronin.

One of the few clans to suspect the true nature of the Spider almost from the first was the Scorpion. Trained in the ways of deceit and paranoia, the Scorpion never accepted that the Spider were what they claimed. They soon undertook the task of exposing the truth about the Spider, though the nature of that truth was not apparent to them at the time.

Daigotsu also launched a campaign to win over the common people of Rokugan by presenting the Spider as their protectors. Whenever bandits threatened villages or people were otherwise left vulnerable by the Great Clans, bands of Spider samurai and monks would sweep in to the rescue. Of course, this fortuitous timing was not always benign—the Spider often hired the bandits to attack in the first place.

Finally, the Spider sought to actively spread the sinister philosophy of Shourido as an alternative to the selfless path of Bushido. Daigotsu had come to realize that allowing the Rokugani to choose a dark path by their own will could be far more effective than any attempt at forcible conquest.

Darkness Beneath the Surface

The Spider were careful to maintain the outward appearance of a benign group of ronin seeking clan status, but as a "clan" created and ruled by the Lost their true interests were of course far more sinister. Their goal was to subvert the Empire and plunge it into chaos and violence, creating openings to enhance their own power and ultimately take control of Rokugan. They frequently took action to spur the Great Clans into distrust or violence. A single arrow with the markings of a particular clan could easily fan the flames of hostility into war.

Infiltration aided this process; thus, the Spider used the Unicorn's trust to create rifts between them and the Crab, and later provoked conflict between the Crab and the Mantis. Daigotsu knew discontent and war created the best environment for the Spider to thrive. When threats of exposure arose, the Spider acted quickly and mercilessly, slaying anyone who might cause them problems. A squadron of Crab who were investigating the Spider were murdered in a bathhouse, and several Scorpion also met bad ends when they probed too deeply into the mysteries of the Spider.

A key aspect of the Spider Clan's plans was a series of assassinations, intended to shatter the leadership of the Great Clans and sow discord among them. The so-called Night of the Assassins in the year 1170 killed dozens of prominent samurai across the Empire, including the family daimyo of the Moshi, Ikoma, Soshi, and Tamori, and the Phoenix Master of Air. The Spider cleverly refrained from any killings against the Unicorn, then presented false evidence to the Unicorn Clan Champion claiming to expose Scorpion spies and assassins within the Unicorn ranks. Since only a few Scorpion had fallen to assassinations, the Unicorn were easily persuaded the Scorpion were the masterminds behind the whole plot.

The Spider Clan in the Iweko Era

The Spider Clan's schemes came to disaster in the year 1170 when the divinely chosen Iweko Dynasty ascended to the throne. Daigotsu had hoped to win the throne for his son Kanpeki, but unsurprisingly the Celestial Heavens rejected this and chose the Kitsuki daimyo to found the new dynasty. The new Empress gained immediate insight into the true nature of the Spider Clan and its activities, insight granted by the Heavens themselves. She outlawed the clan and proclaimed anyone caught wearing their mon would be slain on sight. However, she did not expose the full connection between the Spider and the forces of Jigoku, partly to ensure the Unicorn would not be irretrievably dishonored by their mistaken alliance.

Daigotsu was furious at his setback; all of his plans had collapsed and the Spider were outlaws. He ordered his minions to set fire to the clan's main stronghold, Black Silk Castle, and the surrounding Shinomen Forest. Although the combined forces of the Phoenix, Dragon, and Unicorn were eventually able to douse the flames, a full third of the great forest was destroyed. Many died in the blaze and the subsequent flight of the Spider, including the reborn Kitsu, Nintai.

However, this catastrophe did not completely end the Spider Clan's plots. Many of the infiltrators Daigotsu had placed around the Empire remained unexposed and loyally sought new ways to further his agenda. Moreover, the Empress appointed a Spider, Daigotsu Susumu, as her Imperial Advisor. Although to public appearances this was simply the appointment of a ronin, a strange decision but one not to be questioned, in truth Iweko knew exactly what she was doing. Susumu gave her a window on the plots and schemes of the Spider, as well as someone who could carry out any necessary order which others might refuse.

A notable instance of this took place during the eruption of an unnatural plague amid the Kali-Ma Invasion. As all of Rokugan fought to contain the plague outbreaks, one area was hardest hit: the lands of the Horiuchi family. Seeing no alternative, Iweko ordered Susumu to exterminate all life in the Horiuchi lands in order to stop the spread of the plague. Susumu's Spider allies sent in a disposable force of goblins to perform the task, keeping their own samurai safe while still carrying out the necessary orders.

The Spider Clan was created as a plot to infiltrate Rokugan, but this plot was rendered pointless by the Empress'

Shourido and the Spider

The Spider Clan and especially the "samurai" of the Daigotsu family follow the corrupt code of Shourido rather than Rokugan's ethic of Bushido. Moreover, the Spider Clan works continually to spread the ideals of Shourido through the Empire, believing the more samurai subscribe to its ideals the more Rokugani will ultimately join the Spider.

The tenets of Shourido, also known as the Dark Virtues, take the principles of Bushido and twist them into something that may seem reasonable to an untrained mind but quickly leads down a path of selfishness and corruption. In fact, many of the Dark Virtues are deliberately designed as reflections of the Great Clans themselves, though they would not wish to see it that way. For example, one of the Dark Virtues is Determination, something highly prized among the Crab—in fact the Great Bear himself, Hida Kisada, became the Fortune of Persistence. The Crane might not recognize what Shourido calls Perfection, but the principles beneath it are not dissimilar to the Crane ethic of excellence in all things.

dictates. Iweko suggested those Spider who were free of the Taint might eventually be accepted into Rokugan, but this raised questions as to whether they would still be the "Spider Clan" in the same sense as before. However, the Dark Lord Daigotsu did find a new purpose for his followers: he saw the invasion of Rokugan by the gaijin god Kali-Ma as a threat to his son's birthright, Rokugan itself. Thus he used whatever resources were available to him to fight the invasion. He was also disturbed to discover that his god Fu Leng was no longer answering his prayers, suggesting the Dark Kami's place as champion of Jigoku had somehow been displaced.

What lies in the future for the Spider Clan is difficult to predict. Clearly by the end of the twelfth century a time of reckoning was at hand, both for the Spider and their leader Daigotsu.

Families of the Spider Clan

The Spider Clan as such does not even come into existence until the latter third of the twelfth century. The families which comprise it are likewise generally of recent vintage and in some cases are "families" in only the loosest and most technical sense of the word. The exception is the Chuda family which claims, somewhat dubiously, to be descended from the corrupted Snake Clan that perished in the Five Nights of Shame (see the Phoenix Clan chapter, page 177-178, for details of that incident).

The Chuda Family

"Seducing the mind is far more difficult than seducing the body. When a man surrenders his mind, you can transform him into an instrument of your will."

– Chuda Hiroe, twelfth century

The modern Chuda family claims to trace its origins back to the original Chuda of the Snake Clan, exterminated by the Phoenix after they succumbed to a monstrous spirit known as a Shuten Doji. Despite the extreme ruthlessness with which the Phoenix undertook this task, they did not quite kill all of the corrupted Chuda. A few managed to slip away and hide as ronin, and the more powerful among them eventually managed to marry into the Asako family and thus infiltrate the very Phoenix who had destroyed them. They passed their corrupt knowledge of maho down through the generations while living outwardly as honorable samurai. Cursed relics of the Chuda also survived, and those who discovered them often fell under their influence and occasionally adopted the Chuda name for themselves.

The Chuda family officially re-established itself in the twelfth century. A powerful maho-tsukai named Asako Mishime reclaimed the Chuda name and swore allegiance to the new Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, Daigotsu. He quickly gathered other maho-tsukai to himself, some of them of his own bloodline, some who had claimed the Chuda name independently, and some who simply lusted for power wherever they could find it. The Chuda joined the rest of Daigotsu's followers in the City of the Lost, constructing the Temple of Blood as their headquarters.

Chuda Mishime has remained the family daimyo ever since, extending his lifespan with the dark magic at his command. The family he rebuilt serves Daigotsu loyally, both in the City of the Lost and more recently as the shugenja family of the Spider Clan.

The Chuda focus their studies almost exclusively in maho, and turn much of their skill to the creation of undead. Undead are potent and fearless troops who strike terror in any who face them. Of course, once Daigotsu created the Spider Clan he required the Chuda to make less aggressive use of their undead minions lest they give away the clan's true nature and intentions.

Interestingly, there are still Chuda in modern times who pursue the goal of freeing the souls of their ancestors who died while under the control of the Shuten Doji. The obvious irony in servants of Jigoku wishing to save ancestors from similar enslavement is evidently lost on them.

The Daigotsu Family

The Daigotsu family was formed when Daigotsu founded the City of the Lost with the goal of creating a dark and twisted version of Rokugan. The Dark Lord created a warrior family in his name, following the same conventions of fealty, obedience, and social rank as the Empire, but enlisting only Tainted and Lost bushi. He ordered the new Daigotsu family to behave in the manner of normal Rokugani samurai, and this made it relatively easy for them to recruit ronin and other dupes into their ranks once the Spider Clan began to infiltrate the Empire.

Despite outward appearances, the Daigotsu are fundamentally different from normal samurai. Not only do they accept the Taint and worship Fu Leng, but they also reject Bushido in favor of Daigotsu's Shourido. Most of them are warriors, usually training in the violent techniques of the Daigotsu Bushi School, but the necessities of infiltration have led them to devise a Courtier School as well, specializing in both emotional manipulation and misdirection. Daigotsu training tends to follow Shourido's tenet of Strength, and many of the family believe they should simply take Rokugan from the grasp of the Great Clans, but their Dark Lord rules through Control and Will... so they do as he bids, simply because he bids it.

The Daigotsu are the largest family in the Spider and make up most of the ranks of its military forces. The Dark Lord considers them his right hand in much the same way the Rokugani Emperors look upon the Lion clan.

Although most Daigotsu are brutal warriors or cunning diplomats, a variety of unusual persons and entities have also sworn their allegiance to the Dark Lord by taking his name and joining the family. They include self-willed undead, powerful maho-tsukai like the former Bloodspeaker cultist Yajinden, and even inhuman creatures such as the Pekkle no Oni that calls itself Daigotsu Oki. What ties them all together is their obedience to their immensely powerful leader. It is not known what may happen if Daigotsu finally dies—the family might continue to follow its dark reflection of samurai loyalty, obeying his son Kanpeki as it did him, or it might collapse into the murderous violence which the Taint so often unleashes.

The Goju "Family"

The Goju far predate the Spider Clan and originated in the machinations of the Nothing. The full story of the fearful man named Goju and the "family" which emerged from him is told in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire* (in Chapter Seven: The Nothing). The modern Goju who assist the Spider Clan are the creatures of the Shadow Dragon—the former Dragon of Air, which absorbed the last fragment of Nothing at the end of the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. The Shadow Dragon pursues its own dark and complex schemes, but it has allowed the Goju to assist Daigotsu on more than one occasion. A particularly powerful individual called Goju Kyoden was part of Daigotsu's inner circle and sacrificed himself to facilitate the Dark Lord's resurrection after he was killed by the Four Winds.

When Daigotsu formed the Spider Clan he sought the Goju to bolster its ranks, and the Shadow Dragon—for its own enigmatic reasons—agreed, allowing its followers to swear allegiance to the Dark Lord. Whether such allegiance really means anything coming from such beings is another question, of course. While the Shadow Dragon currently be-

haves as an ally of the Spider Clan, its true motivations are unknown and probably unknowable.

In the meantime, the Goju serve the Spider as shinobi, much like the Shosuro in the Scorpion Clan. While many of the other families engage in infiltration training, it is the inhuman Goju who are true masters of the arts of the craft, drawing on the mystical powers of Nothing to accomplish deeds unavailable to mortal beings.

Whether the Goju would have a role in a more public or Imperially accepted version of the Spider Clan is as yet unknown.

The Kokujin "Family"

The Kokujin were an order founded by the mad dragon monk Hitomi Kokujin, a victim of Enlightened Madness. Much of his story is told in Chapter Three (page 96-98). After his checkered career within the Dragon Clan came to an end, Kokujin stole Togashi's daisho and fled into the Shadowlands. He first crossed Daigotsu's path while the Dark Lord was building the City of the Lost. The mad monk showed great interest in the enhanced goblins of Daigotsu's follower Omoni (the so-called "Sculptor of Flesh") and began tattooing them with his own blood. He also tattooed many corrupted and Lost humans, as well as the occasional captured victim. His Shadowlands gifts caused these tattooed persons to become subservient to his will, and he began bestowing his own name upon them to create a "family."

Although Kokujin eventually allied himself with Daigotsu, he was never a very reliable vassal and frequently left the Shadowlands to embark on his own bizarre personal plots. This eventually led to his death when he fomented a peasant rebellion in Scorpion lands. Kokujin perished at the hands of Bayushi Shinzo.

Kokujin's order of tattooed monks worked as part of the Spider Clan after it was formed, functioning as a twisted reflection of the tattooed orders within the Dragon. The Tainted tattoos granted to them by their leader gave them significant power. However, after the mad monk's death his followers fell into disarray. Rather than trying to hold them together when their only binding force was the blood of a dead madman, Daigotsu allowed them to dissipate and instead encouraged the formation of new monastic orders within the Spider. A few members of the disintegrating order did stay loyal to Daigotsu, notably Kokujin Konetsu, who rose to a position of some importance within the Spider Clan.

The Order of the Spider

The corrupt monastic order known as the Order of the Spider was founded by a Lost sohei, Roshungi. He was originally a Bloodspeaker cultist but fell to the Taint and devoted himself to the service of Fu Leng. When Daigotsu built the Temple of the Ninth Kami in his City of the Lost to promote the worship of the Dark Kami, Roshungi immediately journeyed there and pledged his loyalty to both Daigotsu and the temple. Roshungi kept his distance from Kokujin, who was prominent among Daigotsu's followers at the time; he did not approve of the former Dragon's methods or goals and felt the only true path was the direct worship of Fu Leng.

When Daigotsu decided to form the Spider Clan to infiltrate the Empire, he dispatched Roshungi and his disciples to form the Order of the Spider and spread the ways of Shourido among the monastic orders and the common people. Roshungi himself was sent to a small shrine in the village of Nikesake, maintaining a low profile while recruiting new members to the Order.

The monks of the Order of the Spider are outwardly as austere, self-disciplined, and mentally balanced as any of the Brotherhood, but this is misleading. They behave this way so as not to let any outside distractions interfere with their devotion to Fu Leng. They have no concerns about spiritual or moral purity, and gladly lower themselves to any act of depravity as long

as they see it as a way to better serve their Kami. Their techniques and training focus on strength and violence, making them a dangerous threat whenever their true nature is exposed.

Roshungi continued as teacher and leader of the Order until the Spider Clan was forced to flee its headquarters at Black Silk Castle and burn the Shinomen Forest. Roshungi knew the symbolic value of the act was very large and dedicated the destruction of the forest to Fu Leng. He also knew the bulk of the clan would have to escape if Daigotsu's plans were to have any hope of future success. Accordingly, he fought in the rear guard to delay pursuit, and perished fighting the Lion who tried to intercept the main Spider force. His primary disciple, Michio, assumed leadership over the Order of the Spider.

The Order of Venom

Unlike the Order of the Spider, the Order of Venom actually predates the creation of the Spider Clan itself. It began its existence as an aberrant sect within the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The sect was focused almost exclusively on martial teachings, to a greater degree than any other sect within the Brotherhood—even the followers of Osano-Wo.

Over time, the sect's focus on fighting became more important than any other teachings or studies, including those of Shinsei. It had become a False Path, forsaking the quest for enlightenment in favor of its own obsessive pursuits. The monks began deliberately looking for opportunities to use their skills, wandering Rokugan and seeking out bandits or similar foes. Soon they began finding trouble where little trouble existed. They refused to let any incident resolve without violence, even if there were better ways to resolve the situation, until they were lashing out against anyone they could no matter how slight the provocation.

The final straw came when a group of monks from the Order of Venom defended a village against a group of bandits... and then killed the village headman and several other inhabitants for the 'crime' of not defending the village properly. The other orders of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, already concerned over the Order of Venom's zealous devotion to violence, intervened and officially dismantled the sect. The monks of Venom were offered the chance to pledge themselves to another order within the Brotherhood, but very few did. Instead they continued to follow the leader of their corrupted sect, a monk named Tansen.

Tansen was a monk who had pledged himself to the Order of Venom at a very young age and rose through the ranks due to his dedication and single-minded nature. Consumed by the Order's corrupted creed of strength, he was determined to continue on the same path but knew this would difficult on their own. The Brotherhood would denounce them as outlaws and the Empire would likely follow. Then Tansen heard about the mysterious new Spider Clan.

The Order of Venom had actually been conducting similar activities to the Spider Clan: striking at bandits and other threatening individuals, but with no concern for Bushido or for magistrates who might disagree with their tactics. Daigotsu initially regarded the Order as a dangerous problem, since its activities might draw unwanted attention to the efforts of the Spider, but after meeting Tansen in person he realized this was a man he could use. Daigotsu offered the Order of Venom a home to continue their training and study, and Tansen quickly agreed. Under the Spider, the Order of Venom continues to train to be the best combatants possible. The fallen monks are not Tainted, not yet, but their embrace of strength accords well with the path of Shourido and they are happy to use their skills as Daigotsu directs them. As long as he does not interfere with their desire to commit violence, he will have their unswerving loyalty.

"Heroes" of the Spider Clan

In the chapters of this book dealing with the eight Great Clans, each clan has a broad selection of heroes from many different eras of Rokugan's history. The Spider, however, have not existed for very long in the official L5R timeline; thus the notable personalities here are more "current" (assuming your game adheres to the canon L5R storyline). However, if you are telling your own story (and more power to you, we say), feel free to file the serial numbers off of these NPCs and use them to represent other Shadowlands archetypes. Also, it should be noted there are more options for such villainous characters in the Bloodspeaker and Lost chapters of the L5R RPG 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire*.

Daigotsu

The Dark Lord of the Shadowlands

If the quality of a samurai is judged by the threat posed by his enemies, the samurai of the modern (twelfth-century) Empire are among the highest-quality in its history. The Empire has seldom faced a threat as severe as Daigotsu, the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands. Born of the Hantei line and subverted by the Bloodspeaker cult, Daigotsu possesses unique vision and strength of will, forging first the City of the Lost from the chaos of the Shadowlands and later building the Spider Clan to infiltrate the Empire. He has inflicted more suffering and chaos on the Emerald Empire than any other mortal man who has ever lived, save perhaps the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban, and there are some who would debate even that. Some might even argue that Daigotsu has inflicted more damage than his god, Fu Leng himself.

Daigotsu's origins are unique. The pregnant Empress was kidnapped by the Bloodspeaker Cult, and she gave birth while in captivity. Somehow the cult bound a name-

less oni to the boy and banished him to the Realm of Evil, preventing the Empire from scrying his location. There, however, he came to the attention of Fu Leng. The cult's plot thus ended in disaster, for instead of serving their will Daigotsu became (and has ever remained) the most devoted and loyal follower of Fu Leng to ever live. Since his return from Jigoku to the mortal world he has worked eagerly to conquer it for his beloved master.

Daigotsu has overcome innumerable disasters and defeats during his reign, emerging from each one stronger than before. Unlike most of the Lost, he is a cultured and articulate man, far from what most of his enemies imagine. He seems to possess more free will than most of the Lost and even to exhibit normal human emotions—such as his powerful love for his wife and son. He intends at all costs to see his son upon the throne of Rokugan, ruling over the Empire in the name of Fu Leng. He will kill whoever he must and sacrifice whatever is needed to make this dream a reality.

Daigotsu, the Dark Lord

Air: 5 Earth: 6 Fire: 6 Water: 5 Void: 4
Awareness: 7 Stamina: 8

Honor: 1.8 *Status: 0.0 (10.0 among the Lost)* *Glory: 0.0 (10.0 among the Lost)*
Shadowlands Taint: 5.5

School/Rank: Bloodspeaker Technique (Insight Rank 9)

Skills: Battle 6, Calligraphy 4, Courtier (Manipulation, Rhetoric) 5, Defense 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation) 4, Horsemanship 4, Hunting (Tracking) 4, Investigation (Interrogation) 6, Kenjutsu 5, Knives 4, Lore: Shadowlands 8, Lore: Spirit Realms 6, Lore: Theology 6, Meditation 5, Spellcraft (Maho) 8, Stealth (Spell Casting) 6

Spells and Spellcasting: Daigotsu is one of the most powerful shugenja the Empire has ever known, rivaled only by individuals such as the late Toturi Sezaru and the Grand Master of the Elements. In addition to the maho powers expressed by his Mastery of Darkness ability, he also has essentially unlimited access to any elemental spells save those that are clan secrets, casting them as a Rank 9 shugenja with no affinity or deficiency. He also has access to most of the secret Bloodspeaker Cult spells.

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Dangerous Beauty, Great Destiny, Leadership

Disadvantages: Sworn Enemies (numerous)

Special Abilities: In mechanical terms, Daigotsu is an akutenshi (see Enemies of the Empire, page 62) with the powers of Claim the Body and Mastery of Darkness. He also has the following unique abilities:

- *Oni Vision: Daigotsu may view the location of any oni he has seen before as a Free Action. If he is located outside the Shadowlands, he must first make a Perception Trait Roll (TN 30) to succeed or be unable to view that oni again for one day.*
- *Oni Heritage: Any mechanical effects that specifically target oni may also affect Daigotsu.*

Michio

Master of the Order of the Spider

The man called Michio is an enigma to all who know him. Uniquely among Daigotsu's vassals he does not call the Dark Lord his master, and he is not required to pay homage to Fu Leng as the other Spider are. Daigotsu knows Michio would refuse such commands, which would cost him a powerful vassal. Further, he has faith Michio will see the truth of Fu Leng's majesty in time and will come to worship on his own.

Of Michio's past it is known only that he was first among Roshungi's students when the Order of the Spider was founded, and succeeded his master when the old monk fell in battle on the Spider's behalf.

Michio was found on the steps of a Brotherhood monastery mere hours after birth. There was a note affixed, reading, "Raise my son well, for he is of noble birth. Knowledge of his lineage would doom him forever." The monks chose never to pursue the matter, raising him to serve in their sect, the Order of Thunder. They were harsh masters and Michio never knew affection or fondness. As he matured, Michio looked at the Fortune of Fire and Thunder and wondered why he deserved such adulation when all he ever did was visit his wrath on the mortal realm. Michio considered the Thunderer unworthy of his adoration and vowed to seek out a cause worthy of his gifts.

It was in the Shadowlands that Michio found true power. He traveled there to study the secrets and truths his order would never allow. There he found men and women who were allowed to seize power only so long as they could maintain it. The idea that only those worthy of power could keep it appealed to Michio a great deal. He returned to the Empire with this ideal and met Roshungi, whose philosophies meshed nicely with his own views. The Order of the Spider became Michio's new home.

Michio is one of the Empire's most deadly unarmed combatants, although virtually no one outside the Spider knows of his existence. He is utterly ruthless and tolerates no weakness or failure among his comrades. He is not without a curious sense of honor, however; to Daigotsu this is merely one more reason to find him valuable.

Michio, Master of the Order of the Spider

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 4 Void: 4

Reflexes: 6 Stamina: 6 Agility: 5

Honor: 4.1 *Status: 1.0* *Glory: 3.3*

Shadowlands Taint: 0.0

School/Rank: Order of the Spider Monk 3 / Dark Paragon 3

Skills: Athletics 6, Heavy Weapons 3, Hunting (Tracking) 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation (Notice) 4, Jiujutsu 7, Knives 5, Lore: Theology 6, Meditation 4, Polearms (Bisento) 5, Spears 4, Stealth 5

Kiho: Air Fist, The Great Silence, Stain Upon the Soul, Earthen Fist, Embrace the Stone, Way of the Earth, Breaking Blow, Dance of the Flames, Flame Fist, Freezing the Lifeblood, Slap the Wave, Death Touch

Advantages: Dark Paragon (Strength), Great Potential (Jiujutsu), Hands of Stone

Disadvantages: Sworn Enemies (Dragon tattooed order)

Suzume Sahara

Misguided Idealist

Suzume Sahara, formerly known as Daigotsu Sahara and before that simply Sahara, is a uniquely conflicted individual. Not long ago he was a hopelessly idealistic young man, a ronin with dreams of serving the Great Clans as a glorious

samurai warrior. His claims of samurai heritage are impossible to verify but similarly impossible to disprove, meaning he walked a razor's edge between offense and acceptance. He had only just come to appreciate the impossibility of his dream when he first met the Spider Clan.

The Spider were all Sahara had dreamed. They accepted any who could prove themselves worthy. They cared about deeds, not lineage... about action, not protocol. He joined their self-titled clan with great relish and immediately began training in their dojo to join the fight against bandits and other threats that plagued the Empire. By the time he learned the truth, it was too late to escape; besides, he had already sworn his oath of fealty.

Sahara finds himself in a terrible position. The Spider are everything he hates, but he has sworn to serve them and in his eyes breaking that oath will make him just as terrible as they are. The Spider have maneuvered him into a position in the Sparrow Clan, which they have extensively subverted, and he has sworn another oath to the Sparrow. He struggles to fulfill both without betraying either, but in his heart he knows this will inevitably prove impossible. His recent elevation to the position of Emerald Magistrate has added yet another layer of conflicted loyalty to his life, and he is beginning to despair.

Suzume Sahara, Misguided Idealist

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3

Reflexes: 4 Agility: 4

Honor: 5.7 *Status: 3.3* *Glory: 3.8*

Shadowlands Taint: 0.0

School/Rank: Daigotsu Bushi 2 / Suzume Bushi 1

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 4, Intimidation 1, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: History 2, Lore: Shadowlands 1, Lore: Theology 2, Perform: Storytelling 2

Kata: Striking as Fire, Striking as Void

Advantages: Allies (Spider Clan), Multiple Schools, Social Position (Emerald Magistrate)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Spider Clan), Idealistic

Chuda Ruri

The Seer of Blood

Chuda Ruri is a mystery even to herself. She was once Soshi Ruri, but the lure of power and immortality led her—almost on a whim—to betray her oaths and join the Spider Clan. She was accepted and even welcomed among the Chuda, and there she found her many talents put to good use on behalf of her new masters. She recognized right away that while they coveted her secrets and desired her beauty, they did not trust her. However, this caused her no difficulty, for in her eyes they were wise not to trust her. She had already betrayed one master, after all. Nevertheless, her talents for divination and scrying quickly made her indispensable to the Spider and brought her more power and prestige within the Spider, much to her relish.

In recent years the Kali-Ma Invasion has required Ruri to undertake one of the more dangerous assignments in the entire Spider Clan. Masquerading as a ronin, she seduced and married an officer in the Crab military, hoping to gain information about the Great Clans' war effort against the armies of Kali-Ma's gaijin demons, the Destroyers. It is a dangerous duty, but one she has greatly enjoyed. However, she has also begun to develop a certain genuine affection for her husband, perhaps the first man she has ever known to treat her with true respect and affection without any ulterior motives.

Chuda Ruri, the Seer of Blood

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 2 Water: 2 Void: 3

Awareness: 4 Intelligence: 4 Perception: 4

Honor: 1.8 *Status: 2.2* *Glory: 3.1*

Shadowlands Taint: 2.8

School/Rank: Chuda Shugenja 3

Skills: Acting 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 4, Divination 4, Hunting 2, Knives 4, Lore: Maho 5, Lore: Shadowlands 6, Spellcraft 5, Stealth (Spell Casting) 4

Spells: Ruri has access to any maho spells she might need, and also has an array of elemental spell scrolls to reflect her current role as a ronin shugenja married to a Crab.

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Blissful Betrothal, Dangerous Beauty

Disadvantages: Consumed by Knowledge, True Love

Goju Asagi

The Shadow of Death

GMs who wish to use the rules presented at the end of this chapter for more individualistic Goju characters may employ Goju Asagi as a model of such character types. He has very little personality of his own remaining and scarcely remembers who or what he was before he was blessed by the Shadow Dragon and sent into the service of the Spider Clan. What does remain is a certain arrogance and hubris regarding his own abilities and a perverse enjoyment in their execution. His bloodlust is so extreme that it sometimes puts off even the more jaded and unpleasant of the Daigotsu and Chuda.

Goju Asagi, the Shadow of Death

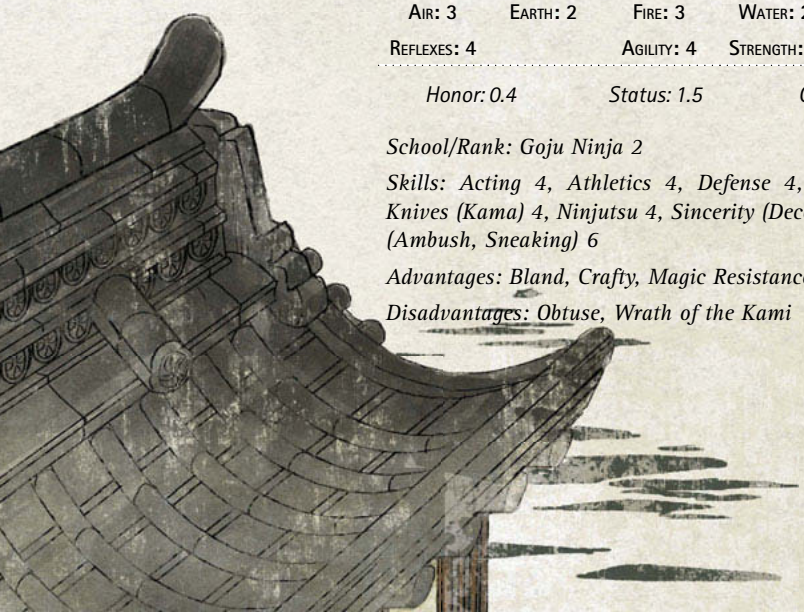
Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 2
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 4	Strength: 3	
Honor: 0.4		*Status: 1.5*		*Glory: 1.1*

School/Rank: Goju Ninja 2

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 4, Defense 4, Kenjutsu 3, Knives (Kama) 4, Ninjutsu 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Stealth (Ambush, Sneaking) 6

Advantages: Bland, Crafty, Magic Resistance (4 points)

Disadvantages: Obtuse, Wrath of the Kami



Lands of the Spider Clan

The major strongholds of the Shadowlands are described in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook, pages 354-356. The following section describes several specifically Spider Clan holdings which were left out of that tome.

Black Silk Castle

After the establishment of the Spider Clan, Daigotsu decided the City of the Lost was too remote to effectively control his operations inside Rokugan. The Spider needed a base which could readily stage incursions within the Empire, whether for infiltration or acting against various bandit groups. Bakemono and other denizens of the Shadowlands worked day and night under the orders of a Lost Kaiu engineer to build Black Silk Castle deep within the Shinomen Forest. Magically hidden from casual observers and camouflaged by the heavy forest, Black Silk Castle became an ideal base.

As its name implies, everything used to construct the castle is of the deepest black: black stone, obsidian, black-stained wood, and so forth. All interior appointments, such as furniture and decoration, are also black, creating a very unnerving effect to outside observers. The castle includes a set of well-appointed quarters for Daigotsu and his family, as well as a luxurious section for notable visitors (though there are few). The rest of the castle interior is sparse, since those who followed Daigotsu feel little need for comforts. Some residents choose to decorate their quarters to their own preference, but the overall tendency is toward practicality, not style or comfort.

Black Silk Castle and much of the forest around it was gutted by fire at Daigotsu's orders when Iweko I ordered the purge of the Tainted Spider.

The Ruins of Otosan Uchi

Otosan Uchi was the capital of Rokugan for over 1100 years, home to the Imperial families and over 20,000 inhabitants. During the Four Winds era, however, Daigotsu staged an invasion of Otosan Uchi and much of the city was severely damaged or destroyed outright. Subsequently, the Bloodspeaker Cult used the ruined city as a base and even briefly summoned a terrible stronghold called the Iron Citadel within its borders. After the defeat of the Bloodspeakers, Lion Champion Matsu Nimuro ordered the city fully destroyed, leaving only a wasteland of ruins and devastation. Since then it has been used as a home or base for many different groups, both benign and malignant.

The Yotsu ronin family has lived in the city since well before its destruction, acting as its defenders under the

charter granted by Emperor Hantei XXXVIII. They do their best to protect others who call the city home, but since the ruination of the city it has been plagued with dark forces beyond their capability to eliminate.

After the defeat of the Lying Darkness, the Shadow-corrupted Ninube family made the city their home for many years. Eventually Asahina Sekawa, the Jade Champion, discovered their existence and led an assault that largely destroyed them.

After the Spider Clan was formed, it began secretly utilizing the ruins of the city as a base. Spider assassins are trained in hidden underground dojo within the city, and when Daigotsu unleashed the series of assassinations across Rokugan in 1170, Otosan Uchi was the primary staging area for the operation. Thus far the Spider lair within the city has remained secret from the Yotsu and the rest of the Empire.

Temple of the Forsaken

The Temple of the Forsaken lies within the Shadowlands, on the outskirts of the City of the Lost. The Temple is not located within the city, and in fact predates it. The Lost samurai from the Battle at Oblivion's Gate built it as they struggled to live in the Shadowlands in a way that was familiar to them. It is a massive dojo, a place where Lost samurai train in the brutal techniques they have developed to take advantage of their Tainted strength. The head sensei of the Temple holds his position by strength, and any other member of the Lost can challenge for the post. Naturally, all such challenges are to the death.

The Temple is not hidden or magically protected from the creatures of the Shadowlands, and the Lost samurai who train there must often defend it against random assaults by beasts, undead, or oni. No effort is made to change this, since such fighting is considered good training.

The Temple's prominence diminishes after the formation of the Spider Clan, as many Lost samurai begin training at Black Silk Castle instead. However, those trained at the Temple retain a certain prestige within the ranks of the Spider due to the legendary cruelty and ferocity of the Temple's most famous sensei, Mirumoto Taki. Some Lost samurai will even voluntarily go to the Temple in order to be able to boast of surviving Taki's training.

The Fanged Temple

When the Order of Venom left the Brotherhood of Shinsei, Daigotsu arranged for them to be able to build a new dojo in the wreckage of an abandoned temple in the northern lands of the Phoenix. The monks called the harsh, jagged rock outcroppings surrounding their new home the Fangs. Thus was born the Fanged Temple, and the Order of Venom had a home once more.

The monks of the Order see their home as little more than a convenient place to gather and train, so it is only roughly maintained. Any who might stumble upon it would be forgiven for thinking it was an abandoned ruin. The harsh life within it fits the Order's desires and philosophies; every challenge is considered a battle, and battle is what they crave.

The monks of the Order will sometimes use their proximity to the Yobanjin lands to find targets for their training, kidnapping Yobanjin peasants and forcing them into the role of sparring partners. The life of such prisoners is generally short and painful. During the War of Dark Fire, the Order of Venom fights the Army of Dark Fire in secret, protecting their home (which was dangerously close to the gaijin army's invasion routes) and reveling in the war's many opportunities for inflicting pain and death. Numerous monks died in the war, but not so many as the Yobanjin they killed.

Daigotsu's Ideals and the Spider: The Dark Mirror

"I am the future of the Empire."

– Daigotsu

The goals of the Dark Lord Daigotsu and his strategies to achieve those goals have changed over time. The only thing that has remained consistent is his commitment to the Dark Kami, Fu Leng. Even when Daigotsu's behavior seems self-serving, it still ultimately supports his grander ambition of raising Fu Leng to rule over the Heavens and the mortal realm. In this respect Daigotsu is very much like the samurai he opposes, who venerate the founding Kami of their clans. Indeed, the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands is fond of saying his worship of Fu Leng is just as pious as the worship of Akodo, Hida, or any other Kami. He claims it is a great injustice that Fu Leng's name is not revered alongside his brothers and sisters. Of course, Daigotsu is also Lost, his soul merged with an unnamed oni, so his claims cannot be regarded as altogether true or sane.

When Daigotsu founded and organized the City of the Lost, he deliberately sought to make a perverse copy of Rokugan's samurai society. His goal was to create his own Empire, dedicated to the worship of Fu Leng and completely under his rule, while crushing the real Rokugan out of existence. The Empire's dark mirror would destroy and replace the original, or so he believed.

The City of the Lost was structured very much like Rokugan, but twisted in all manner of ways—not only the cruelties and sadisms intrinsic to those controlled by the Taint, but also through the replacement of Bushido with a perverse competing ideology, Shourido. It was a city ruled by strength and power. Weakness was never tolerated and to exhibit such was often considered a crime worthy of summary execution, much as if an ashigaru dared to insult a samurai in Rokugan. It was an 'Empire' ruled by might and fear. Although the Lost's society did not value loyalty, Daigotsu's power and the influence of Shourido imposed a sort of order, and the Dark Lord's rule went unchallenged... for the most part. When Iuchiban returned from imprisonment and proved himself stronger than Daigotsu, the City of the Lost bowed before the Bloodspeaker without hesitation. The loyalty of the Lost was only as strong as the chains that bound it.

This principle of rule through strength and power applied to all levels of the society within the City of the Lost. Leadership of the Lost army's legions and the smaller military units within them was dictated by who was strong enough to hold their position from any who would challenge for it. Even the sensei who trained the Lost samurai in their dojo could be overturned by a more powerful student.

Still, in certain basic ways life in the City of the Lost truly was a mirror to life in Rokugan. It operated on the same system of caste and rank, albeit enforced only with violence rather than by tradition. And the Code of Shourido reflected the dark desires found in the hearts of all too many Rokugani samurai.

After the birth of his son Kanpeki, however, Daigotsu began to change his goals. His attempts to destroy Rokugan and replace it with his own dark realm had all met with ultimate failure, and even Fu Leng's assault on the Heavens during the time of the Four Winds had come to naught. What sort of legacy was he bequeathing to his heir? Continuing to create an Empire that was a dark reflection of Rokugan would leave Kanpeki ruling only that, while the true Rokugan continued to withhold the respect due to Fu Leng—and ultimately to both Daigotsu and Kanpeki as well.

The Dark Lord knew there were only two ways Kanpeki could ever sit on the throne of Rokugan: conquest or assimilation. Every attempt at conquest had failed; even when bitterly divided against each other the various clans of the Empire always managed to set aside their enmity and band together to defeat the greater threat. Thus Daigotsu concluded assimilation was the only way to truly achieve his goals.

Initially, he actually tried claiming Great Clan status directly, even going so far as to send one of his Lost samurai, Daigotsu Soetsu, to demand such status from the Emperor. Unsurprisingly, this was rejected, and the Dark Lord concluded he would have to take a more subtle approach. Abandoning the City of the Lost, he chose instead to carry the concept of a dark mirror further and create a clan of his own, a clan that was a perverse reflection of the structure, ethics, and ideals of Rokugan's Great Clans. Thus was the Spider Clan born.

In his desire to create a clan that would function in much the same way as any of Rokugan's true Great Clans, Daigotsu copied traditional structures such as families and daimyo. Many Lost samurai had already taken the name Daigotsu, but now the Dark Lord formalized the process and began treating them like an actual samurai family ruled directly by him, even creating gempukku ceremonies and oaths of loyalty. He incorporated the resurrected Chuda family into the new clan and sought to do the same with the Goju (though whether their oaths meant anything was for the Shadow Dragon to decide). He even brought monastic orders into the clan in a direct imitation of clans like the Dragon and Phoenix.

Even more so than with Daigotsu's earlier rival 'Empire' in the Shadowlands, the Spider Clan bears striking similarity to the Rokugani clans which supplied its model. Much like other samurai, members of the Spider Clan follow the orders of their family daimyo or the head of their monastic order. They wear family and clan mons, carry the daisho, and even study the ways of court, art, and iaijutsu. Of course, all such pursuits are filtered through the perverse code of Shourido and the dark influence of the Taint that afflicts most Spider samurai.

Spider Infiltration Strategy

"I have heard of your problem. What can I do to help?"

– Suzume (Chuda) Chiaki

In a certain sense, the Spider Clan is not really a clan at all. It is a myth constructed by the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands as a means of ultimately achieving what he could not attain through war: the throne of Rokugan, if not for him than for his son Kanpeki. By cloaking themselves in the mantle of a clan and behaving as clans do, the Spider seek to gain some measure of acceptance within the Empire. They believe it is only a matter of time before they are awarded their rightful place at the head of Rokugan.

The initial goal of the Spider Clan's campaign of infiltration was to locate individuals within the Great Clans of questionable honor. The Spider provided them with whatever they needed, creating a network of allies and influence agents. This, in turn, allowed the Spider to work their own covert agents into place within the clans of Rokugan—often targeting Minor Clans whose small size made it easier to subvert them by controlling just a few key positions.

At the same time, the Spider set out to establish themselves within the Empire by playing the role of a ronin band seeking elevation to clan status. Like many such ronin groups in the past, they made a point of posing as protectors of the common people, stepping in to save villagers, fight bandits, and otherwise act as honorable samurai. Such methods inevitably met with considerable success. When a village is saved from bandit attacks, the peasants are not terribly concerned with the brutal fighting methods of their saviors or the peculiar origins of the mon that appears on their armor. Moreover, this method allowed the Spider to actively recruit idealistic and ambitious ronin into their ranks—a very useful strategy since these ronin were not Tainted and thus could serve as "front men" when dealing with the rest of Rokugan.

Once they had allies in place and a reasonable amount of influence and popular acclaim, the Spider sought alliances with the Great Clans of Rokugan. This was a delicate process but ultimately gained a fair amount of success with the Unicorn Clan, which was glad of any help during its war with the Lion. Although the Unicorn were uncertain of this mysterious self-titled Spider Clan's nature, the Spider's reputation as defenders of the common man won them some degree of legitimacy, and their subsequent exploitation of their own assassination plot greatly strengthened the connection.

The climactic element of Daigotsu's plan for the Spider was to use their successful infiltration of the Empire to unleash a wave of assassinations all across the Empire, violently destabilizing the Great Clans. Daigotsu's plan here was very ambitious, hoping to bring death to every Clan Champion, family daimyo, general, and master courtier in every clan. No one with the ability to lead would be spared, and while the Dark Lord knew not all the targets would fall, he expected to kill enough of them that the clans as whole would succumb to chaos and confusion. They would turn on each other, leading to large-scale war and opening the door for the Spider Clan to step in and claim its position unresisted.

As it turned out, although Daigotsu's schemes met with considerable success, they did not culminate in the victory he sought. The great wave of assassinations killed only a fraction of its targets, partly because the Spider Clan's covert infiltration had not proceeded as far as hoped, partly because the Scorpion and Dragon Clans had become aware of Spider activity, and partly through the simple intervention of chance. Fortunately, the Spider made sure there was nothing on the killers to connect them to their origins. And while the Empire did not plunge into the irredeemable chaos which the Dark Lord hoped for, the assassinations did succeed in strengthening the Spider alliance with the Unicorn and opening many gaps in clan power structures that could be filled by Spider infiltrators.

What ultimately wrecked the Spider Clan's ambitions, however, was not a failure of Daigotsu's plans but rather something he could never have anticipated: the ascension of the divinely mandated Empress Iweko. The favor of the Heavens revealed the Spider's machinations to Iweko and she ordered all of their Tainted members hunted down and killed. However, she did show compassion for those un-Tainted samurai who had joined the Spider Clan in good faith, and allowed them the chance to prove themselves as worthy of being a clan in the Empire. Thus, while the Spider Clan may yet attain Imperial recognition, the form in which it does so may wind up being quite different from the 'dark mirror' Daigotsu created. What the Dark Lord and his Lost followers would do then can only be guessed.

Hiding in Plain Sight

When Daigotsu formed the Spider Clan and moved his base to the Shinomen Forest, his followers gained the ability to strike and spy from inside the borders of the Empire, bypassing the many defenses intended to keep all Tainted threats confined to the Shadowlands. However, this new infiltration strategy also made the Spider vulnerable in ways the Shadowlands was not. If the samurai of the Empire were to discover the Spider Clan's true nature and location, they would quickly and easily hunt them down and exterminate them. This meant the Spider Clan had to carry out its mission while remaining physically hidden and concealing its Tainted nature—both from new recruits and from the rest of Rokugan.

The Spider Clan was still composed primarily of the Lost, and could call on the services of monstrous thralls such as bakemono, undead, and even demonic oni. But these weapons were too overt for the clan's goals and thus could only be used in the direst emergencies. For that matter, many of the Lost themselves were too grotesque and monstrous to move freely through Rokugan. Instead it was the non-Tainted or lightly Tainted members of the clan, and those of the Lost who could hide their taint through various methods, who were tasked to move amongst the clans and infiltrate their counsels.

At their peak the Spider had at least one spy in position to watch the activities of each of the Great Clans, and even after Empress Iweko's purge many of these agents remained in place. In some cases the Spider were able to infiltrate the clan directly, but more often they placed theirs agent somewhere nearby, preferably in the ranks of a trusted Minor Clan.

A good example of this is the Dragon Clan. Daigotsu knew the Dragon had many ways to ferret out infiltrators, including an artifact called the Jade Mirror. He considered it too great a risk to try to place an operative directly within the clan. Instead, he sent a trusted disciple to a place among the Dragonfly. From that vantage point he used the Dragonfly Clan's role as gate-keepers for the Dragon to monitor the larger clan.

A more sophisticated infiltration took place with the Sparrow Clan, whose close relationship to the Crane made them an ideal target. Spider minions ambushed a pair of Sparrow samurai, slaying one and performing a ritual to turn the other—a young woman named Suzume Chiaki—into a creature called a *rokurokubi*. The new entity retained her appearance and memories but was truly a demon. She secretly joined the Chuda family while infiltrating the Sparrow. Over time Chiaki rose to a position of influence among the Sparrow, becoming a trusted member of the small clan. The Sparrow daimyo of the time had no interest in courtly matters and soon was leaving almost all aspects of diplomacy to Chiaki. She used this influence to help the Spider plant many other infiltrators within the Sparrow, making the clan into a Spider strongpoint in the Empire. Should the daimyo ever discover the truth, the Spider are well-positioned to assassinate him and arrange a more amenable replacement.

In the wake of Iweko's purge, the Spider infiltration efforts became more valuable to the clan than ever. Information gathered by the Spider Clan's agents allowed the clan to survive the worst effects of the Empress' wrath, and knowledge was and remains one of the most powerful weapons available to the Dark Lord.

The Enemy of My Enemy

The Spider Clan is the enemy of the Empire. They are a dark reflection of everything honorable and right in Rokugan and will always be at odds with those who follow Bushido and obey the Celestial Order. Most samurai would far rather face their own deaths than fight at the side of one who follows the path of Shourido.

However, the Spider Clan's efforts to infiltrate the Empire have led to this very thing happening with some regularity. After Daigotsu decided the birthright of his son lay within the Empire, the warriors of the Spider Clan more than once found themselves assigned to the same sort of battles as traditional samurai of Rokugan.

The Rokugani are well acquainted with the concept of an alliance of convenience—indeed it would be fair to describe most alliances between Great Clans as falling into this category. Allying with the forces of Jigoku is another matter entirely. Hida Kisada's infamous alliance with the creatures of the Shadowlands brought great shame on the Crab Clan and led to the sacrifice of his own son, Hida Sukune.

The Spider Clan, however, used its pretense of being a normal band of ronin to engage in all manner of battles alongside normal Rokugani samurai. They battled bandits and other criminal threats on numerous occasions, and fought alongside the Unicorn against the Lion army. Roku-

gani samurai are perfectly willing to fight in alliance with ronin, even ronin with delusions about their proper place in Rokugan. Of course, if the Spider's true nature were ever discovered they would have been immediately attacked; when the Scorpion learned many of the Spider were Tainted, a covert war erupted between the forces of the two clans.

When Empress Iweko learned the true nature of the Spider Clan, she chose not to share the entire revelation with the Empire, but she did outlaw the Spider Clan and proclaim the death of all its Tainted members. Anyone found wearing the mon of the Spider Clan was to be killed on sight. However, subsequent conflicts such as the War of Dark Fire and the Kal-Ma Invasion led to Spider samurai and monks fighting the invading forces, sometimes even in uneasy cooperation with local Rokugani. Daigotsu would not sit by and allow outside forces to threaten the Empire he considered his son's proper birthright.

Villains as PCs? The Spider Clan in Play

The Spider Clan is primarily an oppositional force, a collection of villains for the GM to unleash on the players. However, it is also possible for Spider characters to be played as PCs. This can be problematic for an L5R campaign in a variety of ways, and the GM and players should carefully discuss and consider the issues involved. However, the Spider do have the advantage of being significantly less troublesome as PCs than most of the other villains in Rokugan.

In any role-playing game there is always a certain appeal to the idea of playing the "bad guys." However, the L5R world creates more obstacles to this sort of play than many other RPG settings. The principle forces of evil in Rokugan—the Shadowlands, the Lying Darkness, the Bloodspeaker Cult—are the pawns of monstrously evil inhuman forces. In most cases their agents do not even have free will as we would understand the term. Not only are such characters not very appealing to play, but it is almost impossible to integrate them into a "normal" L5R campaign. The rest of the characters will try to kill them on sight. There are ways to get around this sort of problem—convoluted plots involving infiltrators or shapeshifters—but they are unsatisfactory solutions at best.

Since the Spider Clan is specifically designed to infiltrate the Empire, and many of its recruits are only mildly Tainted or even entirely free of Jigoku's touch, it is much easier to work Spider characters into a campaign without running into the problems inherent to other types of "bad guy" characters. A player can run a Spider who is taking the role of a Mantis or a Sparrow or whichever other clan he or she chooses, as long as it fits in with the GM's views on the Spider's level of infiltration of that given clan. A player can also run a Spider as a ronin, perhaps one who does not even wear the Spider mon. (Of course, playing a ronin includes its own set of difficulties.) Since the Spider are trying very hard to fit into Rokugan's normal society, the characters can pursue the same collective goals as the rest of the party—in fact, the character may not have any special mission from the Spider at all, but simply be an agent-in-place tasked with collecting information and awaiting future orders. The Spider character could still pass on interesting information to the clan and even serve as a plot hook by conveying Spider secrets back to the rest of the PCs.

All this being said, allowing Spider characters is still problematic in a number of ways. PCs who are "villains" are always a temptation for their players to "break the rules" and ignore the conventions and moral precepts of the society around them. Although the Spider are infiltrators and thus supposed to avoid drawing negative attention, this temptation will still be present. Conversely, other players who are aware their fellow character is a Spider will be tempted to "metagame" and try to figure out ways to expose and destroy the Spider PC, even if their characters would have no reason to suspect him of perfidy. And if the Spider is exposed, death is certain to follow, not only derailing the game but also potentially causing bad feelings between the players. Many GMs may consider these risks too great to allow Spider PCs.

More generally, many GMs and players may feel it is simply inappropriate to allow "bad guys" into an L5R campaign at all, even if the Spider Clan makes it possible to do so. L5R is a game about heroic samurai, after all, so allowing a Spider player character into the game has the potential to badly undermine its central themes. (To be sure, a campaign where the characters are *all* Spider Clan can make for a refreshing change of pace.) Ultimately, players should remember the Spider are simply another option for play, not a mandatory inclusion in every L5R game.

The Spider Clan and Timeline Neutrality

The Spider Clan is an extremely timeline-specific faction—it does not come into existence until the Race for the Throne at the end of the Toturi Dynasty, and its survival into the future of the Iweko Dynasty is very much in doubt. For games set outside of that specific era, the Spider Clan does not have any obvious use.

However, there is no absolute reason why the GM need restrict the Spider Clan to its "canon" history. The concept of a false clan infiltrating the Empire on behalf of Fu Leng could easily have been devised in an earlier era by a different akutenshi. A creative GM can depict a Spider Clan founded and created by Moto Tsume, Doji Nashiko, or even Hida Atarasi.

Further, individual elements of the Spider Clan can be excised from the clan and used as villainous organizations in many other eras. The corrupt Chuda might have emerged in almost any era after the Five Nights of Shame. Violent and corrupt monastic orders have plagued the Empire more than once, and the GM can use the Order of the Spider or the Order of Venom to depict them. The possibilities are endless.

The Spider Clan and the Forces of the Nothing

The alliance of the Spider Clan and the minions of the cosmic force known simply as the Nothing is essentially one of convenience. The Nothing and its various avatars (such as the Shadow Dragon during the Spider era) truly serve no force but themselves and the Nothing's mindless primal drive to unmake creation. The Shadow Dragon, however, finds it extremely advantageous to ally with the Spider in order to accomplish its goals, and for that reason its Goju minions are found almost exclusively among the Spider's ranks. The Ninube are somewhat more diverse in their endeavors, but no less bound by the Nothing's wishes—regardless of what they may imagine.

The new mechanics in this chapter include rules for Goju and Ninube Schools, allowing players to create "standard" PCs who are minions of the Nothing. This is a convenient and straightforward way to implement such characters in a campaign, since it essentially follows the same mechanical design as any other Schools. However, approaching the Goju and Ninube in this way also dilutes the essential horror of the Nothing as presented in Chapter Seven of *Enemies of the Empire*.

The Nothing is distinct from other enemies of Rokugan. It does not seek power, wealth, resources, or territory—the usual motivations for conquest. The Nothing is an existential enemy which seeks only the unmaking of creation itself. The Shadow mechanics presented in *Enemies of the Empire* reflect this, ensuring any person who binds himself to the Nothing will eventually be stripped of all identity and absorbed into it. This is the price of dealing with the Nothing: in exchange for great power comes inexorable oblivion. Using a stable path of conventional School progression negates this effect, dramatically reducing the impact of the Nothing in the game.

The Shadow Dragon

The Shadow Dragon is an amalgam of an Elemental Dragon (the former Dragon of Air), the last remnant of the Nothing, and the Taint of Jigoku. It seems to retain a large amount of free will, albeit driven entirely by evil and malign goals, and its actions are enigmatic and often inexplicable. Why it chose to ally with the Spider is unknown; it may have nefarious purposes of its own which it believes are suited by advancing the cause of the Spider Clan.

However, the Shadow Dragon remains first and foremost an avatar of the Nothing and every action it takes is slanted, directly or indirectly, toward the eventual destruction of creation. The Dragon itself may not realize this, since its nature as a former Celestial being makes it very resistant to being totally consumed by Nothing. The process of corruption is far slower than would be the case with a mortal being, so slow that it may take centuries. However, it is also unstoppable and remorseless. Someday, the Nothing will prevail and consume the Shadow Dragon completely.

Accordingly, any campaign set during or prior to the War Against the Darkness should use the Shadow mechanics from *Enemies of the Empire* to depict the forces of the Lying Darkness. Goju and Ninube NPCs should be represented by the Shadowspawn mechanics in that book or the "Shadow Mystic" presented below. Playable human characters are represented by applying the effects of Shadow Ranks onto a pre-existing "normal" character from Rokugan; if their Shadow corruption has advanced far enough (at least three Shadow Ranks), they can acquire the Goju or Ninube name in place of their own family name. In general, Goju will tend to include characters who are bushi, monks, or shinobi, while Ninube will tend to include courtiers and shugenja. However, the delineation is not exact and both Goju shugenja and Ninube bushi exist.

Goju and Ninube in the Spider Clan

After the rise of the Shadow Dragon in the wake of the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Goju and Ninube appear to take on a somewhat different and more 'stable' nature. Some Goju even ally themselves with the Spider Clan and appear to work toward furthering that Clan's interests in Rokugan. GMs who wish to represent this by making playable Goju and Ninube characters under the standard L5R rules may do so with the new mechanics introduced later in this chapter.

When using the schools presented later in this chapter, the GM should ignore the rules and mechanics for Shadow Ranks from Chapter Seven of *Enemies of the Empire*—combining these abilities with the School Techniques will make these characters too powerful. That being said, Goju and Ninube characters are still agents of the Shadow and may be able to offer the temptation of Shadow Ranks to other characters as part of the Nothing's ongoing efforts at corruption.

GMs who prefer to continue using the 'classic' Shadow rules presented in *Enemies of the Empire* may represent a Goju character in the era of the Shadow Dragon in the same way as before: create a normal human character and then apply the Shadow Rank rules and mechanics from Chapter Seven of *Enemies*. In recognition of the impact of the Shadow Dragon, Goju characters created after its rise could be granted a slower progression of Shadow contamination, such as by using the optional graduated Shadow Ranks rule and increasing the number of Shadow Points at each Rank.

Since the Ninube believe themselves to be distanced from the Shadow Dragon, Ninube characters should adhere to a faster progression using fewer Shadow Points per Shadow Rank, or even ignoring Points and using only whole Shadow Ranks. In either case, the mounting sense of disquiet that results as the character becomes increasingly powerful but draws ever closer to oblivion remains the same, true to the cosmic horror that underlies the concept of the Nothing in any campaign.

New Creature: The Shadow Mystic

The Ninube are traditionally depicted as being of a more 'magical' nature than the Goju and have even sometimes been portrayed as using spells. To assist GMs with including such foes in a campaign dealing with the Shadow, a typical such creature is presented here. It follows the same basic model and rules as the Shadowspawn described in *Enemies of the Empire*, but with additional capabilities of its own.

Fortunately for the Empire, Shadow Mystics are relatively rare. They are physically almost as powerful as a Lesser Shadowspawn, but are also able to cast spells in a manner similar to human shugenja. Unlike shugenja, however, the spells of a Shadow Mystic are not derived from the Elements. There are no kami of Shadow; the Mystics draw on the raw stuff of Nothing. Accordingly, the spell-like effects produced by a Shadow Mystic are not elemental in nature and are not affected or restricted by anything that constrains normal Elemental magic. This means most wards and other protective devices are of no use against the spells of a Shadow Mystic, making them dangerous foes indeed.

Like other minions of the Nothing, a Shadow Mystic in its true form appears as a generalized humanoid shape without a face. Most Shadow Mystics are believed to be shugenja whose identities were wholly consumed by the Nothing. Unlike Shadowspawn, Mystics are given to greater subtlety in their actions, resorting to physical combat only when their spells are no longer of use. This subtlety should not be mistaken for free will, however; Shadow Mystics are just as much under the control of the Nothing as any other Shadowspawn.

Shadow Mystic

The Shadow Mystic presented here is a generic type that uses only Rank 1 and 2 spells. GMs should feel free to modify it as necessary to suit the campaign, giving it different spells or higher-level spell effects as needed. While most Shadow Mystics will be Ninube, they are not unknown among the ranks of the Goju.

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4
Reflexes 3	–	Agility 3	Perception 3
Initiative: 5k4			*Attack: 3k2 claws (Complex)*
Damage: 2k2			*Armor TN: 20*
Reduction: 6 (0 against crystal)			*Wounds: 64: Dead*

Skills: Acting 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Stealth (Spell Casting) 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 1 (when revealed in its true form)*
- *Swift 1*
- *Cohesion of Shadow: A Shadow Mystic does not feel pain and thus does not suffer Wound penalties. It continues to function at full strength until reduced to Dead, at which point it collapses and unravels into incoherent shadow-like smoke.*
- *Partial Invulnerability: Shadow Mystics take half damage (rounded down) from non-crystal weapons and from non-Void spells and other magical effects not specifically intended to target the Nothing and its minions. Crystal weapons and Void spells affect them normally.*
- *Mental Resistance: Shadow Mystics are immune to all Fear effects and to all spells that create illusions or influence the mind or thoughts.*
- *Shapeshifting: A Shadow Mystic can assume the identity of any generic person, such as a typical servant, eta, low-ranking bushi and the like. This is a Simple Action; resuming its true form is a Free Action. Its Shapeshifting ability is not sufficient for it to assume a convincing copy of any recognizable individual. Contact with crystal or with light shone through crystal will reveal its true form. If it attacks physically or casts a Shadow spell without a successful use of Stealth (Spell Casting), its true form is also revealed.*
- *Shadow Spellcasting: Mechanically, Shadow Spells function in accordance with existing spell casting rules in every way (which Rings are used or targeted, etc.) However, they are not considered Elemental spells regardless of what Ring they use. Instead they are considered to be Shadow spells (i.e. they have the Shadow keyword). Shadow Spells are only affected by those things that explicitly affect creatures or effects associated with the Nothing or its manifestations (e.g. the Lying Darkness or the Shadow Dragon). For example, the Rank 1 Earth spell Elemental Ward will have no effect on spells cast by a Shadow Mystic. Likewise the Magic Resistance Advantage will not affect the TN of a Shadow Mystic's spells. The Mystic has a number of spell slots per day equal to the total Mastery Ranks of all the spells it knows. For example, the typical Mystic presented here knows spells totaling 9 Mastery Ranks, so it will have 9 spell slots per day.*
- *Shadow Spells: A typical Shadow Mystic knows the following spells: Touch the Emptiness (Rank 1), Way of Deception (Rank 1), Mists of Illusion (Rank 2), Armor of Earth (Rank 1), Burning Kiss of Steel (Rank 1), Disrupt the Aura (Rank 2), The Rushing Wave (Rank 1)*

A Goju Ninja School

As described in *Enemies of the Empire*, the Goju are essentially the brawn of the forces controlled by the Lying Darkness and its successor, the Shadow Dragon. They are certainly the most numerous of its minions (although still relatively few in number compared to any real samurai family) and consist of men and women from all backgrounds and families who have been absorbed into the Lying Darkness and lost their identity, becoming faceless creatures of darkness. All members of the Goju have had their identities at least partially consumed (in most cases almost completely so) by the Nothing. All are able to draw upon the power of the Nothing to varying degrees, using it to generate supernatural capabilities that invariably center around infiltration, deception, and murder.

If the GM allows this school to represent the Goju, the rules and mechanics for Shadow Ranks in Chapter Seven of *Enemies of the Empire* should not be used.

New Basic School (Optional): Goju Ninja

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Athletics, Kenjutsu, Ninjutsu, Sincerity (Deceit), Stealth 2, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 0.0
- **Outfit:** Black Clothing, Ninja-to, Tanto, 6 Shuriken or Tsubute, any one weapon, 50 feet of Rope and Grapple, Traveling Pack, 1 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Cloak of Night

The first lesson a Goju masters is the art of wrapping oneself in shadow, gaining concealment from enemies in exchange for making direct action more difficult. You may increase your Armor TN up to a maximum amount equal to your School Rank x 5. The TN of all your rolls other than Athletics, Defense, and Stealth Skill Rolls is increased by the same amount. Activating this Technique is a Simple Action and it lasts for the duration of the skirmish.

Rank Two: Melting Into Shadow

A Goju is not merely protected by the darkness but part of it, and can blend easily within it. You gain bonus rolled dice equal to your School Rank on any Stealth Skill Roll. Any uncontested roll made by an opponent trying to detect you automatically has its TN increased by an amount equal to your School Rank x 5. You gain one Free Raise on all attack rolls made against opponents who are unaware of your presence.

Rank Three: The Shadowed Blade

The Goju is a swift and merciless foe. You may make an attack as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action when attacking with knives or any weapon that uses the Ninjutsu Skill. Alternatively, when wielding shuriken, you may take a Complex Action to make a number of ranged attacks equal to your School Rank.

Rank Four: Step Within Shadow

As all darkness is one with the Goju, so too can the Goju use the darkness to move between shadows without crossing the space in between. You may enter any shadow large enough to conceal an individual of your size and emerge from any other similarly-sized shadow nearby. This is considered a Simple Move Action. The range of this movement is equal to your School Rank x 100 feet.

Rank Five: Shadow Upon the Moon

A true Goju no longer even vaguely resembles anything human. Your facial features are permanently erased, leaving only a tell-tale eggshell mask in their place. In darkness or shadows, you may dissolve your physical body into a vague cloud of inky vapor. This is a Simple Action; changing back into corporeal form is a Free Action. You may move at your full speed while in incorporeal form but may not physically interact with any object or individual and cannot be harmed by anything except crystal. You may pass through solid matter in a thickness of up to your School Rank x 5 in inches. You gain +5 to your Initiative Score during the first Round (only) each time you change back to your corporeal form.

A Ninube Shugenja School

The individuals who call themselves the Ninube are not truly shugenja in the conventional sense of the word, but then they are not truly individuals either, so the terminology here is largely a matter of convenience. The Ninube are minions of the Lying Darkness who seem to retain a portion of their individuality (whether they truly do is impossible to say). After the Darkness was defeated but before the Shadow Dragon usurped its place as the avatar of Nothing, the Ninube chose to go their own way, forsaking loyalty to this new master. (Or so they believe... in truth, they remain every bit as much a part of the Shadow Dragon's machinations as their more willing former comrades among the Goju.)

Shosuro Infiltrators and Shuriken

Sometimes, ideas come along just a little bit too late. The Rank 3 Technique ability for the Goju Ninja School regarding shuriken is, one would hope, delightfully flavorful for ninja of all sorts, not just the creatures of Shadow. GMs who wish to portray the Shosuro Infiltrators as being more 'classically ninja' in their abilities are encouraged to apply this same ability to the Shosuro Infiltrator School in the L5R RPG 4th Edition core rulebook.

If the GM allows this school to represent the Ninube, the rules and mechanics for Shadow Ranks in Chapter Seven of *Enemies of the Empire* should not be used.

New Basic School: Ninube Shugenja

- **Ninube Family:** +1 Reflexes"
- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Knives, Sincerity (Lying), Spellcraft, Stealth 2, any Low skill
- **Honor:** 0.0
- **Outfit:** Black Clothing, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 2 Koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Air/Earth

Technique: Mask of the Nothing

As a Complex Action you may expend a spell slot to dissolve your physical self and become a shadow. As a shadow you are invisible in darkness and gain a bonus of +5k0 to your Stealth Skill Rolls under all other circumstances. You are immune to most mundane attacks, but crystal and magic can affect you. Magical attacks that involve crystal or generate light double their rolled damage dice against you. When in shadow form, if you suffer damage that would kill you, you instead return to physical form at once with either half of your Wounds or with the Wounds you possessed when you entered shadow form, whichever is lower; you are Stunned when this happens.

You may not inflict damage on others in any way while in shadow form, but you may cast non-damaging spells and can speak in the form of a disembodied whisper.

You gain a Free Raise on all Nothing spells. You may not cast maho spells.

- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Air spells, 2 Fire spells, and 1 Water spell

Nothing Spells

Several existing spells may be cast as Nothing spells. When this is done the spells invoke a very unsettling atmosphere obvious to any shugenja (although they may not know what causes it, only that they feel unwell), and may even make non-shugenja uncomfortable. Common side-effects of such spells, in addition to their normal effects, include the deepening of shadows, the dimming of lights, the presence of faint undecipherable whispers, etc.

GMs may of course add or exclude any spells from this list as it suits the needs and style of their campaigns.

Air: By the Light of Lord Moon (ML1), Cloak of Night (ML1), Way of Deception (ML1), Hidden Visage (ML2), The Eye Shall Not See (ML3), Your Heart's Enemy (ML3), Gift of Wind (ML4), Cloud the Mind (ML5), Echoes on the Breeze (ML5)

Fire: Extinguish (ML1), Hurried Steps (ML2)

Water: Reflections of Pan Ku (ML1), Wave-Borne Speed (ML2)

New Game Mechanics

The following section presents new mechanics for the Spider Clan which do not involve the influence of the Nothing. GMs and players may use these mechanics or not as it suits their games.

New Alternate Path: Chuda Necromancer

The Chuda family are among the greatest practitioners of maho the Empire has ever known, eclipsed only by a handful of prodigies (mostly from the Bloodspeaker Cult) of such masterful skill they surely were the blessed of the Realm of Evil. The Chuda have reached their level of skill not through natural affinity but through unwavering devotion to the study of blood sorcery. Centuries of research has been augmented by the unprecedented resources they acquired after joining with Daigotsu. In modern times the Chuda also gain additional necromantic knowledge from encounters with the Jackals, a cult of dark sorcerers from the distant Burning Sands.

The corrupt Chuda have always included some in their ranks devoted to the creation and control of the undead, and this group has only become more terrifyingly powerful since the founding of the Spider Clan.

New Alternate Path: Chuda Necromancer [Shugenja]

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Chuda Shugenja 3
- **Requirements:** Lore: Shadowlands 3, knowledge of the maho spell Summon Undead Champion

Technique: The Dead Do Not Rest

The Chuda are unparalleled masters of undeath. As a Simple Action you may expend a spell slot of any element to immediately create from existing corpses a number of zombies equal to your Taint Rank. These undead will obey simple commands from you. They last for one week or until you choose to dismiss your power over them—either way, at that point the corpses disintegrate into rot and dust. (Statistics for zombies can be found on page 331 of the L5R RPG 4th Edition rulebook.)

New Maho Spell: Eternal Unrest

- Ring/Mastery: Earth 2 (Maho)
- Range: Touch
- Area of Effect: Target corpse

- Duration: 1 month
- Raises: Area of Effect (+1 corpse per Raise), Special (-10 minutes casting time per Raise)

As masters of necromancy, the Chuda often find themselves in need of corpses for their spells and techniques. This ritual is designed to ensure such corpses are always available, regardless of circumstances. It normally requires one hour to complete, although it can be shortened (with Raises) to a minimum of ten minutes. You may target a maximum number of corpses equal to your Taint Rank. At the spell's conclusion the targeted corpses are prepared for use. At any later time within the spell's duration you may take a Complex Action and expend an Earth spell slot to instantly summon the prepared corpses to your location. Chuda Necromancers are particularly fond of using this spell to summon forth corpses for use with their insidious Technique.

New Kata: Art of Ninjutsu

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 5
- **Schools:** Daigotsu Bushi, Bayushi Bushi, Daidoji Scout, Shoshuro Actor, Shoshuro Infiltrator, Goju Ninja
- Once per Round you may calculate the distance of a Move Action as if your Water is equal to your Stealth Skill Rank. This does not change the maximum distance you can move in a Round.

New Kata: Strength of the Spider

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Schools:** Any Spider Bushi
- **Effect:** Once per Round if you successfully cause at least 15 Wounds to your opponent, he suffers a -3 penalty to the total of all rolls on his next Turn.

New Spider/ Shadowlands Ancestors

GMs should read the sidebar on 'Ancestors from Jigoku' in the L5R RPG 4th Edition rulebook, page 244, which also applies to the ancestors listed here.

Chuda Bikimi [3 points]

Chuda Bikimi was a corrupt, ruthless, and utterly evil maho-tsukai, a terrible phantom who moved throughout the Empire like a blade of darkness. He snatched victims from their beds, from their dojo, from all imaginable locations, never once seen by any save his victims. All those who were kidnapped met terrible fates in necromantic maho rituals. Even beyond death, Bikimi's legacy persists and he bestows his sinister blessings on those engaged in similar evil schemes. His guidance grants you a +1k0 bonus to any Stealth Skill Roll. If you are a shugenja who practices maho, you may instead expend a spell slot to gain a +1k1 bonus to a Stealth Skill Roll.

- **Demands:** Bikimi has no respect for those who are foolish enough to expose themselves. If you ever willingly reveal yourself to an enemy, Bikimi will abandon you forever, with no chance to regain his favor.

Yogo Junzo [6 points]

Once a lord of the Scorpion, Yogo Junzo's fury at the dissolution of his clan following the Scorpion Clan Coup led him to betray his duty and open the Black Scrolls containing Fu Leng's essence. He became a self-willed undead monstrosity and led a Shadowlands army into Rokugan, assailing temples and monasteries and putting dozens of great libraries to the torch. The effects of his campaign of destruction still haunt the Empire generations later. His dark blessings allow you to call on the most dire and blasphemous knowledge to enhance your power. For each Forbidden Knowledge Advantage you possess, you gain a bonus of +2 to the total of all Spellcasting Rolls, +4 if the roll is for casting a maho spell. You gain the same bonus for every Rank of Taint you possess.

- **Demands:** Junzo demands you follow him down the path of dark knowledge and ever-greater power. If you are ever presented with an opportunity to learn new forbidden knowledge (or to gain a new instance of the Forbidden Knowledge Advantage) and do not take it, even to preserve your reputation or secrecy, Junzo abandons you.

Appendix Two
The Great Clan Vassal Families

The number of vassal families in Rokugan is vast. Countless such families have been named, grown, shrunk, and disbanded since the dawn of the Empire. A full listing of them would be impossible, and indeed many have long since been forgotten over the years. Some vassal families, however, have managed to endure over the long term, carrying out modest but valuable duties within their clan.

The first section below lists those vassal families which have existed for a significant length of time over the Empire's history—in some cases, going all the way back to the first century. The second section lists prominent vassal families that emerged in the Empire's "modern" era—the twelfth century or immediately prior.

It may be noted that nearly all of the Mantis vassal families belong to modern times, since the clan did not begin to create them until it was elevated to Great Clan status. The only exception is a single vassal family of the Kitsune—who themselves were an independent minor clan, the Fox, up until the twelfth century.

Long-Term Vassal Families

Crab Clan

Fundai (Kaiu): The Fundai, founded in the sixth century, are skilled shipwrights. Most of the craftsmen in Crab ports and shipyards are of the Fundai family, and the notorious Crab kotetsukan (the iron-armored "turtle ships") are their creation.

Kakeguchi (Hida): The Kakeguchi family are descended from one of Hida's earliest followers, a man who stood watch and guarded the Crab lands faithfully without thought of reward. When Hida Kakeguchi's brother complained of how their service went unrewarded while Hida showered honors on Hiruma, Kaiu, and Kuni, Kakeguchi scolded and shamed him, pointing out simple loyalty was more important than any reward. The Kakeguchi are the strongest supporters and most steadfast vassals of their Hida patrons, and often serve the clan as military officers, border wardens, or magistrates.

Kano (Yasuki): The Yasuki are known mainly as merchants and diplomats, but the family's founder was a Crane and an artisan in addition to her other skills. At her death she named her follower Kano as the keeper of those traditions, and when the Yasuki joined the Crab during the First Yasuki War, the Kano came with them. In modern times the Kano family are a rare group of peaceful artisans within the harsh brutality of the Crab Clan. They produce beautiful works of art, but also sometimes train with the Kaiu and turn their hands to more useful tasks such as weaponsmithing.

Maisuna (Kaiu): The Maisuna are descended from Kaiu engineers who threw themselves into the task of repairing and expanding the original fortifications at the Battle of the Cresting Wave. In the years after that battle they expanded the basic structure into the mighty edifice of the Kaiu Wall, and have maintained it through all the years since. They are skilled and hardy stonemasons, widely admired in the clan not only for their skills but also for their steady and placid nature. The Kaiu Wall is a continual monument to their dedication and capability.

Meishozo (Kuni): The Meishozo were founded in the eighth century after the Kuni Witch-Hunters captured a corrupted Shosuro Actor who used his makeup to conceal his Taint. They learned his techniques of disguise and acting, and the Meishozo family was created to use those techniques for hunting the powers of darkness. Officially, the Meishozo are tasked with maintaining the techniques of Kuni face-painting, but in realty their focus is on infiltrating maho cults and using sting operations to expose those who have an unhealthy interest in the dark arts.

Moshibaru (Hida): The Moshibaru were born in the aftermath of the great fourth century war in which the Crab and the Imperial Legions fought together against the armies of the Shadowlands. To restore the clan's numbers, Clan Champion Hida Ichido started the tradition of the Twenty Goblin Winter. This tradition has endured through all the centuries since, and those ronin who win admission to the Crab join the Moshibaru vassal family.

Raikuto (Hiruma/Yasuki): The Raikuto are descended from Hiruma Saitsune, an aging noblewoman whose wise counsel and diplomatic skill served the Crab Clan extremely well during the late first century. After her death, she was posthumously declared the first daimyo of the Raikuto family (named after her son and heir). The Raikuto specialize in diplomacy and often serve alongside the Yasuki in court. After the fall of Hiruma Castle in the eighth century, the Hiruma daimyo ordered the Raikuto to swear fealty to the Yasuki, since the now landless Hiruma could no longer support them. This situation prevailed until the Hiruma retook their lands in the early twelfth century, at which point the Raikuto returned to their founding family's ranks.

Ugawari (Kuni): A small and ill-favored vassal family, the Ugawari originated in the fourth century. They specialize in the capture and imprisonment of Shadowlands creatures, creatures which the Kuni shugenja use for study and dissection. Needless to say, this is a highly questionable activity and one which is generally kept from the view of the rest of the Empire. So notorious are the Ugawari that they are regarded dubiously even among the rest of the Crab Clan, although the Kuni consider them valuable vassals.

Crane Clan

Ashidaka (Kakita): The Ashidaka are descended from the first samurai weaponsmith to create the perfect swords now known as Kakita Blades. It is said when Kakita Ashidaka finished his first perfect sword, he tested it against a stone in the Seikitsu Mountains, and the pure ringing tone of the steel could be heard even in the Celestial Heavens. In reward, Ashidaka was granted his own family name and a small piece of land near the mountains. His descendants live there still, continuing to forge the swords which are among the Crane Clan's most precious possessions.

Hiramichi (Daidoji) and *Hiramori (Daidoji):* Two obscure and secretive vassal families born out of an even more obscure and shameful incident in the sixth century. A civil war known as the "Foxfire War" erupted within the Daidoji family when Daidoji Hira, the youngest brother of the family daimyo, lost his reason and led his followers into the southern Crane marshes. There he and later his son Yasuhira waged a vicious insurgency that lasted for decades. The soldiers who fought and ultimately defeated Hira's followers were forced to wage war in a highly dishonorable manner, employing traps, assassinations, ambush, and poison. After the war ended, these samurai were formed into two separate vassal families, the Hiramori ("forest Hira") and the Hiramichi ("Hira of the paths") so their skills could be preserved for the clan without staining the honor of the Daidoji as a whole. The two families perform disreputable tasks which the rest of the Crane disdain, sacrificing their own moral purity for the sake of the clan. The Hiramichi serve as smugglers and blackmailers, while the Hiramori are specialists in guerilla warfare.

Iwasaki (Kakita): An ancient but very minor vassal family of the Kakita, the Iwasaki pursue the Kakita ideal of artistic perfection by running a handful of extremely high-quality geisha houses in a small city to the south of the Kakita Artisan Academy. Iwasaki-trained geisha are much in demand across the Empire, and by providing their services the family earns considerable political favors for the Crane Clan. Although the family is named after its founder Kakita Iwasaki, it was his vassal Kakita Sayuri who first won fame and success for them with her excellent geisha houses, and her original holding—the House of the Golden Lily—remains the family's premier possession in modern times.

Kotagama (Doji): Founded in the fifth century in response to the treason of Asahina Yajinden, the madman who forged the Bloodswords for the monstrous sorcerer Iuchiban. The Crane Champion of the time appointed two trusted retainers, Doji Katomara and Doji Machigama, to create a new vassal family whose purpose would be to monitor the clan for trouble and possible disloyalty. The Kotagama are functionally an internal security force within the Crane Clan, although they disdain the use of dishonorable tactics and instead rely simply on acute observation. Magistrates are frequently recruited from their ranks.

Dragon Clan

Kouken (Mirumoto): The Koukan were founded hundreds of years ago by a Mirumoto daimyo who recognized the ability of monks to ferret out information that might be denied to others. The Mirumoto, isolated within the Dragon mountains, needed to know what was happening in the rest of the Empire but felt the Togashi tattooed men could not be relied on to share news on a consistent basis. Instead, the Mirumoto formed their own small monastic order, recruited from within the ranks of their family and including both young samurai of a religious bent and older retired samurai. All members were carefully chosen for both their piety and their devotion to the Dragon Clan. The method proved successful and eventually those who joined the order were given their own name, the vassal family of the Koukan. The Koukan are monks but are still considered to be members of the Mirumoto; they travel the Empire tending to the needs of the common people, all the while sending news, gossip, and valuable intelligence back to the Mirumoto.

Zurui (Mirumoto): The Zurui are descended from Mirumoto Sasugo, a woman of the Shiba family who married into the Mirumoto during the Gozoku era. She was dedicated to the duty of the yojimbo and taught her followers and children to protect the Dragon clan's shugenja at all costs. During a later Dragon intervention in a Lion-Crane border skirmish, samurai trained in her ways proved quite adept at protecting the Agasha from enemy troops, and in reward her descendent Mirumoto Zurui was permitted to form a vassal family. The Zurui continue their yojimbo traditions into modern times, although the rest of the Mirumoto tend to regard them as exceedingly one-dimensional in their attitudes.

A Fallen Family: The Shimizu

Vassal families often die out, usually due to the end of their bloodline or the termination of the duties they were assigned to pursue. However, not all vassal families end in such mundane ways.

The Shimizu family was founded in the eighth century when a magistrate named Akodo Shimizu killed a maho-tsukai who infiltrated the Emperor's own court. In reward for his services, Shimizu was awarded his own vassal family. Although he ruled well, his descendents were less honorable men. In the late ninth century, during a series of skirmishes with a neighboring family, the Shimizu family succumbed to the very maho they had once hunted; they summoned a powerful oni. The oni corrupted two generations of the family before one young Shimizu turned against his treacherous relatives and revealed the truth. Taking the name Akodo Giri, he led the clan's armies to exterminate his own family, and the foul deeds of the Shimizu were erased from the Lion histories.

A handful of Shimizu managed to escape the purge and have lived covertly within the Lion lands into modern times, maintaining their foul maho practices.

Lion Clan

Katai (Akodo): The Katai are descended from a fifth-century Matsu samurai-ko who became ronin rather than serve an Emperor who was a mere puppet of the Gozoku conspiracy. Under the name of Mochiko this Lion ronin led a group of like-minded wave-men who defied the Gozoku and became the most loyal followers of Empress Yugozo-hime after she overthrew the conspiracy. Mochiko eventually became Emerald Champion. Her followers, led by her lieutenant Katai, were given fealty within the Akodo. The Katai hold lands near the forest Kokoro Nezuban Mori and are tasked with maintaining and harvesting its lumber resources.

Hosokawa (Ikoma): The Hosokawa are descended from Ikoma Kyube, a sternly dedicated samurai from the late eighth century. Tasked with traveling the Empire to record events for the Ikoma family's official histories, Kyubo spent only one week out of each season at home, devoting all the rest of his time to his duty. His selfless devotion was finally rewarded with his appointment as the head of a new vassal family, the Hosokawa, tasked with coordinating the reports of all the Ikoma family historians and scribes. They serve the Lion Clan in this task with such single-minded devotion that even their fellow Lion often describe them as "utterly uninteresting."

Ise (Kitsu): The Ise are descended from Kitsu Ise, a militant shugenja from the dawn of the Empire. The Kitsu family's early experiments in exploring other spirit realms often attracted dangerous creatures to Ningen-do, and Ise devoted himself to hunting down and destroying these malignant entities. In reward he was granted his own family name, and his descendents continue to protect the Lion lands from dangerous spirit creatures.

Ikeda (Matsu): When the Unicorn returned to the Empire at the end of the eighth century, their new cavalry tactics were a huge shock to Rokugan's methods of warfare. The Ikeda are descended from a Matsu samurai who undertook the task of visiting the barbaric Unicorn and studying their methods and tactics. He learned many of their secrets and trained the first true heavy cavalry forces in the Lion armies; for this feat he was rewarded with his own family name. The Ikeda are the chief horsemen of the Lion Clan and their mastery of cavalry tactics is second only to the Unicorn themselves.

Koritome (Matsu): In the aftermath of the Battle of White Stag, a Lion archer named Matsu Koritome sacrificed himself to kill a team of gaijin snipers who had laid an ambush for the new Emperor. In honor of his deeds, Hantei

VIII proclaimed the two hundred finest archers in the Lion Clan to be the new Koritome family. They are considered some of the greatest masters of the bow in Rokugan. Indeed, the Tsuruchi family claim the Lion father of their founder was a himself a Koritome samurai.

Mantis/Fox Clan

Byako (Kitsune): The Byako are descended from a third-century fox spirit that took human form to assuage the grief of the Fox Clan daimyo, whose beloved nephew had died in the Kitsune Mori forest. Of all the Kitsune, the Byako maintain the closest connection to the spirit world and their children often disappear into the forest at adulthood, rejoining their shapeshifter relatives. The Byako are known to be quite potent shugenja, but refuse to ever leave the Fox lands.

Phoenix Clan

Atsumaru (Agasha): This tiny vassal family originated from a brilliant but repulsive Dragon shugenja named Agasha Nakune, one of the first in the family to embrace the practice of alchemy. He recruited a ronin named Kadowaka to help him collect the herbs and other unusual ingredients needed for his alchemical experiments. Kadowaka served loyally, and when Nakune subsequently became the Agasha family daimyo he offered the ronin fealty with the family name of Atsumaru. When the Agasha fled the Dragon Clan for the Phoenix many centuries later, the Atsumaru loyally followed them. In both their old and new homes the Atsumaru still work as woodsmen, gathering the rare ingredients needed for Agasha experiments.

Nani (Asako): The Nani are descended from one of the first Asako to embrace the secret ways of the henshin mystics. The man named Nani fell into a False Path and succumbed to madness, but Lady Asako herself nursed him back to sanity. Afterward, he and his followers were granted status as a vassal family dedicated to watching for others among the Asako who might stumble into a False Path. They continue to fulfill this duty into modern times.

Chukan (Asako): In the early second century, a scholar named Asako Chukan dedicated himself to sorting, organizing, and cataloguing the huge numbers of scrolls already accumulating in the temples of the Asako lands. His efforts won praise from all across the Phoenix lands and soon he was named the founder of a vassal family. The Chukan are tasked with continually updating and organizing the vast stores of knowledge that accumulate in the Asako libraries, a monumental and endless duty that is seldom even noticed by outsiders.

Nasu (Shiba): The Nasu Imperial family was created by the Gozoku Alliance in the fourth century to help them administer the Imperial bureaucracy. After the overthrow of the Gozoku, Shiba Gaijushiko concealed the Nasu within his family even as he helped Empress Yugozohime dismantle the rest of the conspiracy. The Nasu survived to become the chief bureaucrats of the Phoenix Clan, quietly keeping the clan's affairs running smoothly and avoiding conflicts with the Imperial bureaucracy. The family is isolationist and keeps itself apart from the rest of the clan, refusing even to study in the Asako or Isawa schools.

Sodona (Shiba): The Sodona family was created in the ninth century in response to the death of the Phoenix Clan Champion in a war with the Lion Clan. Rather than seek revenge, the new Clan Champion instead created a vassal family dedicated solely to protecting the Shiba themselves—a peculiar notion, considering the Shiba normally devote themselves to protecting the Isawa or Asako. The Sodona instead supply yojimbo to high-ranking Shiba nobles and dignitaries. The Sodona are known for carefully balancing the practicalities of their protective duties with an idealistic vision of Bushido.

Scorpion Clan

Kochako (Shosuro): The Kochako were created in response to the reign of the Gozoku Alliance. In the wake of the Gozoku's downfall, the Scorpion decided they must police their own ranks against any future disloyalty and appointed special agents to watch over the Scorpion Clan. Chief among these watchmen was Shosuro Kochako, whose service was so exemplary the Shosuro daimyo named him as the head of his own vassal family. The Kochako family is tasked with rooting out traitors within the Scorpion Clan—traitors to the clan and traitors to the Empire. They

operate in secret and only the lord of the Shosuro knows how to contact them.

Tokagure (Shosuro): The Tokagure are descended from Shosuro Tokagure, the first official keeper of the poisonous gardens at Shiro no Shosuro. He was elevated to his position and permitted to enlist others (including commoners) into his family's ranks in order to free the rest of the Shosuro for more important duties such as spying and assassination. The Tokagure ensure the Shosuro have access to all the ingredients they need for their deadly poisons.

Nanbu (Soshi): The nanbu are descended from a peasant *budoka* who saved the life of judge Soshi Saibankan, the founder of the Imperial magistrate system. Saibankan rewarded the selfless peasant warrior by enlisting him as a personal guard, and within two generations Nanbu's descendants were an official vassal family in service to the Soshi. The Nanbu have quietly served the Soshi as warriors and bodyguards ever since, even achieving some brief notoriety in the twelfth century when the heir to their line, Tzurui, served in the ranks of Toturi's Army.

Tansaku (Yogo): The Tansaku are descended from a second century shugenja, Yogo Tansaku, who undertook a quest on behalf of his daimyo to find a cure to the infamous Yogo Curse. After decades of research, Tansaku concluded the Curse could not be lifted, but did achieve some insight into how it functioned. When he predicted the family daimyo would succumb to the Curse unless she listened to his warnings, she wrathfully exiled him to a monastery. Two years later the Curse came upon her when she secretly fell in love with Tansaku himself, disgracing her reputation and leading to her forced retirement. Her son and heir appointed Tansaku's family as vassals, tasking them with continuing to study the Curse and seek an end to it—a duty they have pursued loyally and fruitlessly into modern times.

Unicorn Clan

Marta (Shinjo): The Marta are descended from one of Lady Shinjo's first gaijin followers, a woman named Martazera who taught the Ki-Rin much of what they needed to survive in the Burning Sands. She was also a brilliant storyteller, and after her death Shinjo memorialized her by naming Martazera's student Yotoko as the founder of the new Marta vassal family. The Marta are the storytellers and historians of the Unicorn Clan, preserving the clan's history not through written records but through special stories that are memorized and passed on to future generations.

Hyuga (Otaku/Utaku): This vassal family is descended from Otaku Hyuga, a young man of the Otaku who longed to ride in battle but was forbidden to do so by his family's traditions. However, instead he accomplished something of far greater value—it was he who first managed to tame one of the Otaku war steeds, the mighty horses who are the pride and joy of the family. For this he was rewarded with his own vassal family, and in modern times the Hyuga continue to serve as the Utaku family's stablemasters.

Naoko (Otaku/Utaku): The Naoko are descended from Otaku Naoko, a battle-maiden from the early history of the Unicorn Clan when they were still called the Ki-Rin. She performed great deeds during battles between the Ki-Rin and a city of gaijin sorcerers, and was rewarded for them with her own vassal family. However, she is also known for embracing the foreign ways her people encountered, claiming they were just as much a part of the Ki-Rin as their Rokugani heritage. In modern times, the Naoko family offers a home to all those Otaku who find their affinity for gaijin ways weigh on them too heavily, and they customarily take foreign personal names to honor their ancestors.

Battue (Iuchi): Soon after the Unicorn returned to Rokugan, a shugenja named Iuchi Nagol who had studied the ways of foreign sorcerers succumbed to the lure of maho. He and his students became corrupted and their foul experiments eventually resulted in the creation of the Tainted region known as the Forest of Dreamers. Some of Nagol's students realized the madness of their sensei and reported the truth to the Iuchi daimyo, leading to Nagol's swift demise. The three surviving former students were ordered to form a new vassal family dedicated to protecting the Iuchi against further incidents of corruption. The Battue family live a semi-nomadic existence, roaming through Unicorn lands in search of corruption and returning only rarely to their home, a remote fortress called the Tower of the Kelet.

Suio (Ide): The Suio are descended from one of Ide's original vassals, a woman with a superb gift for learning foreign languages. Their expertise in deciphering foreign tongues and foreign customs was a vital resource for the Unicorn Clan during the centuries it wandered the Burning Sands. After the Unicorn returned to Rokugan, the Suio applied their skills to learning the intricacies of Rokugani culture and custom. In the twelfth century, the return of

the desert Moto to Rokugan gave the Suio yet another chance to ply their unique skills.

Onshigawa (Moto): The Onshigawa family was created in the sixth century while the Unicorn were still roaming the gaijin lands. Moto Khatalan, the only daughter of a great Moto hero, was courted by many gaijin nobles from the steppes, but she defied all of them and took their steeds to swell the Unicorn Clan's herds. In return she was granted permission to form her own vassal family—in a mixture of respect and humor, she chose as her family name the name of the last of her suitors, a steppe tarkan who died while trying to leap a gorge she had already crossed. The modern Onshigawa family specialize as scouts and skirmishers, and their best men usually serve on the staffs of Unicorn generals.

Modern Vassal Families

Aotora (Scorpion, Bayushi): The Aotora are descended from Bayushi Aotora, a master of the ways of poison who spent his entire lifetime—including several years in the Burning Sands during the Scorpion Clan's exile—studying the ways of toxins and cures. His deadly research cost the lives of three of his five children. In his old age he presented his massive library of knowledge to the Clan Champion, who was so impressed he bestowed Aotora's name on the two surviving children as a new vassal family. The tiny Aotora family continues to pursue the mastery of poisons on behalf of their Bayushi lords.

Chiyu (Dragon, Tamori): The Chiyu family are descended from a group of ronin shugenja led by a man named Chiyu. In the aftermath of the Clan War they settled in an abandoned village near the Dragon mountains and studied the ways of herbalism and healing, discovering many natural cures and balms which had been overlooked by the Great Clans. Some years later, the newly-created Tamori family was struggling to grow its numbers in the wake of the Agasha defection; Chiyu's followers were quarreling with the Phoenix, so the Tamori eagerly offered them fealty as a vassal family. The modern Chiyu family continues to study the ways of healing and herbalism, a useful supplement to the Tamori customs of alchemy and martial study.

Endo (Crab, Hiruma): The Endo family were founded by Kaiu Endo, a young and determined engineer who rebuilt Shiro Hiruma in just two years after it was recaptured from the Shadowlands. He was granted a vassal family name as reward, and chose to swear fealty to the Hiruma rather than the Kaiu since his deeds had been performed on their behalf. The Endo devote themselves to maintaining and restoring the Hiruma holdings, which are under constant pressure from the Shadowlands.

Goraiku (Mantis, Moshi): The Goraiku family was created soon after the Moshi family joined the Mantis Clan. The rigors of the Clan War forced the normally peaceful and matriarchal Centipede Clan to rely more heavily on its fighting men, and Moshi Goraiku had risen to prominence as a skilled general. With the Moshi joining the more traditional non-matriarchal Mantis, the Moshi daimyo feared Goraiku might eventually challenge her for control of the clan. Rather than run such a risk, she proclaimed him the daimyo of a new vassal family dedicated to the military defense of the Moshi lands. The Goraiku are the only place within the Moshi where men are allowed to rule, thereby ensuring they are always subservient to the overall leadership of the family.

Hiasobi (Dragon, Tamori): The Hiasobi are masters of *kagaku*, the art of creating alchemical items, most especially those involving fire and flames—such as the popular *hanabi* fireworks used at festivals and celebrations across the Empire. They are descended from Asahina Maryoku, a controversial alchemist from the early twelfth century known for radical and sometimes dangerous methods. Maryoku died when an alchemical potion malfunctioned at a prestigious Crane-Phoenix wedding, unleashing a violent fire that took his life and injured many other wedding guests. The Asahina daimyo angrily stripped Maryoku's students of the Asahina name and proclaimed them ronin. The Tamori family daimyo, however, was intrigued by their gifts with alchemy and offered them fealty within his own family, granting them the name Hiasobi in honor of their profession. They continue to study the ways of alchemy within their new clan.

Hogosha (Mantis, Yoritomo): The Hogosha family are descended from Yoritomo Hogosha, a Mantis courtier who played a key role in holding the Imperial courts together during the chaotic times of the War Against the Darkness. He was rewarded for his deeds by the creation of his own vassal family. The Hogosha are a small family dedicated to the ways of court and diplomacy, and most of the clan's senior diplomats (as well as the sensei of the Yoritomo Courtier School) are drawn from their ranks.

Izaku (Phoenix/Dragon: Agasha/Tamori): Founded shortly after the Clan War by the joint efforts of an Asako scholar and an Agasha shugenja, the Izaku are dedicated to the collection and preservation of magical knowledge, and the Izaku Library is one of the Empire's most formidable repositories of the art and wisdom of the shugenja. The Izaku came under heavy attack from the Lying Darkness and were largely forgotten by both the Dragon and the Phoenix due to the chaos and division which assailed them during the Hidden Emperor era—most notably the defection of much of the Agasha family to the Phoenix and the subsequent creation of the Tamori family as their successors. When the War Against the Darkness ended, the Izaku petitioned the Imperial Court for permission to serve as vassals to both the Agasha and the Tamori, an effort to maintain peace between Dragon and Phoenix. This unusual arrangement was approved by Emperor Toturi I and

the Izaku are the only vassal family in the Empire's history to serve two clans simultaneously.

Kagehisa (Mantis, Tsuruchi): The Kagehisa are descended from the Wasp's Blade, the group of ronin hired to help defend Kyuden Ashinagabachi. Their commander, Kagehisa, was one of Tsuruchi's most loyal followers, and when the Tsuruchi family joined the Mantis Clan the new daimyo Tsuruchi Ichiro asked Kagehisa and his fellow ronin to swear fealty as the family's first vassals. The Kagehisa study the ways of the sword rather than the bow, and continue to uphold their duty as protectors of the Tsuruchi family's seat of power.

Kenshin (Unicorn, Iuchi): This vassal family is descended from Iuchi Kenshin, a samurai from the dawn of the Empire who was born without the gift of the kami, but spent his life loyally guarding his sister, whose magical gifts were tremendous. Hundreds of generations of their bloodline showed the same tendency—women born with magical power, men born entirely without it but loyally protecting their female kin. In modern times, the Iuchi daimyo discovered this peculiarity and decided it had great spiritual significance; he decreed the bloodline to be the vassal family of the Kenshin. Female Kenshin continue to be some of the finest shugenja in the Unicorn Clan, and male Kenshin continue to serve as some of the clan's finest yojimbo.

Murame (Lion, Ikoma): The Murame family was founded at the end of the War Against the Darkness when the Akodo family was reinstated within the Lion. The restoration of the Akodo was unsettling to the Ikoma, who had stepped in to replace the Akodo as the clan's premier tacticians. Ikoma Murame, one of the chief Lion commanders and a sensei of the clan's War College, was especially troubled by the sudden change. In honor of his service and his dilemma, the Ikoma proclaimed him the daimyo of the Murame vassal family, tasked to preserve the Ikoma family's new martial traditions. They have continued to do so ever since.

Naganori (Scorpion, Yogo): This vassal family is descended from Kuni Naganori, a Crab who administered the occupied Yogo lands during the Clan War. The treason of his lord Kuni Yori so shocked him that he not only left the Kuni family to become a ronin, but even destroyed his scrolls and gave up the path of the shugenja, becoming a simple swordsman and devoting himself to fighting the creatures of the Shadowlands. His dedication to fighting the forces of darkness and his capable administration of the Yogo lands both impressed the Scorpion, and when they were reinstated after the Clan War they offered him fealty as a vassal. The Naganori family are bushi and serve as adjuncts to the secretive Kuroiban (Black Watch)—hunting not for maho-tsukai but specifically for Shadowlands creatures which infiltrate the Empire.

Noroko (Lion, Kitsu): During the chaos of the War Against the Darkness, the Kitsu daimyo succumbed to the Taint and engaged in maho. Many Kitsu committed seppuku in shame at his actions, while

others became ronin. Eventually, these ronin were permitted to rejoin the Lion as the Noroko vassal family, although this decision was controversial—many believed they should have committed seppuku rather than abandon their duties. The Noroko devote themselves to rooting out any renewed corruption within the Lion Clan, and often work in concert with the Jade Champion and even the Kuni Witch-Hunters.

Rokugo (Scorpion, Bayushi): The Scorpion Clan relied for centuries on disreputable and even criminal enterprises—gambling dens, geisha houses, smuggling networks, sake houses, opium dens, and other such things—to finance its activities and to gather the secrets and blackmail it needed to survive. When the clan was twice disbanded and reinstated in the first half of the twelfth century, it lost control of many of these unsavory ventures, and the Scorpion leadership decided it would be wise in future to maintain some public distance from criminal ventures. They recruited a ruthless criminal gang led by a man named Rokugo, granting him and his followers vassal family status in exchange for bringing their cartels and other criminal ventures into the Scorpion Clan. In modern times the Rokugo family run a massive network of vice and criminality, most of whose members have no idea they are actually working for the Scorpion.

Sakura (Dragon, Kitsuki): The Sakura were founded in response to a peculiar event in the year 1120: the recovery of a journal by Kitsuki Kaagi, a magistrate who discovered many of the dark secrets of the Lying Darkness... and paid the price. The journal proved a dangerous object that corrupted any who read it, but a few were able to withstand its power, notably a woman named Kitsuki Sakura. She and her comrades used the knowledge from the journal to help wage the War Against the Darkness a few years later. In reward for her service and her heroic death against the Nothing, daimyo Kitsuki Yasu appointed her family as the Sakura and tasked them to root out and suppress dangerous and forbidden knowledge—a strange inversion of the Kitsuki family's more customary devotion to uncovering the truth at all costs.

Seizuka (Lion, Akodo): Akodo Seizuka was a compulsive explorer and mapmaker who lived in the mid-twelfth century. His obsession with creating detailed and accurate maps was little more than a curiosity to his clan until the year 1153, when they played a crucial role in Clan Champion Matsu Nimuro's capture of Toshi Ranbo from the Crane. Seizuka was rewarded with the right to his own family name, and his children continue to serve the Lion as map-makers preparing for future wars.

Shingon (Phoenix, Isawa): The Shingon family are descended from Asako Shingon, a mighty shugenja who worked with Iuchi Yogosha in the early twelfth century to create a set of five potent elemental nemuranai. For this achievement Shingon and his son were granted vassal family status by the Isawa. The Shingon family specializes in the art of crafting elementally awakened items, an extremely difficult skill and one whose results are often unpredictable.

Shudo (Mantis, Kitsune): The Shudo are descended from Kitsune Shudo, a Lion-trained Fox samurai who served in the armies of Yoritomo's Alliance during the Clan War. Shudo was a fierce supporter of the alliance, but when the Fox Clan withdrew into neutrality he loyally returned to defend his clan's lands. In reward for his devotion he was granted a family name. The small Shudo family devotes itself to protecting the Kitsune family as yojimbo and guards.

Suguru (Mantis, Tsuruchi): The Suguru are descended from a ronin woman who won admission to the Mantis Clan during the Four Winds era. She was a shugenja who uncovered several maho-tsukai within the ranks of the Imperial magistrates, and requested fealty to the Tsuruchi as a reward. The small Suguru family devotes itself to rooting out corruption (both material and spiritual) within the Empire's magistrates.

Tsume (Crane, Doji): The Tsume family was born at the end of the eleventh century from the ambitions of Doji "Tsume" (the Talon) Kigura, a minor but skillful courtier. In return for his services to the clan he won a small but fertile territory in the Kintani Valley. From there, his immediate heirs set out to win greater lands and prestige, capturing the Lion stronghold of Shiro Kyotei and slaughtering the Lion vassal family known as the Damasu. At its peak the Tsume family even managed to capture the oft-contested castle of Toshi Ranbo, although it was later lost to a Lion counteroffensive and it was eventually ceded to become the new Imperial City. The Tsume are known for their aggressive and ambitious nature and for their skills with polearms—the family's legion is known as the Tsume Pikemen.

Watanabe (Mantis, Yoritomo): Watanabe was the most skilled Mantis shipwright of the twelfth century, and after the Mantis were elevated to Great Clan status he was one of the first Mantis to give his name to a vassal family. Although the Watanabe are known chiefly as shipwrights, their ranks also include all of the surviving scions of the long-disbanded Gusai family, serving as a means to preserve the bloodline for the future.

Appendix Three
Heritage Tables

Heritage Tables are an optional mechanic to help players develop interesting backgrounds for their characters. By rolling on their clans' Heritage Tables, players can create connections between their characters and the past, as well as planting plot seeds that may germinate in the future. It should be noted that not all players will wish to use Heritage Tables, however. In particular, a player who already has a firm character concept should be wary of the Tables, since an unlucky roll can twist or sabotage that background into something the player doesn't want. Some GMs may also prefer to have the players develop their own stories rather than relying on a chart to concoct background.

If the GM and players agree to use the Heritage Tables, each player may make one roll on the table for their character's clan. (Heritage is based on clan, not on school.) GMs who wish to allow the players a little more control over their heritage can allow them to roll two or even three times, choosing one of the results. Exceptionally generous GMs can allow the players to simply choose a preferred result from the Tables. GMs who are concerned over the impact of Heritage Tables can of course forbid their use, or reserve a "veto power" over results which would be disruptive to the campaign. Ultimately, the Heritage Tables should be treated as a tool for enhancing the game, not as a trick or a strait-jacket.

Using Heritage Tables

To use a Heritage Table, the player rolls a single die on the initial chart for his clan. This determines whether his character's heritage is Shameful, Illustrious, or a Mixed Blessing. The player then rolls again on the specific subtable to determine the exact nature of the heritage.

Many results on the Heritage Tables allow a character to gain a Skill Rank or an Advantage for free, or to purchase an Advantage for a reduced cost. Since this can have a significant impact on the expenditure of Experience Points, it is recommended that any Heritage rolls be made before the players begins spending Experience Points to build the character.

Conversely, some Heritage results inflict an automatic Disadvantage on the character. The player does not receive Experience Points for these Disadvantages, though their point value is unchanged for the purpose of game mechanics that target point values (such as the Bayushi Courtier techniques).

Crab Heritage Tables

Table 1.0: Crab Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-3	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 1.1
4-7	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 1.2
8-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 1.3

Table 1.1: Shameful Crab Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor summoned a powerful kami during a time of need. Your ancestor made promises to the kami in return for its help, but never followed through. You gain the Disadvantage Wrath of the Kami.
2-3	Your ancestor was a merchant patron who thought he was getting the better end of a deal, only to discover he'd had the wool pulled over his eyes. Your family has been impoverished ever since. Start with three less koku in your Outfit.
4-5	Your ancestor fell to the Shadowlands and returned to fight his former clan as one of the Lost. His failure haunts you line to this day. You start with 0.1 Taint and your starting Honor is 1.0 lower.
6-7	A creature from the Shadowlands cursed your line with its dying breath. You start play with the Disadvantage Bad Fortune: Lingering Misfortune.
8-9	Your ancestor abandoned a comrade to die in the Shadowlands. The other man's family swore a blood feud against yours. You gain the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage.
0	Your ancestor was seduced by the Shadowlands and in the generations since he has taken several of his descendants to join him there. You are next on the list.

Table 1.2: Illustrious Crab Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	A particular kami took an interest in your family line, and it senses a similarity to your ancestor in you. You may take the Friendly Kami Advantage (if you are a shugenja) or the Friend of the Elements Advantage for one less Experience Point.
2-3	Your ancestor made many political connections with another clan which have lasted to this day. You gain a 3-point Ally Advantage in that clan for free.
4-5	Your ancestor single-handedly turned back an enemy sally during a siege. His deeds still bring fame to your family today. Gain 1.0 Glory.
6-7	Your ancestor died a hero's death fighting the Shadowlands. His legacy of heroism inspires you today. Gain 1 free Rank in a Weapon Skill of your choice.
8-9	A visiting dignitary got caught in a Shadowlands atttacl while touring the Wall. Your ancestor saved his life and in thanks was granted an additional stipend. Your starting Outfit gains 2 koku.
0	During a fierce battle with another clan, your ancestor saved the life of one of his enemies. Their descendants remain indebted to your line. You gain a free 3-point Obligation with their clan.

Table 1.3: Crab Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your family is known for something disreputable—not necessarily undeserved. You gain the Infamous Disadvantage. However, you have learned from your family's illicit activities and gain one free Rank in a Low Skill.
2-3	Your ancestor discovered something very interesting—and very taboo. You may take the Forbidden Knowledge Advantage for one less Experience Point.
4-5	Your family has always had good relations with the Nezumi. You gain a free 2-point Ally who is a Nezumi.
6-7	Due to various mishaps and misfortunes, you are the last of your line, and have all your family's titles and responsibilities resting squarely on your shoulders. You gain 0.5 Status but you are also under a 3-point Obligation to the Crab to keep your family line alive.
8-9	Your ancestor participated in a battle with another clan, where he unexpectedly distinguished himself in a duel. However, the descendants of the samurai he defeated would like re-match. You gain 1.0 Glory but you also have a Sworn Enemy in another clan's family.
0	Your ancestor was a Kaiu craftsman of singular skills. One of his creations was passed on to you. Unfortunately he was afflicted with too much Fire and sometimes didn't seem himself. You gain the Sacred Weapon: Kaiu Blade Advantage for free, but the blade is afflicted with some manner of curse known only to your GM.

Crane Heritage Tables

Table 2.0: Crane Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-3	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 2.1
4-8	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 2.2
9-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 2.3

Table 2.1: Shameful Crane Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was in charge when a clan treasure vanished. He committed seppuku and your family has worked to rebuild its reputation ever since. You gain the Driven Disadvantage.
2-3	Your ancestor was mildly obsessed with her looks, and people say you act just like her. You gain a 2-point Compulsion: Always Look Your Best.
4-5	Your ancestor was a clan magistrate but was rumored to sell justice to the highest bidder. His flaw has been passed down through the bloodline to you. You gain the Greedy Disadvantage.
6-7	Your ancestor was a soldier who deserted rather than face the enemies of the Crane. His deeds still stain your family's reputation. You start with 0.5 less Status and 0.5 less Glory than normal.
8-9	Your ancestor lost an important duel and his failure still hangs over your line. You start with 1.0 less Honor and 0.5 less Status than normal.
0	Your ancestor claimed a rival's art as his own, winning praise from the Imperial Court. If the deceit is ever discovered, your family will be ruined. You gain the Dark Secret Disadvantage.

Table 2.2: Illustrious Crane Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor created a work of art that is still admired to this day. You gain 1 free Rank in the appropriate Artisan skill and 0.5 Glory.
2-3	Your family has ties of marriage or alliance with another clan. You may take the Different School Advantage for 2 less Experience Points.
4-6	Your ancestor served the clan as a clerk in the Imperial bureaucracy. You may take the Precise Memory Advantage for 2 less points.
7-0	Your ancestor fought in one of the famous battles of his time, and his courageous deeds are still celebrated in the Crane Clan. You gain 0.5 Glory and a free Rank in either Battle or a Weapon Skill of your choice.
8-9	Your ancestor nearly single-handedly averted a political catastrophe and turned it into a victory for the Crane. His brilliance is reflected in your own skills. You may take the Clear Thinker Advantage for 1 less Experience Point.
0	Your ancestor saved an Asahina Fetish Master from a serious social mishap. In thanks she gave your family a fetish (chosen by the GM) which has since been passed down to you.

Table 2.3: Crane Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	At your gempukku you were given an item. It seemed commonplace, but you were told you were to be its keeper and only use it in a time of great need. You were also told no one was sure what it did...
2-3	Your ancestor slew a major enemy of the Crane in a duel. His descendants remember this as well. You gain 0.5 Glory but also gain a Sworn Enemy in another clan.
4-6	Your ancestor ignored his duty to the Crane and followed a personal quest to a different school in another clan. He made allies for your family but his obsessive nature has been passed down to you. You may take the Different School Advantage for two less points, but you have the Driven Disadvantage.
7-0	Your ancestor was a magistrate who revealed another family's dishonor. You have inherited his uncompromising and perceptive nature. You gain a free Rank in Investigation and the Contrary Disadvantage.
8-9	Your ancestor was a highly successful merchant patron who cared little about scruples or propriety. You are a true heir to his traditions. You gain an additional 3 koku in your starting Outfit, but gain the Insensitive Disadvantage.
0	Your ancestor was an artist of high renown and you're expected to follow in his footsteps, perhaps even to surpass him. You may take the Soul of Artistry Advantage for 2 less points, but you gain the Disadvantage Consumed by Perfection.

Dragon Heritage Tables

Table 3.0: Dragon Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-2	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 3.1
3-5	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 3.2
6-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 3.3

Table 3.1: Shameful Dragon Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor gave away vital information about Dragon troop movements. His foolishness still haunts your family's reputation. You gain the Infamous Disadvantage.
2-3	Your ancestor was the victim of an elaborate confidence scheme which ended with his seppuku. Unfortunately, you share his weaknesses and your family's status has never recovered from his failure. You gain the Gullible Disadvantage and lose 0.5 Status.
4-5	Your ancestor lacked the courage to face the enemies of the Dragon, fleeing from battle. It is up to you to rebuild your family's reputation. You start with 0.0 Glory and it will take you twice as long (20 Glory Points) to reach Glory Rank 1.
6-7	Your mother became pregnant with you after swearing an oath of celibacy to her daimyo. She committed seppuku after giving birth. You start with the Black Sheep disadvantage.
8-9	Your ancestor successfully pursued a love match within another clan, disrupting others' marriage plans and earning their eternal hatred. You gain a Nemesis within that clan.
0	Your ancestor lost focus during an alchemy experiment, causing it to fail horribly. Ever since then your family has been cursed with Epilepsy, and you are no exception.

Table 3.2: Illustrious Dragon Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was significantly involved in a famous major battle of his time. Gain a free 2-point Ally from another clan of your choice and 1 rank in the Lore Skill for that clan.
2-3	Your ancestor performed admirably while occupying a high-profile position in the Dragon Clan. You gain 1 free Rank in a High Skill of your choice.
4-5	Your ancestor had a romantic affair during winter court that was the inspiration for many pillow books. Some of that past glory reflects on you. You gain 0.5 Glory and may take the Advantage Seven Fortunes Blessing: Benten's Blessing for 1 less Experience Point.
6-7	Your ancestor played an instrumental role in a small battle. You gain 1 free Rank in a Bugei Skill of your choice.
8-9	Your ancestor died while carrying the clan banner in battle. His superiors found him still holding it upright the next morning. Your family still reveres his name and his glory redounds to your benefit. You gain 1.0 Glory and 0.5 Honor.
0	Your ancestor was a tattooed man famous for his unusual nature—including the fact that he married and had children. You gain 1 free Rank in any one Skill which is not a School Skill for you.

Table 3.3: Dragon Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	One of your parents was of the Tattooed Order and you were given a tattoo shortly before your gempukku. Unfortunately, your mind was not fully prepared for such power. You gain a Togashi tattoo of the GM's choice, but you also gain the Enlightened Madness Disadvantage connected to the tattoo.
2-3	One of your ancestors picked up an item from a battlefield on a whim. It has since been passed down to you. Although no one is quite sure what it does, family legend speaks of a spirit that makes its home within...
4-5	Your ancestor escalated a minor matter of honor into a duel to the death with a samurai from another clan. He won the duel, fortunately, but it was his temper which brought it on in the first place. You have inherited his nature and legacy. You gain 1.0 Glory and 1 free Rank in the Lore Skill for the clan of the duelist he defeated, but you also gain the Brash Disadvantage.
6-7	Your family has never been wealthy, but your ascetic lifestyle has helped you on the path to enlightenment. You gain 1 free Rank in the Meditation Skill, but you also have the Ascetic Disadvantage.
8-9	Your ancestor was a very creative soul, but saw into the Elements too deeply. You gain a +1k0 bonus to all Craft rolls, but you also gain the Frail Mind Disadvantage.
0	Your ancestor followed one of the False Paths. You may take the Sage Advantage for 1 less Experience Point, but you also gain the Disbeliever Disadvantage.

Lion Heritage Tables

Table 4.0: Lion Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-2	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 4.1
3-7	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 4.2
8-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 4.3

Table 4.1: Shameful Lion Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was a Deathseeker who never redeemed his name. Your family still labors under his failure. You start with 2.0 less Honor.
2-3	Your ancestor had a vice, and someone else found out about it. You have the Blackmailed Disadvantage.
4-5	Your ancestor lacked the courage to stand on the front lines of battle. He ran, leading to a defeat that cost many lives. Your family lives under the shadow of his failure. You start with 0.0 Glory and gain the Disadvantage Phobia: Combat (1 point).
6-7	Your ancestor made an enemy in a family from another clan, and they've never forgotten it. You gain a Sworn Enemy from that clan.
8-9	Your ancestor served in an army destined for inglorious defeat. The Lion tend not to talk about this particular battle, but they do give you funny looks. You lose 0.5 Glory and gain the Disadvantage Driven: Prove Self.
0	Your ancestor found true love in the arms of a Crane. They were forbidden to see each other again, and being a dutiful Lion your ancestor obeyed... but you have inherited his/her passionate nature. You gain either the True Love or Lost Love Disadvantage (your choice).

Table 4.2: Illustrious Lion Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	The blood of your ancestors runs strong in your veins. You may take a Lion Ancestor for 2 less points.
2-3	You can trace your line directly back to your family's founder. Honors and gifts from those early years have been passed down to you. You may take the Lion Sacred Weapon Advantage for 2 less points.
4-5	Your ancestor served honorably and memorably in the Imperial Legions. You gain 0.5 Honor and 0.5 Status.
6-7	Your ancestor died a hero's death while fighting in one of the major battles of his time. His skills are reborn in you. You gain 1 free Rank in a Weapon Skill of your choice.
8-9	Your ancestor rose to be a Rikugunshokan, commanding one of the four Lion armies in a great battle of his age. He led well, and his legacy is in your blood. You may take the Advantage Leadership for 2 less Experience Points.
0	Your ancestor died defending the Emperor from an assassination attempt. The Emperor proclaimed his line—of which you are the scion—to be Sacrosanct.

Table 4.3: Lion Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was a Kitsu who met a spirit creature he shouldn't have. You still labor under the effects of that long-ago encounter. You gain the Cursed by the Realm Disadvantage but may take the Inner Gift Advantage for 2 less Experience Points.
2-3	Your ancestor was a famous Ikoma Bard and you possess a great many of her traits. You may take the Sensation Advantage for 1 less point, but you love the adulation of the audience, and gain the Disadvantage Compulsion: Perform (2 points) as well.
4-5	Your gempukku took place on the battlefield where your ancestor died. He guides your steps, walking beside you ever since. You gain the Haunted Disadvantage but also gain 1 free Rank in a Bugei Skill of your choice.
6-7	Your ancestor took part in a battle that was a defeat for the Lion, but which is now used to teach students at the War College. You lose 1.0 Glory but gain 0.5 Honor.
8-9	Your ancestor was one of the Ikoma Lion's Shadow. His subtle and pragmatic ways have passed down to you. You start with 1.5 less Honor, but you may take either the Crafty or the Silent Advantage for 2 less Experience Points.
0	Your ancestor took part in a victorious battle, but the Lion histories consider the battle to have been run ineptly. You lose 1.0 Glory but gain 1 free Rank in a Weapon Skill of your choice.

Mantis Heritage Tables

Table 5.0: Mantis Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-4	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 5.1
5-7	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 5.2
8-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 5.3

Table 5.1: Shameful Mantis Past

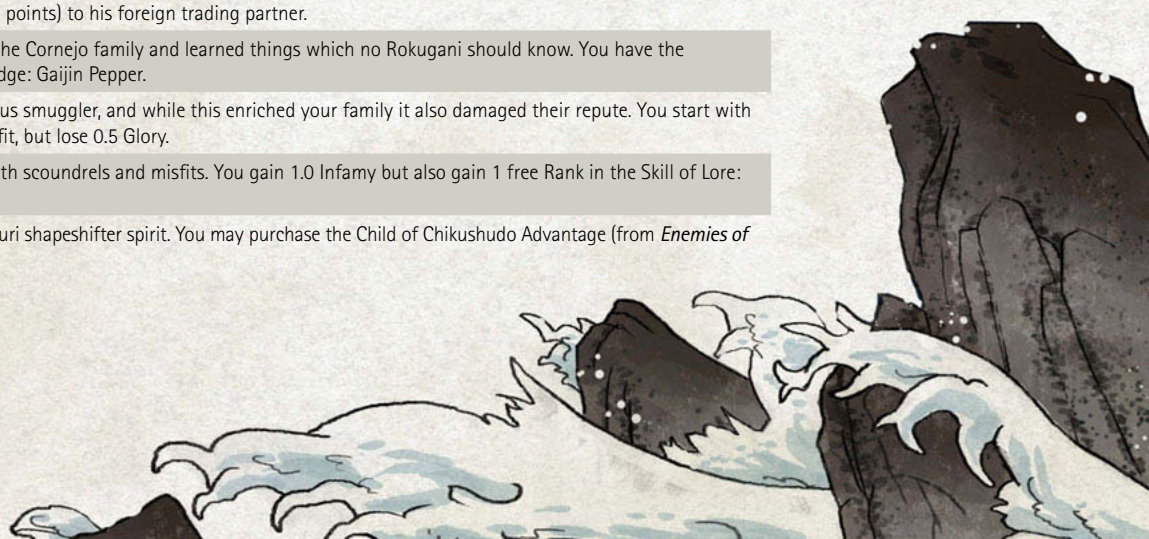
D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor thought he was the one in charge of the scam...he was wrong. His weakness is yours as well. You gain the Can't Lie Disadvantage.
2-3	Your ancestor fought on the losing side in a famous battle. He was convinced the Mantis would win... right up until the end. You gain the Overconfident Disadvantage.
4-5	Your line is filled with pirates. One ancestor was particularly noted for harassing other clans. You gain a Sworn Enemy in a clan of the GM's choice.
6-7	Your ancestor fought and died in a war far from Rokugan's shores. No one in Rokugan has ever heard of it, nor would they want to. Lose 1.0 Glory.
8-9	Your family was on the losing side of a commercial dispute and has never recovered. You gain the Disadvantage Seven Fortune's Curse: Daikoku.
0	One of your ancestors committed seppuku to atone for the Gusai family's treachery. You gain Social Disadvantage: Gusai Ancestor.

Table 5.2: Illustrious Mantis Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was a merchant patron of some renown within the Empire. You start with 2 extra koku in your Outfit.
2-3	Your ancestor proved himself during one of the great battles of his time, and his derring-do is still remembered today. His blood runs true in your veins. You may purchase the Daredevil Advantage for 1 less Experience Point.
4-5	Your ancestor was a legendary sailor and explorer. You gain 1 free Rank in either the Sailing Skill or the Navigation Skill.
6-7	You can trace your family line back to Kaimetsu-Uo himself. You may take the Blood of Osano-Wo Advantage for 1 less point.
8-9	Your ancestor was a mercenary in the early days of the Mantis Clan. He made contacts across the Empire, but became especially good friends while serving in the army of one particular clan. You gain a free 3-point Ally in another clan of your choice.
0	Your ancestor won the blessing of the Thunder Dragon during a great storm. You may take a Rank of the Magic Resistance Advantage for 1 less Experience Point.

Table 5.3: Mantis Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	You are one of the secret descendants of the Gusai family. You gain Dark Secret: Gusai Family but also gain 1.0 Status.
2-3	Your ancestor was involved in covert trade with gaijin. You may take the Gaijin Gear Advantage for 1 less Experience Point, but you have an Obligation (3 points) to his foreign trading partner.
4-5	Your ancestor was an ally of the Cornejo family and learned things which no Rokugani should know. You have the Advantage Forbidden Knowledge: Gaijin Pepper.
6-7	Your ancestor was a prosperous smuggler, and while this enriched your family it also damaged their repute. You start with 1 additional koku in your Outfit, but lose 0.5 Glory.
8-9	Your family history is filled with scoundrels and misfits. You gain 1.0 Infamy but also gain 1 free Rank in the Skill of Lore: Underworld.
0	Your ancestor married a komouri shapeshifter spirit. You may purchase the Child of Chikushudo Advantage (from *Enemies of the Empire*, page 244).



Phoenix Heritage Tables

Table 6.0: Phoenix Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-3	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 6.1
4-7	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 6.2
8-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 6.3

Table 6.1: Shameful Phoenix Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was forced to undergo the Forgotten ritual, and remnants of it remain in your bloodline. You gain the Momoku Disadvantage.
2-3	Your ancestor lost a book containing the only copy of some vital information. He committed seppuku and your family has been committed to finding the knowledge ever since. You gain the Driven Disadvantage.
4-5	Your ancestor was a yojimbo who failed to protect his charge in battle. The shame of his actions has not yet been purged. You gain 1.0 Infamy.
6-7	Your ancestor was an Ishiken who got a little too close to the Void. You gain the Touch of the Void Disadvantage.
8-9	Your ancestor dabbled in maho. He summoned an oni and gave it his name. Ever since, that oni has been haunting your family line.
0	While researching powerful new magics, your ancestor disappeared in a flash of light, taking his notes with him. The Kitsu have determined his soul never made it to Meido. No one has been able to duplicate his work or determine where he has gone. Your family is obsessed with hunting for him; you gain the Consumed by Knowledge Disadvantage.

Table 6.2: Illustrious Phoenix Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	You can trace your line directly to your family's founder. You may take a Phoenix Clan Ancestor for 2 less Experience Points.
2-3	Your ancestor was one of the Elemental Masters and your line is still granted respect for this today. You gain 1.0 Glory and 1.0 Status.
4-5	This is not your first time around on the kharmic wheel, and you have been lucky enough to be reborn as your own descendant. You may take the Enlightened Advantage for 1 less point.
6-7	Your ancestor was instrumental in negotiating a peace treaty between two clans. His legacy of virtue and compassion is still carried forward in your line. You gain 1.0 Honor and you may purchase the Advantage Paragon of Compassion for 2 less Experience Points.
8-9	Your ancestor was a yojimbo who fought and won a glorious duel in defense of his charge. His fame endures and you look to his example for guidance. Gain 1 free Rank in the Iaijutsu Skill and 0.5 Glory.
0	Your ancestor achieved one of the great breakthroughs of magic, and you have benefitted from his work. Gain 1 free Rank in either the Lore: Shugenja Skill or the Spellcraft Skill

Table 6.3: Phoenix Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was a shugenja of some renown with her Element, but was absolutely terrible with the opposing Element. You may take the Friend of the Elements (Element of your choice) Advantage for 1 less Experience Point, but also gain Wrath of the Kami in the opposing Element.
2-3	A kansen tempted your ancestor into using maho, leaving a stain on your family name. The kansen has since found you. It acts as the "Friendly Kami" advantage, but the bonuses only apply to casting Maho spells.
4-5	One of your ancestors went missing for several months. No one is sure where he went, but when he returned he had no memories save for a message he claimed was from the Celestial Heavens. You may take the Advantage Chosen by the Oracles for 2 less Experience Points, but you also gain the Disadvantage Lord Moon's Curse (3 points).
6-7	Your ancestor was repeatedly defeated at something, and your family has made a point of being the best at it ever since. Choose a Skill. You gain the Jealousy Disadvantage in that Skill, but you also gain either 2 free Ranks in that Skill or one free Emphasis in that Skill.
8-9	Your ancestor was a well-known mediator. In one particularly dangerous situation she took extreme and dishonorable measures to preserve the peace. Her dishonor and success both linger. You start with 1.0 less Honor but also gain a 2-point Ally in another clan.
0	Your family has always been one of the guardians of Gisei Toshi. You have access to the sacred knowledge and hidden items within Gisei Toshi should you need them, but you must never tell anyone about the city's location. Gain Dark Secret: Location of Gisei Toshi.

Scorpion Heritage Tables

Table 7.0: Scorpion Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-2	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 7.1
3-5	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 7.2
6-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 7.3

Table 7.1: Shameful Scorpion Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was branded with the name "junshin," and you find that you're junshin too. The clan will probably never trust you with anything important.
2-3	Your ancestor was played for a fool in the courts for all to see. His weak nature is reborn in you. You gain the Gullible Disadvantage.
4-5	Your ancestor gave away vital information to the enemy, forever tainting your family's name as disloyal. You lose 1.0 Glory and 0.5 Status and may never have the Gentry Advantage.
6-7	Your ancestor was supposed to target and eliminate an enemy—either politically or physically. Regardless, he fell in love with his target instead and never completed his mission. Your family has been fighting his legacy ever since. You lose 0.5 Status and gain the Disadvantage Failure of Bushido: Duty.
8-9	Your ancestor was in command of a battle that should have been an easy win for the Scorpion. Instead, they were defeated, resulting in many years of lost time for the Scorpion in the courts. You gain the Overconfident Disadvantage.
0	You aren't sure what your ancestor did, but somewhere there's a tree with his name on it.

Table 7.2: Illustrious Scorpion Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Charisma runs in your blood. Your ancestors were all notable seductresses and seducers. You gain the Dangerous Beauty Advantage.
2-3	Your ancestor had a winter romance that the Scorpion were able to use to further their agenda. You may take Blackmail on someone in another clan for 2 less Experience Points.
4-5	Your ancestor was adept at finding others' weaknesses and twisting them to her benefit, and you are her true heir. You gain the Heartless Advantage for 1 less Experience Point.
6-7	Your ancestor without hesitation or question in order to further a larger plot, and his loyalty runs in your veins. You may take the Advantage Paragon of Duty for 2 less Experience Points.
8-9	Your ancestor was a shinobi who assassinated vital targets. Some of his skills are reborn in you. You gain 1 free Rank in the Stealth Skill.
0	Your ancestor performed a mission for the Shosuro Infiltrators, for which they owe your family a debt. You may call on their assistance once in your life and they will help you. (The GM decides exactly how.)

Table X.7: Scorpion Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was a Rikugunshokan in command of the Scorpion army. He was instructed to lose a specific battle, but despite his best efforts he won instead. You may take a Rank in the Luck Advantage for 1 less Experience Point, but you also gain the Infamous Disadvantage.
2-3	After your gempukku you were given a nemuranai. You were told nothing about its history or nature, only that you are to keep it safe, hidden, and never ever to use it.
4-5	Your family has always had connections with the criminal underworld, and someone knows about it. You gain either 2 free Ranks of Lore: Underworld or a 2-point Ally in the criminal classes, but you also gain the Blackmailed Disadvantage.
6-7	Your ancestor died in a duel to prove a point. You share both his nature and his legacy. You may take the Advantage Paragon of Duty for 2 less Experience Points, but you also gain a Nemesis in the appropriate clan.
8-9	Your ancestor joined the shinobi and a few of the skills he was taught have been passed down. You gain 1 free Rank in the Ninjutsu Skill but you also have the Disadvantage Dark Secret.
0	Your ancestor was Shadow Branded. Due to the Shadow's ongoing influence over your family line, you gain the Silent advantage, but the Shadow is looking for you...

Unicorn Heritage Tables

Table 8.0: Unicorn Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-2	**Shameful Past:** Roll on Table 8.1
3-6	**Illustrious Past:** Roll on Table 8.2
7-0	**Mixed Blessings:** Roll on Table 8.3

Table 8.1: Shameful Unicorn Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor was a Moto who fell to the Shadowlands, and he would very much like you to join him. You gain the Disadvantage Cursed by Jigoku.
2-3	As part of an investigation, your ancestor uncovered a dirty secret about another family… and spread the news widely. You gain the Rumormonger Disadvantage.
4-5	Your ancestor ran from his duties to the Unicorn and became a ronin. Although your family has survived, the shame still stains your reputation. You lose 0.5 Glory and 0.5 Status.
6-7	Your ancestor was on the losing side during one of the famous battles of her day. You lose 1.0 Glory.
8-9	Your ancestor was a Battle Maiden who betrayed her oath of chastity. Her passionate nature has passed down to you. You gain the Lechery Disadvantage.
0	Your ancestors were cursed by a gaijin wizard. Your family has been unable to lift the curse despite generations of effort. You gain the Weakness Disadvantage in a Trait chosen by the GM.

Table 8.2: Illustrious Unicorn Past

D10 Roll	Result
1	You can trace your lineage back to the founding Kami, Lady Shinjo. You may take a Unicorn Ancestor for 2 less Experience Points.
2-3	Your ancestor was an Ujik-hai who joined the clan via a blood oath. You may take the Gaijin Gear Advantage for 2 less Experience Points.
4-5	Your ancestor fought bravely in a famous battle of his day, and you strive to live up to his glorious example. You gain 0.5 Glory and 1 free Rank in the Battle Skill.
6-7	Your ancestor died while protecting a commander in the army of an allied clan. They have not forgotten his sacrifice. You may take a free 3-point Ally from that clan.
8-9	Your ancestor died in a successful fighting retreat, saving her comrades. Her skills are reborn in you. You may take the Tactician Advantage for 1 less point.
0	Your ancestor was a loyal samurai rewarded by his lord for years of dutiful service. His legacy has passed to you. You may purchase the Unicorn Sacred Weapon Advantage for 2 less Experience Points.

Table 8.3: Unicorn Mixed Blessings

D10 Roll	Result
1	Your ancestor fell to the Lying Darkness, and your family has fought against it ever since. You gain the Shadow as a Sworn Enemy, but you have a small crystal item (a pendant, earring, or necklace).
2-3	Your ancestor was originally from another clan, but joined the Unicorn through a politically arranged marriage. You may call in a favor from that clan, but once you do you will become Obligated to them.
4-5	Your ancestor joined the Kolat, and your bloodline has served the conspiracy ever since. You gain the Advantage Forbidden Knowledge: Kolat but also gain the Disadvantage Dark Secret: Kolat.
6-7	Your ancestor was a highly successful merchant in foreign lands. You inherited a strange artifact from him, but no one has any idea what it does.
8-9	Your family has struggled financially, and you have been forced to study the ways of coin and craft in order to compensate. You start with 4 less koku in your Outfit, but you gain 1 free Rank in Commerce and 1 free Rank in a Craft Skill of your choice.
0	Your ancestor met a jinn while wandering the Burning Sands. They had a long and fruitful affair. You occasionally have strange urges and odd dreams…

Spider Heritage Tables

Table 9.0: Spider Heritage

D10 Roll	Result
1-3	**Born of Darkness:** Roll on Table 9.1
4-8	**Fallen from Grace:** Roll on Table 9.2
9-0	**Omens and Portents:** Roll on Table 9.3

Table 9.1: Born of Darkness

D10 Roll	Result
1-3	Your father was a minor functionary in the entourage of an Imperial Herald. When your lord was killed by bandits, he survived, and the Lost accepted him into their ranks. He meant only to survive, but their acceptance gave him the first true sense of belonging he had ever known. You gain the Perceived Honor Advantage.
4-6	Your parents were among those who first flocked to Daigotsu's banner, and you were among the first born in the City of the Lost. You the Fame Advantage and 1 free Rank in a Weapon Skill of your choice.
7-9	Your mother was consumed by the Lying Darkness, yet somehow managed to give birth to you without passing on her affliction. Or did she? You gain the Crafty Advantage.
0	Your parents were members of the Unbroken, a group of Tainted ronin who sought to purge their corruption by killing others that possessed it. You, however, embraced your strength and cast aside their weakness. You gain the Strength of the Earth Advantage.

Table 9.2: Fallen from Grace

D10 Roll	Result
1-2	Your family once served the Crab, but an ancestor was corrupted in the line of duty and rather than be consigned to death, he embraced his fate. You gain the Large Advantage and 1 free rank in the Heavy Weapons Skill, but also gain a Sworn Enemy among the Crab.
3-4	Your family was once part of the Mantis, but a voyage through the Sea of Shadow led to corruption and madness. You gain one rank of the Luck Advantage and 1free Rank in the Skills of Chain Weapons and Sailing, but gain a Sworn Enemy among the Mantis.
5-6	Your family once claimed membership among the Phoenix, but your ancestor's love of secrets and lust for knowledge overwhelmed him, leading him to corruption. You gain the Forbidden Knowledge Advantage and 1 free Rank in a Lore Skill of your choice, but gain a Sworn Enemy among the Phoenix.
7-8	The Scorpion once considered your family loyal vassals, but study of dark secrets led to your ancestor's corruption and he was sanctioned by the clan. You gain the Dangerous Beauty Advantage and 1 free Rank in the Stealth Skill, but gain a Sworn Enemy among the Scorpion.
9-0	Your ancestor was once a Unicorn, but the call of the fallen Moto was unusually strong within his soul and he willingly rode to the Shadowlands. You gain the Gaijin Gear Advantage and 1 free Rank in the Horsemanship Skill, but gain a Sworn Enemy among the Unicorn.

Table 9.3: Omens & Portents

D10 Roll	Result
1-3	You were taken from your family as an infant—stolen by the Bloodspeaker Cult, who felt you were a child of prophecy. You never embraced their ways, however, and eagerly betrayed them to the Lost at the first opportunity. You gain the Touch of the Spirit Realm Advantage.
4-6	You were abandoned at a monastery as a child, an unwelcome burden on your parents. Your years in the monastery were unpleasant and punishing, but the doctrine of strength and power in the Order of the Spider appealed to you, and you were among Roshungi's first adherents. You gain the Dark Paragon Advantage.
7-9	As a child you suffered from visions. Others thought you were possessed by demons and eventually you were abandoned by your family. The Lost never questioned your value, however, and let you earn your place among them. You gain the Ishiken-do Advantage.
0	The other Lost found you as a child, surviving alone in the Shadowlands. No one understands how this was possible and you have no memory of those years. Sometimes, however, you have half-remembered dreams that give you glimpses of what happened... or what will happen. You gain the Inner Gift Advantage.

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