
Legend of the Five Rings
4th EDITION ROLEPLAYING GAME


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Legend of the Five Rings RPG, 4th Edition

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序文 FOREWARD

As I write this, the final files for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game, 4th Edition are being prepared and sent to our partners for layout. Writing and playtesting has been done for a little while now, and editing just wrapped up. We're going to run them through a secondary proofreading once the PDFs are done, but all the grunt work is finished. It's been almost two years since we started it, and now the finish line is in sight. For the most part, my work is done. And in its wake I find myself oddly missing it. Normally when I finish a big project I'm hugely relieved. This time, it's something that's been a part of my life virtually every day for nearly two years, and I'm kind of at a loss what to do now. Oh, there are plenty of follow-up projects: web support, the GM screen, the first couple of sourcebooks... but nothing quite like that basic book.

Obviously, for me to miss working on the book already, you can infer that this has been an amazing experience. I have been blessed in the past to work with amazingly talented professionals, people who were not only my coworkers but my friends as well, but this has been altogether different. The team I put together for this book has been nothing short of phenomenal, and I count myself lucky to have been able to work with such incredibly gifted designers. Todd likes to call this my magnum opus, and I'd love to confirm that, but in all honesty I cannot. Too many other good men and women have poured their heart and soul into this game for it to ever belong to just one person. I'm just happy to have been a part of it, and there are so many people without whom it never could have happened.

I'm always grateful to my family, who have supported me and encouraged me over the years. Julie and my parents, foremost, but my brothers, both biological and other, as well. And of course my little man, Dalton, with whom I hope I can one day play this amazing game. I love all you guys.

I'm grateful to my friends and coworkers on the Design Team, Rob and Brian. They have been there every step of the way and taken and improved upon ideas I've had in ways I never thought possible. It has been truly a pleasure. Not just the designers, though, but jim and Todd as well, and the many others at the office who have given this project their unwavering support.

I don't know how I could ever say enough to thank the playtesters of this edition. It could not have happened without them, not in any form. Thank you all so much for your hard work and dedication.

And thank you for reading and playing the game. I hope that you have every bit as much fun playing it as I have had in working on it.

Shawn Carman

L5R Lead Writer
Alderac Entertainment Group



The scout races in and drops to one knee, fist to ground.
"Kazumi-sama," he pants, "the ploy has worked!"

-The Taisa

Welcome to



"Scout coming in," Matsu Kazumi calls. The Taisa makes a gesture to the soldiers behind her.

The squadron of the Imperial Legions stirs itself to life, men and women rising to their feet and checking their horses. Shiba Naro re-ties the straps on his armor, noting out of the corners of his eyes that Bayushi Chieko is watching to make sure he does it right. He has been with the Fourth Legion for eight months now, but many of them still treat him like a hapless younger brother, even the ones like Chieko who are barely older than him. It doesn't help that Chieko is also highly attractive. Naro clamps his jaw and finishes his check before sliding the twin swords of his daisho underneath his silk obi belt. "At least now I am offered a chance to fight and show my worth," he thinks.

The scout races in and drops to one knee, fist to ground. "Kazumi-sama," he pants, "the ploy has worked!"

The Taisa smiles coldly and lets her gaze linger briefly to the southern horizon. The clouds of dust raised by the decoy force are just visible, smudges of gray-brown against the deep blue sky of summer. A handful of men on horseback, dragging branches to raise the dust of the full squadron, chasing after the handful of bandits who fled southwest to lure them away.

"And the bandits' main force?"

"One mile," the scout replies, pointing north. "They have made camp and stacked weapons."

"So ka," Kazumi says, and her smile turns feral. She swings into the saddle and turns her horse to face her soldiers. "Mount up! We finish these bandits today. This task has already taken far too long, now it ends!"

Shiba Naro mounts his sturdy Rokugani pony, soothing the animal's nerves with an absent motion of one hand, then snatches up a yari from the tripod of spears in the center of the camp. Chieko slips into position alongside him, pulling down her war-mempo to conceal her lovely features. She gives him a smile and Naro feels his face heat despite his efforts to maintain on. Hurriedly he ties on his own war-mask.

Within a few moments, the whole unit surges forward in a walk-trot, following the scout. The Legionnaires speed their pace as they pass through a low valley and up toward a ridge. They crest the top of the slope and suddenly the bandit camp is before them, dirty men scrambling up and reaching for weapons, an antheap kicked by a vengeful child. A roaring war-cry rises from the ranks of the samurai as they spur their mounts to a gallop. Eager for glory, Naro forces his mount ahead, into the front ranks of the charge, leveling his spear at the bandits. One of them is waving a yari in sharp, decisive gestures, trying to get his men into a defensive line, but they are not trained soldiers and the Legionnaires have caught them by surprise...

"And... that's an Initiative roll," the GM declares with a smile.

Welcome to the Emerald Empire

You hold in your hands the fourth edition of the Legend of the Five Rings role-playing game. Here in these pages is an exciting opportunity to delve into adventure and intrigue in a distant and exotic land, without ever leaving the comfort of your own home! Gamers have been visiting Rokugan, the Emerald Empire, since the first edition of this game was published in 1997, and we hope and expect this latest version will be even more exciting and compelling than its award-winning predecessors.

What is a Role-Playing Game?

A role-playing game is a cooperative experience between multiple participants. At its simplest, it can be described as an organized form of group make-believe, with a set of rules and procedures to keep things consistent and fair. The goal is not to win – there are no real "winners" in a role-playing game – but simply to have a good time.

When a group of people get together to play a role-playing game, one of them is selected to be the Game Master ("GM" for short). Everyone else is a Player. Each player is responsible for creating a single fictional character, like a character in a novel or a movie. These are known as Player Characters ("PCs" for short) and they are, in effect, the "stars" of the story depicted in the game. The players completely control their characters, deciding what they do, what they say, how they feel, and how they react to the world around them. The rules contained in this book outline how these characters are created and what they are capable of doing, providing realistic limits on their capabilities and actions. These rules systems are commonly referred to as "mechanics." Among other things, they explain how the players and the GM can use dice (in this case 10-sided dice) to resolve actions and events in the game.

Once the players have created their characters, the GM is responsible for presenting them with an adventure, by describing the events, locations, and individuals the characters encounter. For example, the GM may tell the players their characters have been gathered together as part of a tournament to earn honor and glory for their lords and clans. Or he may tell the players that their characters meet when the lord of the castle where they are staying is found dead, and they have to decide who killed him. Or he may tell them they



are all bitter enemies, and let the story grow from there. The GM is also responsible for administering the game itself, for controlling the flow of play, interpreting and controlling the rules, and deciding how the story plays out. The responsibility of the GM is considerable, as the description and actions of every object, creature, and individual the characters encounter is in his hands. The GM must try to anticipate the actions of the characters and how the world around them will react and be changed by those actions. The GM also serves as the final arbiter of the rules, of how they are applied to the game and what happens in situations where the rules are not clear. In effect, the GM is the engine of the imaginary world, the one who lends it motion and power, the one who spins the wheels of plot and unleashes dramatic challenges, twists, reversals, and climaxes.

Although a role-playing game is a game, it is not a competitive one. As mentioned above, no one really "wins" a role-playing game, and the GM and players are not on different "sides." A role-playing game is intended to be a cooperative experience, an exercise in make-believe and interactive storytelling. Everyone works together to create a story that is emotionally engaging, dramatically satisfying, and enjoyable for all – even if it does not end well for the characters. After all, not all stories end happily, and some of the best stories are tragedies – especially in Rokugan.

Traditionally, a role-playing game is comprised of individual adventures, or stories, which happen one after the other. An extended series of such adventures is known as a "campaign," and a successful RPG campaign can run for months or even years of play.

But Why is it Called "Role-Playing"?

A key aspect of a role-playing game (or "RPG"), as its name implies, is that the players are supposed to get into the role of the characters they control, to imagine how those characters would speak and act in a given situation and play accordingly. Many players make a point of speaking as their characters, trying as much as possible to inhabit the role of their character rather than treating the character as a separate entity. This is known as "playing in-character" and is often both the most challenging and the most rewarding aspect of a role-playing game.

Likewise, the GM is responsible for taking on the roles of all the samurai, peasants, monsters, and other individuals which the players may encounter during the game. These innumerable characters are commonly referred to as Non-Player Characters (or "NPCs") and giving them distinctive identities, personalities, and motives can be very challenging for the GM. The reward for this effort, however, is an imaginary world that seems to come to life around the players, making their adventures that much more engrossing and compelling.

Why Use Dice?

Since the first role-playing games appeared in the 1970s, almost all of them have used dice in one way or another to resolve in-game actions. This is partly because role-playing games are descended from tabletop miniatures games, but it is also because using dice in the game provides a means of depicting chance, luck, and fortune. Without dice, a role-playing game is not really a game at all, but merely an exercise in group storytelling, which can lead to disagreement and tension when different players want to push the story in different directions. The dice supply an impartial arbiter, out of the control of both players and GM, to prevent such disagreement.

Of course, dice aren't the only way to resolve actions while inserting chance into a game – a few RPGs have employed other methods of resolving actions, such as drawing from a deck of cards, and some have even experimented with taking away dice altogether and letting the GM simply decide whether the players succeed or not. However, dice remain the most widespread and traditional method, and the one which Legend of the Five Rings uses by default. Of course, if you and your fellow players want to experiment with playing without dice, by all means do so!

What is Rokugan?

Rokugan is a fictional kingdom, a vast Empire whose history, myths, and culture draw heavily upon the real-life history and culture of ancient and medieval Asia, primarily Japan but also including China and Korea, among others. It is a land where samurai, honorable servants of the Divine Emperor, wage war and forge peace in the name of their lords. It is a land where mighty Great Clans, each comprised of multiple ancient families, work together and against one another in hopes of accomplishing their political and military agendas. It is a land where valiant warriors, or *bushi*, struggle to win the day for their clans on the field of battle. It is a land where pious *shugenja* priests offer prayers to the multitude of Fortunes in hopes of achieving the blessings of Heaven for their lands. It is a land where courtier politicians wage an endless war of words, seeking any possible advantage for their clans. Rokugan is an Empire of honor and glory, of strife and adventure, of horror and mystery.

Why Play Legend of the Five Rings?

There are many RPGs on the market, offering games on every topic from classic fantasy to science-fiction to costumed superheroes. We would assume, though, that if you've bought this book you are looking for a different sort of gaming experience than what you've been offered by those other games. What sets Legend of the Five Rings apart from them?

Legend of the Five Rings (often shortened to "L5R") is a fantasy game, with magic and monsters, but it is not about killing monsters, collecting treasure, and rescuing princesses. It is a game about honor, heroism, and the moral consequences associated with the samurai code of Bushido. Rokugan is a world with a rigid code of conduct, morality, and authority. Samurai do not adventure for gold. They do not roam the land in search of vorpal blades conveniently nestled in the caves of wandering ogres. They honor their families, lords, and ancestors by respecting the traditions set forth by over 1,000 years of history and valor. What use are gems and flying carpets to the samurai, who carries the soul of his grandfather and the burden of tradition everywhere he walks?



It should be noted that L5R is not about playing a real-world samurai, but rather about the romanticized vision of samurai found in stories and film, a vision in which Honor and Bushido have real meaning and force. Players and GMs are creating the mythical and legendary tales of samurai who excel in their station. Such stories are not based on rational self-interest or self-preservation, but rather on heroic conduct in the tradition of Bushido. So if you don't know all the details of how samurai addressed each other, if you don't remember the myriad subtle differences between the Heian, Kamakura, Muromachi, Nara, Edo, Toyotomi, and Tokugawa eras of historical Japan – don't sweat it too much! Rokugan is ultimately a fantasy world, a fusion of Asian culture from many eras and many peoples. Samurai legends do not need to concern themselves with every mispronounced word or poorly placed Japanese honorific.

Bushido is the centerpiece of L5R, the fulcrum of every scene, act, adventure, and campaign. It is, ultimately, what sets this game apart from every other RPG. Bushido is the moral code, the "way of the warrior," that informs the behavior of every samurai, whether bushi, shugenja, or scholar. It is a double-sided blade of conviction and narrow-mindedness. It is a culture of obedience and tradition. It is the path of the honorable and courageous. And it is the tool of every GM to make the players face the complex and often difficult consequences of their decisions and choices. Following Bushido is not easy, and characters' choices can twist in their hands like a bloodied knife.

With Bushido, a GM can make even the simplest adventure a daunting task, with every complication enriching the game experience. For example, consider an adventure where the dead body of a friend is finally found, but his *daisho*, the twin swords which mark him as a samurai, is missing. How can the body be brought back to the family honorably without the swords? Now the game is not a simple transportation mission with bandits trying to attack the caravan on the way home. Instead, the game is about the conflict between a proper funeral and a timely one. It is about honor and propriety, the things that truly matter to a samurai, not about attack rolls and Wound totals.

Of course, in truth no one can tell you how to play L5R. This book belongs to you and you can play the game in whatever way you want. But if you are willing to embrace the moral conflicts and compelling emotional drama inherent in Bushido and the samurai life, you will find Legend of the Five Rings to be in a class apart from any other RPG.

What is in This Book

This book contains all the basic material you will need to design and play adventures in the world of Legend of the Five Rings. The Rokugani believe that all of reality is organized into five Elements – Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Void – and it is from these that the "five rings" of the title are derived. Accordingly, this book is divided into five chapters, each discussing a different aspect of Legend of the Five Rings.

The *Book of Air* contains basic information on the world of Rokugan. It includes a brief century-by-century history of the Emerald Empire, a discussion of Rokugani culture, beliefs, and customs, and specific discussion of the eight Great Clans who dominate the Empire's history and conflicts.

The *Book of Earth* contains the basic rules of the game. It explains the fundamental mechanics of playing Legend of the Five Rings, including the role and importance of the five Elemental Rings, the various die-rolling mechanics, and the essential rules of combat, dueling, and other actions.

The *Book of Fire* contains the basic character creation rules and offers detailed discussions of how to make an assortment of basic character types from each of the eight Great Clans. It also offers a full list of Skills, Advantages, Disadvantages, and Spells for use in the game.

The *Book of Water* contains advanced and optional rules, rules which the GM and players can decide to use or ignore as they please. These rules add more variety and customization options to the game. They include information on playing a character from one of the Minor Clans or Imperial Families, and a variety of special mechanics such as Alternate Paths, Advanced Schools, Kata, Kiho, Ancestors, and the sinister secrets of black magic (also known as *maho*) and the Shadowlands Taint.

Finally, the *Book of Void* contains rules and information for the GM. There is an extended discussion of different ways to construct adventures and campaigns for L5R, as well as rules for monsters and natural creatures, a basic selection of such creatures with which to challenge the players, and a sample adventure with which to start out your Legend of the Five Rings gaming experience.

A Note for Returning Players

Some players of Legend of the Five Rings Fourth Edition may be familiar with previous editions of L5R. Such players may feel daunted at the prospect of learning the game all over again. Fear not! Most of the basic mechanics have remained unchanged. Characters are still defined by the five Rings, their subsidiary Traits, and a selection of Skills. Mechanics such as Advantages, Disadvantages, Schools, Paths, Advanced Schools, and Spells have all been retained, but all of them have been redesigned from the ground up to ensure a balanced, thematically consistent game experience. Players should read through these mechanics carefully before assuming they still do the same things they did before.

There are a number of specific mechanical changes from earlier editions. For the convenience of returning players, we have summarized the most notable of these changes here:

- The Skill list has been reworked, rationalizing some errors in previous editions and, in the process, bringing back a few old favorites. Skills still have Emphases that allow PCs to specialize in using the Skill in a specific way, but instead of creating a bonus to the total roll, an Emphasis now allows players to re-roll dice that result in a 1. Skill Mastery Abilities, first introduced in 3rd Edition, are still around but have been simplified and re-designed.
- Weapons no longer have special abilities. A character's extra capabilities with a weapon are now determined solely by Skill Mastery and School Techniques.
- There are now five combat Postures, instead of three. The new Postures are Defense (which makes characters somewhat harder to hit, while still allowing them to cast spells or perform Skill rolls, but not attack) and Center (which is used for dueling and also allows a character to "power up" for a round before attacking).
- Iaijutsu duels have been streamlined and simplified, doing away with the need to spend endless time rolling Focus attempts.
- Initiative is now rolled once, at the start of combat, and changed only if a character has an Advantage or Technique which allows it to be modified later.
- The Action system has been simplified from 3rd Edition. A character may take one Complex Action or two Simple Actions per round. Characters may also take any number of Free Actions, but each specific type of Free Action (such as moving) can only be taken once per round.
- There are no longer Techniques which grant an extra attack. Instead, certain Techniques change attacks from a Complex Action to a Simple Action.
- Raises are now limited solely by Void, and the availability of Free Raises has been greatly reduced. Some of the combat maneuvers which can be performed with Raises have been changed significantly from 3rd Edition, especially the Extra Damage, Feint, and Disarm maneuvers.
- An assortment of standardized Conditions (such as Blind, Prone, and Stunned) have been introduced in order to simplify combat situations and consolidate information. Instead of searching through the rulebook to figure out what happens when your character is knocked down, you can simply flip to the Conditions section in the Book of Earth.
- The rules on Alternate Paths and Advanced Schools have been modified somewhat. In particular, Paths now replace a specific School Technique, instead of being "added in" between School Ranks, so there is now a real trade-off in taking a Path.
- The advanced rules for Kata, Kiho, and Ancestors have all been changed greatly from their previous forms.





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"We tell the stories of heroes to remind ourselves that we can also be great"

- Doji Shizue

Book of Air



The Birth of the Universe

In the beginning, before the universe was created, there was only Nothing. The Nothing that existed before the birth of all things was aware, and at some point during its timeless existence, it realized it was alone – and thus experienced Fear. This unprecedented emotion was the first Sin, and created one third of the world. The realization of Fear also created in the Nothing a sense of loneliness and a desire for a companion. These sensations were the second Sin, Desire, and created a second third of the world. And when the Nothing realized what it had done, it experienced regret and a wish to unmake what it had mistakenly created. This was the third Sin, Regret, and it created the final portion of the world, completing it and ending the Nothing's existence.

The newly-made universe was chaotic and formless at first, like an egg whose white and yolk had been intermixed. Slowly, the primal elements of creation seeped through the empty universe, and the energies pooled, with the heaviest sinking to the bottom and creating different layers of reality. Above was the Celestial Heavens, while below the mortal realm was born, as were the various other spirit realms and, finally, Jigoku, the Realm of Evil.

In the wake of the Nothing came three entities whose names have never been known by any living creature, mortal or divine, since that time. When they are spoken of at all, they are simply known as the Three Gods Whose Names Cannot Be Spoken. These three gods looked upon the new realms, particularly the mortal world, and recognized that it must be given form and purpose, an act beyond their means. In order to give shape to the universe, the three gods sacrificed themselves to give birth to a single man and woman, two divine beings who could do what the three before could not, and bring order to existence. Thus were born the Sun Goddess and the Moon God.

Lady Sun and Lord Moon looked down upon the mortal world and were perplexed by its formlessness. Ultimately, they realized they could only give form to what existed there by giving names to all the things that could be found in the mortal realm. They entered the mortal realm and named it, and doing so, they created names for themselves; Lady Sun became Amaterasu, and Lord Moon became Onnotangu. They began to name all they found there, such as stones, trees, deer, and all other things imaginable.

As the two gods walked the mortal world, Onnotangu noticed something Amaterasu did not: a tiny scrap of the primordial darkness that had once comprised the Nothing. Intrigued and deceptive, Onnotangu chose not to name this particular bit of existence, and did not bring it to Amaterasu's attention. In doing so, he allowed the living shadow to slink away and hide itself, where it would grow powerful as the world aged, and one day threaten the existence of the universe itself. Of course, Onnotangu could not know at the time that his act would have such dire consequences.

The Fall of the Kami

With the mortal realm fully formed, Amaterasu and Onnotangu returned to the Celestial Heavens, and Lord Moon's ardor for Lady Sun grew more powerful with each passing moment until, driven by his obsessive love, he pursued the Sun across the sky, creating the cycle of day and night. Onnotangu eventually caught up with Amaterasu, and the sky was blackened during the middle of the day. It was at this time, the first eclipse, that the ten children of the Sun and Moon were conceived. Their birth did not come for some time, as the divine are not subject to the same rules of mortals, but eventually they were born: Hantei, Hida, Doji, Togashi, Akodo, Shiba, Bayushi, Shinjo, Fu Leng, and Ryoshun. Their birth was a cause for great concern for Onnotangu, not only because he knew that Amaterasu would love their children far more than she would ever love him, but also because he knew a child of both the Sun and Moon had the potential to become more powerful than he and might attempt to usurp his position. The Moon God thus decided his children must die.

Lord Moon pursued his children throughout the Heavens, heedless of Lady Sun's pleading for him to stop. One by one, he captured each of them and swallowed them whole, while Amaterasu wept for their demise. However, despite her sorrow, Amaterasu was determined to save at least one of her children. After each child was consumed, she brought her husband a drink of drugged sake. After the ninth child was consumed and the sake drunk, Onnotangu was so stupefied that Amaterasu was able to feed him a stone in place of her last child, Hantei. Thus one child was saved, and Lord Moon fell into a deep slumber. Hantei trained with the Celestial Dragons to defeat his father, and they gave him a sword of great power. When Lord Moon awoke, he found Lady Sun and Hantei awaiting him, and son battled father. It was a terrible battle, but in the end, Hantei cut his father open, and his siblings tumbled out – all save for Ryoshun, the first consumed and the only one among them who was truly dead.

In a rage, Onnotangu lashed out and seized Fu Leng, his youngest son, determined that not all his spawn should escape. Hantei struck and severed his father's hand, and Fu Leng tumbled after his siblings. In desperation, Fu Leng reached for anything to save himself, took hold of Hantei, and pulled him down alongside him. Thus, nine of the ten children of Lady Sun and Lord Moon fell from the Heavens and came to the mortal realm.



Pre-History of the Empire

The mortal perception of time is completely alien to the laws governing the Celestial Heavens, and as a result, things that seem to have taken very little time, or even that might have happened instantaneously, can allow vast lengths of time to pass in the mortal realm. After Lady Sun and Lord Moon named the world, thousands of years passed while they pursued one another and gave birth to their children. During that time, the mortal realm was not idle. Many races were born, rose to prominence, and faded into obscurity long before mankind walked the world. The lion-like Kitsu, the subterranean Zokujin, the wily Kenku, the brutish ogres, and the opportunistic trolls were but a few of the races that flourished during this time, although the conflicting accounts of their "empires" make any attempt to properly chronicle this era impossible.

Perhaps the greatest of the pre-human civilizations was that of the Naga, a race of serpent-men who shared a strange communal mind. The Naga Empire was vast, and came into conflict with a race of immortals from a distant land known as the Ashalan, as well as with the Lying Darkness, the primordial shadow spared by Onnotangu, and the power of Jigoku, which they collectively called the Foul. Eventually the Naga fell into a deep slumber, a slumber entered on the day that the sun turned black as the ten Kami were conceived. The Naga went to sleep so their race might survive and emerge in the future, when they believed the Foul would again threaten all of existence.

After the Naga entered their sleep, the Nezumi came to prominence. A former food source for the Naga, the rat-like Nezumi established a far-reaching empire that somehow overcame the powerful ogre race, who were extremely few in number compared to the quick-breeding Nezumi. There is no way to know how far the Nezumi empire would eventually have spread, but its heyday was ended by the fall of the Kami, for the youngest of the Sun and Moon's children, Fu Leng, fell far from his siblings and crashed into the mortal world in the center of the Nezumi capital. The devastation wrought by his fall destroyed the city, scattered the Nezumi, and created the Shadowlands, for he punched through the mortal realm into Jigoku itself.

The tears of Lady Sun and the blood of Lord Moon are what gave rise to humanity, who spread quickly across the face of the lands currently known as Rokugan. Although this should have occurred simultaneously with the fall of the Kami, it is commonly believed that at least a century passed after mankind first appeared before the Kami descended to the mortal realm. In that time humanity scattered across the land, forming many different tribes, villages, and groups. Among the most prominent was the Tribe of Isawa, named for their leader, the most powerful spell-caster known to exist in the mortal realm. It was into this environment that the Kami descended.

When the Kami arrived, they believed their brothers Fu Leng and Ryoshun were dead (incorrectly, in the case of Fu Leng), and chose not to speak of their fallen siblings out of respect for them. The children of the Sun and Moon wandered the world, interacting with mankind before returning to speak with one another. It was unanimously agreed that mankind should be protected and guided, and the only question that remained was who among the Kami should lead. Many of them believed they were best suited to rule, and ultimately a

tournament was held at the site of their arrival in the mortal realm. Hida, strongest of the Kami, was defeated by the speed and skill of Shinjo, but Shinjo in turn was tricked and defeated by Bayushi. Shiba, Bayushi's twin, observed his brother's tricks and was not deceived. Doji's elegance overcame Shiba, but she in turn was defeated by the might of Akodo. Finally, Hantei defeated his brother Akodo and became the first Emperor of Rokugan. Togashi, who had foreseen the outcome of the tournament, did not participate.

At their Emperor's command, the other seven Kami set forth to gather followers to their banners, and to pacify the land in the name of the Hantei. Thus the Great Clans of Rokugan were born.

The stalwart Hida forged the Crab Clan.

The delicate Lady Doji breathed life into the Crane Clan.

The enigmatic Togashi and his followers became the Dragon Clan.

The militant Akodo gathered to his banner the Lion Clan.

The humble Shiba created the scholarly Phoenix Clan.

The manipulative Bayushi crafted the Scorpion Clan in the shadows.

The compassionate Shinjo created the Ki-Rin Clan, later known as the Unicorn.

The History of an Empire

The Empire of Rokugan uses a dating system devised by the Isawa family, which measures time from the year of the Empire's founding. This system is known as the Isawa Calendar (IC), and is used by all Rokugani to record historical events.

First Century (1-100 IC)

The First War

Once the Great Clans were established, the Kami began to create a shining civilization under their rule. Unfortunately, they had little time and preparation before their work was threatened to its core. A monstrous horde of demonic oni, cackling goblins, and other Shadowlands creatures appeared from the south and began to advance, destroying everything that stood in its way. The unsuspecting Empire had never seen such powerful beasts and could do little to prevent the collapse of its defenses. The general who led the gruesome legion was an even worse surprise for the Kami. It was their fallen brother Fu Leng, who had not died as they previously believed. Instead, he had fallen through to the realm of Jigoku. The Realm of Evil had consumed him with insidious whispers, manipulating Fu Leng until he became the leader of that malignant place. Filled with hate for his former family, Fu Leng intended to topple the fledgling Empire of Rokugan.

The Great Clans marched onto the battlefield in the first test of their mettle. Many of the Kami took the field themselves to protect their followers, yet the thought of fighting their brother troubled their hearts. Akodo, the war leader of Rokugan's forces, was a tactical genius but he could only slow down the Shadowlands assault. Hantei himself was critically wounded in battle. Slowly but surely, Rokugan was losing the war.

The Kami returned to their capital, Otosan Uchi, to decide on a course of action. At this critical moment, a strange little man entered the court uninvited and changed the course of history forever. His name was Shinsei, and he promised the Kami victory over Fu Leng's hordes if he were given permission to take seven mortal champions deep into the heart of the enemy's lands. The Kami could not believe such a thing was possible, but Shinsei won them over one by one in private conversation. His discussions with Hantei broached every topic under the sun, and Shiba recorded all of the words from this meeting as a single text. This document, called the Tao of Shinsei, would later become the basis of Shintao, the official religion of Rokugan.

Shinsei's idea seemed outlandish. How could one mortal from each clan be enough to defeat the dark god Fu Leng in the heart of the Shadowlands? The Little Teacher believed the Kami could not do this, despite their great strength. "Fortune favors the mortal man," he declared, and mortals had to fight for their own realm. Shinsei finally convinced Hantei to follow his plan. The monk gathered the Seven Thunders, one from each of the Great Clans: Hida Atarasi, Doji Konishiko, Mirumoto, Matsu, Isawa, Shosuro, and Otaku. Together they traveled south through the worst of the fighting to infiltrate the enemy's lands, a desperate and perilous journey.

On what was later recorded in history books as the Day of Thunder, the heroes of Rokugan faced Fu Leng in personal combat for the fate of the Empire and the world. The fight was brutal, and Fu Leng killed each Thunder except for Shosuro, the Scorpion. But the mortals prevailed. The Thunders sealed Fu Leng's soul into twelve magical scrolls, the Black Scrolls, and banished him from the mortal realm. Shosuro returned to Rokugan with the Black Scrolls, which Hantei entrusted to the Scorpion Clan. The Scorpion had to protect the Black Scrolls forever, lest the dark god return to wreak havoc once more.

The Dawn of the Empire

The First War, the War Against Fu Leng, was finally over, and Rokugan looked to the future. Shinjo decided the Empire needed to be aware of any other forces that could one day menace Rokugan. She did not want to see another war like the war against her fallen brother, with whom she had remained sympathetic even as she battled his terrible army. Shinjo decided she and her followers would travel outside the Empire's borders and explore the world. The Ki-Rin Clan left to the west and disappeared into the desert. They would not be seen again in Rokugan for many centuries, but they would not be forgotten. Their exploits with and against the people they met along the way would become the stuff of legend.

The first century was a time of great excitement and upheaval. Gods walked the earth next to the men who would one day become the samurai of the Empire. These men were not yet truly samurai, lacking a fully developed code of conduct, but they were all noble men who listened to their own sense of justice. In time, the Rokugani learned to put their trust in the Kami and their vision of the future. This trust transformed these noble warriors into samurai.

Despite the presence of the Kami, the first century was a wild and untamed period. Threats surrounded the newborn Empire, including tribes of warriors who would not bend to the rule of the Kami. These men had to be forced out of the borders of Rokugan, and did not leave without a fierce fight. Others adopted a more insidious plan to destroy Rokugan from within. These conspirators, who would become the Kolat, swore to overthrow the divine rule imposed on them, even if it took centuries.

The first century also saw dynamic changes in the land itself. Fu Leng's fall had created the Festering Pit. This profane landmark allowed the dark realm of Jigoku to extend its reach into the mortal realm, and the south completely transformed into the Shadowlands during these early years.

Finally, the first century saw the adoption of Shinsei's words into the organized religion of Shintao, and the formation of Bushido, the samurai code of honor. The first Minor Clans, the Fox and Mantis, appeared. Shugenja made great advancements into spellcraft, as they learned to speak to the kami who formed the Five Elements. This era is remembered in modern Rokugan as a mythic time when every man could easily change the course of history.

Second Century (101-200 IC)

The second hundred years of Rokugan's history were a welcome respite from the tumultuous events that had marked the birth of the Empire. During these years, the Empire built a firm foundation of laws and practices that would become honored tradition. For instance, two samurai from different clans put aside their differences to create a strong Imperial force that could regulate law and conflict between the Great Clans. The warrior Doji Hatsu and the courtier Soshi Saibankan created the outlines of both the Imperial Legions and the Emerald Magistrates. These two institutions would come to play vital roles in Rokugan's governance.

The second century also saw the decline of divine presence within the land. Many of the Kami had already perished in the late first century, including Hantei, who passed the throne to his son, Hantei Genji. Togashi, leader of the Dragon, disappeared into the mountains, and while he remained in control of the Dragon Clan, he allowed no one to know of his continued existence. Lady Doji succumbed to depression and disappeared into the sea. Bayushi vanished in search of his lost follower Shosuro, who had succumbed to the power of the Lying Darkness. This left only the aging Hida. The Kami of the Crab had no desire to meddle in politics, so the fate of the Empire was firmly in the hands of mortals.



The second century was a time of peace and production, and those who lived during this era found great pride in the newly formed samurai way. Without clear threats on the horizon, the people of Rokugan set their minds to developing their culture. Many of the traditions and archetypes of samurai life were formed during this time, especially by Hantei Genji, the "Shining Prince." The courtiers of the Great Clans founded their own traditions. The formation of the Emerald Magistrates and the Imperial Legions also established the Empire's traditions of law enforcement and political appointments.

Third Century (201-300 IC)

The last of the Kami disappeared from the world of man with little fanfare. The Kami Hida had long since abdicated his leadership of the Crab Clan to his son Osano-Wo, and played no role in Rokugan's affairs. However, his divine instincts told him something terrible had befallen his first son, the Thunder Hida Atarasi, supposedly killed on the Day of Thunder. Finally, he decided to travel into the Shadowlands to find out for himself. After a difficult journey, the Kami discovered his son, mortally wounded by Fu Leng, had been infected by the corrupting touch of the Shadowlands. The two waged a vicious battle. Hida finally destroyed the abomination that had been his son, and succumbed to his wounds shortly after. No word of this battle ever reached Rokugan, although strange and grotesque legends about it persisted in the Shadowlands for centuries.

The third century, like the one before it, was mostly calm and peaceful. The people who lived during this time were concerned with improving the quality of life for their clans, and small improvements made during this era have remained relevant ever since. The Brotherhood of Shinsei was formally organized during this time, sparking great intellectual debate among the scholars and theologians of every clan.

Fourth Century (301-400 IC)

After arguments that persisted for decades, the Yasuki family finally decided to permanently leave the Crane Clan. This event marked the first time any family had ever seceded from a Great Clan. The neighboring Crab Clan accepted the Yasuki into their ranks, and also decided to take their lands. This sparked a full-scale war between the Crane Clan and the Crab Clan, another first in Rokugan's history. The First Yasuki War, as it is now known, lasted over a decade and ended in a stalemate, with the Crane reluctantly accepting the Yasuki departure. The war spawned the Minor Clan of the Sparrow, and resulted in an Imperial Edict banning open large-scale warfare among the Great Clans.

The Gozoku Alliance did not appear until the end of the fourth century, but that event was so important it dwarfs everything else that happened in this period. The Gozoku was a secret cabal between the leaders of the Crane, Phoenix, and Scorpion Clans, Doji Raigu, Shiba Gaijushiko, and Bayushi Atsuki. It was designed to usurp power from the throne. The Gozoku leaders believed the Emperor was only human, despite his noble blood, and a union of intelligent people could accomplish much more than any single ruler. The Gozoku kidnapped the heir to the throne and used that leverage to seize power from the Emperor.

The Gozoku believed they were doing the right thing, and they made many improvements to the Empire. They created better roads and increased the power and wealth each Great Clan held. Unfortunately, the changes under their rule were not all for the better. Crime, both petty and organized, dramatically increased across the land, as the people lost faith in the power of the throne.

The fourth century had begun with an era of growth and peace. Several Minor Clans formed during this time and in the Crab lands a new alliance between man and the nonhuman Nezumi was forged. However, this era of optimism slowly fell into corruption after the Gozoku took over. The end of the fourth century was marked by intrigue and conflict. It is one of the darkest points in Rokugani history, as Rokugan damaged itself without any external force compelling the change.

Fifth Century (401-500 IC)

As the fifth century opened, the Gozoku took extreme measures to ensure their reign would endure. They executed those they suspected of being spies, including many monks from the Brotherhood of Shinsei. This brutality helped others, especially in the Lion and Dragon Clans, to recognize the darker aspects of the Gozoku and plot their end. They found their opportunity with the Emperor's daughter Hantei Yugozohime. The Lion trained her to be a wise and capable warrior, and upon the death of her father, she challenged the new Gozoku puppet Emperor to a duel and won. The combined armies of the Lion Clan and the Dragon Clan stood behind her and secured her power, and as Empress, Yugozohime quickly dismantled the Gozoku power structure.

The Rokugani faced another danger on the heels of the Gozoku threat when a strange fleet appeared on the shores near the capital city of Otosan Uchi. It was a fleet of *gaijin*, foreign explorers from the distant nations of Merenae and Thrane. The Rokugani were wary of the strange people, but Yugozohime gave them a chance to prove themselves, making a trade agreement with them. Unfortunately, the strangers proved untrustworthy, for just a few years later they attacked the Empire. Yugozohime died in the ensuing battle, known as the Battle of White Stag, but the Rokugani completely routed the foreign troops and ships. In the aftermath of the attack, the new Emperor, Yugozohime's son, called for a complete ban of all things gaijin. No Rokugani would ever trade with the foreigners, the Emperor proclaimed, and he also forbade the use of gaijin technology, especially the explosive substance known as gaijin pepper (gunpowder). In the aftermath of this incident, the Minor Clan of the Tortoise was founded to keep watch for future gaijin threats.

The fifth century was a tumultuous era of change and war. When Yugozohime overthrew the Gozoku, she had no choice but to make sweeping changes. Her followers uncovered and executed Gozoku traitors quickly, helped by several high-profile members who repented. Imperial forces cracked down on the crime that had grown during the Gozoku era, and the people began to trust the throne once more.

The arrival of gaijin forces in Rokugan illuminated the exact problem Shinjo foresaw at the birth of the Empire. Until this event, Rokugan had no contact with those from outside its borders, and this first interaction nearly threw the whole Empire into chaos. As it was, this minor meeting resulted in a giant naval battle and the death of the Empress. The Rokugani grew deeply suspicious of foreign influences, which would create many problems centuries later with the return of Shinjo's people.

Sixth Century (501-600 IC)

The First Rise of the Bloodspeaker

The sixth century saw the rise of a new villain of grand and terrible proportions. Otomo Jama, the younger son of the Emperor, found a secret collection of magical texts written by a Crab shugenja who had researched the effects of the Shadowlands Taint. Jama was intrigued by the power described within and he began to dabble in these abilities. His research and hard work paid off by making him one of the most powerful *maho-tsukai* (blood sorcerers) of all time. Even worse, he learned from gaijin lands the secret of removing and hiding his own heart, making himself immortal. He adopted the name Iuchiban and gathered other depraved worshippers and power-mongers into a deadly cult called the Bloodspeakers.

At first, the Bloodspeakers stayed in hiding and spread their influence slowly across the Empire. Secret cult cells began to form in all the Great Clan lands, clandestinely worshipping the head of their cult. Iuchiban's lieutenants spread chaos through the Empire with small, nearly unrecognizable events.

One of his followers, Agasha Ryuden, traveled to the Twilight Mountains to find the blood of the First Oni. He crafted a mighty *nemuranai* (magical artifact) called the Anvil of Despair, sacrificing the entire Minor Clan of the Boar to its creation. Another lieutenant, Asahina Yajinden, used the Anvil of Despair to forge a set of four incredibly powerful cursed blades, the Bloodswords. Each fed on the blood of those it killed, growing ever stronger, and each had the ability to influence its bearer, negatively amplifying his flawed emotions. Passion, Ambition, Judgment, and Revenge were sent to the leaders of four Great Clans in the hope they would misuse the power within the blades. The leaders did not suspect the treachery within the gifts and accepted them happily, dooming themselves – all except one.

The Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Rikoji, realized from the start that there was something wrong with this mysterious Crane gift. He held the blade under close surveillance. His worst fears were soon realized when the other three recipients of the Bloodswords died in bizarre inexplicable tragedies. Rikoji ordered his men to find the source of the weapons, and one of his samurai traced the Bloodswords back to Iuchiban's headquarters within the Imperial capital itself.

Facing exposure and arrest, Iuchiban called on a grotesque resource to oppose the Empire's forces. The greatest heroes of the Empire were entombed within the Imperial crypts. Iuchiban raised these bodies into profane undead mockeries of what they once were. Only the courage of a bold Lion samurai enabled the forces of the Great Clans to rally and destroy Iuchiban's zombies, capturing the evil sorcerer. Iuchiban's gaijin sorcery made it impossible to actually kill him, so the people of Rokugan imprisoned him in a secret tomb designed to contain his power forever.

Unfortunately, Iuchiban did not remain imprisoned. His underling Yajinden had found the secret of jumping his spirit from body to body, and soon Iuchiban mastered this skill as well, escaping his tomb. With his earlier defeat on his mind, Iuchiban at first remained undercover, and set to work rebuilding and expanding his power base in the Bloodspeaker cult.

The people of the sixth century were ill prepared for the terrifying might of unfettered blood magic, known as *maho*. They knew vaguely of the power inherent in such dark magic, but it had never been used on such scale and power before Iuchiban. Yajinden's Bloodswords incapacitated the leaders of three powerful Great Clans and would have done even more were it not for the caution and guidance of the Scorpion Clan Champion. Even so, the terror of facing undead soldiers nearly routed the magistrates and Imperial guards who came to arrest Iuchiban. Although the warriors of the Crab Clan were accustomed to fighting shambling corpses, other samurai were not prepared for such horrors. The thought of fighting perverted corpses of past heroes was especially shocking to a society that revered its ancestors. After Iuchiban's defeat, Emperor Hantei XII decreed that everyone would be cremated upon death to prevent such an atrocity from occurring once more.

The Steel Chrysanthemum

A sense of horror colored the beginning of the sixth century with the rise of Iuchiban. After his defeat, the Empire endured a period of uncertainty, punctuated by a Mantis attempt to kidnap the Imperial heir and, even worse, the bizarre tyranny of the Steel Chrysanthemum.

Hantei XVI was brilliant and capable, but also a brutal tyrant and a paranoid, sadistically cruel man. His rule quickly became a reign of terror as he tortured and killed anyone he suspected of disloyalty, crushing every hint of open rebellion with military force. Over time his mental state became increasingly unstable, leading to bizarre behavior such as proclaiming Fortunes for Dung and Torture. Finally, his murder of his own mother in open court prompted the Imperial Guard to overthrow him. The true fate of the Emperor was concealed from the public at large, and most of his abuses were carefully left out of the Empire's official histories. The throne of Rokugan passed to the Steel Chrysanthemum's young son – who, fortunately, proved to be a far better ruler than his father. Nevertheless, both Iuchiban and Hantei XVI offered a cautionary warning of what might happen if divine power fell into the wrong hands.

Seventh Century (601-700 IC)

With the destruction of two great threats, Iuchiban and the Steel Chrysanthemum, all of Rokugan was on edge for the next century, wondering what fate would bring next. Thankfully, the Empire enjoyed a period of respite, with no events as earth shattering as those of the previous two hundred years.

Rokugan recovered slowly from the effects of Hantei XVI's reign. To try to ensure such an event could not happen again, the Rokugani embraced the writings known as the Articles of Heaven, which adjusted many aspects of law and tradition to try to prevent future abuse. Rules were instituted to improve the treatment of the common folk, to protect hostages and prisoners, and to place some legal constraints on the use of torture. The seventh century as a whole was an era of rebuilding. The few serious threats that arose within this time were eliminated before they could grow in scale.

Organized crime did increase somewhat during this era, and the romanticized story of Yasuki Fumoki, dashing pirate, became popular among the people. The increase in criminal activities centered around the large cities on the coast, though smuggling and bandit gangs also rose inland. The reported death of Fumoki did little to stem the increase, as people enamored with his glamorized lifestyle continued to rebel against society.

Eighth Century (701-800 IC)

The Attack of the Maw

After a quiet century of relative peace, Rokugan erupted in war again. This time the Empire would face a clear enemy, the Shadowlands. An Oni Lord known simply as "the Maw" gathered the largest Shadowlands army seen since the War Against Fu Leng. They appeared without warning and assaulted the Crab lands, quickly overwhelming the clan's defenses. The Maw's army advanced relentlessly, overrunning the Hiruma lands and threatening to crush the entire Crab Clan. Finally the battered Crab armies gathered in the Hida provinces for a last-ditch effort. All looked hopeless, until a young, unknown shugenja named Kuni Osaku called forth remarkable power from within herself and raised a river into a wall of water to stand in the path of the Shadowlands army. Osaku bought the Crab Clan precious time, and they put it to good use. For 73 days, the Crab used magic and manpower to construct a giant wall that stretched across their lands. Other clans sent aid and supplies, and the Great Carpenter Wall was finally completed with no time to spare. Osaku died, her life force consumed by her mighty spell, and the Maw's armies resumed their attack. The Wall, however, stopped them where nothing else could. The Crab crushed the Shadowlands army, slew the Maw, and forced his shattered army back to the south. Rokugan was safe once more. Thereafter, the Crab went to work expanding and lengthening the new Carpenter Wall, also known in the Empire as the Kaiu Wall, until it stretched across their entire border with the Shadowlands.

Although the Crab had prevailed, they paid a bitter price. The Kuni lands had become Tainted, and cleansing them would reduce them to a gray and lifeless wasteland. Worse yet, the Hiruma lands had been lost completely, left on the wrong side of the newly built Kaiu Wall. These losses engendered an even fiercer hatred of the Shadowlands within the Crab Clan, as well as a wary respect for their monstrous might. Over the next three centuries, countless Hiruma samurai would die in fruitless attempts to reclaim their castle and birthright.

Sadly, the other Great Clans did not learn as much as the Crab from this near-disaster. The Kaiu Wall did become very effective in stemming the Shadowlands threat, and the other Great Clans, who rarely saw it with their own eyes, came to believe the Shadowlands was always kept well under control by the strong Crab.

The Return of the Bloodspeaker

Decades after the Maw's attack, the plans of the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban were finally exposed when he made the mistake of trying to possess the body of a Dragon Clan tattooed monk. The Togashi was well trained and fortified against spiritual attack, and fought off Iuchiban's influence. He quickly warned the other clans of Iuchiban's escape. The Great Clans remembered the terror Iuchiban spread across Rokugan the first time, and gathered their forces against the Bloodspeakers. Iuchiban assembled his own followers and a terrible seven-day-long battle ensued, at the end of which the clans totally destroyed Iuchiban's undead army. The Togashi monk who had first detected Iuchiban was able to capture the sorcerer with a special tattoo, sealing Iuchiban within his own body. He entered Iuchiban's tomb, sacrificing himself, and the shugenja of the Empire worked a great ritual to bind the Bloodspeaker's soul into the very stone of his prison.

It was simple for everyone to push aside petty rivalries with other Great Clans to come together against Iuchiban's threat. The Imperial Edict for cremation greatly limited the size of his new army, and the Dragon Clan monk's sacrifice limited the Bloodspeaker's actions. However, it was a strong reminder that this villain was not yet truly defeated.



Ninth Century (801-900 IC)

The Return of the Unicorn

The internal boundaries of Rokugan changed forever when the followers of Shinjo finally returned to the Emerald Empire after eight centuries of exploration. Now calling themselves the Unicorn Clan, they were unaware of the Shadowlands threat and approached their ancestral homeland from the south. The Crab Clan readied to defend against the foreigners, but the Unicorn bypassed their fortifications and rushed on into the Empire. They fought several battles against the rest of the Great Clans, most notably the Scorpion and Lion, before everyone realized the truth. The Emperor welcomed the return of Rokugan's lost brothers and sisters, and restored them to control of their original provinces.

The return of the Unicorn immediately and dramatically changed the Empire, and they faced a difficult struggle to adapt to their new home. The Rokugani were accustomed to the balance of power that had settled after seven centuries of political and military maneuvering. The sudden appearance of the Unicorn Clan changed that, and altered many of the borders between the clans, immediately sowing the seeds of discontent with those who lost land and influence, such as the Scorpion and the Lion. Even worse, the Unicorn seemed almost to be gaijin themselves, with strange foreign habits and practices. They attempted to make friends and allies among the other Great Clans, but had only limited success at first, mainly with the Crab and the Crane.

Unfortunately, the Unicorn Clan's return also birthed a new enemy for Rokugan. The Moto family daimyo, Moto Tsume, led his army into the Shadowlands, confident that he could do what the Crab Clan could not. He paid dearly for that arrogance when he and nearly his entire force succumbed to the Taint. The vast legion of Lost which resulted came to be known as the Dark Moto. Tsume and his Dark Moto would menace the Empire time and time again for hundreds of years.

The reintegration of the Unicorn Clan into Rokugan would prove to be a long and difficult undertaking. Despite their best efforts, the Unicorn would remain outsiders for centuries to come. The ninth century was thus a time of vast change and culture clash, and the courts became both interesting and dangerous during this era.

Tenth Century (901-1000 IC)

In contrast to the time just passed, few tumultuous events occurred during the tenth century. The Rokugani continued to adjust to the arrival of the Unicorn Clan. It was a time of minor battles and skirmishes for political gain. This era is in many ways the perfect example of the "normal" Empire, when people could live without grand, epic events hanging over their heads.

Eleventh Century (1001-1100 IC)

Rokugan continued to thrive without any external threats menacing its borders. Various small skirmishes and battles continued to take place, some with disastrous results. Two Minor Clans, the Hare and the Fox, nearly went to war over territorial disputes. The situation worsened when Fox Clan diplomats were assassinated during negotiations. The involvement of the Crane Clan finally calmed things down from the precipice of full-scale war.

It was during the eleventh century that the Lying Darkness began to make overt maneuvers against the Empire, slowly building on the foundation it had laid with the corruption of the Scorpion Clan Thunder Shosuro during the first century. The Darkness' strange power grew slowly but remorselessly throughout this time, and it created the Ninube "family" within its ranks.

Few major or tumultuous events occurred during the eleventh century, but this was in part a prelude to far greater things, as the Empire approached the Second Day of Thunder. Thus like the century before it, the eleventh century is perfect to showcase a normal and relatively peaceful Empire.

Twelfth Century (1101-1200 IC)

The twelfth century is one of the most tumultuous periods in Rokugan's history, beginning with the gradual escalation of minor events that led up to the Clan War and the Second Day of Thunder. The Black Scrolls had been entrusted to the Scorpion Clan's care at the founding of the Empire and they had remained safe for a thousand years, but this century would see each one opened and used, heralding the return of the dark god Fu Leng. The Second Day of Thunder would call on the descendents of the Seven Thunders to face Fu Leng and defeat him once more. These events in turn would lay the groundwork for further crises that would nearly shatter the Empire during the second half of the century.

The Scorpion Clan Coup

Bayushi Shoju, Scorpion Clan Champion, foresaw the return of Fu Leng. Secret prophecies told that the last Hantei would doom the Empire and herald the dark god's return. Shoju's heart filled with dread and he sought out ways to halt the coming catastrophe. He decided the only choice was to bring an end to the Hantei dynasty. He and his clan assaulted the capital, killed the Emperor, and attempted to seize control of Rokugan by force. This event was later known as the Scorpion Clan Coup. The Great Clans allied together to defeat the Scorpion Clan, and Shoju perished for his temerity.

Shoju had failed to kill the Emperor's son, and Hantei XXXIX took the throne in the wake of the Coup's failure. He formally disbanded the Scorpion Clan and executed many leaders of the clan as punishment for their actions. The young Emperor also vindictively disbanded the Akodo family, since their leader Akodo Toturi had failed to protect the previous Emperor from Shoju's attack. For Toturi himself the Emperor reserved the worst punishment he could imagine for a samurai. He denied Toturi the right of seppuku and forced him to become ronin.



Yogo Junzo, daimyo of the Scorpion Clan's Yogo family, was filled with rage at the outcome of the Coup. He opened the first of several Black Scrolls to punish the Empire for Shoju's defeat. The Black Scroll spread a deadly plague known as the Wasting Disease across Rokugan, and its Taint transformed Junzo into an undead mockery of what he once was. Shortly after, Junzo opened the second Black Scroll, strengthening Fu Leng's grasp on the mortal realm. The dark god immediately latched on to the weak mind and soul of the young Emperor and began to whisper in his ear.

The Clan War and the Second Day of Thunder

The Elemental Masters, leaders of the Phoenix Clan, saw the looming and deadly threat of the Shadowlands. They felt they did not understand enough about the Shadowlands, and the Elemental Masters were not accustomed to lacking full information on every situation. They decided to open several Black Scrolls in their possession to gain more intimate knowledge of their foe. The Masters, arrogantly secure in their power, believed they would not be affected by the Scrolls. They were quite wrong, and soon fell under the influence of the Shadowlands Taint.

Though Akodo Toturi became ronin after his failure during the Scorpion Clan Coup, his tale continued. The Kami Togashi, appearing in public for the first time in ten centuries, counseled Toturi to continue serving the Empire. With Dragon Clan resources, Toturi assembled an army of ronin, Dragon samurai, and Unicorn samurai that would work to protect the entire Empire. The Naga, newly awakened from their slumber, also joined with the Dragon Clan to oppose the forces of the Shadowlands.

The Emperor had fallen ill from the Wasting Disease, and with no heir apparent, war soon raged across Rokugan between all the Great Clans. The Crab entered into a misguided alliance with the Shadowlands, a decision they would come to bitterly regret. The weakened Emperor succumbed to Fu Leng's power, and brought Shadowlands creatures into the heart of Rokugan to prepare for the Second Day of Thunder. Once the Rokugani finally realized the truth, they banded together in a desperate attempt to defeat the dark god. Togashi and a mysterious man called the Hooded Ronin, the descendent of Shinsei himself, assembled a new set of Seven Thunders, spiritual descendents of the original seven heroes: Hida Yakamo, Doji Hoturi, Mirumoto Hitomi, Toturi, Isawa Tadaka, Bayushi Kachiko, and Otaku Kamoko. They traveled into Otosan Uchi to confront Fu Leng in mortal combat, and while Togashi, Doji Hoturi, and Isawa Tadaka all perished, the Thunders succeeded once more in killing Fu Leng and banishing him from the mortal world. Toturi, who struck the final death-blow to the dark god's human form, ascended to the throne and became the first Emperor of the Toturi Dynasty.

The Hidden Emperor Era (The War Against the Darkness)

Toturi's first actions as Emperor were to reinstate the Scorpion Clan and elevate the Mantis Clan to the status of Great Clan, the latter a reward for their valiant service to the Empire during the Clan War. He did not reform the Akodo family, partly to avoid accusations of favoritism and partly from continuing shame over his previous failure. The Empire was safe for several years before a new crisis arose.

The Lying Darkness, having gathered power for centuries, struck at the heart of the Empire. Its minions kidnapped the Emperor and blamed the Scorpion Clan for the crime. The Scorpion were banished to the Burning Sands, where they struggled to survive for several years before managing to return to Rokugan.

The disappearance of Toturi the First sparked another series of large-scale wars and conflicts among the Great Clans. The Lying Darkness enhanced these battles, re-igniting old rivalries and feeding ancient hatreds between different factions. The rescue of Emperor Toturi did little to end these battles, since the Lying Darkness had corrupted him and his actions became erratic and destructive. Elsewhere in the Empire, the Crab Clan fought to retake the Hiruma territories from the Shadowlands, while the Kami Shinjo returned from long imprisonment in the Burning Sands to expose and purge the Kolat who had infiltrated her family in the Unicorn Clan. Otaku Kamoko, the Unicorn Thunder, helped the now-purged Unicorn to finally destroy the Dark Moto, and the rule of the clan passed from the Shinjo family to the Moto.

Higher matters were at stake than merely the Empire's internal struggles. Lord Moon, Onnotangu, held great contempt for the human race in his heart, a legacy of his bitter hatred for his own children whose bloodline had mingled with mortals. He was fueling the Lying Darkness with his own power.



The Dragon Thunder, Mirumoto Hitomi, took it upon herself to stop this threat. Using the power of several artifacts and the assistance of Togashi's soul, she challenged Lord Onnotangu to personal combat, slew him, and ascended into the Heavens as his replacement. Lady Sun, Amaterasu, was enraged by the death of her husband and left her position in the Celestial Heavens. Rokugan was engulfed in twenty-seven days of complete darkness, dramatically increasing the power of the Lying Darkness.

When Lady Amaterasu came to her senses, she was overcome with shame at her actions and committed seppuku. Hida Yakamo, the Crab Clan Thunder, was her second during the ceremony and ascended to become Lord Sun after her death.

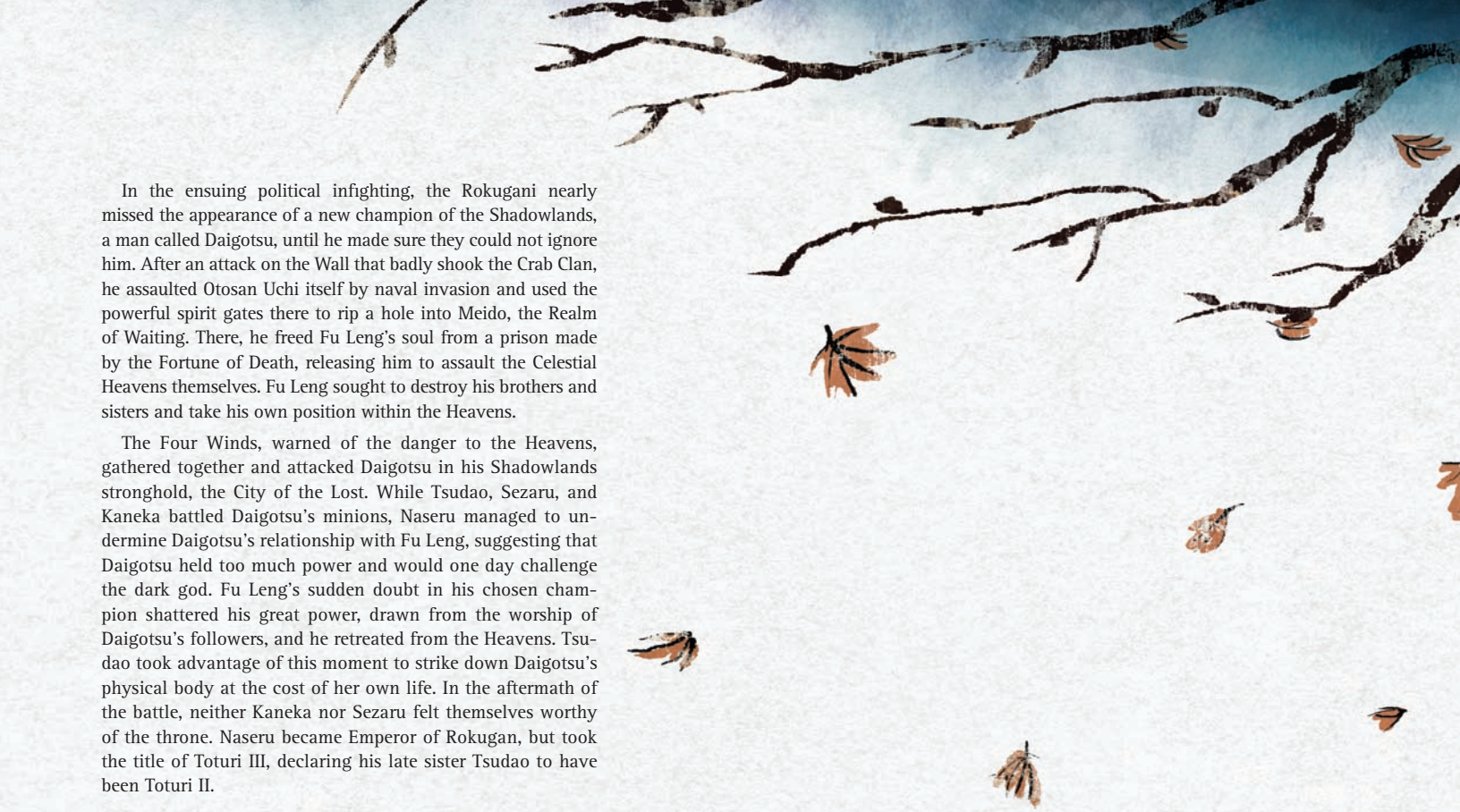
By now, the Empire was finally awake to the threat posed by the Lying Darkness. It had made its home deep within the Shadowlands at Oblivion's Gate, an artifact of great power where ancient dead spirits could return to the mortal realm. Toturi committed seppuku to free the Imperial throne from the influence of the Darkness, and in the wake of his sacrifice the armies of the Great Clans united once more and marched into the Shadowlands. The revered ancestors of the Great Clans, including Toturi himself, returned through Oblivion's Gate to help Rokugan in its hour of need. At the critical moment, their efforts weakened the Darkness, allowing the new Moon, Hitomi, to do what Onnotangu and Amaterasu had never done – give it a name. She gave it the Akodo name, limiting its power and simultaneously restoring the Lion family. The Lying Darkness was defeated, reduced to a shell of its former power. The remnant which remained behind was absorbed by the Celestial Air Dragon, preventing it from ever growing strong enough to threaten existence once more – but in the process, creating the Shadow Dragon, a sinister being who would menace Rokugan for many years to come.

In the aftermath of the War Against the Darkness, the Naga race returned to sleep once more, believing that one more challenge yet lay in their future.

The Four Winds Era

The Rokugani hoped the defeat of the Lying Darkness would finally bring about a time of peace, but it was not to be. Many of the spirits who had returned through Oblivion's Gate could not understand that their time in the mortal realm, Ningen-do, had passed. One of them was none other than Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum. The returned Hantei gathered the spirits together and attempted a coup against Toturi. The War of Spirits pitted man against revered ancestor in a conflict that lasted a decade. Eventually, the war ended in a truce between the Toturi Dynasty and the Steel Chrysanthemum.

Nearly a decade after the War of Spirits, Toturi the First was ambushed and killed by a new type of Shadowlands creature called an Onisu. His death sparked great debate across the Empire, for he had not formally declared his heir. Some people followed Toturi Tsudao, his eldest daughter by the Empress. Some followed Toturi Sezaru, his eldest legitimate son, a prodigy shugenja who held the powers of three Elements within him. The Lion Clan and Unicorn Clan followed Akodo Kaneka, Toturi's oldest but illegitimate son, born of an affair with a geisha. Fewest followed Hantei Naseru, the politically adept youngest son, who had taken the Hantei name as part of the truce that ended the War of Spirits. The four children came to be known as the Four Winds.



In the ensuing political infighting, the Rokugani nearly missed the appearance of a new champion of the Shadowlands, a man called Daigotsu, until he made sure they could not ignore him. After an attack on the Wall that badly shook the Crab Clan, he assaulted Otosan Uchi itself by naval invasion and used the powerful spirit gates there to rip a hole into Meido, the Realm of Waiting. There, he freed Fu Leng's soul from a prison made by the Fortune of Death, releasing him to assault the Celestial Heavens themselves. Fu Leng sought to destroy his brothers and sisters and take his own position within the Heavens.

The Four Winds, warned of the danger to the Heavens, gathered together and attacked Daigotsu in his Shadowlands stronghold, the City of the Lost. While Tsudao, Sezaru, and Kaneka battled Daigotsu's minions, Naseru managed to undermine Daigotsu's relationship with Fu Leng, suggesting that Daigotsu held too much power and would one day challenge the dark god. Fu Leng's sudden doubt in his chosen champion shattered his great power, drawn from the worship of Daigotsu's followers, and he retreated from the Heavens. Tsudao took advantage of this moment to strike down Daigotsu's physical body at the cost of her own life. In the aftermath of the battle, neither Kaneka nor Sezaru felt themselves worthy of the throne. Naseru became Emperor of Rokugan, but took the title of Toturi III, declaring his late sister Tsudao to have been Toturi II.

Return of the Bloodspeaker

Though Daigotsu had died, his preparations allowed him to return to the mortal realm. His power was immediately challenged by the return of the dreaded sorcerer Iuchiban, who had escaped from his tomb once more. Iuchiban defeated Daigotsu and forced him out of his own home, and the Bloodspeaker cult seized control of the City of the Lost. Daigotsu traveled into the Burning Sands to find the secret of Iuchiban's power.

The Empire was caught unprepared for Iuchiban's large-scale assault, as the Bloodspeakers unleashed a rain of Tainted blood over the whole of Rokugan. Unfortunately, while dealing with this open enemy, the Emperor discovered there were also hidden enemies within the Empire's borders. Bayushi Atsuki, one of the original founders of the Gozoku, had returned to Rokugan through Oblivion's Gate and resurrected that ancient conspiracy.

Ultimately, the combined powers of the Great Clans and Daigotsu ended the threat of Iuchiban, not just temporarily but for all time, as the sorcerer's hidden heart was at last unearthed. The Gozoku proved more tenacious, and the forces of Toturi the Third spent years rooting out their corruption from all parts of the Empire.

Even as Iuchiban was destroyed, Shinsei's descendent Rosoku, son of the Hooded Ronin, emerged from hiding. Rosoku believed Rokugan needed to find enlightenment once more if it was to face the challenges of this age, and he presented the Empire with a series of enigmatic riddles. The ones who solved these riddles would become known as the Keepers of the Elements, led by the Keeper of the Five Rings, Asahina Sekawa. Tragically, soon after presenting these challenges to the Empire, Rosoku was murdered by an agent of the Bloodspeakers.

The emergence of Rosoku and the Keepers sparked a wave of enlightenment and religious fervor across the Empire, much to the surprise of Emperor Toturi III. Naseru was always a very rational man and could not understand enlightenment. He wandered the land incognito, trying to understand this concept, and finally traveled into the heart of the Shadowlands to the Tomb of Seven Thunders, the resting place of the original seven heroes. Naseru sacrificed himself so that the Empire's heroes could return with the wisdom needed to protect the Empire from impending threats.

The Race for the Throne

With the death of Toturi III, another power-struggle erupted across the Empire. Sezaru's magical power drove him down the slope of madness and eventual death. Moto Chagatai, the Khan of the Unicorn, attempted to seize the throne of the Empire through sheer force in an attempt to unify the Empire under one strong ruler. Kaneka died at the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, fighting his old friend Chagatai. Chagatai was ultimately unsuccessful in his attempt. Wars raged across the land and courtiers schemed to place the throne into the hands of one lord or another, until the Celestial Heavens themselves intervened.

The Heavens could no longer tolerate mankind's influence in the spirit realms. The newly created Jade Dragon challenged Lord Sun, Hida Yakamo, to personal combat and became the new Sun, while Jade's twin the Obsidian Dragon likewise defeated Hitomi to ascend to the position of the new Moon. With the gods restored to rule of the Heavens, it was time to restore balance in the world of mortals. The new Sun and Moon decreed another tournament in the same place where Hantei had won the throne twelve hundred years before. The Heavens would judge the samurai most worthy to head a new dynasty on the Imperial Throne, a dynasty with the true favor of the divine. In the end, Kitsuki Iweko, the Kitsuki family daimyo, was proclaimed Empress Iweko the First.

The Geography of Rokugan

Rokugan is a land of diverse geography, ranging from open plains and fertile farmlands to rugged mountains and tropical islands. For the most part, the climate is temperate, with a long and fairly warm summer but a surprisingly bitter winter – all of continental Rokugan experiences significant snowfall during the winter months, and travel slows to a crawl during that time.

The most notable geographic features of Rokugan are its two great mountain ranges, known as the Great Wall of the North and the Spine of the World (or *Seikitsu*) Mountains. The Great Wall of the North defines Rokugan's northern frontier, and serves as a barrier between the lands of the Phoenix, Dragon, and Unicorn Clans and the open steppes which lie beyond, inhabited by gaijin barbarians. The Spine of the World range divides Rokugan in half, running across the Empire from the northwest to the southeast. Although there are several passes near the ends of this mountain chain, in its vast center it is crossed by only one major pass. For much of the Empire's history this was the fabled Beiden Pass, which connected the lands of the Lion and Scorpion, but during the War of Spirits this pass was destroyed. Through the will of the Celestial Heavens, a new pass was opened farther to the north, the Seikitsu Pass, connecting the lands of the Scorpion and Unicorn.

Beyond the borders of Rokugan to the west and northwest lies the vast desert of the Burning Sands. Strange foreign lands and kingdoms may be found on the far side of the Burning Sands, and Rokugan has occasionally made contact with them, but for the most part the Empire ignores this bleak desert and whatever lies beyond. On the western border of Rokugan, forming a natural barrier between the Empire and the Burning Sands, lies the Shinomen Forest, a vast primeval forest which is home to ghosts and strange inhuman creatures, most notably the legendary Naga. Rokugani avoid this place, and few know of what lies within.

To the southwest, however, lies a realm whose attentions Rokugan cannot escape, however much the Empire might wish it: the Shadowlands, the corrupt and terrifying domain



created when Fu Leng fell from the Celestial Heavens at the dawn of time. Fu Leng's terrible fall tore a hole through reality into Jigoku, the Realm of Evil, creating the fabled Festering Pit of Fu Leng. Oni, other monsters, and the horrible Taint continually emerge from the Festering Pit, and their influence has created the Shadowlands.

The Crab lands serve as the border between the Shadowlands and the rest of Rokugan. Here the Crab stand eternally vigilant behind the barrier of the Kaiu Wall, the mightiest fortification in the Empire. The Crab lands tend to be rocky and mountainous, with little agricultural productivity. Even worse, over the centuries some of their territory has been Tainted by Shadowlands incursions. While the Taint was purged from those lands, what remains behind is little more than lifeless wastes. The waters of Earthquake Fish Bay provide the Crab with abundant seafood, but even with that resource they are chronically short on food, forced to import from the rest of the Empire. However, their rocky lands do contain abundant ore and mineral wealth, especially iron.

In contrast to the Crab, the Crane lands are some of the broadest and most productive in Rokugan. The Crane control territories both north and south of the Seikitsu Mountains, and boast great fields of rice and grain in both regions. They control almost the entire coast of the Empire from the border of Crab lands all the way north to the ancient capital of Otosan Uchi, and those coasts are dotted with large, prosperous port cities, their bays filled with shipping throughout the year. Small wonder, then, that the Crane can boast of being among the wealthiest of clans, with castles whose size and beauty are exceeded only by the Imperial Capital itself.



The Scorpion lands, north of the Crab and surrounded to the east and north by the Seikitsu Mountains, are moderately populated, with several forests and rivers, notably the mighty River of Gold, a major trade artery in the western Empire. The Scorpion do, however, lay claim to one of the largest cities in Rokugan, the great trade center of Ryoko Owari. Inns and teahouses in Scorpion lands are reputed to be among the Empire's finest, perhaps because the Scorpion wish for their visitors to always be relaxed and comfortable.

In the northeast of Rokugan, adjacent to the Burning Sands, lie the rolling hills and open plains of the Unicorn Clan, crossed by several lesser rivers and dotted with the occasional small forest. The Unicorn have few cities, since most of their folk maintain the nomadic traditions formed by centuries wandering outside of the Empire. They do, however, have many small farming villages, as well as a handful of diamond mines that enrich their merchants.

The Lion Clan, traditional rivals of the Crane, control the north-central plains of the Empire, a wide and fertile territory but one which is stressed by the need to support the vast armies of this martial clan. Forests are sparse in this territory, and the Lion carefully control them to prevent exhaustion of their limited timber resources. The Lion also have a number of copper mines on their side of the Seikitsu Mountains, a useful source of trade for a clan routinely short of rice. Packs of wild lions, the namesakes of the Lion Clan, may be found in these lands with some frequency, although they are rare elsewhere in Rokugan.

The Dragon lands, separated from the Lion by the Drowned Merchant River, are for the most part quite mountainous, with high peaks surrounded by thick forests. The Dragon lands are directly adjacent to the Great Wall of the North, and are notoriously difficult for others to enter without permission. Many tales speak of roads that mysteriously vanish or seem to turn back on themselves. The price of such security, however, is a distinct lack of productive farmland, and the Dragon are almost certainly the poorest Great Clan in the Empire.

The Phoenix lands are tucked into the Empire's northeastern corner, with two small mountain ranges separating them from the rest of Rokugan. The Phoenix Mountains form a barrier to the west, toward the Dragon lands, while the Mountains of Regret lie to the south, toward Otosan Uchi. Between the two ranges is a relatively narrow plain through which passes most of the Phoenix Clan's trade and commerce with the rest of Rokugan. Their territory also boasts a major forest, the Isawa Mori, reputed to be haunted by ghosts and angry spirits. Most of their farmlands and major castles are located along the coast, but the Phoenix have few actual ports, since much of their coastline is rugged cliffs.

South of the Empire's mainland lie the Islands of Silk and Spice, where the Mantis Clan makes its home. In contrast to the rest of the Empire, these islands are tropical, covered in lush vegetation and strange animals unknown to the mainland. Colorful birds, monkeys, constrictor snakes, and other exotic and dangerous forms of life are common. The Mantis have relatively little farmland, and rely primarily on the abundance of the sea to feed themselves.

Social Classes and the Celestial Order

The Rokugani believe all living beings, indeed all of existence, are organized into a hierarchy set in place by the will of the Celestial Heavens. This hierarchy – known as the Celestial Order – was revealed to the Rokugani by the Kami at the founding of the Empire, and they regard it as the sacred and unquestioned expression of divine will. To ignore or violate the Order is to blaspheme against the cosmos itself. Thus, the citizens of the Emerald Empire are organized into three distinct castes, each of which is divided into several smaller ranks and sub-castes. Typically, a person is born into a caste and remains within that caste for their entire life, although exceptions are possible.

At the top of the social order are the samurai, the rulers of Rokugan. They are the only "real people" of Rokugan, and have complete power and rights over all below them. The samurai caste itself is, of course, divided into social ranks of its own – the Kuge (nobility) and the Buke (those who serve). The Kuge include the Emperor, the various high Imperial officials and daimyo, the Clan Champions who rule over the various clans of the Empire, and the daimyo of the various families within each clan. All other samurai belong to the Buke. Of course, there is considerable social striation within the buke as well, ranging from the top tier of provincial daimyo and city governors, down through magistrates, advisors, military officers, and other officials, and ending in the vast numbers of simple warriors, courtiers, and priests who serve the Empire – the so-called "ji-samurai." In general, a samurai is not permitted to question or oppose someone of a higher social rank without the strongest possible justification. Conversely, a samurai can easily lord it over those of inferior social rank, and it is expected that such abuse will be endured honorably. Samurai are supposed to always treat each other with extreme respect and politeness, even if they are actually bitter enemies, for to fail in public manners is to violate Courtesy and possibly even "lose one's face," an unforgivable social error.

Below the samurai are the Bonge – the common folk, also known as *heimin* or "half-people." These comprise the vast majority of Rokugan's population, and are the ones who keep the nation and economy running. They are generally not permitted to use weapons, although exceptions are made for specific duties such as *ashigaru* (peasant military levies) or *budoka* (personal armed retainers to samurai). Samurai can demand anything from a heimin without recompense, and can kill any heimin who disobeys or fails to show respect. However, the Celestial Order also dictates that there are responsibilities between the different castes of society, something emphasized in writings like the Articles of Heaven. So while it is the heimin's duty to produce and obey, it is the samurai's duty to protect and administer. Nevertheless, the life of the bonge is a hard one, full of difficult labor and suffering. Only a few commoners are fortunate enough to serve a samurai who truly cares about them – for the most part, their lords treat them with indifference, if not outright cruelty. Naturally, heimin are always respectful and obedient toward samurai, since the alternative is to earn their wrath, but they seldom feel anything toward their masters other than fear and wary respect. However, the rare samurai who goes out of his way to fulfill his duties to the heimin caste will soon draw their notice, and such exceptionally compassionate samurai are often rewarded in turn by extra loyalty and effort.

Even within the ranks of the bonge, there are social striations. The highest-ranking of the heimin are the peasants, for they grow the food which all the Empire needs to survive. Slightly below the peasants are the artisans and craftsmen – carpenters, blacksmiths, stonemasons, brewers, seamstresses, and so forth. Although they do not grow food, these persons still create things of use and value, and truly skilled heimin artisans can actually earn the respect of samurai who admire their work. (In fact, some samurai are artisans themselves, although they pursue rarified arts such as painting and sword-making rather than simple things like building furniture or forging horseshoes.) At the bottom of the bonge's ranks are merchants. Merchants are regarded with contempt by samurai, since they do not actually make anything for themselves – they simply buy and sell things made by others. However, commerce is important to the Empire's economic health, and many clans rely on commercial activity to swell their coffers – a contradiction which troubles more than one samurai. To get around this problem, some samurai appoint themselves as "merchant patrons," watching over and supervising the activities of commoner merchants, thereby allowing them to conduct commerce without directly dirtying their own hands with such distasteful activities.

Monks occupy a peculiar position within the social order. They are not samurai, and by strict interpretation of the Rokugani social system they cannot be considered anything other than heimin. However, their role as upholders of the Empire's religious traditions affords them a respect which other commoners do not enjoy. Most samurai treat monks with a certain deference, and prominent members of the Brotherhood of Shinsei are sometimes invited to court to provide counsel and guidance to daimyo.

If the position of monks is peculiar, that of *ronin* – those samurai who have no lord, no clan or family to call their own – is far more difficult. A ronin is technically still of the samurai caste, but with no lord or clan to protect or care for him, he must make his own way through the world, tossed by the waves of fate – hence the name *ronin*, or "wave-man." Since ronin cannot rely on a stipend or household, most of them are forced to work as mercenaries or bodyguards, earning food and lodging by the strength of their swords. Some ronin ultimately must engage in manual labor to earn their keep, but as samurai they consider this bitterly shameful, and many of them resort to crime or banditry rather than live like common folk.

Below the bonge are the lowest of Rokugan's social order, the *hinin* or "non-people," who are born into those tasks which the Rokugani consider to be intrinsically spiritually impure. Primarily, this involves any activity which leads to touching "unclean" substances such as blood, garbage, or dead flesh. Morticians, leatherworkers, and refuse collectors (known collectively as *eta*) form the bulk of the hinin caste. Such persons are regarded as less than nothing, and even peasants look down on them and abuse them. The eta's life is bitter and unpleasant, and their only hope under the rules of the Celestial Order is to fulfill their duties well enough to be reborn into a higher station in their next life. The rest of Rokugan ignores the eta as much as possible. Nevertheless, these people have a vital role, performing the "unclean" jobs no one else will touch.

Although most of the hinin are eta, the ranks of this caste also include a few other individuals. Torturers, who must constantly inflict harm and touch blood and sweat, are also considered hinin, although they are permitted to serve samurai more directly than the eta. Finally, geisha – women who offer samurai entertainment and companionship – are considered to be hinin, although unlike eta and torturers they are accorded certain fame and respect by the rest of society.

The Emperor's Chosen

The Emperor's Chosen are a small group of samurai who occupy some of the most prestigious and influential positions in the entire Empire. As their name implies, they are appointed directly by the Emperor, although permitting those who served one's predecessor to continue to serve is a common tradition among dynastic Emperors. Members of the Chosen are of the Kuge, roughly on par with the Great Clan Champions in terms of status and influence.

- The Imperial Advisor is the personal advisor to the Emperor in court, responsible for ensuring that none of the interminable squabbling among the clans goes unseen. The Advisor is also responsible for remaining abreast of any personages at court that might be beneath the Emperor's notice. Typically the Advisor is expected to offer observations to the Emperor regarding events at court, although it is the Emperor's discretion whether to listen to such observations.
- The Imperial Chancellor maintains the Imperial Court, ensuring that all are aware of the schedules, locations, and events during each session. When the Emperor is in attendance, the Chancellor acts as a sort of master of ceremonies. When the Emperor is absent, the Chancellor essentially conducts the court in his stead, significantly magnifying his power. When the Emperor travels to a clan court, the Chancellor typically works very closely with the host of that court to ensure that all flows smoothly around the Son of Heaven.
- The Imperial Herald carries the Emperor's proclamations and laws throughout the land, ensuring that all Rokugani are aware of Imperial intentions and commands. It is one of the oldest positions among the Emperor's Chosen, dating all the way back to the founder of the Miya family, who delivered Hantei's proclamations to Rokugan after the end of the First War. In modern times the position is still traditionally held by the daimyo of the Miya family, although the Emperor can bestow it upon another if he sees fit.
- The Imperial Treasurer oversees the calculation, collection, and distribution of Imperial taxes. During some periods of Rokugan's history the office of Treasurer does not exist, and during those eras its responsibilities are assumed by the Emerald Champion. When the Treasurer does exist, the position is still regarded as somewhat less prestigious than the other Emperor's Chosen, due to its association with the unpleasant topics of money and commerce. Of course, none would dare to openly disdain the position of Treasurer, since doing so would not only be a direct insult to the Emperor, but could very easily result in great difficulties with taxation during future seasons.
- The Shogun of the Empire is a military position, originally conceived in the ancient written works of the ronin tactician Sun Tao, who theorized that when the Emperor was unable to lead, the Shogun must. The position did not actually come into existence until the twelfth century, however. In its modern reality the Shogun acts as a check against the power of the Emerald Champion, ensuring that neither commands too much of the Emperor's direct military power. The Shogunate, the military organization controlled by the Shogun, is smaller than the entirety of the Imperial Legions, but the Shogun can call upon the Legions as well.
- The Voice of the Emperor is similar in some respects to the position of the Imperial Herald, save that the Voice typically delivers direct and personal messages for the Emperor rather than general proclamations. The Voice is not a consistent position, and is generally only appointed during eras when the Emperor is maintaining a greater distance from his subjects. The Voice accompanies the Emperor everywhere he goes and often speaks for him in court when he does not wish to directly participate in the day's activities.



The Jeweled Champions

Although the Empire of Rokugan is strictly stratified by the Celestial Order, which dictates clear divisions between the different levels of the samurai caste, some aspects of meritocracy can still be found in the Emerald Empire, and great ability and achievement are usually rewarded with some manner of elevated social status. Nowhere is this better exemplified than the Jeweled Champions, individuals who have achieved positions of exceptional status and prestige through personal achievement. While these positions can sometimes be bestowed by Imperial proclamation, it is far more common for them to be awarded through competitions or contests.

- The Emerald Champion is the most prestigious of the Jeweled Champions. The Emerald Champion is the personal bodyguard and champion of the Emperor, responsible for dealing with direct threats and challenges to his person, as well as overseeing the activities of his personal guard. Additionally, the Emerald Champion is considered the supreme arbiter of the Emperor's laws throughout the Empire. Since no one man can enforce the laws of an entire realm, the Emerald Champion relies on a massive organization of Imperially endorsed magistrates known as Emerald Magistrates, as well as the military force of the Imperial Legions (traditionally ten in number, although this has varied over the centuries). When the Shogun exists, however, the Emerald Champion shares control of the Legions with him. During eras when there is no Imperial Treasurer, the Emerald Champion is also in charge of tax collection.
- The Jade Champion is a position similar to that of the Emerald Champion, but is filled by a shugenja rather than a bushi (almost all Emerald Champions are bushi). The Jade Champion is responsible for ensuring that illegal forms of magic, such as the sinister blood sorcery of *maho* or the various forms of gaijin sorcery, are not performed within the Empire, and that those who do so are summarily punished. Like the Emerald Champion, the Jade Champion is served by an organization of magistrates, known as Jade Magistrates, as well as a single Jade Legion to back his actions with military force.
- The Amethyst Champion was originally an Imperially appointed position, chosen by the Otomo family, to care for a cursed gaijin artifact called the Amethyst Crown, which brought great riches but with great risk. In the twelfth century, the crown was finally destroyed, and thereafter the position came to more closely resemble the other Jeweled Champions. The Amethyst Champion is a representative of the Emperor, serving as an Imperial presence in distant courts. The Champion is by his nature automatically welcome to attend any court anywhere in the Empire, and is expected to make several trips a year to keep watch on the Emperor's more distant subjects, ensuring they are upholding their lord's expectations.
- The Turquoise Champion is the grandest artisan in the Empire, determined by an elaborate challenge open to all who create things of beauty. The Turquoise Champion is considered the ultimate patron of the arts, and typically uses his wealth to encourage others to take up the oft-overlooked artistic side of samurai life.
- The Ruby Champion is the master sensei of the Emerald Dojo, the institution where the Emerald Magistrates and Imperial Legionnaires who serve the Emerald Champion are trained. The position is sometimes appointed by the Emerald Champion (or the Emperor himself), but in keeping with the general spirit of the Jeweled Champions, it is more often determined by a contest. The position has the most fluid length of any Jeweled Champion, as the Emerald Champion can choose to hold a new contest at any point, effectively dismissing the existing Ruby Champion unless he can emerge victorious and retain his position.
- The Topaz Champion is clearly the least among the Jeweled Champion, since the position lasts only a single year for each recipient. Each year's successor is determined by an extremely illustrious gempukku ceremony held in the city of Tsuma in Crane lands. The contestants undergo a series of rigorous tests that cover all topics a traditional, honorable samurai is expected to be familiar with. All who succeed in achieving their gempukku are permitted to participate in a climactic iaijutsu tournament, and the winner of that tournament is declared the Topaz Champion. The position has no set duties or rewards other than an exquisite suit of armor, but rare is the Topaz Champion who is not invited to fill some manner of prestigious position, whether in his own clan or within the organization of another Jeweled Champion or one of the Emperor's Chosen.
- There are other positions associated with the Jeweled Champions beyond the Champions themselves. For example, the Jeweled Smith is an Imperially-appointed position granted to a smith of exceptional skill, responsible for producing weapons and armor for use by the various Jeweled Champions. During some eras the Shadowlands have also created their own sinister counterparts to the Jeweled Champions, such as the Obsidian and Onyx Champions, dark reflections of the Emerald and Jade Champions respectively, maintained by the so-called Spider Clan during the latter half of the twelfth century.

Rituals of Life

All samurai life is ritual, and a samurai's standard day is simply moving from one ritual to another. This is true for all samurai, whether they be trained as bushi, courtiers, or shugenja. Although the rituals may differ from clan to clan and family to family, the respect a samurai has for them does not. Even a clan as militaristic and pragmatic as the Crab has all manner of rituals which its samurai follow with care and devotion.

The rituals of samurai life begin at birth. Whenever a samurai child is born, special blessings and religious ceremonies are held to ensure that evil spirits are driven away, lest they curse the child or bring bad fortune upon it. Portents are also taken from the positions of the stars, and all possible omens are examined for hints at the child's destiny. One month after birth, the new samurai child is taken to the nearest shrine to be blessed and recorded in that shrine's rolls. Rokugan does not have anything resembling a true census, but a dedicated researcher can learn much about a province's population by consulting the birth records at local shrines.

Children enjoy care-free lives in their younger days, although dedicated parents will make sure to remind them of the samurai duties which await when they grow older. They do learn to read and write, as well as the basics of etiquette and proper behavior. A key transition point comes when the child is old enough to begin training in one of his or her clan schools. This usually happens between the ages of 10 and 12, although true prodigies may begin their training two or three years earlier. The decision of which school a samurai child should attend is a momentous one, since it typically sets the samurai's path for life. Almost all samurai attend a school, as failure to do so implies a lack of the skill and dedication expected of them, and it is quite rare for a samurai to be able to switch from one school to another. Thus, parents carefully consider their family's traditions and the needs of their lord and clan, as well as their child's visible talents (if any). Priests and astrologers may also be consulted to determine where a child's path should lie. The wishes of the child are seldom if ever considered. A family which has served the clan as bushi for ten generations is liable to continue to do so, regardless of what their child might wish.

Schooling typically lasts four years, although it can be shorter or longer depending on the talent of the student. When a student has mastered the first Technique of the school, he or she is considered ready for a *gempukku*, or coming-of-age ceremony, one of the most important rituals in a samurai's entire life. The gempukku ritual varies greatly from one clan, school, or family to another, but in general, it is both a celebration of change (from child to adult) and a testing to prove what the child has learned. Typically, the child will be expected to demonstrate mastery of the school's first Technique, as well as to perform other actions which show dedication to family and clan traditions. For example, Akodo students are expected to recite their lineage back to the founding of the family, while Hida children must undertake a mission into the Shadowlands and return with the head of a dangerous creature. Once the ritual is complete, family and friends offer gifts to the newly-made adult, who is permitted to choose a personal name. Some prefer to keep their childhood name, but many take a new name to symbolize their hopes for the future or their dedication to family, friends, allies, clan, or Empire.



The Origins of Ronin

How does a samurai become a ronin? Many of them are born to this station, either being the children of ronin themselves, or the unacknowledged, illegitimate children of clan samurai. Others are made ronin by some shame or failure that results in their being expelled from their clan, a punishment which most samurai consider to be worse than seppuku. A samurai may also become ronin if his lord dies without an heir. Typically, another lord from the same clan will accept such "orphaned" samurai into his own service, but on rare occasions no daimyo steps forward to make such an offer, and the vassals become ronin.

A custom among some clan samurai is to occasionally request permission to go on a *musha shugyo* or "warrior's pilgrimage," leaving their lord's service and wandering the Empire in search of wisdom and experience. This is most common among those clans which place a higher value on individual accomplishment, such as the Dragon or Crane, but samurai from every clan are known to undertake these quests from time to time. Most daimyo are more than willing to grant permission for such pilgrimages, since it is considered honorable for a samurai to seek to better himself in this way. During a musha shugyo, a samurai is considered to be a ronin (and may even take on a different name in order to symbolize this), but when the pilgrimage is complete the samurai is usually accepted back into his lord's fealty and resumes his old station.

What is a Geisha?

The nature of geisha can be somewhat confusing. Contrary to what outsiders may think, geisha are not prostitutes. They are entertainers, trained to offer solace to lonely and stressed-out samurai by means of pleasant conversation, jokes, music, dance, and relaxation. A samurai who pays for an evening with a geisha is paying for the chance to rest, unwind, and "take off his face," becoming merely a man for an evening, sharing the company of a beautiful and charming woman without the burdens of samurai duty and honor. Romance with a geisha is certainly possible, but entails an extended period of courtship, in which the samurai shows his dedication by means of repeated visits and gifts (traditionally presented to the mistress of the geisha house rather than to the geisha herself). Only a samurai who proves himself truly dedicated can earn a geisha's favors.

The Rokugani geisha is a woman, and indeed geisha are often regarded as the true epitome of Rokugani femininity. However, Rokugan has female samurai as well as male, and if your group wishes, some male geisha can exist in your version of Rokugan. As one might expect, actual romance with male geisha can be problematic (since a samurai woman who gives birth to an illegitimate child has dishonored herself, her family, and her clan), but in most other respects male geisha would play the same role as their female counterparts: entertainment, charming conversation, and a chance to relax and open one's heart with someone who offers no threat.

The dream of most geisha is to find a patron who will sponsor them for life. This might be a wealthy commoner or ronin who is willing to marry them, providing them with a respectable home, or it could be a samurai who is willing to take them on as an official concubine.



The next great ritual in a samurai's life is marriage. In Rokugan, marrying is a duty, typically undertaken at the command of family or lord. Marriages are treated almost as a business matter, and are typically arranged (a process called *mi-ai*) by the parents of the couple, often with the help of a middleman, or even a professional matchmaker known as a *nakado*. Mi-ai traditionally begins with a formal interview between the parents of the prospective bride and groom. Samurai seek pairings which can better their family's station, increase their lands or prestige, or cement some long-term political or personal goal through blood ties, as well as seal bargains or alliances between clans and families. It is not expected for the couple to be in love, or even to know one another prior to their wedding. The process of arranging a marriage can take anywhere from a few months to several years, and a mi-ai interview is not considered an immediate guarantee of success – rather, these preliminary meetings are done to make sure both sides are comfortable with a future pairing, ensuring an ultimately successful union. If the two families live far apart, a nakado or other go-between will be enlisted to help ferry messages and gifts back and forth. Among truly high-ranking families it is not uncommon for children to be betrothed long before they reach adulthood.

One of the most basic purposes of each year's Winter Courts (see "Time and the Seasons," page 34) is to bring people together in marriages that create alliances and cement bargains for the following year. Fathers and mothers of noble lineage always bring their most gifted children to whichever Winter Court they manage to attend, hoping they will catch some royal eye. Typically, marriages arranged at Winter Court are performed at that court, or during the following spring.

Weddings themselves are very elaborate rituals, performed with the presence and supervision of both daimyo and priests, and many blessings and prayers are made to prevent bad fortune, remove evil spirits, and bring harmony and fertility to the match. Usually the ceremony is held privately, with only the immediate family and a presiding priest, but this is followed by an elaborate public reception in which guests enjoy a magnificent feast and offer numerous gifts to the new couple. The bride traditionally wears white, the color of death, at the beginning the wedding, symbolizing that she is dead to her old family. After the ritual is complete and she emerges for the reception, she removes the white kimono to reveal a red one underneath – the color of life, showing she is reborn into her new family. Once the ceremony is done, the newly wedded couple often spends a month apart, meditating on what it means to be married, before they take up their new household together.

When a samurai reaches the age of forty, it is traditional for him or her to retire from active service to the clan. This is not mandatory, however, and samurai in the more active and pragmatic clans will often continue to actively serve their lords long after reaching their fortieth year. High-ranking nobles and daimyo also tend to stay active longer than the normal time. A samurai who does retire will most commonly choose to join the Brotherhood of Shinsei, taking a new name and beginning a new life as a monk or nun. Such retirement is accompanied by an extended ritual celebration, in which family and friends commemorate the samurai's deeds and bid him goodbye. At the conclusion of this ritual, the samurai shaves his head, a transformation symbolizing his entering a new life of religious contemplation. Not all retiring samurai join the Brotherhood, however – some of them instead remain with their families or their lords, living quiet but honored lives, and offering advice and counsel when it is sought. Retired samurai may also sometimes return to active service, taking up their swords once more when a crisis or threat requires their attention.

The last ritual of every samurai's life is their funeral. These, like everything else in Rokugan, follow a strict protocol. By Imperial Law, all bodies must be cremated. Traditionally, a funeral takes place four days after death, and those four days are filled with prayers, as well as the burning of special scrolls filled with "last words" which are the final parting words of the living to the dead. The body is anointed and purified by eta, then kept in state with an honor guard until the day of the cremation itself. Special foods are prepared on that day, and relatives and friends gather to observe the funeral pyre, which is also blessed by shugenja and monks. Once the body has been burned, even more prayers are spoken, to speed the spirit of the departed on its journey to the afterlife. The immediate relatives gather at the pyre and use special chopsticks to remove the remaining fragments of bone from the ashes – these are placed in a crematory urn, which is kept in a place of honor for 35 days before finally being buried, an event accompanied by a final round of prayers, chants, and blessings.

Day-to-Day Etiquette

In addition to major rituals such as weddings and funerals, samurai also follow many other smaller rules and rituals of life. These rituals together form the tradition which Rokugani refer to as "etiquette" and which guides all the details of their lives. Following etiquette, in not only large events but every small moment, is an important way in which samurai demonstrate their civilized and honorable nature, setting themselves apart from commoners and barbarians. Indeed, a samurai who fails to follow these daily rituals is showing himself to be uncouth and uneducated, perhaps even unworthy to bear the title of "samurai." Even the most pragmatic of clans, such as the Crab and Mantis, teach their samurai the basic essentials of etiquette.

Samurai are always polite, even to bitter enemies. They use family names or clan identity to address strangers, and full names (family and then personal) to address those they know. Only a close friend, family member, or a child can be addressed with the personal name alone. Further, the Rokugani nearly always use formal suffixes when speaking to each other – these show good manners and a proper knowledge of the forms of address. The suffix "-san" is the most widespread and well-known, and is used with any person who is of similar rank and station. The more respectful suffix "-sama" is used when speaking to social superiors, or when speaking to someone of equal rank in a very formal public setting. (Using "-sama" in an inappropriate context, on the other hand, can be highly insulting.) The suffix "-dono" implies both respect for the one addressed and great humility by the speaker, and thus can be used not only for daimyo but also for anyone else who is regarded with high admiration. The suffix "-kun" is typically used only when addressing social inferiors, or when speaking to male children. It can also be used by a woman when she is addressing a man of the same or lower age with whom she is kin or close friends. Finally, the suffix "-chan" is normally used for children, but can also be used for young women in a casual or affectionate manner (such as addressing a sister or classmate, for example).

Rokugan, Not Japan

The world of Rokugan is heavily based on the history and culture of feudal Japan, with lesser but still significant influences from China, Korea, Mongolia, and other parts of Asia. However, it is important for players of Legend of the Five Rings to realize that Japan is a source of inspiration, not a rigid template. Many aspects of Rokugan differ, sometimes quite significantly, from the historical samurai culture of Japan. Players should keep this in mind before automatically expecting every aspect of Rokugan to replicate the real societies and peoples who inspired it.



Failing to use a suffix at all implies great familiarity or even intimacy, and is never done casually or openly.

All Rokugani bow when greeting or acknowledging each other. When the greeting is between persons of broadly equal social rank (such as two samurai, or two peasants), both bow from the waist, with the person who is of lower station offering the deeper bow. When there is a serious difference in station (peasant greeting samurai, samurai greeting daimyo, or anyone to the Emperor), the person of higher station simply nods, while the person of lower station kneels and touches their forehead to the ground. Bowing inappropriately, or failing to bow, is a severe insult and can easily lead to punishment or even execution.

Rokugani samurai are normally modest and restrained in their public deportment. They do not raise their voices, save in battle or other emergency, and remain calm and smooth-spoken as much as possible. Samurai who speak loudly or crudely, such as Crab bushi hardened by service on the Kaiu Wall, are regarded as uncouth thugs. Samurai also do not touch in public unless required to by circumstances (e.g. catching someone who is falling, helping up a comrade on the battlefield, treating an injury, and so forth). To touch someone without absolute need, and especially to touch someone in a formal public setting like court, is a serious breach of etiquette. The Rokugani always dress modestly, and it is considered inappropriate and barbaric to show one's limbs or torso in public. Some clans do violate this rule to a certain degree, such as the Unicorn (many of whom still wear the sleeveless garments they used during their time in the Burning Sands), but even they do not presume to dress immodestly while in court or visiting a daimyo.

Samurai make a point of ignoring anyone who violates the rules of etiquette, whether such violations be deliberate or accidental – such uncouth persons simply do not exist, and are shut out of all conversations and denied all requests or petitions. This extends even to conversational topics, for when samurai speak with each other, there are certain things which simply are not mentioned. Open discussion of the Shadowlands, or associated topics such as *maho* or the Taint, is obviously considered highly inappropriate and anyone who brings up such ghastly things without dire need tends to be socially ostracized (hence the difficulties which most Crab face in court). "Unclean" things like blood, sweat, and dead bodies are also considered off-limits in conversation, as are the behavior and duties of the eta. More generally, the Rokugani tend to avoid speaking of any distasteful topic, such as commerce, for any longer than is strictly necessary. They also avoid being too direct or blunt in their speech, and favor heavy use of indirect phrases, symbolism, and allegory, as well as leaving things unsaid so as to be assumed by context. For example, a Crane courtier seeking to ally with the Unicorn against the Lion will not say, "Join us to fight against the Lion Clan." Instead, he will say something like, "The wisdom of Shinsei reminds us that it is always better for samurai to stand together against a common threat, an adage which the descendents of Akodo do not always seem to remember."

Rokugani who become drunk will often violate the rules of etiquette. However, drink is also considered a suitable excuse for bad behavior, and a samurai who has breached etiquette can sometimes reduce the damage by issuing a public apology in which he blames his inappropriate actions on an excessive indulgence in *sake*.

Visiting

Visiting another samurai usually involves some fairly elaborate etiquette. When samurai visit the residence of another, they are expected to present their personal chop (a stamp inscribed with their name) and explain who they are and why they are there, either to a guard or to the first household servant they see. If the host does not wish to see the visitor, a servant will deliver the polite message that the host is busy today. "Please come back and try again tomorrow." Although this seems to leave an opening for a future visit, the experienced samurai will recognize this is simply a polite refusal that allows everyone to maintain face.

It is considered polite, when visiting another samurai, attending a geisha house, or staying at an inn or teahouse, to place all weapons (especially swords) aside, leaving them on a daisho rack in a private room, placing them into the care of a guard, or leaving them in a closet supplied for that purpose. This ensures there will be no temptation toward unseemly violence. Samurai attending on someone of significantly higher social status (such as their daimyo) are usually expected to leave all weapons behind, although exceptions may be made for those who are regarded with great trust. In some instances a samurai will be permitted to keep the wakizashi (the symbol of one's samurai station) but not the katana; however, it is just as likely that the samurai will be expected to set aside all weapons, as a gesture of peaceful respect. If swords are to be taken into the presence of one's host, they are usually placed on the floor, rather than being kept in one's belt. The choice of which side they are placed has significance. Placing them on the right implies trust, while placing them on the left – the side from which they are drawn for combat – suggests hostility or distrust.

In a samurai's home, visitors will usually be offered tea at the very least, and perhaps more depending on how long they are expected to stay. Sake is usually only served in the evening.

Gift-Giving

Depending on the situation, it may be appropriate to give a gift to a samurai's host. Gifts are also offered when attending a wedding, a gempukku ceremony, or any other formal social occasion, as well as during festivals. The importance and sincerity of a gift is determined by the effort put into it. A gift that costs a lot of money but has no personal or historical significance is likely to get little more than a polite thank-you, while a gift of little actual value but profound significance will be received with deep reverence and honor.

When a samurai is offered a gift, he is expected to refuse it twice. This allows the gift-giver to offer it three times, showing that he truly wishes to make the gift. Cutting this ritual short is considered a breach of etiquette, and may even be construed as an insult to the gift-giver (showing that their gift is not worthy of proper attention). It is also possible to deliver a severe insult through the choice of gift. Anything that a daimyo can and should provide to his samurai (weapons, armor, clothing, standard food items) is a direct insult, since it suggests the samurai's lord is not properly caring for his vassals. Similarly, while money can be a gift, it is not one appropriate for samurai, who are not merchants and have no need of coin (at least in theory). Essentially, the more practically useful an item would be to the recipient, the more of an insult it can be. Conversely, a useless but meaningful item typically has the highest value as a gift. A cherry blossom that fell into the samurai's lap while he was writing a famous poem is a great gift indeed.

A Letter From Court

Sister, I must say that your recent gift to Doji-sama met with a far more generous response than I expected. When I saw the rich and splendid gifts which the other courtiers were presenting, I felt sure we would be shamed and suffer a great blow to our prestige. Imagine my surprise when I offered the simple set of chopsticks – along with your suggested speech, of course, about how they had been used by Doji Shinobu to taste the first meal served in his new castle – and Lord Doji-sama's eyes lit up. He responded in the appropriate ways, of course, but I could tell by a number of small signs that he was delighted. When I departed from his presence after the ritual two refusals, I caught any number of venomous looks directed my way from behind sheltering fans! Truly, your advice has been invaluable.





Time and the Seasons

The Rokugani calendar is divided into twelve months, much like a Western calendar, but starts the new year at the beginning of spring, rather than in midwinter. The month of the Hare, corresponding to April, is the first month of the Rokugani year. Each Rokugani month has two names, one in common usage and the other the formal religious name. There has been some change in both sets of names over the centuries, as both common and religious usage have varied with time. Table 1.1 shows the months of the Rokugani calendar in their most modern usage, as well as how they correspond to a Western calendar.

Spring, the months of the Hare, Dragon, and Serpent, is when the farmers plant rice, grain, and vegetables. It is a time of heavy labor, made more difficult by frequent rainstorms. Military action during spring is limited, as the roads are not dry enough to move large armies, but small-scale skirmishing between enemy clans can be frequent and intense. It is also a time of heavy diplomacy, as courtiers return from Winter Court to present proposed agreements to their lords, agreements which must be reviewed, re-negotiated, and then finalized or abandoned. If there is to be war in summer, it is during spring that plans are laid. It is also during spring that the first pain of a bad harvest from the previous year may be felt, as food stores begin to run short.

Summer (the months of the Horse, Goat, and Monkey) is very hot, and most peasants try to avoid working too much while they wait for their crops to grow. The weather is humid in the central Empire, dry in the western territories such as the Unicorn and Crab, but everywhere the heat is intense and cases of heatstroke are not uncommon. Summer is known as the "season of war" and is the peak of Rokugani military activity – the roads are dry and armies can maneuver with minimal disruption to the vital planting and harvest seasons. Summer also is the peak of famine, in those unfortunate years when famine strikes – the previous year's harvest is exhausted and everyone must wait for the autumn to bring new supplies. Thus, the summer can also see peasant unrest and even, occasionally, revolt.

Autumn, the shortest season, encompasses the months of the Rooster and the Dog. The transition from summer to fall – from the season of war to the season of harvest – is celebrated with the Setsuban Festival, a major festival during which it is forbidden for samurai or commoner to spill blood. The autumn harvest generally marks an end to any major wars in the Empire, since no clan can afford to disrupt the harvest. For peasants, it is a time of intense labor followed by equally intense celebration, as they welcome the harvest and the end of war. Autumn is host to another major festival, the Bon Festival, in which the Rokugani pay homage to their departed dead.

Winter begins with the month of the Boar and lasts until the end of the year. All of continental Rokugan experiences heavy snowfall during the winter, making travel extremely difficult and war nearly impossible. Most samurai of any significant rank or station spend the winter in the court of one or another of Rokugan's great lords, and these "Winter Courts" are the highlight of Rokugan's social season, with hundreds of samurai gathering together to gossip, negotiate, eat, drink, flirt, and plot. The most prestigious Winter Court of all, of course, is the one which hosts the Emperor for the winter, and samurai compete viciously to win invitations to the Imperial Winter Court. The end of winter is accompanied by the paired celebrations of the Year's End Festival and the New Year's Festival, ushering in the next year. All Rokugani celebrate their birthday on the beginning of the year, rather than on the actual anniversary of their birth.

Table 1.1: The Rokugani Calendar

Western Month	Rokugani Common Name	Formal Religious Name
April	Hare	Sun
May	Dragon	Moon
June	Serpent	Hantei
July	Horse	Akodo
August	Goat	Doji
September	Monkey	Shiba
October	Rooster	Bayushi
November	Dog	Shinjo
December	Boar	Hida
January	Rat	Togashi
February	Ox	Fu Leng
March	Tiger	Ryoshun

Food

Rice is the staple of the Rokugani diet, eaten with every meal. Indeed, so central is rice to Rokugani life that their standard greeting is not hello, but "Have you had rice today?" Rice is used in a variety of different ways – it may be steamed and served as a main dish, boiled into a porridge, mixed and shaped with vinegar, crushed into rice cakes, or ground up to make a flour for dumplings and noodles.

Rokugani do eat other grains, such as millet and barley. Actual wheat, primarily buckwheat, is used mostly for dumplings and noodles. (*Soba*, buckwheat noodles served in broth, is a popular food.)

Vegetables are eaten extensively and in great variety, and are usually cooked in some way – steamed, stir-fried, pickled, or stewed. Popular choices include beans (especially soy beans), cabbage, *daikon* radishes, onions, potatoes, mushrooms, peppers, bamboo shoots, and various greens. Seaweed is also eaten, either fresh or dried.

The primary sources of protein in the Rokugani diet are *tofu* (soybean curd) and seafood. Seafood is extremely popular and is considered a delicacy, especially inland where fresh fish is difficult to get. Saltwater and freshwater fish, crab, lobster, mussels, eels, octopus, squid, and oysters are all popular choices – the Rokugani will eat pretty much any aquatic creature they can catch. Seafood may be boiled, broiled, fried, or stewed. Fish specifically may also be served as *sashimi*, raw fish placed atop vinegar-treated rice.

Meat is more problematic. The Rokugani will eat poultry in moderation, but they consider red meat to be disgusting, and believe it imputes a foul odor on those who eat it. Although samurai will hunt stag or boar for sport, they do not eat it, instead giving the corpses to the eta for their meals. (Eta are already unclean, so it hardly matters if they eat such things.) The Unicorn Clan is a partial exception to this principle – the Unicorn learned to eat red meat during their centuries wandering the Burning Sands, and they still do so occasionally, although only within their own lands.

The most popular drink is tea (*cha*), a fragrant hot brew, and serving tea to guests is one of the most basic forms of Rokugani hospitality. *Sake*, an alcoholic beverage made from fermented rice, is also extremely popular among samurai and commoners alike. It is usually served hot, although some of the higher-quality types of sake are served cold. A more powerful and harsher form of sake known as *shochu* is also available, but only heavy drinkers partake of it, and those who drink shochu are often looked down upon by others.

Food is eaten primarily with chopsticks. These are normally simple wood, but fancier chopsticks made from expensive or aromatic timbers, ivory, or even jade may be used in wealthy company. Spoons are used for soups, porridges, and stews. Knives are used extensively in the kitchen but never at the table – food is always served in a form which can be eaten with chopsticks or spoons. The Rokugani also eat various kinds of snacks, usually sold by street vendors, and served on wooden skewers.

Traveling Rokugani often carry rice balls, which are packed together in cylinders or triangular shapes, and wrapped in dried seaweed to keep them fresh. These can be eaten by hand, a rare exception to the general rule that one should not touch one's food.

Hair

The traditional hairstyle for a male samurai is a shaved pate and a topknot, doubled forward over the crown. Female samurai traditionally wear their hair long, never cutting it, and if they are unmarried, they tie it back in a so-called "maiden's foxtail," a ponytail or braid high on the skull. A woman never cuts her hair unless she is widowed or otherwise in mourning.

There are many samurai in Rokugan who eschew these conventional styles and instead use their hair to identify themselves with their clan. Crane samurai, both men and women, are known for dying their hair white and wearing it long, with only a loose topknot or ponytail to constrain it. Many Lion samurai dye their hair gold, in honor of the beasts whose name their clan bears. Dragon, whose clan contains many monastic and ascetic samurai, sometimes shave their heads bald like monks, while Crab who spend their lives on the Kaiu Wall may either shave their heads or allow their hair to grow long and wild. Unicorn bushi, especially those of the Moto family, are also known for letting their hair go loose and untethered. Monks themselves, of course, shave their heads as a symbol of their ascetic lifestyle, and samurai who retire to the Brotherhood of Shinsei will likewise shave their heads to symbolize their transformation.

Rokugani men tend to have only modest facial hair, and usually keep themselves clean-shaven, especially when they are young men. Beards and moustaches, when they do appear, are kept carefully trimmed, and the goatee is the most common type of beard.

Clothing

The inhabitants of Rokugan dress according to their station, and it is usually possible to tell someone's social status and profession simply by looking at their garments. Rokugani clothing is a mixture of silk and cotton, varying by season – silks are worn during the heat of summer, heavier cotton garments during fall and winter.

The traditional samurai garment is the *kimono*, a robe-like outfit with full sleeves. It is kept closed with a belt called an *obi*, and small pouches and items can be tucked under the obi or hung from it. If a samurai carries swords, these are traditionally tucked under the obi, keeping them ready to hand. Many samurai wear an outer vest or jacket, called



a *kataginu*, over their kimono, and bushi also wear *hakama*, a sort of pleated, divided skirt, taking the place of pants. In court or other social situations, samurai garments show considerable variety in color, design, and embroidery, and bitter competitions and rivalries can arise over the latest trends in fashion. Samurai often incorporate their clan colors into their clothing, but they are by no means restricted to wearing only those colors, and artistic or pretentious samurai will make very creative use of color, embroidery, and design to draw attention. However, all samurai take precautions not to solely wear another clan's colors, since doing so can be construed as an insult.

Women's kimono usually differ from men's in several ways. Typically, a woman's obi will be significantly wider than a man's, and tied in an elaborate bow. Her kimono sleeves are often round, compared to a man's more squared sleeves. An unmarried woman will wear kimono with very long flowing sleeves, often reaching the knees or even dragging on the floor, whereas a married woman's sleeves are shorter (but are still considerably longer than a man's).

All samurai (except ronin) wear *mon*, unique circular symbols of their clan, family, and school. These are embroidered onto their garments in specific locations, according to long-standing social convention. Typically, samurai will wear a large mon for their clan on the back of their kimono or kataginu. The family and school symbols will be worn on the front, but the choice of which side – left or right – has great significance. The mon closest to the right is there to guide the samurai's sword, while the mon on the left is that which is closest to his heart.

Peasants dress in simpler and less decorative garments than samurai, although most peasant women will try to have at least one colorful kimono they can wear to festivals and celebrations. A peasant woman will wear a very simple, practical kimono, often with a shorter skirt that offers less obstruction to walking and labor. A peasant man will wear short cotton leggings, extending down to the knee or slightly below, and a cotton overcoat known as a *haori*.

Monks of the Brotherhood wear only a loincloth and simple robes, usually tan or saffron in color, and seldom carry anything more than a walking stick.

The Three Sins

The Rokugani regard a great number of activities as inappropriate, dishonorable, or criminal, but the core of their moral code is the belief that there are three true Sins: Fear, Desire, and Regret, the very Sins which first created the universe. To succumb to any of these Sins is to leave the path of honorable and proper behavior. Fear causes one not only to lose courage but to shrink from proper samurai duty. Desire causes one to forsake loyalty to one's lord and clan in favor of personal, selfish indulgence. And Regret makes a samurai doubt his own deeds, second-guess himself and become distracted by past failures.

Dwellings

Common folk, such as farmers and craftsmen, live in villages (or more rarely, cities), with an entire family residing in a single dwelling. A farmer's home is a simple wooden hut, with wooden floors and exterior walls, typically made from cedar, and paper interior walls. The roof is thatch. Such a house usually has only two rooms, a living room and sleeping quarters. More important villagers, such as the local headman, will often have a larger home that includes a "quality room" used to entertain visiting samurai.

Samurai homes are considerably larger and more pleasant. Their overall construction is similar, but they have multiple rooms and tile roofs, and almost always have a garden as well (though for poorer samurai it is very small). Samurai residences are divided into three sections, a front area used for business, a middle section for guests and sleeping, and a third, more private section where food is prepared and the family have their private chambers. Most samurai have household servants, commoners who live in the house or in a smaller attached building.

Wealthy commoners, especially merchants, often live in houses similar in quality to a samurai residence, although they are careful not to be too ostentatious lest they draw the wrath of jealous samurai on themselves.

Lords and governors usually live in castles, which come in two types: Kyuden and Shiro. Kyuden are the most elaborate, and function as both military strongholds and as palaces. Traditionally, the title "Kyuden" is only bestowed upon a stronghold which is judged fit to host the Imperial Winter Court, and some clans choose to only give the title to the ancestral home of their founding Kami. A Kyuden is a formidable structure, with lower floors of stone and upper levels of heavy, solid wood, topped by a tile roof. They are equipped to accommodate ambassadors and visitors from many clans at once, and to house hundreds or even thousands of troops in the event of attack or siege. Despite this militaristic nature, however, many Kyuden are also designed to be artistic and visually appealing, and much effort and resources are often expended to this end. Only the Crab, who have no effort to spare from their endless war with the Shadowlands, refrain completely from such decorative efforts.

A Shiro is typically a smaller and more common castle, with a greater emphasis on function rather than on form. There is much greater variety between different Shiro, however, and they show considerable range in size, function, and beauty. A Shiro which is the seat of a Crane or Scorpion family, for example, is likely to be far larger and more beautiful than a regional fortress in the lands of a militaristic clan like the Lion or Unicorn.

Monks usually dwell in monasteries, located in remote places where they can contemplate and study without disturbance. Some monks, however, are assigned to the religious shrines and temples found in almost every city and town in the Empire. Here they serve alongside shugenja of the clans, seeing to the religious needs of their communities. Temples are usually well-built structures of wood and stone, in a pagoda design. The largest of these temples are the great shrines known as Shinden, of which there are only a few in the Empire. A handful of shugenja families actually make their ancestral homes in some of these great temples, but more typically, Shinden are run and administered by the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

Cultural Option: The Role of Women

"Samurai maidens who remain faithful to their lords get their names in history books. The ones who fall find their names in tragic love songs."

– Doji Shizue

The "default" form of Rokugan, as outlined above, is one in which gender plays relatively little role in the lives of samurai. However, some players and Game Masters may wish to run a game which draws more heavily on the historical cultures which inspired Rokugan – and in those cultures, gender roles were often quite strict. However, the GM and players should make sure they are all in full agreement before introducing these concepts to their game. Accurately depicting the "double standard" of gender roles in a pre-modern society, even a relatively idealized fictional society like Rokugan, can easily become upsetting or offensive to some players. Such potential problems should be considered with care.

If the GM and players do agree to use a more historical depiction of gender roles in Rokugan, the position of women becomes complex and constrained in many ways. A female samurai is still considered equal to men as far as caste, but in other ways, she faces many differences and inequalities. These are especially notable for those women, known as samurai-ko, who serve as bushi. Their lives are a difficult balancing act between their roles as bushi and their roles as women.

Samurai-ko are treated as court ladies, with the deference due one their station, unless they are dressed and prepared for war. Conversely, if a samurai-ko is dressed in military gear, she is referred to with her military title instead of her social title, carefully ignoring her gender. Samurai-ko do have all the rights of men, including the ability to rule a house or land, speak for their clan, and go to war on behalf of their daimyo. However, samurai-ko are also female, and there are many social conventions to which all female members of the samurai caste are expected to conform when not in combat.

For example, women are traditionally expected to speak more softly than men, to use smaller gestures and motions, and to move more slowly. Unmarried women are not allowed to be alone with men, and thus those who wish to serve their clan as samurai-ko must either take an oath of chastity or burden themselves with an "honor retainer" or family member who follows them around, making sure they obey all social conventions and are never alone with a man who might taint their virtue. If a celibate samurai-ko is found to have a lover, she usually has no choice but to either commit seppuku or, more frequently, renounce her station and join a monastery as a nun. Of course, many samurai-ko do take lovers, and the poetry and stories of Rokugan are full of the legends of samurai-ko who doom themselves for love.

Once a samurai-ko marries, unless she is a daimyo or other person of significant rank, she is expected to take over the duty of running her household. This is a tradition dating from the time of Lady Doji, who ran her household while Kakita went out to wage war against the forces of Fu Leng.



Travel

Travel in Rokugan is slow, for most samurai do not own steeds, and the number of major roads is limited. Even on horseback, journeying across the Empire can take many days or weeks, and during bad weather – heavy rains or snow – progress is painfully slow.

Travel in Rokugan is carefully controlled, and most samurai must gain permission from their daimyo to leave their lands. All travelers, samurai and commoners alike, must carry travel papers which indicate their destination and business. Such papers are issued by daimyo or magistrates, and traveling without papers (or carrying false papers) is considered a crime. Papers are checked regularly by patrols, by guard posts at clan borders and major road crossings, and at the gates to cities. As one might imagine, this can make life difficult for ronin and others who travel regularly.

All the roads in Rokugan are considered to be owned by the Emperor, but are maintained and patrolled by the clans whose lands they cross. The major roads are dotted with roadhouses, small way-stations where travelers can stop for the night if they cannot reach the next village. These are simple buildings equipped with futons for sleeping, a firepit for cooking, and a well for fresh water.

When traveling samurai arrive in a town or city, they are expected to pay a courtesy call on the local land-holder or governor, notifying him of their presence and intentions. In major cities this visit is usually handled by a minor functionary on behalf of the daimyo, but in smaller towns or rural areas the local ruler may actually allow a brief personal audience. Failing to pay such a courtesy call is considered a breach of etiquette.

Men and Women

All members of the samurai caste, both men and women, are expected to serve their clans with equal dedication and honor. Rokugan makes few distinctions in the duties and deference afforded to men and women, for all alike are samurai and are entitled to the respect which their position deserves. Some social distinctions are made, however, based in part on the simple reality that it is women who must bear children. It is also more common for a woman to marry into another family or clan than the reverse.

When samurai marry, one member of the new family is expected to remain at home, managing the household, while the other continues to serve the clan. The spouse who remains "active" is assigned a stipend by the one who runs the house. It is more common for a samurai household to be managed by the wife, simply because she must already remain home to birth and care for the couple's children. However, in some families with a more matriarchal tradition, such as the Utaku and the Moshi, the man is traditionally assigned to manage the household. Likewise, these matriarchal families are more likely to marry their men, rather than their women, into other families.

It should be noted that in Rokugan, "running a household" means significantly more than one might expect. The spouse assigned this duty handles all of the money and is in charge of the household in every respect, managing the family's finances, hiring workers to repair and improve the house and grounds, seeing to it that any retainers receive their own stipends, and handling all of the entertainment for visitors. Although this involves a great deal of time dealing with money, it is not considered damaging to the reputation – to the contrary, a spouse who maintains a well-run and prosperous household is regarded with honor and respect.

Among high-ranking nobles, who have small armies of household servants, many of these traditions are ignored. It is not uncommon for both spouses in a noble family to continue with their samurai duties, leaving their household and children in the hands of trusted servants and underlings.



Religion and Philosophy

Rokugan's religious beliefs actually encompass three different forms of worship – Shintao, Fortunism, and ancestral worship – all of which are united by the will of the Emperor into a single religious system. The Brotherhood of Shinsei, an order of monks, maintains and upholds Rokugan's religion, with different branches of the Brotherhood focusing on different aspects of the faith.

Shintao itself is dedicated to studying and practicing the teachings of Shinsei, the "Little Teacher" whose words enlightened the first Hantei and saved the Empire. Shintao is a superficially complex philosophy, but at its root it focuses on spiritual and physical balance and moderation, avoiding the temptations of mortal life in order to attain a state of harmony known as Enlightenment. There is considerable debate within Rokugan as to exactly what Enlightenment means and how it can be attained, although most scholars agree that balance and spiritual dedication are important elements. Many divergent sects of Shintaoism have appeared over the centuries, some of them questionable or even blasphemous in their approach.

Fortunism is the worship of the Fortunes, the spirits and gods who dwell in Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens, as well as the lesser spirits dwelling in the mortal realm. The Fortunes are organized into a celestial hierarchy, ranging from the Sun and Moon, supreme rulers of the Heavens, down through the Seven Great Fortunes and Elemental Dragons to the hundreds of Lesser Fortunes. The founding Kami of the Great Clans also reside in Tengoku and are worshipped with the same reverence. Below the Fortunes are lesser spiritual beings, such as Ryu (elemental dragon spirits) and Fuschicho (phoenix spirits) who sometimes visit the mortal world or dwell there for extended periods of time. Below them in turn are the simple elemental spirits who inhabit all objects in the mortal world. The Rokugani revere all of these beings, from the highest to the lowest, worshipping and appeasing them as appropriate. Thus, when a peasant's lands are afflicted with plague, he will pray to Ekibyogami, the Fortune of Pestilence, for mercy. When a peasant cuts down a tree, he will give thanks to the spirits within that tree, apologizing for the need to cut it down and thanking the spirits for supplying wood and warmth to his family.

Ancestral worship offers reverence to the spirits of one's forbears, especially those who have ascended into Yomi. The Rokugani believe that their honored ancestors watch over them from the afterlife, and pray to them for guidance, aid, and good fortune. Every house in Rokugan, from lowliest eta to highest noble, contains an ancestral shrine where the residents may offer prayer and dedication to those of their kin who have gone before.

Kharma and the Celestial Wheel

The Rokugani have long accepted that most souls are reborn, returning to live new lives in mortal bodies – a belief that goes back to the dawn of the Empire and the first teachings of Shinsei. However, they also worship their ancestors, a seeming contradiction. Modern Rokugani have come to believe that each soul has a destiny, a goal for which it is intended. So long as that destiny goes unfulfilled, the soul will be re-born again and again, returning to the mortal world in a new body. Only when a soul's specific destiny is fulfilled is it allowed to enter Yomi, the Realm of Sacred Ancestors, and leave the Celestial Wheel. This concept of reincarnation is a key element of Rokugani theology, for it means they are taught not to fear death. Death, after all, is merely passage to another life.

During a lifetime, a soul accumulates kharma – a burden of good and bad deeds, those which guide it toward its destiny and those which drag it away on the path of sinfulness. When people die, their souls carry this kharmic burden into the afterlife, and the Fortune of Death, Emma-O, assigns their rebirth accordingly. A samurai soul deeply burdened by bad kharma may be reborn as a commoner, an eta, or even condemned to become a gaki for a few decades. Conversely, those who have lived well, avoided sin, and fulfilled their duties are liable to be reborn in a higher station. Thus, all inhabitants of Rokugan have a powerful spiritual incentive to accept and obey the social order, and to fulfill their duties to the best of their ability.

Peasants in Rokugan have a saying: "Samurai are punished for their deeds in this life by being reborn as samurai in their next life." Although this is partly a joke the peasants use to keep up their spirits, it contains an element of truth. The pressures of life in Rokugan can make it extremely difficult to cleanse one's kharma, and only the rare and exceptional soul manages to ascend to a higher station, let alone fulfill their destiny and make it into Yomi. However, there is a flip side to this – mortals have the power to change their destiny. Shinsei himself asserted this when he chose mortals to be the Seven Thunders and confront the dark Kami Fu Leng. In his words, "Only mortal men have the power to change destiny." Thus, a Rokugani who performs deeds of great courage and nobility can alter both his own destiny and that of the world around him, cleansing his kharma in a single moment of heroism.

The Oni of Jigoku

The Realm of Evil, Jigoku, is regarded by Rokugani with the utmost horror and revulsion. One of the most terrifying aspects of that realm is its native inhabitants, the demonic beings known as oni. Oni are creatures of pure malice and destruction, seeking to corrupt, kill, and destroy all in their paths. They can enter Ningen-do in a variety of ways, including being summoned with *maho* (blood magic) or passing through physical gateways such as the Festering Pit. Oni vary widely in both power and appearance, and the Rokugani have encountered literally hundreds of different kinds. Although some oni are relatively weak, even the lowliest of them can be a terrible threat to a samurai, and the mightiest oni are capable of destroying whole armies. More information on oni can be found in the *Book of Void*.



The Spirit Realms

In the early history of the Empire, the Rokugani had a fairly simple view of the cosmos. They believed it was divided into three realms, the Realm of Mortals (Ningen-do), the Celestial Heavens (Tengoku), and the Realm of the Dead (Jigoku). Oni and other demonic beings were believed to come from the darkest regions of Jigoku, which also included the domains of ghosts and honored ancestors.

Over the centuries, however, the Rokugani have come to a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the other realms of existence, known collectively as the Spirit Realms. Spirit creatures visiting Ningen-do have been studied and questioned by shugenja and scholars, and some shugenja, notably from the Kitsu family, have actually been able to locate spirit portals and pass through them, visiting these other dimensions in person. The long war with the Shadowlands has given the Rokugani a better understanding of Jigoku and its true nature. And in the twelfth century, one shugenja, Naka Tokei, actually visited all of the spirit realms in person; his discoveries further deepened Rokugan's understanding of these places.

In modern Rokugan, scholars recognize a total of 12 Spirit Realms, counting Ningen-do (the Realm of Mortals, the physical world inhabited by humans). The other known realms are as follows:

Chikushudo (the Realm of Animals): Located in close alignment with Ningen-do, and with many portals connecting the two, Chikushudo is home to a variety of powerful animal spirits, especially the shapeshifters called *hengayokai*, such as kitsune (foxes) and tanuki (badger-dogs). These beings find humans both appealing and fascinating, and often take human form to dwell among them – indeed, Rokugani legends record many instances of shapeshifters who fell in love with mortals and bore their children, and at least two clans, the Bat and the Fox, have close blood connections to shapeshifters.

Gaki-do (the Realm of the Hungry Dead): A dark and unpleasant realm, closely aligned to Jigoku and with several portals traveling between them. Gaki-do is home to the *gaki*, malignant ghost-like spirits which feed upon unclean substances and negative emotions. Some Gaki are native to this realm, while others are created from mortal souls condemned to this place for their sinful lives. Gaki of both sorts often travel into the mortal realm to feed.

Jigoku (the Realm of Evil): The most deadly and dangerous of the spirit realms, Jigoku is home to the monstrous oni and countless other malignant beings, and exudes its power into other realms by means of the sinister spiritual corruption known to Rokugani as the Shadowlands Taint. Jigoku constantly seeks to overturn the Celestial Order by invading and corrupting other spirit realms, especially Ningen-do, and these efforts are the cause of many of the greatest crises which Rokugan has faced in its long history.

Maigo no Musha (the Realm of Lost Heroes): Perhaps the most obscure of the spirit realms, this dimension is also known as the Realm of Thwarted Destiny, and is home to those souls whose destiny had been blocked so completely that they cannot be reborn normally into the mortal realm. By taking refuge in Maigo no Musha, these souls may eventually find redemption and reclaim their destinies.

Meido (the Realm of Waiting): When mortals die, their souls travel to Meido, where they await judgment by Emma-O, the Fortune of Death. Aside from Emma-O and his servants, Meido has no native inhabitants, and the souls found there are all mortals awaiting judgment. Sometimes, a soul will get lost on its way to Meido, or leave this realm to return to the mortal world – such souls become *yorei*, ghosts.

Sakkaku (the Realm of Mischief): A minor spirit realm which is home to trickster spirits such as mujina and kappa. The creatures of Sakkaku are not directly malevolent, but their tricks and pranks can often be dangerous or deadly to mortals. They enjoy entering Ningen-do to tease and torment mortal men, and portals between Ningen-do and Sakkaku are fairly widespread. Many creatures from this realm dwell in the mortal world for extended periods of time.

Tengoku (the Celestial Heavens): The Heavens are home to the Fortunes and the great Celestial Dragons, and keep watch over the mortal realm and all the other spirit realms. Tengoku is a celestial bureaucracy, much like the Empire (which was built in imitation of it), and is ruled by the Sun and Moon, with the Dragons and Greater Fortunes in direct support. The Heavens seek balance in all things, and thus oppose (albeit usually indirectly) the actions of realms like Jigoku which seek to overturn that balance.

Toshigoku (the Realm of Slaughter): Another malignant realm, like Gaki-do and Jigoku (to which it is closely connected), Toshigoku is a realm dedicated to bloodlust and rampant violence. Souls who die in the grip of bloodlust are often condemned to Toshigoku, and those who meet this fate are usually consumed by the violent urges of the place, devolving into nothing more than mindless killing machines. Thankfully, stable portals to Toshigoku are quite rare, but temporary gates to this realm sometimes open spontaneously at sites of extreme violence such as battlefields, drawing souls directly into the Realm of Slaughter's embrace.

Yomi (the Realm of Blessed Ancestors): Those mortals who manage to fulfill their destiny and purge their bad kharma are allowed to leave the Celestial Wheel and ascend into Yomi, where they dwell for eternity, watching over their mortal descendents. Yomi is a place of beauty and glory, home to the spirits of the greatest heroes of Rokugan. Metaphysically, it is very close to Tengoku, but even the mightiest of mortal souls are normally not allowed to enter the Celestial realm – only those elevated to the status of Fortunes may do so.

Yume-do (the Realm of Dreams): This realm is visited by mortals every night in their sleep, but it is also possible to enter it physically through spirit portals. Portals to Yume-do are rare, and their presence can sometimes lead to disruptions in the mortal world as dream-beings pass through into the waking world. Yume-do is inhabited primarily by the formless creatures of dream, who take on the shape and aspect of whatever a dream may require. It also home to the baku or "dream eaters," beings who feed on the dreams of mortals, and their Tainted counterparts, the Baku no Oni. The most obscure and significant inhabitants of Yume-do, however, are the Nezumi Transcendents – those ratlings who have managed to gain an eternal existence, watching over the rest of their species from the Realm of Dreams.

The Three Sacred Substances

According to Rokugani myth, when Lady Sun wept for her children at the dawn of time, her tears rained down on Ningen-do. Those which touched the earth became jade. Others solidified in mid-air, becoming crystal. Later, when Lord Moon's belly was cut open by Hantei, the god's blood also rained down on the mortal world. Where it touched the ground, it became obsidian, but where it landed on the jade tears of Lady Sun, the two substances merged to become the first mortal men and women, born from the mingling of the Sun's purity and the Moon's rage and madness.

Jade, crystal, and obsidian are all sacred and spiritually powerful substances, imbued with the essence of the divine beings who spawned them, and the Rokugani have studied and worked with them for centuries.

Jade is the most widespread of the three substances, although still quite rare compared to normal minerals like iron or copper. Veins of jade can be found underground in many places throughout the Empire, and almost all of the Great Clans operate at least one or two jade mines. Jade, as a substance of spiritual power and purity, has the ability to harm spirit creatures or those who are afflicted with the Shadowlands Taint. The Crab Clan makes great use of jade in its endless war against the Shadowlands, since the sacred stone has the ability to damage creatures like oni whose flesh is resistant to mundane weapons. It is possible to forge jade into weapons, although only the most skillful of artisans can manage this, and such powerful items are rare and treasured keepsakes for those fortunate enough to possess them.

Crystal is much less common than jade, but also possesses much greater potential power. Unlike jade, which becomes corrupted as it absorbs and negates the Shadowlands Taint, crystal is far more resilient, able to repel the Taint's influence with great strength. Spirits of tremendous purity are found within crystal, and when those spirits can be awakened, the resulting power will glow with light as bright as the Sun, burning and repelling creature of darkness or Taint. Awakening crystals in this manner is difficult, however, and few shugenja have managed to do so. Crystal weapons do exist, but are extraordinarily rare, for the talent required to forge them is great indeed. Even master weaponsmiths usually find crystal to be beyond their skill.

Obsidian is also much less common than jade, but the Rokugani do not regret this, for Lord Moon's Blood is dangerous. Like jade and crystal, obsidian can harm creatures which are resistant to mundane attack – indeed, it can often do so with greater efficacy than jade. But obsidian carries the curse of the Moon's madness within it, and obsidian items have a tendency to drive their bearers to violence or insanity. Furthermore, while obsidian is not intrinsically Tainted, it has a sinister affinity to the Shadowlands Taint, and can be forged into Tainted artifacts and weapons of great and terrible power. Rokugani regard obsidian with deep suspicion, if not outright dread, and no sane artisan will employ it willingly.

The Tenets of Bushido

"This is the path of the warrior. All men who call themselves samurai are measured by it. Those who stray from this path will perish. Those who adhere to its teachings will prosper."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

All samurai are supposed to live according to a strict and demanding set of ethical principles known as *Bushido* (literally, the "way of the warrior"). The principles of Bushido were first established by the Kami Akodo, founder of the Lion Clan, in his earliest writings, including his seminal book *Leadership*. They quickly came to be accepted by all the clans in Rokugan, and as the roles of samurai evolved to include courtiers and artisans, the Code of Bushido evolved into a complete philosophical view of the role and duty of the samurai. In modern Rokugan, Bushido is integral to almost every aspect of a samurai's life, and the proper way to uphold the Code is a subject of continual discussion and debate among all samurai.

Bushido is comprised of seven Virtues: Courage, Compassion, Courtesy, Duty, Honesty, Honor, and Sincerity. These virtues are held to represent the proper way in which samurai should live and serve their lords. In its ideal form, Bushido values each of these virtues equally, and a samurai is expected to adhere to all of them with equal vehemence. In practice, however, few samurai can live such spotless lives. Moreover, every clan in Rokugan views Bushido in a slightly different way, according to their respective views of duty, honor, and life. The true nature of Bushido is constantly debated within the courts of Rokugan, and the true way to uphold its Virtues is seldom fully agreed upon even within the same clan. Every clan, even the Scorpion, has its idealists who try to uphold every Virtue no matter the cost, just as every clan, even the Lion, contains a few dark souls who laugh at Bushido and flout its principles.

Compassion (Jin)

"Through intense training the samurai becomes quick and strong. He is not as other men. He develops a power that must be used for the good of all. He has compassion. He helps his fellow men at every opportunity. If an opportunity does not arise, he goes out of his way to find one."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

Compassion teaches samurai that, as the warrior elite of society, it is their duty to protect and guide the lesser folk of Rokugan. In its most obvious form, this means offering military protection, guarding the commoners against bandits, criminals, foreigners, and the monsters of the Shadowlands. It is this form of Compassion which is most widely respected and revered in Rokugan, for even clans like the Lion and Scorpion recognize the importance of keeping their peasants alive and productive. Bullying or abusing those of lower station is an act unworthy of a samurai, even if the social order allows it.

Some clans take Compassion more fully to heart, however, and seek to offer guidance and help to the lower castes. The Phoenix, for example, are known for educating their peasants in the ways of the Tao, seeing this spiritual support as being just as important as physical protection.



Courage (Yu)

"Rise up above the masses of people who are afraid to act. Hiding like a turtle in a shell is not living at all. A samurai must have heroic courage. It is absolutely risky. It is dangerous. It is living life completely, fully, wonderfully. Heroic courage is not blind. It is intelligent and strong. Replace fear with respect and caution."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

Courage is in many ways the most basic and universal of all the Bushido virtues, since every samurai is expected to be ready and able to die at a moment's notice. The central importance of courage to a samurai's life cannot be understated. A samurai must be prepared to fight and die without hesitation, whether at his lord's command or simply due to unavoidable circumstance. Indeed, it is popular to say that a samurai lives at all times three feet from death, since that is the reach of a katana. Naturally, the warlike clans such as the Lion, Crab, and Unicorn tend to speak most often of courage – especially the Crab, who must face the unimaginable terrors of the Shadowlands on a daily basis. But in truth there is no clan which ignores courage. Even the Scorpion, notorious for their contempt for Bushido, recognize that courage is important if their samurai are to fulfill their duties properly (though to be sure, the Scorpion are far more willing to retreat from a hopeless battle than most other samurai would be).

It should be noted that, just as Akodo pointed out in his final line, courage does not mean foolhardiness. After all, a samurai's life belongs to his lord, not to him. A samurai who throws his life away in a useless and selfish gesture is not behaving honorably, but rather is failing in his duty to lord and clan. Indeed, the Crab would be the first to point out that there are many times when retreating from a fight requires more courage than merely staying and dying.

Courtesy (Rei)

"Samurai have no reason to be cruel. They do not need to prove their strength. A samurai is courteous even to his enemies. Without this outward show of respect, we are nothing more than animals. A samurai is not only respected for his strength in battle, but also by his dealings with other men. The true inner strength of a samurai becomes apparent during difficult times."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

Samurai are civilized men and women, not barbarians, and are expected to behave with courtesy and proper manners at all times. A samurai who shows undue emotion or rudeness is not only violating Courtesy but is also losing his face (*on*), disrespecting those around him and shaming himself. A true samurai remains courteous and well-mannered at all times, even when facing his bitterest sworn enemy, or provoked with vile insults and malignant behavior. A samurai who openly insults others is showing his own weakness, which is why Rokugani courtiers endlessly practice the art of the subtle and indirect insult. Conversely, when a samurai is confronted with failures of Courtesy by those of higher station, his own honor is demonstrated by his ability to endure such provocations and avoid drawing attention to others' failures. Rokugani as a whole make a point of ignoring those who engage in uncouth and improper spectacles, since to draw attention to such discourteous behavior is to make matters even worse.

As one might expect, those who serve their clans in politics and the courts tend to place a very strong emphasis on Courtesy, since it is a vital element of social and political negotiation. The most heavily political clans, such as the Crane and the Scorpion, place a special value on Courtesy, although in the case of the Scorpion this is more for the Virtue's tactical value in court than due to any moral commitment to it. Conversely, the notoriously crude and pragmatic warriors of the Crab Clan tend to discount or ignore Courtesy, although the courtiers of their clan practice it as avidly as any.

Duty (Chugo)

"For the samurai, having done some 'thing' or said some 'thing,' he knows he owns that 'thing.' He is responsible for it and all the consequences that follow. A samurai is intensely loyal to those in his care. To those he is responsible for, he remains fiercely true."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

If there is a Virtue which competes with Courage for universal acceptance, it is Duty. A samurai must always be ready to serve his lord in whatever way is required, no matter what the cost. Death is the least that a samurai may face – he must be prepared to endure humiliation, dishonor, shame, and failure for the sake of Duty. He must remain faithful to lord, family, clan, and comrades no matter what temptations may fall in his path. A samurai who violates loyalty to his lord or clan is violating Duty, and such untrustworthy individuals are hardly worthy of the title "samurai." Duty is the reason why love is so problematic for samurai, since a samurai in love will feel a conflicting loyalty to his (or her) beloved which may disrupt or diminish the fulfillment of duty.

The Scorpion Clan refers to Chugo as "Loyalty" and practically makes a fetish of it. In a clan where treachery and lying are a way of life, there has to be one thing that can be counted on, and for the Scorpion, that is Loyalty. Violations of Loyalty are punished in the most horrific way the Scorpion can manage – the terror of Traitor's Grove, where the souls of those who betray the Scorpion Clan are imprisoned for eternity.

Honesty (Gi)

"Be acutely honest throughout your dealings with all people. Believe in justice, not from other people, but from yourself. To a true samurai, there are no shades of gray in the question of honesty and justice. There is only right and wrong."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

Honesty is in principle the simplest of the virtues of Bushido, but also perhaps the most troublesome. Ideally, it would seem obvious that an honorable warrior should always tell the truth, and indeed, there are some families and clans which embrace Honesty with the same fervor as the rest of the virtues. The Unicorn Clan is famous for its straightforward and direct ways, even in the subtle world of politics, and the Kitsuki family of the Dragon Clan was founded on the search for truth above all

else. Honesty is also strongly associated with justice, and thus tends to be a virtue admired by magistrates (or at least by those magistrates who take their duties to heart).

However, many other samurai, especially those who serve their clans in court, find that Honesty is often a virtue which must be danced around, or perhaps even violated, in order to fulfill their duties. Almost all those samurai who serve in the arena of court and politics practice the art of deceiving or manipulating their opponents while still remaining technically truthful, and some families make almost an art form of employing such tactics while still satisfying themselves that they are behaving honorably. Most highly political schools and families, such as the Doji or the Yasuki, quietly accept that sometimes they will simply have to lie for their clan, and therefore tend to emphasize Sincerity far more than Honesty in their approach to Bushido, counting on their adherence to the other virtues to make up for their sometimes erratic observance of this one. The Scorpion, naturally, ignore Honesty altogether, and exhibit almost open contempt for samurai who strive to tell the truth or who follow the path of justice.

Honor (Meyo)

"A true samurai has only one judge of his honor, and that is himself. Decisions you make and how those decisions are carried out are a reflection of who you truly are. You cannot hide from yourself."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

Both the subtlest and the most basic of the virtues, Honor teaches that every samurai stands in judgment over himself, at all times. Bushido is not merely enforced by social convention or superior authority, but by each samurai's own heart and soul. A samurai without Honor cannot truly follow the other virtues of Bushido, for he is merely acting as others expect, not as his own sense of honor demands. Conversely, a samurai with true Honor will follow the ways of Bushido even when the society around him becomes corrupt and his superiors expect him to behave dishonorably solely because they command it.

Almost all samurai in Rokugan respect Honor, for it lies at the very heart of Bushido. Only the Scorpion reject it, as they reject most aspects of Bushido – indeed, from the Scorpion perspective Honor is the most troubling virtue of all, because it can justify disloyalty. Those few Scorpion who actually believe in Bushido and try to embrace Honor within their hearts are regarded with deep suspicion and contempt by the rest of their clan, and are derisively labeled as *junshin*, "not of the blood."

Sincerity (Makoto)

"When a samurai has said he will perform an action, it is as good as done. Nothing will stop him from completing what he has said he will do. He does not have to 'give his word.' He does not have to 'promise.' The action of speaking alone has set the act of doing in motion. Speaking and doing are the same action."

– Akodo's *Leadership*.

Samurai are taught from childhood that they must express absolute sincerity in both word and deed. A samurai who speaks on behalf of his lord in court, but does so in a lackadaisical or unconvincing manner, is serving his lord as badly as if he refused to speak at all. A samurai who shows a lack of dedication in his actions, who acts and behaves without absolute commitment, is a samurai who fails his lord and his clan.

Sincerity is regarded with particular admiration by political clans and families, such as the Crane and the Otomo, but most samurai respect it. The Dragon respect Sincerity's principle of unifying word and action. Even the Scorpion recognize that Sincerity is very tactically valuable, since if they say and do everything with complete conviction, their enemies will never know when they are lying or telling the truth. However, some of the more pragmatic warrior families, such as the Hida and Moto, regard overt displays of Sincerity with suspicion, seeing them as little more than deception dressed up as honorable behavior. The Crab in particular are known for delivering the sneering insult, "Oh, how sincere," whenever they feel someone in trying to manipulate them.

The Concept of Face (On)

Face is a vitally important aspect of samurai culture. It is intrinsic to the belief that samurai are exceptional persons, chosen by birth to serve the Empire in ways that mere peasants cannot. A samurai is expected to maintain self-discipline at all times, to control himself and to never show the sort of open emotions and out-of-control behavior that characterizes "lower people." A samurai who cannot control his emotions is a samurai who cannot serve his lord with honor and trust, for his emotions will override his judgment and loyalty. Thus, maintaining dignity and self-control is vital to a samurai's life.

The ability to maintain this self-control, never showing one's true feelings, is referred to as maintaining one's *on* or "face." A samurai who maintains face is a samurai who cannot be manipulated, a samurai who can deceive his enemies, a samurai who serves his clan without fail. By contrast, a samurai who loses face, who loses self-control, shames both himself and, worse, his family and clan.

Face is a purely samurai concept, one that is not expected of peasants and other common folk. Maintaining face is sometimes compared to wearing a mask, a mask which must be kept on every hour of every day, concealing one's true feelings beneath *on*. The Scorpion Clan is fond of remarking that their own physical masks are not concealment at all, but rather an admission of the truth: no samurai ever show their true selves. "All of us wear masks," the Scorpion say, "the difference is, we of the Scorpion admit it."

Shame and Disgrace

A samurai who is shamed by dishonorable actions or loss of face will be expected, at the very least, to offer deep and sincere apologies for such actions. Typically, if the disgrace was fairly modest, the samurai will be punished in a non-permanent way – assignment to less prestigious duties, for example, or expulsion from the castle, court, or city where he misbehaved. Although such punishments are not lethal, they nevertheless represent a deep and profound shame for

the samurai involved, who may well spend the rest of his life trying to redeem himself for his failure.

More extreme failures, such as a violent outburst, an attack or serious insult against someone of higher station, or a breach of duty or loyalty, are punished much more severely. A samurai who commits such acts is quite likely to be ordered to commit seppuku (if he does not offer seppuku himself out of shame). On other occasions, such disgraced samurai may be expelled from family and clan, and thus made ronin. A samurai may also forsake his fealty and become ronin by his own choice rather than face the prospect of punishment or seppuku, particularly if he feels he is not actually guilty.

Seppuku

Seppuku is a form of ritual suicide which samurai perform when they have been irretrievably dishonored. By performing the ceremony and thus dying honorably, the samurai wipes away the stain of dishonor and leaves his or her family name clean and untarnished. It is important to remember that the main purpose of seppuku is to protect the family, rather than the individual. In Rokugan a family is the repository of all the collective deeds and accomplishments of its members, and it is commonly said, "I have borrowed my name from my ancestors. I must return it to them untarnished." A dishonored person thus brings dishonor and shame to the entire family. By committing seppuku, a samurai spares his family from the shame of his deeds.

A samurai who is committing seppuku in a formal setting dresses entirely in white (the color of death), and traditionally writes a final poem, a death-haiku, before taking up his wakizashi to commit suicide. The ritual may be witnessed by the samurai's friends or relatives, representatives from his daimyo, or other individuals. The actual suicide is usually performed by means of the wakizashi, the blade which symbolizes a samurai's honor (although another blade can be substituted in a pinch). The samurai kneels and makes three cuts across his belly, disemboweling himself. In order for the ritual to be properly completed, the samurai must not flinch or cry out in pain. Since this is extremely difficult, by long-standing tradition seppuku is assisted by another individual, a "second," whose task is to complete the ritual by beheading the samurai, ensuring he dies with honor. Serving as a samurai's second is an important and honorable task, and the sword used to behead the victim is carefully cleansed with water beforehand.

Seppuku is usually not something a samurai can do at will. Samurai who are facing total battlefield defeat or the military annihilation of their bloodline, however, will sometimes commit seppuku immediately rather than face the eternal shame of utter defeat. Indeed, entire samurai families have been known to commit suicide under such circumstances.

More normally, however, permission to commit seppuku must be granted by the samurai's daimyo, and cruel or intolerant daimyo have been known to deny seppuku and force their samurai to live with their shame.

Aside from acting to preserve family honor, the other form of permissible seppuku is to protest unjust orders from one's lord. This form of protesting seppuku is known as *kanshi*, and must still be authorized by the daimyo. Most daimyo don't care for such an act, but it is considered quite dishonorable and ill-mannered to refuse one's samurai permission to commit *kanshi*.

Women of the samurai caste who are not bushi are permitted to kill themselves in a less painful fashion, known as *jigai*, in which they stab themselves in the throat with a knife. This is generally reserved for women who are courtier or shugenja. Given the chance, they will bind their ankles together before performing this act, so as not to shame themselves with wild kicking during their death throes.



Shourido

During the Twelfth Century, certain forces within the Shadowlands devised the concept of Shourido, an "alternate code" of behavior that embraced selfish accomplishment, to tempt Rokugan's samurai away from the path of honor. Shourido is not officially recognized within Rokugan, and most traditional samurai regard its teachings with nothing but horror and contempt. Those of a less honorable nature, however, often succumb to its sinister appeal.

Shourido has its own set of seven Dark Virtues: Control, Determination, Insight, Knowledge, Perfection, Strength, and Will. As their names imply, embracing these alternative "virtues" is an explicit rejection of Bushido, for they emphasize personal achievement, power, and advancement, regardless of the cost to oneself or to others. There is no room in Shourido for loyalty or duty, no room for respecting one's peers or protecting the weak – it is a corrupting code designed to undermine the Rokugani social and moral order, promoting selfishness, ambition, and treason.

Politics

The way of the samurai is often considered synonymous with the way of the warrior. But in the Emerald Empire, samurai do not serve their clans solely on the battlefield. Politics has been a vital element of Rokugan's history since its founding, and the negotiations and maneuvers of courtiers have changed the Empire as often as war, if not more so. Indeed, skillful courtiers can sometimes alter the outcomes of wars after the battles are fought – a talent which earns the frequent wrath of militaristic clans like the Lion and Crab.

Although some bushi look down on courtiers and the subtle arts of politics, those who must serve their clans in court reject the notion that they are any less samurai than their warrior cousins. Courtiers must pursue their diplomatic struggles with the same courage and zeal as a bushi in combat, for their failures can be as catastrophic as a lost war, and their victories can bring glory and success to their clan without the need to fight a war at all. Failure in court can mean death as certain as failure in combat – courtiers must walk a perpetual knife-edge, working to obstruct, undermine, and destroy their opponents without falling prey to the same fate themselves. Seasoned bushi who get re-assigned to court are often forced to admit it is just as taxing a field of conflict as warfare itself.

In Rokugan, politics takes place primarily in the various courts of the Empire. Every daimyo and governor maintains a court in their castle or palace, inviting emissaries and visitors from other families and clans to attend and meet as their guests. The higher-ranking the host, the more prestigious the court, and the more important will be the political discussions and negotiations which take place there. The most prestigious court in the Empire, of course, is the Imperial Court, hosted by the Emperor and his chief advisors. Many courtiers spend a lifetime trying to win an appointment there. The heaviest political activity takes place during the winter, and just as the Imperial Court is the most important and prestigious of political postings, the Emperor's Winter Court is the most desirable of all courts to spend the snow-bound months.

Court, more than any other part of Rokugani life, is suffused with delicate etiquette and indirect speech. After all, diplomats speak for their clan, and have the weight and prestige of that clan behind them. A minor daimyo who insults or ignores a courtier without legitimate cause could well be forced to commit seppuku for his breach of etiquette. Nor is anyone so uncouth as to openly discuss alliances or treaties in open court. Trained diplomats employ hints and subtle conversational gambits to suggest a possible topic of discussion. Much of the truly important and crucial negotiation at court takes place in private meetings, rather than in open chambers where others might overhear it.

Political agreements in Rokugan are seldom expressed as written treaties, save when both sides wish to present a formal agreement to the rest of the Empire. More commonly, negotiations are handled through personal commitment and word of honor. Clans trust their courtiers to handle delicate situations, and courtiers in turn can call on the trust of their clan to give their word great weight. Indeed, minor daimyo or provincial officials may well have difficulty keeping their positions if a powerful, influential courtier speaks out against them to their feudal lord – especially if the courtier's accusations turn out to be true.

A major part of politics in Rokugan is the exchange of letters, and experienced courtiers spend much time and effort each day in composing and sending such missives to each other. A good courtier can maintain a steady flow of correspondence with dozens of people from across the Empire, dropping small tidbits of information to them and carefully reviewing the snippets of gossip they send him in return. For many courtiers, this network of correspondents can be just as important as the allies in their own court. Correspondence can build an alliance that lasts generations or begin a feud that lasts centuries. Indeed, a



timely piece of information from the far side of the Empire can turn the entire course of negotiations, and a courtier's fame and fortune can be founded, built, or shattered by a single letter.

Within the courts themselves, critics and blackmailers alike employ letters as their weapon of choice, and lovers use them as their most subtle but most direct gift. This continual flow of correspondence within a court is known as the "Game of Letters." Unlike letters sent to and from those outside court, these letters are designed primarily to display skill and to manipulate others rather than to convey information. The Game of Letters is quite ancient, and tales claim that the second Emperor, Hantei Genji, the Shining Prince, was one of its most skilled early practitioners. Many of the letter-writing conventions embraced by modern courtiers, like so many other aspects of Rokugani courtly and social life, are believed to have been first developed and established by the second Hantei Emperor.

Economics

Trade and commerce in Rokugan is quite extensive, but this is a topic which samurai for the most part ignore as much as possible. Samurai are taught to believe that money is beneath their concern and that commerce is something which should only interest lowly commoners. Of course, reality is not quite so ideal – samurai who manage their households must continually be aware of money and expenses, and daimyo must track their provincial incomes, collect taxes, and pay stipends to the samurai sworn as their vassals. Nevertheless, the general social convention is that samurai should not dirty their hands with matters of mere trade.

Rokugan's currency is based on rice, the vital crop which keeps the Empire alive. The basic unit of currency in Rokugan, the gold coin known as the *koku*, is supposed to represent an amount of rice able to feed one person for a year. (In practice, the actual value of the koku has become diluted over the centuries, as the circulation of new currency gradually erodes its value.) In theory, all the land in the Empire belongs to the Emperor, who delegates the task of guarding and maintaining those lands to the clans. Likewise, all food and goods created in the Empire each year belong to the Emperor, who distributes them to his subjects as needed. Of course, transporting all those goods to the Imperial capital for redistribution is impossible, so early in the Empire's history the concept of the koku was created to ease the process. Each fall, when the rice harvest is collected, local daimyo and Imperial tax collectors assess the food and goods created in each province, and the Imperial authorities collect approximately 60% of each year's production, in food, goods, or cash, taking it back to the capital. The Emperor then returns to each clan a certain number of koku, minted and marked by clan, which they can use to redeem food and goods from Imperial storehouses as needed.

Such is the theory, anyway. In practice, over the centuries the koku evolved into a form of currency, and surplus food and goods effectively became economic power which the more productive clans, especially the Crane, could use to exert influence against their less wealthy rivals. In addition, because a clan is required to trade its koku for rice, a clever daimyo can exert pressure on specific clans by stockpiling their koku, threatening to "cash in" an amount greater than the current harvest can support. Further, the koku is not always a stable currency. Because the minting of new koku each year is based on the harvest, the value of a koku can fluctuate from one year to the next, climbing during a famine and dropping sharply during a good year, with unpredictable impact on the rest of the Empire's economy.

Trade developed over Rokugan's history in part as a means of further streamlining the ungainly economic system of Imperial taxes and koku. It was far more efficient to directly trade koku to another clan for needed goods than to try to redeem koku for those goods through the Imperial treasury. Although this undermined the principle of the Emperor's universal ownership and control, it was so much more efficient that the Rokugani simply closed their eyes to such unpleasant realities. Further, once trade got underway it became a new source of wealth and thus a new asset which could be taxed, benefiting daimyo and Emperor alike. Thus, merchants have come to be recognized in modern Rokugan as a sort of necessary evil.

Since samurai are not supposed to care about such lowly matters as trade, merchants are all heimin, and these commoners face many obstacles to their work. In order to thrive, a merchant must be able to travel across the Empire, running caravans between different regions where different goods are available cheaply or are highly sought-after. This requires travel papers to authorize such journeys. In addition, most clans charge tariffs to those who would trade within their boundaries, cutting into the profit margins which merchants rely on to survive. Not only that, but the slow pace of travel and news in Rokugan means that a merchant's trading plans may fail through no fault of his own – he may plan to sell silk in the Crane lands, only to find that the Crane have enjoyed an unusually good silk harvest this year and the price has plummeted. As if all that were not enough, merchant caravans are also a favorite target of bandit gangs, and during times of war a merchant may find roads and trade routes unexpectedly closed, or even have his goods seized by a passing army.

As one might surmise, true independent merchants in Rokugan are rare. Instead, most of them seek the help and support of influential samurai, preferably a daimyo or other person of note. Those samurai who support merchants in this way are known as "merchant patrons," and this position allows them to earn wealth for their clan while still maintaining a suitable social distance between themselves and the actual practice of trade. In truth, most merchant patrons do actually conduct trade, closely supervising the commoners under their control and making all the key decisions required to ensure profit and wealth for their clan, but the social convention of the "merchant patron" allows them to at least maintain the pretense that they are not dirtying their hands with money.

The wealth generated by trade and commerce is an important and powerful weapon in every clan's arsenal. A wealthy clan can apply direct economic pressure on its less-prosperous rivals, using trade embargos or price manipulation to weaken their position. The Crane and Mantis in particular are masters of such tactics, and their economic warfare has been known to overturn battlefield victories by their rivals.

Crime and Punishment

Rokugan recognizes many of the same crimes as other cultures – murder, theft, bribery, false witness, and so forth. However, in Rokugan the identification and punishment of crimes is complicated by a number of other factors, most notably the social striations of the Celestial Order, as well as the Rokugani concept of what constitutes acceptable evidence of guilt.

Crime in Rokugan is investigated and punished by magistrates, primarily clan magistrates appointed by daimyo and governors to maintain order and enforce the law within their provinces. These magistrates are usually assisted by a team of *yoriki* (lesser-ranking samurai), and may also recruit ronin or even *budoka* (armed peasant vassals) to help with the work of tracking down and punishing criminals. There are also two classes of Imperial magistrates – Emerald Magistrates, appointed by the Emerald Champion, who investigate crimes of national scope or character, and Jade Magistrates, appointed by the Jade Champion, who specifically investigate crimes involving black magic or the Shadowlands.



It may be noted that most magistrates, whether they be clan magistrates or Imperial magistrates, are not chosen on the basis of ability. An appointment as a magistrate, like any other appointment, tends to be political in nature, and Rokugan is full of magistrates who have only the vaguest understanding of the law and their responsibilities to enforce it.

The crimes which are most likely to attract the attention of magistrates in Rokugan are violations of Imperial law, which are considered treason. These include *maho* and other forms of religious blasphemy, attacks on Imperial authority or Imperial personages, and so forth. Magistrates also investigate dishonorable conduct (brawling, public disturbance, lying to authority), violence against persons (assault, murder), corruption (theft, tax evasion, bribery), and organized crime (smuggling, banditry). Generally speaking, when dealing with these sorts of crimes, magistrates focus their strongest efforts against those acts which are committed within the same social caste (such as a peasant attacking a peasant, or a samurai stealing from a samurai) or which are committed upward across caste lines (e.g. a peasant attacking a samurai), especially the latter, which are considered a violation of the Celestial Order. Crimes committed "downward" – a samurai abusing or killing a peasant – are barely recognized as such, and usually punished with nothing more than an apology or a small fine. Of course, a samurai who makes a habit of abusing or killing peasants is violating Compassion, and may find himself challenged by other samurai who take their responsibilities to the lower castes more seriously.

Rokugani criminal justice is rather different from Western concepts – indeed, it could be fairly said that Rokugani justice is not really justice at all. In Rokugan, all that matters is eyewitness testimony and direct physical evidence. Logical deduction and inference are not considered proper evidence, and the very idea of solving crimes or mysteries in such a way is largely unknown except in the controversial Kitsuki family of the Dragon Clan. Personal testimony is always the most important evidence of all, and the higher the social rank of the witnesses, the more weight their testimony carries. Thus the testimony of a single samurai will outweigh any number of heimin or hinin, and a daimyo's word outweighs that of a low-ranking samurai. Direct physical evidence, such as the discovery of a blood-stained knife with a Crane mon, is also considered acceptable, although it is not seen as being nearly so compelling as testimony.

However, evidence acquired through magical means, by having a shugenja speak with the kami, is not legally admissible – the Emperor long ago decreed such evidence to be off-limits, lest powerful shugenja manipulate the spirits to frame their enemies.

Interestingly, while magical evidence is off-limits, torture is considered an acceptable method of investigation in Rokugan, and most daimyo and magistrates retain the services of a hinin torturer to assist them in questioning suspects and eliciting confessions. Torture is not used casually, however, and under the Articles of Heaven it is considered improper to employ it on those who are weak and vulnerable, such as children and the elderly.

Once a criminal has been arrested, that criminal is expected to confess to the crime. A written confession is considered the closing document of any criminal investigation, and in its absence, a conviction requires special authorization from a daimyo or other figure of high rank. Once someone has confessed, the crime is solved and effectively forgotten – there is no mechanism for re-opening a case, and the very idea of trying to do so is considered improper by most Rokugani.

Crimes may be punished in a variety of ways, depending on their severity, and magistrates have some leeway in deciding appropriate punishment. Any really serious crime, such as murder, *maho*, banditry, or treason, is usually punished by death – hanging or beheading, typically, although for serious treason more gruesome punishments may be used, such as boiling in oil or crucifixion. If the criminal is a samurai and has confessed, he will sometimes be allowed to commit seppuku instead of facing the shame of execution.

Other crimes may be punished in a greater variety of ways, depending on the severity of the offense. Serious crimes such as evading Imperial taxes may still be punished with death or exile, but for samurai guilty of lesser offenses such as assault, petty theft, public nuisance, or harm to one of lower station, magistrates may employ modest punishments such as handcuffing, house arrest, fines, or public reprimand. Punishments for commoners are generally more severe than for samurai – a peasant guilty of petty theft might be subjected to a severe public beating, for example, and a merchant found guilty of a crime may have his business and livelihood seized.

If a samurai has been accused of a crime, but the evidence is inconclusive (especially if the accused and accuser are of equal social rank), a magistrate may authorize a duel to settle the matter. Once a duel has been fought and won, the matter is considered closed and no further questions can be raised.

Dueling

Rokugan is a society ruled by a caste of armed warriors who follow a strict code of honor and etiquette. When a samurai is insulted or maligned, and even more so if his (or her) family, clan, or lord is the target of such insults and slanders, he will usually respond by issuing a challenge to a duel. Duels are considered the appropriate and socially acceptable response for any situation where a samurai feels that honor or reputation has been threatened or compromised. Indeed, failing to issue a duel means the original insult or slander is left unanswered, in effect making it true. Conversely, once a challenge has been issued, the other samurai must either back down and apologize, retracting whatever slander he issued, or else defend his words with steel. Backing down, of course, is a tremendous loss of prestige and face, and a wise samurai will never issue an insult or accusation without being prepared to back it up in a duel.

Duels are not always to the death. Samurai are not supposed to throw their lives away without cause, and when the insult or offense which caused the duel is not of great magnitude, a duel to first blood, or until one combatant acknowledges defeat, will be considered sufficient. When the insult is serious, however, duels are always lethal, and end only when one (or both) participants are dead.

Regardless of whether it is to first blood or to the death, a truly honorable duel must be authorized by higher authority. Typically, this requires the permission of each samurai's daimyo, but other high-ranking samurai such as Imperial officials and district governors can often approve duels as well, especially duels to first blood. Magistrates also have the power to authorize duels to prove the guilt or innocence of an accused criminal. This is not to say that a duel cannot be fought without such permission. Unauthorized duels are a regular feature of Rokugani life, especially where samurai passions become involved, and while such duels are considered socially scandalous and improper, they are not punished in the same way as a murder. Typically, the samurai is subjected to little more than house arrest or a public reprimand.

Traditionally, any samurai who wears a katana is signifying his ability to defend himself, and if he is challenged to a duel, he must fight on his own behalf. A samurai who carries only a knife or a wakizashi (such as the typical courtier or shugenja) is signifying that he is not a warrior and cannot fight his own duels. If he is challenged, he can call for a champion to fight on his behalf. Likewise, if such a samurai issues a challenge to another, he is expected to have a champion available to fight for him. Usually, daimyo will supply champions for their samurai, although they may refuse to do so if they consider the duel to be fought over insufficient justification. Once the duel is resolved, the losing party is expected to share the fate of their champion, committing seppuku if it was a duel to the death.

Once a challenge has been issued and accepted, the challenged party will be permitted to specify the time and place of the duel (a custom known as the "rights of the challenged"). When passions are high, the duel may be accepted and fought immediately, but more typically the challenged party will choose a symbolic or beautiful location at some noteworthy time, such as dawn. In theory, a duel can be held weeks or months after acceptance – sometimes as much as a year, though never more than that – but delaying a duel in this manner is often considered a sign of lack of self-confidence or even cowardice.



Unconventional Duels

Since Rokugan is a highly traditional society, the iaijutsu duel is considered the true and proper form of dueling, the only appropriate way to settle a matter of honor. Hence the importance of wearing a sword and appointing champions for those who cannot fight for themselves. However, there are two circumstances in which this can change.

- Mutual Agreement: On some occasions, both parties in a duel may agree to settle their conflict with some other method than iaijutsu. This is most likely to happen if both of them belong to the same clan or follow the same path in life. For example, if a challenge occurs between two Tsuruchi archers, they are likely to settle the matter with their bows rather than with swords. Similarly, shugenja who challenge each other have been known to fight duels of magical power, known as *taryu-jiai*, rather than allowing yojimbo to duel on their behalf.
- Battlefield Challenges: Individual challenges are a regular occurrence on the battlefield, as samurai seek out worthy opponents to test their steel, and it is considered extremely dishonorable to interrupt such a one-on-one fight once it has begun. Some of these battlefield confrontations are indeed formal iaijutsu duels, but just as often, they are simple contests of armed strength, with the combatants each relying on their best weapon and skill.



Blood Feuds

Rokugan is a society governed by honor, and samurai are expected to uphold that honor with steel. If a samurai is killed in an unauthorized duel, or through the incompetence or negligence of another samurai, the family of the fallen has the right to declare a blood feud against the one responsible. Blood feuds may also sometimes result when it is impossible to punish a crime, severe insult, or other dire offense through the normal methods of Rokugani justice or dueling. For example, if a samurai's family was left impoverished and disgraced by the political machinations of another, he might declare a blood feud to avenge this.

When a samurai declares a blood feud, he must appear before his daimyo and request formal permission, much as with a duel. Few daimyo refuse, for a blood feud is considered an honorable and socially acceptable way to seek vengeance. The daimyo will issue a written authorization for the blood feud, and once this is done, a state of war effectively exists between the samurai's family and the offender. Samurai pursuing a blood feud are expected to carry their daimyo's written authorization with them, so as to prevent misunderstandings with the local authorities and magistrates. Those who interfere with a blood feud are interfering with an honorable task, and may be dealt with as severely as the avenging samurai might wish.

A blood feud ends when the offending party is killed. At that point all violence is expected to cease and the avenging samurai should depart peacefully. Of course, death in a blood feud can sometimes result in another feud being declared in turn, as the family of the slain offender seeks its own vengeance. Thus, feuds can escalate and grow until they encompass entire bloodlines for multiple generations – the notorious feud between the Crane and Lion Clans, which lasted for over ten centuries, originated with a clash between Kakita and Matsu at the dawn of the Empire.

War in Rokugan

The Code of Bushido is also known as the "Way of the Warrior," and although the Rokugani religion often focuses on peace and compassion, most samurai of the Empire are bushi, raised in the path of arms and taught to seek glory and fame on the battlefield. Minor wars and border skirmishes are a constant reality of life in the Emerald Empire, where the different clans are constantly jockeying for power and influence, and major wars erupt with some regularity. During periods of crisis, such as the eras of the Clan War or the Race for the Throne, war is near-constant and major clashes of arms become a regular part of every samurai's life.

During the fourth century, following the first major inter-clan war (the so-called First Yasuki



War), the Emperor issued a proclamation forbidding the clans to fight each other with their full strength, fearing that such unrestricted conflicts could tear the Empire asunder. Through most of Rokugani history, this edict has been obeyed, and most of the wars which fill the Empire's histories were fought with relatively small armies of a few hundred or, at most, a few thousand on each side. However, there have been more than a few occasions in Rokugan's history when these restrictions have been set aside and the clans have brought their full strength to bear. This has happened most famously when the Empire has been threatened by non-clan enemies. The Crab Clan routinely employs the bulk of its power to defend the Empire's southern border against the Shadowlands, and the other clans have fielded their entire strength to face threats such as the armies of the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban or the fifth century attack by the gaijin Merenae.

During the Clan War, when the Hantei dynasty was collapsing, the edict against full-scale warfare also broke down, and while the subsequent Toturi dynasty made some efforts to restore it to force, these were not fully effective. Large-scale conflicts between Great Clans took place several times during the short-lived reign of the Toturi, and did not halt until the ascension of the Iweko Dynasty restored an undisputed Imperial authority.

Armies and Tactics

Rokugani armies are primarily infantry forces. The native Rokugani pony is not hardy enough to support full-scale cavalry warfare, although it can be used effectively for scouts or mounted infantry. Thus, the only samurai who employ true cavalry tactics in Rokugan are the Unicorn, who brought back full-size horses from their long journey through the Burning Sands. Other Rokugani armies developed some degree of anti-cavalry training and tactics in the centuries after the Unicorn returned to the Empire, but their lack of full-size horses prevented them from deploying any large-scale cavalry force of their own.

The standard Rokugani military unit is the legion (*daibutai*), which comprises between 700 and 1,000 troops, commanded by an officer called a *taisa* (captain). Legions are divided into companies (*kaisha*) which number roughly 150-200 men, commanded by *chui* (lieutenants). Officially, legions are organized into larger forces referred to as armies, traditionally numbering 48 legions each, and commanded by a *rikugunshokan* (general) assisted by several senior officers known as *shireikan* (commanders). Every clan maintains at least one army, and the more militaristic clans can field three or four armies simultaneously. In practice, armies are more likely to be administrative and organizational in nature than to actually go into the field as a single unified force. Such large-scale deployments generally only take place during the Empire's rare periods of unrestricted warfare.

When armies go into battle, regardless of their strength, it is the smaller units – legions and companies – which form the primary units of tactical maneuver. They usually deploy in rectangular blocks, wider than they are deep. However, the Rokugani generally do not have concepts like phalanx fighting or maintaining a "shield wall." It is expected that once two enemy units collide on the battlefield, the soldiers on each side will engage each other in personal combat. Consequently, the Rokugani march and advance in a more dispersed and open formation than Western medieval armies, and once contact is made with the enemy, any formation will quickly break down into a sprawl of hundreds of small melees. Thus, battlefield tactics tend to focus more on pre-contact maneuvering, bringing more troops to bear on the decisive point through effective scouting and skillful march and deployment, and wearing down the enemy with archery and magical attack prior to engagement, as well as on successfully withdrawing and rallying units after combat.

There are exceptions to these principles. The Unicorn, for example, practice all-out cavalry charges with close-ranked troops, although such forces are seldom able to maintain their formation after the initial collision. Likewise, the Crab Clan's long war with the Shadowlands has taught them the importance of a solid defensive line, and they are less likely than other clan samurai to break ranks in order to battle opponents one-on-one.

Sieges

The Rokugani prefer to meet their opponents on the open field, fighting glorious battles which earn the participants fame and honor. However, when an army is badly outmatched, or has already lost a battle, commanders will usually recognize the greater value of preserving their strength by retreating inside a nearby castle and enduring a siege.

For the most part, Rokugani siege warfare tends to favor the defender. Only the Crab, the undisputed masters of this sort of warfare, possess siege weapons in any significant quantity, and even their mighty catapults and rams can be hard-put to reduce a large, well-constructed castle. Usually, a siege will lead to a protracted stand-off, with the besieging army attempting to starve out the defenders, while those inside the castle wait and hope for relief by an allied army. Actual assaults on well-garrisoned castles are apt to be extremely bloody, since Rokugani fortresses are designed to channel attackers into a succession of narrow passageways where they can be riddled with arrows. When such an assault takes place, it is usually because the attackers are either desperate to take the castle, or have underestimated the strength of the defenders.







The Great Clans of Rokugan

Of the eight Kami who competed within the first Celestial Tournament, seven went forth to honor their Emperor by creating Great Clans to serve him. Since that time, one additional Great Clan has been given leave by the Emperor to serve him in the same manner as the others, and one other self-titled "clan" has claimed the title but never been recognized.

In theory, the Great Clans command only what power is granted to them by the Emperor. This consists of the power to fulfill their specific duties without interfering with the duties of other clans, and to govern over the Emperor's lands bestowed to them in his name. In reality, of course, each clan commands considerable military, economic, and political power, enough to overthrow the Empire, and only the power of the other clans keeps them in check – that and the fact that no honorable Clan Champion would ever consider such a blasphemous and disgraceful act.

Although all the Great Clans are ultimately loyal to the Emperor, they can and do have radically different outlooks on virtually every aspect of life, and conflicts between them are common. Most Emperors have historically chosen not to interfere with inter-clan wars because they permit the clans to vent their hostility honorably. After all, denying a massive force of noble warriors the right to pursue satisfaction in what they consider a matter of honor is generally a poor idea.



"We are the Wall."

The Crab Clan

In any gathering of samurai, it is all too easy to pick out a Crab from the members of the other clans. Crab Clan samurai are larger and more powerful than those of virtually any other family or clan in the Empire, and unfortunately, are often ruder, less diplomatic, and less refined than others as well. This is not necessarily a deliberate act on the part of the Crab; they simply have radically different priorities than the rest of the Empire. Since the founding of Rokugan, the Crab have stood guard in the south, protecting the Empire from the demons and monstrosities that dwell within the blighted region known as the Shadowlands. While other clans have enjoyed peace and serenity for centuries at a time, the Crab know only war, day in and day out, year upon year. While they certainly do not begrudge their duties, they do tend to resent those more sophisticated and effete samurai who mock the Crab while benefiting from the protection they afford.

Duty is by far the tenet of Bushido the Crab value the most, rivaled only by Courage. Perhaps because of the duties they fulfill, the Crab care very little for social niceties, preferring blunt honesty and practicality to polite conversation. They believe that strength grants the right to rule, and they resent the fact that clans they perceive as weaker, especially the Crane and Scorpion, tend to enjoy more wealth and comforts than they do. The Crab embrace their duty to the Empire, however, because their lord and founder Hida was defeated by Hantei at the dawn of the Empire, proving Hantei to be stronger. For this reason alone, the Crab serve the Emperor faithfully. In times of weak rule, however, some among them have been sorely tempted to wonder why a Crab upon the throne might not be a more reasonable solution for the Empire as a whole.

The Crab were founded by Hida, the largest and most physically powerful of the children of the Sun and Moon. Although not a dullard by any means, Hida was nevertheless generally unconcerned with studying things such as religion or philosophy. He gathered together only the most powerful and fearsome warriors to bear his name, and the Hida family has been acknowledged, grudgingly in some cases, as among the greatest warriors of the Empire for centuries. The Hida have ruled the Crab Clan well for a thousand years, not only by excelling at the war which is the clan's birthright, but also by understanding the importance of delegating duties to gifted subordinates, which the Hida are fortunate to have in abundance.

The ranks of the Crab are not limited to the Hida family. The Hiruma, the oldest servants of the Hida, are gifted scouts and yojimbo, emphasizing speed and athleticism over the Hida's strength. The Kaiu are brilliant engineers and tacticians, and advise their lords on all matters related to warfare. The much-maligned Kuni have sacrificed much to understand the enemies the Crab face, and these shugenja are frequently accused of terrible acts by other families within the Empire. The wily Yasuki, who joined the clan after the First Yasuki War, are vastly different from the rest of the Crab, and are both exceptional merchants and extremely manipulative politicians, serving the clan in the courts. The Toritaka family, part of the Crab for less than a century, are well-versed in the spirits and undead that can slip past the Great Carpenter Wall, and assist in hunting down those who have escaped the Crab's notice.

The Crab lands are largely mountainous, with some small degree of open land in the northern foothills and scattered among the peaks of their various mountain ranges, notably the Twilight Mountains and the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. A portion of their lands, primarily those of the Kuni and Hiruma, have suffered terribly from previous assaults by the Shadowlands, and are almost completely barren. As a result, the Crab are forced to import a great deal of their food. Fortunately, the mountains are rich in ore, giving them ample supplies for trade.



The Crab's view of other clans

- Crane: Pathetic, weak socialites with scarcely a warrior among them. They belittle us? Put them on the Wall for a week and see how many are left alive. They will beg for our protection then.
- Dragon: Their ways are strange and nonsensical. They seem to be capable warriors when their hand is forced, but why do they wait so long to enter the battle? Perhaps they are cowards.
- Lion: They alone understand what it means to wage war, but even they have no appreciation for what it is we do each day. Perhaps one day we can be true brothers, but until they gain perspective, they are to be respected but not feared.
- Mantis: Our distant cousins are brave enough, but so intent on proving themselves that they behave foolishly. Wealth and daring do not earn respect, little brothers.
- Phoenix: Pacifism has no place among samurai. We are called to make war, and to weep over the deaths of your enemies is weakness.
- Scorpion: There is no one more useless than a Scorpion! All the weaknesses of the Crane, plus their pointless love of deception and lies. They are so convinced of themselves that they think they are invulnerable. We will see about that, perhaps soon.
- Unicorn: Our closest allies, they understand what it means to be ostracized because they do not care for the peculiar rules and fashions that command the day in other courts. They are strange, yes, but they are our brothers in arms.
- Minor Clans: They understand what it means to struggle to survive every day, even if they command no resources to speak of. We treat them kindly, but ultimately they are of little consequence.





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

The Crane Clan

If there is an individual of importance anywhere in the Empire, then it may be safely assumed he has a close friend, advisor, or perhaps a bride that is a Crane. This is how the Crane maintain their ruthless grip on the social and political world of Rokugan: they make themselves indispensable to all others who wield power. It is an act that comes naturally to the Crane, as they are the followers and descendants of the Lady Doji, said by many to be the first Hantei's most beloved sibling, and the Kami responsible for creating the social and political institutions of Rokugan's courts and society. As a result, the Crane have a perfect understanding of every nuance and facet of politics. Because they have such exceptional command over the courts, their duty to the Emperor is to maintain the Empire's social harmony, to ensure Rokugan always has art and beauty and civilization, a task that has earned the clan the appellation Left Hand of the Emperor.

Because of the duties they perform for the Empire, the Crane have vastly more courtiers and artisans among their ranks than any other clan. Even those among their ranks who eschew politics and diplomacy, their dedicated warriors and pious priests, are generally impeccable in appearance and demeanor. This is simply a facet of the clan's emphasis on their eternal duty. Those who are not specifically called upon to fulfill it are still trained not to violate it in any way. The unfortunate side effect of this emphasis is that there are many among the Crane who are guilty of arrogance and condescension toward other clans. Over the years this has gained the clan many enemies, and the dominance in court they usually enjoy has probably been the only thing that has prevented their enemies from destroying them. On a more personal level, individual Crane often find themselves the target of others' animosity in court. Fortunately, the clan's bushi school produces the Empire's greatest masters of iaijutsu, the formal dueling system used to resolve disputes, ensuring that those who challenge the Crane in court are frequently proven in the wrong. It comes as no surprise that the most valued tenet of Bushido to the Crane is Courtesy, since is it both their weapon of choice and their preferred defense against their foes.

Lady Doji was a woman of incredible beauty, grace, and foresight, and correctly anticipated many of the difficulties her clan would face as a result of their duties for the Emperor. As a result, she was careful to recruit followers who would be able to deal with such shortcomings, and the ruling Doji family that bears her name continues her tradition of careful planning and accurate assessment. The Kakita, who bear her husband's name, traditionally excel as both the Empire's finest duelists and as artisans. The Daidoji, the name granted to one of Lady Doji's younger sons after his incredible feat of heroism in recovering the lost sword of his older sister from the Shadowlands, are least like the Crane ideal, but are stalwart warriors and yojimbo who defend the Doji against all threats, as their name ("Defender of Doji") signifies. The Asahina family joined the clan centuries after its founding, after a renegade Phoenix Master of Fire married into the clan in amends for his rampage in their lands. Early in the clan's history, they were served by the wily Yasuki as well, but that family defected to the Crab Clan in the fourth century, contributing to the endless hard feelings between the two clans.

The lands controlled by the Crane are some of the most extensive and productive of any clan's, again owing to their close relationship with the Emperor. Virtually every resource required is produced within the Crane lands, save for some of the more uncommon ores and minerals, and they trade well with other clans. It is no wonder that the Crane are among the wealthiest of clans, and have the most well-attended courts, given the beauty and rich resources of their home provinces.



The Crane's view of other Clans

- Crab: Brutish oafs who think the rules of polite society should not apply to them simply because they do what they do. They could no more survive without us than we could without them, but they fail to see it.
- Dragon: Strange people who prefer to stay hidden in the mountains and contemplate the universe. By all means, please feel free to remain there.
- Lion: They have the temperament of angry children and the flexibility of a stone sculpture. The world does not exist in the ridiculously narrow view they hold, and they resent anyone strong enough to tell them so.
- Mantis: They are ostentatious beyond all belief, but willing to undertake all manner of unsavory tasks for pay. They are useful and convenient allies!
- Phoenix: Perhaps our closest allies, they at least understand the benefit of a structured and orderly society. Their insistence that all clans should cooperate with one another is useful as well, if a bit naïve.
- Scorpion: Deceitful, manipulative cretins who will stoop to the lowest means to accomplish what they wish. They are what we would become if we forgot our honor and dignity.
- Unicorn: They remain grateful for our assistance in re-establishing them once they returned to the Empire. They are peculiar and ignorant in many ways, but can be quite helpful in certain circumstances.
- Minor Clans: Those descended from our own ranks deserve our consideration, but the rest are of little use in the grand scheme of things.

"Know yourself, and you can never be defeated."

The Dragon Clan

While all the clans have unique customs and practices that others would readily identify as strange, perhaps no other clan save the Unicorn suffers the confusion and disdain of the Empire so much as the Dragon. Although the Dragon are beholden to their own traditions and codes of conduct, there is little they do that is considered normal to the other clans. This is a direct reflection of their founder, the most enigmatic and peculiar of the Kami, Togashi, who gathered to his banner other singularly unique individuals and created a clan of oddities. The task bestowed upon the Dragon Clan by the first Emperor was to watch the Empire, and it is a task they embraced without question. During the earliest days of Rokugan, the Dragon Clan ascended to the northern mountains and have rarely ever come down, never expanding their borders, and engaging in battle with the other clans for reasons no one else can ever fully comprehend.

For the majority of their history, the Dragon Clan has lacked any form of unifying philosophy, adopting instead the notion that all honorable souls should be free to find their own path to enlightenment. The Dragon as a whole believe every individual must determine how the code of Bushido and its tenets applies to them and then live according to that determination. This is not to say they condone abandonment of the Code; the Dragon condemn those who are without honor as much as any other clan. They place particular emphasis on the tenet of Sincerity, embracing the principle that word and deed should be as one, both with oneself and others.

The Kami Togashi was an enigma even to his brothers and sisters, unique among the children of the Sun and Moon, and he has no extended family that bears his name. Instead, he created a monastic order, the Togashi, which is ruled by his direct line of descendants. The Togashi line is as enigmatic and reclusive as its progenitor, and perhaps a handful of individuals in any given generation of the Empire ever meet the Dragon Champion. The Togashi's closest followers are the Mirumoto, the largest and easily the most practical family of the Dragon, at least by their clan's standards – other samurai, by contrast, often find them mysterious or strangely poetic. The Mirumoto deal with most of the day-to-day affairs of the clan so the Champion can focus more fully on the pursuit of enlightenment. The Kitsuki family often represents the Dragon in court, and they are known throughout Rokugan as exceptional magistrates despite their strange obsession with evidence and logical deduction over testimony. The Agasha family once served the clan as shugenja with an interest in alchemical pursuits, but they eventually abandoned the Dragon to join the Phoenix, and were replaced by their successors, the Tamori family.

The Dragon Clan controls provinces that are almost exclusively mountainous, making it difficult for them to marshal any significant amount of resources. The few plains they control at the mountains' foothills are fortunately very arable, but far from sufficient to feed the entire clan. The minerals they mine from the mountains are the clan's primary resource, and one they trade heavily in order to feed their people. Although artisans are relatively uncommon among the Dragon, smiths are not, and fine weapons and armor are a valuable product with those who appreciate such things.



The Dragon's view of other clans

- Crab: They cling to duty with enormous tenacity, and that is admirable, but their open disdain for everything outside their own realm of experience is their weakness. They are not so strong that they can survive alone.
- Crane: The Crane rule the courts, yes, but not always with the benevolence a true master of men should possess. Like the Crab, they create their own hardships by alienating those around them.
- Lion: The Lion have a mighty roar, but it deafens them to the sound of all else. If all they crave is war, that is all they shall receive. What a shame, to miss all else the world has to offer.
- Mantis: The Mantis are hardy souls who live fully in the world, but they forsake their own spirits in doing so. One must live in both worlds in order to achieve one's destiny.
- Phoenix: Our closest allies and those most fully on the path of enlightenment. We salute their brilliance and their piety, and hope only they will one day learn to be less assured of their own infallibility.
- Scorpion: We have been allies at times, and we respect their strengths without the judgment that other clans levy against them. Still, they walk a dark path, and one day they may become lost in the shadows. Our Kitsuki watch them closely.
- Unicorn: Most believe they have no place in the Empire, but they do not listen, and embrace ways that others find abhorrent. They are comfortable with themselves, and in that, they are strong.
- Minor Clans: Greatness may spring from the lowliest of places, but the ambitious must beware lest their own desires cast them down.

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"Honor, Glory, and Bushido.
There is nothing else."

The Lion Clan

There is no greater military power in Rokugan, perhaps the world, than the unleashed might of the Lion Clan. Even at the dawn of the Empire, the first Emperor recognized the nascent Lion would become powerful, perhaps beyond any other clan, and tasked them with becoming the Right Hand of the Emperor, the defenders of the throne and the Empire as a whole. It is a role the Lion relish, and would never surrender unless they were first wiped from the face of the world. It is not outside the realm of possibility that an Emperor could remove that duty from the Lion, but doing so would invite the possibility that the clan would revolt or, vastly more likely, that huge numbers of them would commit seppuku in shame. Fortunately, every Emperor in history has recognized the benefit of having a completely loyal army at his command, and the duty of the Lion has remained unaltered since the time of the first Hantei.

The unifying philosophy of the Lion Clan is unwavering, unflinching devotion to honor, the code of Bushido, and the contents of Akodo's treatise on tactics and the military, *Leadership*. Lion samurai revere all tenets of Bushido, although some of them may overlook Courtesy and Compassion when it suits them. One tenet that is never permitted to lapse, however, is Honor, which governs the lives of all Lion. So great is their devotion that any Lion who shames himself beyond redemption enters a unique sect of warriors called the Deathseekers. The only purpose a Deathseeker has is to give his life in glorious battle for the clan, hoping that in doing so he has redeemed his shame.

Ultimately, the Lion consider themselves the measure by which the honor of other clans should be judged, and they tend to find others wanting. This arrogance has earned the clan many enemies, but few who dare raise steel against them for fear of the enormity of Lion retribution.

The Kami Akodo, later known as Akodo One-Eye due to injuries suffered during the First War, was by far the most militant of the children of the Sun and Moon. He was narrowly defeated by Hantei to determine which would become Emperor, and swore his undying loyalty to the first Hantei. His tactical brilliance, his unflinching sense of honor, and his unfailing ability to see the true worth in others allowed him to create a formidable family bearing his name, one that would develop a reputation for being impossible to defeat on the field of battle. His subordinates and the families that took their names were likewise formidable: the Matsu have all the ferocity and martial prowess of their founder, the Ikoma all the wisdom and versatility of the first Ikoma, and the Kitsu the incredible spiritual perceptions of the mysterious creatures who married Akodo's daughters to create that family.

The Lion control a vast region of plains between the Dragon Mountains and the Spine of the World Mountains, the majority of which is quite fertile. This is extremely fortunate for the clan, as its enormous military requires an astonishing amount of food to maintain, so much so that the clan frequently has to trade for additional supplies. During times of heavy war, however, the clan's complete commitment to battle ensures heavy casualties, which in turn allow their lands some time to recover from their constant state of depletion. Because the Lion provinces border the Spine of the World Mountains, and because there are precious few woodlands within their borders, they tend to use more stone in their architecture than wood, and any significant construction undertaking requires additional importing of wood. Fortunately, their lands are also home to many rich veins of copper, which is useful in a number of ways throughout the Empire, so the Lion rarely want for trading partners.



The Lion's view of other clans

- Crab: They are formidable, but they conduct themselves strangely and seemingly without thought for their honor. They are to be respected as warriors, but little else.
- Crane: Cowards and manipulators who face threats with words rather than steel, and who hide behind the Emperor when the time comes to face the consequences of their actions.
- Dragon: What can be accomplished from hiding in the mountains for centuries at a time? Nothing. They are beneath our notice.
- Mantis: Bold but presumptuous. When they have achieved one fraction of what a true Great Clan has accomplished, then perhaps we will reassess our view of them. Until then, they are insignificant in every regard.
- Phoenix: Powerful foes with considerable prowess at manipulating the battlefield, but they squander their abilities with their obsession with peace. Samurai are born for war.
- Scorpion: They are all that we despise about the Crane, but worse. Their blatant disregard for honor is an offense that cannot be borne. Why they have not been destroyed by the Emperor after a thousand years, we will never understand.
- Unicorn: Their ways are strange, and therefore inferior, but they conduct themselves with honor and speak the truth in all instances. For that, and for the might of their cavalry, they are to be respected.
- Minor Clans: The Minor Clans exist only through the generosity of the Emperor and the mercy of the Great Clans. They should always remember this.

"We are the children of Thunder."

The Mantis Clan

The mere existence of the Mantis Clan as a Great Clan of Rokugan gives credence to the words of Shinsei: "Fortune favors the mortal man." The Mantis were born from Hida Kaimetsu-Uo, son of Hida Osano-Wo and a Matsu woman. Kaimetsu-Uo was not chosen as his father's heir, and so carved a land of his own out of the Islands of Silk and Spice off the Empire's coast. There he and his followers became the Empire's first Minor Clan (although their claim to be the first would be contested by the Fox Clan). Centuries later during the Clan War, the Mantis played an essential role in defending the Empire from the Shadowlands, and when the Clan Champion Yoritomo demanded the right to stand among the Great Clan Champions as an equal, they granted him that right, later reinforced by Imperial decree. Since that time, the Mantis have struggled to prove to everyone, including perhaps themselves, that they are truly worthy of the mantle of a Great Clan, and to fulfill their duty of patrolling the seas of Rokugan with their vast fleet of *kobune* (ships).

The samurai who serve the Mantis Clan are extremely diverse in their philosophies, due primarily to each individual family having once comprised a separate Minor Clan before their consolidation into the Mantis Clan. Generally, however, most subscribe to the philosophies of the Yoritomo family, either out of loyalty or duty – or at least appear to do so. The Mantis, for the most part, believe destiny is theirs for the taking. The very fact that the clan has ascended to the ranks of the Great Clans is proof in their minds that this is a valid belief, and they see no reason to stop. There is no obstacle that cannot be overcome, no enemy that cannot be defeated, and no goal that cannot be achieved. A Mantis enemy is a deadly thing simply because he will never stop trying to defeat you until he wins or dies – in which case his brothers will take up the quest in his place.

The Yoritomo are the unquestioned masters of the Mantis Clan, and a more self-assured and ambitious family would be difficult to find. Some believe their outrageous behavior is a result of self-doubt, stemming from the fact that they are the only ruling family without a Kami of their own to call their progenitor. Of course, saying such to one of them would result in explosive anger at the very least. The Tsuruchi, perhaps the greatest archers in the Empire, are quiet and resourceful, while the Moshi are more conservative and find the behavior of their comrades something of an embarrassment. Their loyalty and devotion to the Tao is unquestionable, however. Very recently, the Kitsune became the fourth family to join the clan, and serve the Yoritomo as scouts and priests, matching their unique talents with the Moshi in that regard.

No clan has holdings as diverse and scattered as the Mantis Clan. Their primary holding is the island chain known as the Islands of Silk and Spice, southeast of the Empire. The Yoritomo have held these islands for centuries, and reaped the reward of their exotic plants, spices, and abundant fishing. The Tsuruchi, Moshi, and Kitsune families have holdings on the mainland, primarily mountainous, but they do include the Kitsune Mori forest, well known for its quality wood. Although the subordinate families control an amount of land roughly equal to the total of the Islands, the resources there are scarcer, and the majority of the clan's wealth comes from the Isles.



The Mantis' view of other clans

- Crab: Our cousins are formidable warriors and strong allies, but their view of the world is too narrow. There is much in life once one's duty has been fulfilled.
- Crane: Cowardly politicians content to sit back and let others take the risks while they steal the glory. Their koku spends as well as any others, though.
- Dragon: And the others call us strange? Still, they do not judge us for our differences, and for that we respect them.
- Lion: Small-minded bigots incapable of seeing the reality of the world that surrounds them. They may be dangerous, but when the world leaves them behind they will be nothing more than obsolete warmongers no one has any use for.
- Phoenix: A thousand years ago they harbored the murderer of our founder's father. They learned then what it means to call down the thunder, and yet they have forgotten. They will remember, when the time comes.
- Scorpion: At least they understand how the world truly works, even if they are foolish enough to let everyone know how devious and secretive they are. Really, what's the point of that?
- Unicorn: Our fellow outsiders. They have always treated us with respect and courtesy, and for that we will treat them with the honor they deserve.
- Minor Clans: We were born from the ranks of the Minor Clans and have brought several of them into our ranks. Thus our own triumph is proof that any clan, no matter how small, can rise to greatness. We offer them friendship and aid in the hope that they may emulate our success.

"Speak to the Kami and know the world."

The Phoenix Clan

Founded by a man of incredible devotion and selflessness, the Phoenix Clan is widely regarded as having the greatest shugenja of the Empire, and for good reason. The number of shugenja in their ranks is more than double that of any other clan, and their shugenja also generally possess a greater understanding of the Elements and how the kami can be invoked. The Phoenix are a clan of brilliant scholars and peaceful priests, many of whom command incredible power at their fingertips. Fortunately, this power is tempered by a devotion to non-violence that, while not absolute, is nevertheless extremely prevalent throughout their ranks. The Phoenix try to maintain a political presence in major courts throughout the Empire, using that presence to campaign strongly for peace and moderation between the more hot-headed clans. Given that their duty to the Emperor is to study and teach the inner secrets of the Tao of Shinsei, this is well within their duties, and while many clans resent their interference, they are rarely vilified for it.

As the Lion are devoted to the tenets of Bushido, so are the Phoenix devoted to the Tao of Shinsei. Even the bushi among their ranks study the text, far more so than is traditional for bushi of other families and clans. Some would say that many in the clan miss the point of it, but few would do so within earshot of a Phoenix, for their centuries-long study of the Tao has enabled them to glean many secrets of the universe, enhancing their incredible potency as shugenja. There is a dichotomy among the various families, however; the Isawa tend to embrace the peaceful philosophies of the Tao because it is part and parcel of the teachings of Shinsei, and as such is proper for their duty as priests and scholars. Other families, particularly the Asako, are more devoted to the principle of the texts, embracing them for their truths. The tenet of Bushido that appeals most to the Phoenix is Honesty, as they wish to avoid staining their souls with deception and lies.

Many clans look upon the Phoenix as arrogant and overly assured of their own abilities, but most would grudgingly admit they are exceptionally gifted as shugenja. Uniquely among the clans, the Phoenix eschew violence at every possible turn, seldom employing it even as a last resort. This is not uncommon among shugenja in the Empire, but even many of the clan's bushi subscribe to this theory.

The Phoenix Clan was founded by the most selfless of the Kami, Shiba. Unlike the other Kami, Shiba understood he was creating not a legacy but something larger than himself. In order to enlist the aid of the powerful Tribe of Isawa in fighting the hordes of Fu Leng, Shiba bowed before Isawa and promised that he and his line would protect the Isawa for all time. Even today, while the Shiba technically rule the Phoenix as Clan Champions, the true power in the clan lies with the scholarly Isawa, the largest and most powerful shugenja family in the Empire. The five most powerful members of the Isawa rule as the Council of Elemental Masters. The Shiba are their loyal yojimbo, defending them and the clan as a whole. The introspective Asako family adheres to monastic traditions, as well as maintaining an order of inquisitors who ensure the Phoenix do not meddle too deeply in matters of darkness, an unpleasant occurrence that has happened more than once through the clan's history. Finally, the Agasha provide radically different theories of magic, exploring such things as alchemy and invoking multiple Elements simultaneously. The Agasha previously served the Dragon, but left during a tumultuous period during the clan's history and were accepted into the Phoenix.

The Phoenix control the northeastern region of Rokugan, including a portion of the Great Wall of the North Mountains, a section of coastline, and one of the largest forests in the Empire, the Isawa Mori. Their croplands are fertile, but tend to have longer and harsher winters than many locations in the Empire, which reduces their ability to produce food. Fortunately the coastline offers a rich bounty of seafood. The Shiba family has a strong artisan tradition, so goods of that nature are exported in small quantities. A unique commodity the Phoenix possess is the wood harvested from the Isawa Mori, which is of exceptional quality for the creation of the scrolls used by shugenja. The Phoenix are extremely careful in how much of this they export, however, harvesting it in small amounts and using the majority of that themselves.



The Phoenix's view of other clans

- Crab: An existence that consists solely of war erodes the soul. If they would but embrace the wisdom of the Tao, it would change everything.
- Crane: Like us, they avoid war at all costs, but all too often they allow petty politics to influence their decisions. Our honored cousins have a path yet to walk.
- Dragon: Our closest allies share much of our devotion, although their methods are strange. Too much emphasis on finding a different path means the true way is lost.
- Lion: Why must there always be war? We all exist under a mandate of peace, yet that is the one Imperial decree the Lion seem to conveniently forget.
- Mantis: Upstarts and braggarts. There is no place in a civilized Empire for those who do not comprehend the natural order of things. That the shugenja among their ranks are of such power is an anomaly, nothing more.
- Scorpion: Nothing can be accomplished with such ridiculous deceptions. They fool themselves with their shadow games, but they amount to nothing in the long run.
- Unicorn: They are uncouth and distasteful, but they understand many foreign forms of magic that should be carefully studied. Treat them with respect and perhaps they will share the invaluable knowledge they possess.
- Minor Clans: Of little significance, but for this very reason, deserving of our protection so long as they recognize their humble place. The abuse they have often suffered at the hands of more arrogant and militaristic Great Clans is shameful. Is it not always the duty of samurai to care for those less powerful?



"I can swim."

The Scorpion Clan

In many of Rokugan's greatest plays, poems, and works of fiction, there is a Scorpion villain, and for good reason. The Scorpion are the antithesis of everything the other Great Clans believe, and as a result they are hated almost without exception. This is their choice, and they would have it no other way. When the Empire was first formed, the Kami Bayushi spoke with the little prophet Shinsei, who told him the parable of the scorpion who rode across a river on the back of a frog. The scorpion could not swim, it explained, and thus it would not sting and kill the frog because to do so would kill them both. Halfway through the trip, the scorpion stung the frog, and as it died, the frog asked why the scorpion had doomed them both. The scorpion simply replied, "I can swim." Bayushi adopted this as his motto, and at his Emperor's command, created a clan that could accomplish any task deemed necessary, any task the Emperor could not have ordered done and still retain his honor. The Scorpion are the Underhand of the Emperor, the necessary villain that exists to ensure the other clans loathe them and never turn against their Emperor.

The principal philosophy of the Scorpion Clan is that the ends justify the means in any situation. There is virtually no act the Scorpion will not commit if doing so advances the clan's agenda and fulfills their mandate. Over the centuries, their duty to the Emperor has become an end for its own sake, and many Scorpion delight in the manipulation of the other clans for no reason other than that they enjoy it. And of course, every manipulation creates interpersonal relationships the Scorpion can control and use later as part of their ongoing efforts, many of which have decades-long or even centuries-long goals. Ironically, the Scorpion value Duty as perhaps the only tenet of Bushido worth their attention, the only trait they share with the Crab Clan. Any Scorpion would lay down his life without hesitation, which is not an uncommon trait among samurai, but Scorpion will do it even if the purpose seems pointless or dishonorable, whereas others might be concerned for their personal honor. To a Scorpion, there is no personal honor, only the honor of the clan and the Empire as a whole.

Bayushi was quite possibly the most brilliant of the Kami, and certainly the one with the greatest gift at deception and stealth. He gathered together followers who were similarly skilled, as well as a handful of complete incompetents who would ensure the Scorpion were dramatically underestimated by the remainder of the Empire. The Bayushi family excels at every aspect of deception, as deadly warriors, skilled infiltrators, and silver-tongued courtiers. Their servants among the Shosuro are the greatest masters of shadow who have ever drawn breath, moving unseen through the Empire as assassins and spies. The Soshi are skilled shugenja who can command the spirits in ways unlike any other clan. The Yogo are shugenja as well, but bear an ancient curse that makes them pariahs around virtually everyone save their Scorpion masters.

The Scorpion hold provinces immediately south and east of the Spine of the World Mountains, including a region of the mountains themselves. In addition to the stone and minerals they contain, the mountains also provide exceptional privacy for certain sensitive holdings or activities the clan wishes to conduct out of the public eye. The arable regions of the Scorpion provinces are fertile, but not exceptionally so. Most of the clan's food requirements can be managed within their own borders, but not all. Fortunately, the Shosuro are among the greatest herbalists in the Empire, and can cultivate extremely rare and potent herbs that grow in few other places. These valuable resources can be traded for food and other goods the clan requires. This includes poppy plants grown for medicinal purposes, the Scorpion and the Phoenix being the only clans with an Imperial charter permitting the growth of such plants. The rest of their lands are sadly rather barren, but at least provide the clan with solitude, something many Scorpion families find essential to their pursuits.



The Scorpion's view of other clans

- Crab: Be extremely cautious, for they are too stupid to be manipulated. The Crab respect only strength, so if one must be killed, do it as spectacularly as possible. Only then will they learn.
- Crane: They have so much potential if they would but cast aside their pointless desire to remain virtuous in the eyes of their colleagues.
- Dragon: They sometimes count us among their allies, and they have always treated us with the respect other clans deny us. If they must be used, then do so cautiously and with as much consideration as possible. They must never know.
- Lion: Anger and honor are easy to manipulate. Both in one clan makes them little more than pawns. Dangerous pawns, yes, but pawns just the same.
- Mantis: Those who are so ridiculously eager to prove themselves will jump headlong into virtually anything with minimal effort on our part.
- Phoenix: They combine arrogance and naive with incredible power. They can be manipulated easily, but their prowess allows them to see through many simple deceptions. Proceed with caution when dealing with them.
- Unicorn: We facilitated their reintroduction to Rokugan, but that does not mean we believe they belong here. Why does everyone assume they are who they say they are, when they can provide so little evidence to support the claim?
- Minor Clans: They are too weak and unimportant to bother with, unless they threaten or defy us – in which case they must be crushed without mercy.



"We are the children of the wind."

The Unicorn Clan

For all their differences, the other Great Clans of Rokugan are united in one regard: they look at the Unicorn Clan as outsiders and borderline barbarians. This reputation is not entirely undeserved, as the clan spent the majority of its history completely absent from the Empire. During the first days of Rokugan, the Lady Shinjo petitioned her brother Hantei for the right to explore the world beyond the Empire in order to ensure that no new threats might come from there. For eight centuries the Clan of the Ki-rin was gone, before it finally returned as the Unicorn Clan. Now the clan fits in poorly with its fellows, having adopted numerous customs the Empire finds strange or even disgusting. The Unicorn do not care overmuch, however, and celebrate life as few others, embracing their rich and diverse culture in spite of the raging xenophobia their colleagues share. The Unicorn may never fully be integrated into the Empire, but their zest for life, their compassionate nature, and their powerful cavalry (unique because of the gaijin horse breeds the clan controls) ensure they will not be ousted from their position any time in the near future.

The Unicorn are filled with curiosity, curiosity born of centuries of wandering and exploration. No matter how beneficial or comfortable their situation, no matter how much power and influence they wield, they cannot help but wonder what lies beyond the horizon. This philosophy pervades their every action, giving some the impression that they are easily distracted, when the truth is merely that they wish to resolve issues as quickly as possible so the option to move on is always present. Some among their number overcome this tendency, of course, such as their court representatives, but somewhere in the back of every Unicorn's mind, curiosity still lurks.

Another dominant aspect of Unicorn philosophy is concern for those who are under the clan's protection. All clans safeguard the peasants who work for them, of course, since they are valuable assets who handle matters the samurai cannot or will not do; the Unicorn take this farther, however. Their centuries of wandering instilled in them a tremendous sense of responsibility for those under their care, since any who perished during their journeys could not easily be replaced. The clan embraces the tenet of Compassion from the code of Bushido, and their feelings are reciprocated; few clans can claim the loyalty of their peasants in the same way as the Unicorn.

The Lady Shinjo was by far the most compassionate and caring of the Kami, so much so that she alone attempted to reconcile with their lost brother Fu Leng during the First War. Her effort was doomed to failure, of course, but even that did not deter her, and her brothers and sisters respected her all the more for it. The family that bears her name has always struggled to rule the clan as they believed she would. The Moto, descended from nomads who joined the clan during its journeys, are brutal and warlike, with little of the gentle nature of their Shinjo lords, though they eventually replaced the Shinjo as lords of the clan. The Utaku (once called Otaku, they changed their name in reverence to the Second Unicorn Thunder, Otaku Kamoko) are pious and devoted, a matriarchal family with the most feared and potent cavalry force in the whole of the Empire. The Ide are among the Empire's most ardent pacifists, and as such get along well with the Phoenix. They are the voice of the Unicorn in court, and have attempted to adopt more of the Empire's customs than the other members of the clan. Sadly, despite their efforts they continue to be regarded as outsiders by most. The Iuchi family practice strange rituals that are unlike those conducted by any other shugenja family, and are looked upon as oddities by many. They have exceptional gifts in travel magic and in establishing mystical bonds with animals. The tiny Horiuchi family was created from the Iuchi and served as caregivers for the clan's orphans and ill, until they were eradicated by plague from the face of Rokugan.

As might be expected of a clan that possesses such enormous numbers of cavalry, the Unicorn lands are dominated by vast, flowing plains and peaceful grasslands. Much of this is used for grazing to feed the horses, of course, but during their long years of wandering, the Unicorn learned a great deal about making the most of their resources, and studied various gaijin methods of agriculture. As a result, the clan is able to feed its people on the modest portions of arable land used for farming, in particular the exceptionally fertile northeastern region of their provinces. The clan also controls a portion of the Spine of the World Mountains, including the narrow but strategically important Iuchi Pass through the northwestern end of the mountain chain, which separates the northern and southern portions of their holdings.



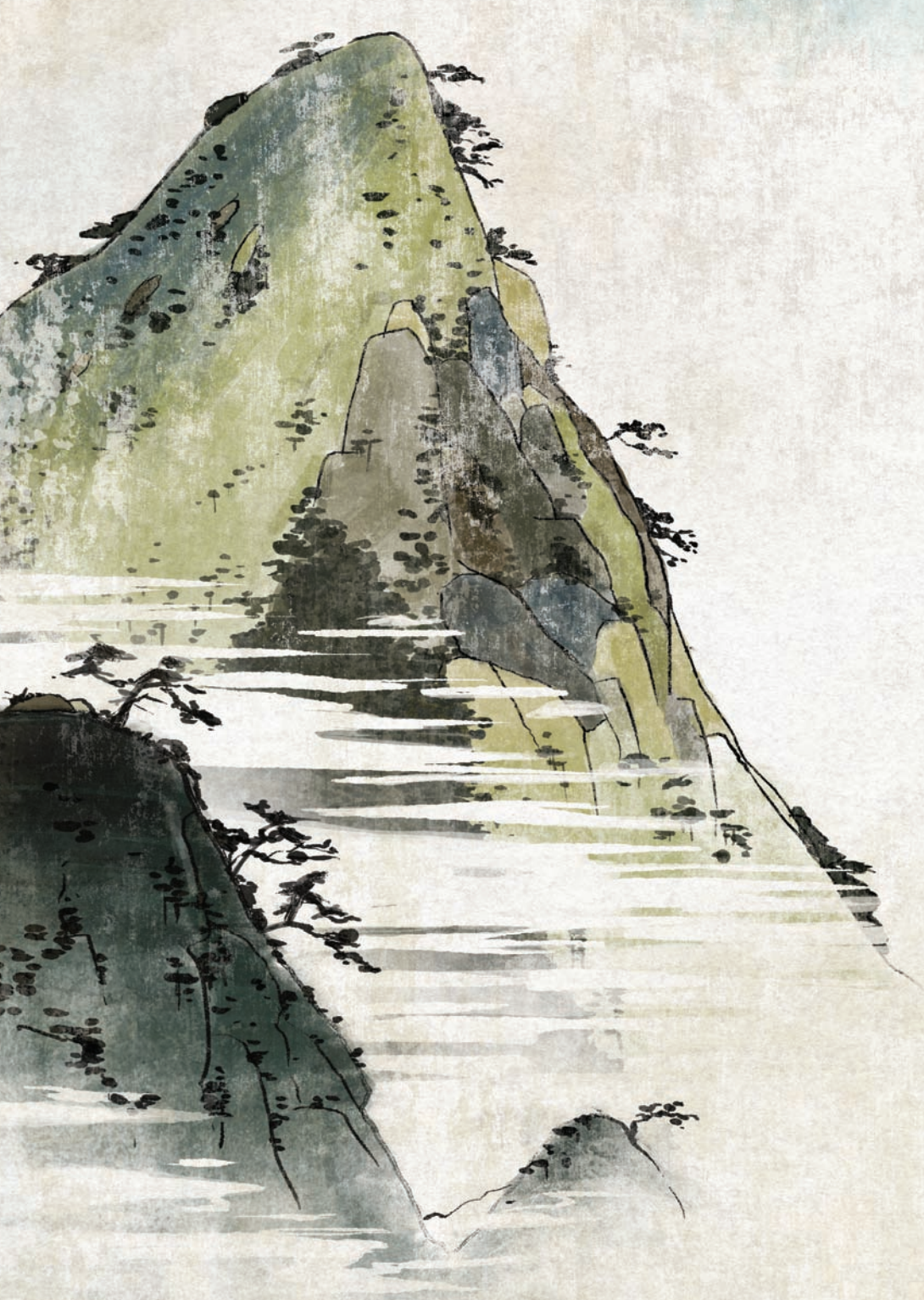
The Unicorn's view of other clans

- Crab: They do not care that we are different, because they do not care about the Empire's customs any more than we do. It is refreshing to be treated as equals, and we will not forget their camaraderie.
- Crane: Were it not for them, we might never have reclaimed our birthright. Always remember they are our allies, and forgive them their arrogance. They know no other way.
- Dragon: What kind of person can tolerate hiding in the mountains for a thousand years? Do they not crave the wind in their hair and the plains rushing by beneath them? They are extremely peculiar.
- Lion: Our closest neighbors and potentially our greatest enemies. They dislike us because we are different, but they recognize our military power. Perhaps one day we can be allies rather than simply neutral toward one another.
- Mantis: Ambitious and aggressive, attempting to seize a place for themselves in the Empire. They are very much like us.
- Phoenix: They look down their noses at us but still covet the knowledge we safeguard. If they wish to gain access to our libraries, they must first meet us as equals. A pity they are not willing to do so.
- Scorpion: Even in the most treacherous realms, we never encountered anyone as despicable as the Scorpion. They are a blight upon the Empire, and perhaps as their enemies we can forge alliances with the other clans.
- Minor Clans: Their weakness makes them of little importance, but their bushi can be as brave and honorable as any Great Clan samurai, and for that at least we can respect them.

一角獣







土の巻

"The elements are not the means to an end… the are the beginning and the end."

- The Tao of Shinsei

Book of Earth



Basic Mechanics: The Roll & Keep System

At its core, the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game uses a very simple mechanic. When a player wishes to have his character take an action, the Game Master determines what abilities the character should use to determine success or failure (these abilities most often consist of one Trait and one Skill used in conjunction with one another). The Game Master must also decide how difficult the task should be, and choose a Target Number (TN) based on this difficulty. The player rolls a number of ten-sided dice based upon the abilities on the samurai's character sheet that the Game Master has identified as necessary for the task. The player then adds the total of the dice rolled and compares the sum to the TN chosen by the Game Master. If the total meets or exceeds the TN, the character successfully completed the task in question. If the total is less than the TN, the character has failed to complete the task.

It is rare that a player will keep all of the dice rolled when his character is taking an action. Typically, a player can keep a smaller number of dice than the amount rolled, and in almost all situations the player will choose the highest rolling of the dice, although he may keep whichever ones he chooses; if for some reason he wishes for his character to fail the roll in question, he may choose lower rolling dice. When denoting the number of dice that should be rolled and kept, the format used is XkY, where X represents the number of dice rolled, or "rolled dice," and Y the number of dice kept, or "kept dice." For example, the notation 4k2 means that four dice should be rolled and two of them chosen to be kept and added together; if the player rolled a 3, 6, 7, and 9, the player would likely choose the 7 and 9 for a total of 16 on the roll.

Target Numbers

A Target Number is a measure of the difficulty of any given task, as determined by the Game Master. A task that should be easy will be assigned a low TN, whereas a difficult task will have a higher TN. While individual Game Masters are encouraged to use their own judgment to determine the difficulty of any task, a general idea of how difficult a given task might be is as follows:

Table 2.1: Standard Target Numbers

TN	Difficulty	Physical	Mental
None	Mundane	Getting out of bed	Remembering details of your sword
5	Very Easy	Striking an immobile target	Recognizing an old friend
10	Easy	Carrying half your weight	Finding a misplaced item
15	Average	Lifting your weight	Remembering someone you've seen once
20	Moderate	Jumping a ten-foot ditch	Recognizing someone in disguise
25	Difficult	Scaling a cliff without rope	Finding a well-hidden object
30	Very Hard	Diving safely from a waterfall	Remembering someone's exact words
40	Heroic	Out-wrestling a troll	Naming all of your ancestors... in order
60	Impossible	Shattering stone with bare hands	Outwitting a Fortune

Rings & Traits

The most basic representations of a character's abilities are the Five Rings. The Five Rings are the basic conceptual building blocks of the Legend of the Five Rings world. All things, both living and nonliving, are composed of differing proportions of the elements that the Rings represent. With regard to characters, each Ring is made up of two Traits, one mental and one physical, representing its influence in the mortal world.

At the beginning of the character creation process, characters begin with all Rings and Traits at 2 out of a possible 10. These may be increased during the character creation process, or during the game, through the expenditure of Experience Points. A Rank of 2 represents the normal capability possessed by an individual with no particular training, whereas the upper limit of 10 is reserved for the most supremely gifted and talented individuals in the world, and for supernatural beings.

Rings are never increased directly. Instead, a Ring is equal to the lower of the two Traits that comprise it. Thus, if a Ring is made up of a Trait of 2 and a Trait of 4, then the Ring's Rank is 2. If the lower of the Traits increases to 3, the Ring will increase to Rank 3 as well. Thus, by increasing both Traits, a player increases the character's Ring, which in turn grants them greater access to other abilities.



Air

Air is enigmatic and mercurial in all things, and represents an individual's capacity for empathy and intuition. The spirits of Air can be capricious and mischievous, but their wrath is as that of the storm. Those who are aligned with the element of Air possess superior instincts and speed of reaction. Those who are at odds with Air are physically sluggish and oblivious to the nuanced behavior of those around them.

Awareness is a Mental Trait that represents a character's intuition and general ability to empathize with others. Awareness allows a character to perceive the feelings and motivations of others, even with little evidence to support their intuition. It also allows them to better portray those same feelings, and thus to win over others who believe the character is sympathetic to their cause. Persuasion, charisma, and manipulation are the hallmarks of Awareness, which is the most important Trait for Social Skills.

Reflexes is a Physical Trait that represents a character's ability to instantly react to events taking place around him. A character with high Reflexes is fleet of foot and possesses a lightning fast response time that aids him in many aspects of combat. Reflexes is important in the determination of a character's Initiative and Armor TN.



Earth

Earth is eternal, unchanging, and unmoving. It is the element of endurance and resistance, and represents an individual's ability to withstand whatever trials arise. The spirits of Earth are quiet and impassive but can be roused into brief moments of terrible violence. Those who are aligned with Earth have tremendous fortitude and resolve, resisting the power of the Shadowlands Taint, while those who are at odds with Earth are frail and weak-minded.

Willpower is a Mental Trait that determines a character's ability to focus his mental energies on the task set before him. A character with a high Willpower is decided and persistent, capable of paying close attention to even the minutest detail for hours on end with no sign of wavering. Willpower is mainly used to resist certain attempts to manipulate or intimidate a character.

Stamina is a Physical Trait that determines a character's ability to endure constant physical activity and recover from wounds suffered in battle. A character with a high Stamina possesses the ability to exert himself for long periods of time with no signs of fatigue or weakness, and to recover from even near-mortal wounds in a remarkably short period of time. Stamina's primary benefit to a character is its influence on how quickly he recovers Wounds suffered from damage.



Fire

Fire is the element of dynamic change, energy, and destruction. It is the element of motion and illumination. Spirits of Fire are capable of mending what has been broken, or of destroying all in their path. Those who are strong in the element of Fire are great warriors, brilliant scholars, or possibly both. Those weak in Fire are physically uncoordinated and sluggish of thought.

Intelligence is a Mental Trait that measures a character's ability to gain new knowledge and put it to use. A character with a high Intelligence understands new information quickly, puts it to use instantly, and recalls it with great clarity. Those with lower Intelligence have difficulty understanding new material and recall it imperfectly. Intelligence-based rolls are common for non-combat oriented characters.

Agility is a Physical Trait that represents a character's hand-eye coordination and general physical athleticism. Virtually any physical feat that is not dependent upon speed or strength is instead dependent upon Agility. Agility is used for almost every Weapon Skill, making it one of the most important Traits with regard to combat.

Special Dice Rules

Exploding Dice

Sometimes dice rolls yield a spectacular result. When a die comes up as a 10, it is rolled again, and the next result is added to the die's total. If the result is another 10, the die is rolled again until a result that is not a 10 is gained.

- Example: A die rolls a 10 and then a 3. The result of that die is a 13.
- Example: A die rolls a 10, a 10, and a 7. The result of that die is a 27.

The Ten Dice Rule

In the L5R RPG, characters can progress to a point where they are rolling large handfuls of dice, so much that it can become difficult to count and track them all. To keep matters relatively simple, no roll can ever use more than ten dice at a time. Additional rolled dice become kept dice at a ratio of one kept die per two additional rolled dice. If both rolled and kept dice already equal ten, then each additional die of both types converts to a bonus of +2 to the total of the roll.

- Example: A roll of 12k4 would become 10k5, because the two extra rolled dice that exceed the Ten Dice Rule become one extra kept die.
- Example: A roll of 13k9 would become 10k10 + 2, because the two extra rolled dice that exceed the Ten Dice Rule become one extra kept die, and the additional odd rolled die becomes a bonus of +2.
- Example: A roll of 10k12 would become 10k10 + 4, with each of the extra kept dice above the Ten Dice Rule becoming a bonus of +2.
- Example: A roll of 14k12 would become 10k10 +12. Since both rolled and kept dice exceed ten, the four additional rolled dice become a bonus of +8, and the two additional kept dice become a bonus of +4, for a total of +12.





Water

Water is the element of rapid change and alteration. It is the inexorable force that can carve mountains over thousands of years and the capricious storm that batters a ship one instant and gently carries it to its destination the next. Spirits of water can enhance the movement abilities of those they bless, or bolster their strength in other ways. Those who are strong in the element of Water possess incredible strength and perception. Those who are weak in Water are slow to move and possess dulled senses.

Perception is a Mental Trait that represents a character's attention to events unfolding around him. A character with a high Perception notices everything that takes place around him, whereas one with a low Perception misses even obvious things happening in his immediate vicinity.

Strength is a Physical Trait that represents a character's pure physical power. Strength is sheer force with no consideration for finesse or precision. Characters with a high Strength are warriors of devastating power, while characters with low Strength are ineffective warriors with little ability to damage their opponents. Strength has considerable effect on weapon and unarmed damage, as well as how much a character can lift, and is often used for taxing physical activities such as climbing or swimming.

Ring and Trait Reduction

There are numerous mechanical effects that can temporarily reduce a character's Traits or Rings. (The reduction of a Ring also reduces the associated Traits, and reducing Traits can also affect a Ring, since no Ring can be higher than its lowest Trait.) Such a penalty reduces all rolls associated with that Ring or Trait, and can also impact any abilities derived from Rings or Traits, such as Wounds (which are derived from Earth). Reducing a living creature's Earth Ring to 0 will also reduce the creature's Wounds to 0, killing it. Reducing other Rings to 0 will not kill a living creature, but it may have other effects at the discretion of the GM. As a general principle, we suggest that such a creature falls unconscious and cannot be revived until the condition causing the Ring reduction is alleviated.





Void

The fifth and final element that comprises the universe is Void. Void is poorly understood by the mortal mind, for it is both the presence and the absence of the other four elements. It is the state of all elements existing together simultaneously, and yet it is also the emptiness that exists between them. Void is an almost uniquely human trait, a result of the divine spark that exists within them through their creation by the forces of the Celestial Heavens. Very few other creatures can even perceive the Void, let alone manipulate it.

There are no Traits associated with the Void Ring. Instead, a character gains a number of Void Points equal to his Void Ring, and may use them to enhance die-rolls and other actions made during the course of the game. Void Points represent a moment of enlightened insight or an epiphany that a character experiences, that moment when, for just an instant, he is at one with the universe. A character's pool of Void Points is refreshed each day after an opportunity to rest, although certain meditation techniques allow them to be recovered more quickly.

A player may declare he is spending a Void Point any time when it would be applicable, but the most common instances are before the player's character makes a roll, takes certain types of Actions, or takes damage. The expenditure of a Void Point enhances a roll or the character's abilities in one of a number of different ways. A character may normally only spend one Void Point per Round for one of the following effects, although some abilities may allow them to spend more than one under certain circumstances. By spending a Void Point, a character may:

- Gain a bonus of +1k1 to a Skill, Trait, Ring, or Spell Casting roll (the Void Point expenditure must be declared prior to the roll being made). Damage Rolls may not be enhanced in this manner.
- Temporarily increase his rank in a Skill from 0 to 1, avoiding Unskilled Roll penalties.
- Reduce the amount of Wounds suffered from one source of damage by 10 (this must be done immediately after the damage total is announced).
- Increase his Armor TN by 10 for one round. This is done at the beginning of the combat Round.
- Exchange his Initiative Score with one willing target for the remainder of the current skirmish. This is done at the beginning of the combat Round. Only one of the two characters needs to spend a Void for this effect to take place.
- Increase his Initiative Score by 10 for the duration of the current skirmish. This is done at the beginning of the combat Round.

Also, Void Points may be spent to activate certain School Techniques (see the *Book of Fire* for discussion of Schools) – this does not count against the once per Round restriction.

Skills

Rings and Traits represent the innate mental and physical abilities of a character. What they learn through training and experience, however, is represented by Skills. Samurai begin acquiring the basic building blocks of Skills at a very young age, when they first enter a dojo to begin training for a life of service in the name of their Clan. Each Clan's dojo teaches different Skills, and even within a single Clan the Skills taught at particular dojo can vary widely. All dojo offer a number of additional, optional courses of study for their students, however, so even two samurai who attend the same dojo can have different Skills, albeit with a common base of training.

Like Rings and Traits, Skills are ranked from 1 to 10. A rank of 1 in a Skill indicates that a character has been introduced to the most basic principles of that Skill, whereas a character with a rank of 10 in any given Skill is either one of the greatest masters on the planet, or a supernatural being of some sort.

When a Skill Roll is called for, it lists the Skill first, then the Trait being used for the particular roll. A call for an Athletics / Agility roll, for instance, would require a player to roll a total number of dice equal to his character's ranks in the Athletics Skill and Agility Trait, and to keep a number of dice equal to the character's Agility Trait.

Raises

There are times when simple success is not enough. When a character needs to accomplish something truly spectacular, Raises are the means by which that can be accomplished. When a player declares he is making a Raise, he is choosing to voluntarily increase the TN of the task his character is attempting, by an increment of 5 per Raise. Raises are generally made when a player feels his character's abilities will allow him to easily exceed the TN for a given task. The most common use of Raises is to allow characters to perform Maneuvers in combat (described later in this chapter), but individual GMs can allow any number of different effects with sufficient Raises. Players who wish to try unconventional or creative actions that are not covered by the basic rules should simply ask the GM how many Raises will be required to succeed.

A character can make a maximum number of Raises per roll equal to his Void Ring. A character with Void 2, for instance, can make 1 or 2 Raises per roll, but not 3. Some mechanical effects grant a character Free Raises. These give the benefit of having made a Raise without actually increasing the TN of the roll in question, and do not count toward the maximum number of Raises that may be made per roll. Free Raises may also be used to reduce the TN of the task being attempted by 5 instead of augmenting the roll in the same way as a normal Raise.

Raises are not without risk, however. If a player declares Raises on a roll, and the result of his roll fails to meet the new, increased TN, the roll fails. This is a failure even if the result of the roll meets the original TN but falls short of the new, increased TN.

Types of Rolls

There are a number of types of rolls that come up frequently in a Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game session. The most common are:

Skill Rolls

Skill rolls are the most common type of roll made in the game. Typically a Skill is combined with a single Trait to determine the number of dice rolled for a particular task. When a Skill/Trait pair is announced by the Game Master, the player will use a number of dice equal to the character's rank in the Trait plus their rank in the Skill. After rolling this number of dice, the player will keep a number equal to the Trait being used, adding these kept dice together to find the total for the roll. Skills thus grant additional rolled dice for each task, increasing the chance of getting better results, while also being less expensive to increase in rank than Traits.

> Example: *John's character Bayushi Shinai is going to fire an arrow at an enemy samurai. The Skill that governs archery is Kyujutsu, which is usually paired with Reflexes. Shinai has Reflexes 3 and Kyujutsu 4, so he rolls 7 dice (3+4). John rolls seven ten-sided dice and gets a 2, 4, 5, 7, 7, 8, and a 12 (a 10 that was rolled again to get a 2). John may keep 3 dice with his Reflexes of 3, and chooses to keep the 7, 8, and 12 to get a total of 27. Since his Game Master had announced the TN for the shot was 20, Shinai has struck his target.*

It is possible for characters to make Skill Rolls even if they possess no ranks in the given Skill. This is referred to as an Unskilled Roll and is described in detail on page 80.

Trait Rolls

Trait Rolls are far less common than Skill Rolls. They represent situations when the characters in question are attempting to complete a task based solely on their innate abilities, either mental or physical, without any benefit from training. This is more commonly a factor for physical tasks, such as holding one's breath or holding onto a moving wagon. Trait Rolls for mental tasks are less common, but might include attempting



to focus one's attention on a subject being observed for a long period of time, or memorize a lot of material very quickly. To make a Trait Roll, a character rolls and keeps dice equal to his Rank in that Trait.

Ring Rolls

Ring Rolls, where dice equal to a character's Rank in a Ring are rolled and kept, are very uncommon and typically involve magical or supernatural effects of some sort. Spells can sometimes require a target to make a Ring Roll in order to resist an effect, for example, or a character may have to roll Earth to resist the Shadowlands Taint.

Damage Rolls

Damage rolls are very common in combat. Any time a character makes a successful attack roll (a specific kind of Skill Roll), he inflicts damage upon his opponent in the form of Wounds. Damage rolls vary considerably depending upon the weapon used in the attack. Every weapon has a damage rating (or DR) that represents the amount of damage it is capable of inflicting. For melee weapons, a character using a particular weapon adds his Strength to the number of rolled dice in the weapon's DR. For example, a Crab bushi with Strength 3 using a dai tsuchi (DR 5k2) would roll 8k2 damage following a successful attack with the dai tsuchi. For ranged weapons, the character's Strength is not always added to the DR of the weapon, depending upon the weapon used. The most common ranged weapons, bows, have a Strength rating of their own that is added to the rolled dice of the projectile's DR. A yumi has a Strength of 3, for example. Using a yumi to fire a standard arrow would roll a total of 5k2 (Strength 3 plus the arrow's DR of 2k2) for damage from a successful attack roll. For rules for other ranged weapons please see the equipment section of the *Book of Fire*.

Another kind of damage roll is the unarmed damage roll. A character that has made a successful attack against an opponent using only his bare hands inflicts unarmed damage. Unarmed attacks normally have a DR of 0k1, which means the character rolls a number of dice equal to his Strength, and keeps one.



Spell Casting Rolls

Spell Casting Rolls are the province of shugenja and are made to determine if they are successful in casting a particular spell. When a shugenja prepares to cast a spell of a particular element, the player rolls a number of dice equal to the character's Shugenja School Rank plus his Ring in the relevant element, and keeps a number of dice equal to the character's Ring.

> Example: *Brent's character Isawa Tishi is going to cast a Fire spell. Tishi has Fire 3 and is a Rank 1 student of the Isawa Shugenja School. Brent rolls 4 dice (3+1) and keeps 3 (equal to the character's Fire Ring).*

Contested Rolls

A Contested Roll is made when two characters are making a roll in direct opposition to one another, and only one can be successful. Any type of roll can be a Contested Roll, meaning that there can be Contested Skill Rolls, Contested Trait Rolls, Contested Ring Rolls, etc. In the case of a Contested Roll, both participants make the designated roll (i.e. in a Contested Agility Roll, the players both roll their characters' Agility) and compare the result. The character whose player rolled a higher result is victorious. It is possible for multiple characters to be involved in a Contested Roll, in which case the player who rolls the highest of those involved is the victor. In any instance where there is a tie on a Contested Roll, and the circumstances of the roll are such that a tie is not a viable option, the players involved must immediately re-roll the Contested Roll. Multiple re-rolls may be made if subsequent ties are the result (although that is statistically unlikely!).

It is possible to declare Raises on a Contested Roll. If this is done, that character's roll must exceed his opponent's by an increment of 5 for every Raise declared, or he is considered to have failed the roll.

Skill Rolls, Expanded

Given that Skill Rolls are the most frequent kind of roll made in the L5R RPG, there are a wide variety of situations and circumstances that can arise as a result of rolls, and several different ways in which these rolls can be made. The following situations and roll types are likely to come up in most average campaign sessions.

Unskilled Rolls

It is possible for a character to attempt a roll when a Skill Roll is called for, even if they have no ranks in that Skill. In this case, they are effectively making a Trait Roll against a Skill Roll TN, which is typically higher than most Trait Rolls can realistically achieve. When making an Unskilled Roll, the following two conditions apply:

- Dice never explode on an Unskilled Roll.
- Unskilled Rolls may not benefit from Raises, either called Raises or Free Raises.

Failed Rolls

When a character fails a Skill Roll, it is often possible to make a second attempt (unless the GM rules that circumstances make a second attempt impossible). For example, a character attempting to climb a tree could try again if his first attempt failed. When making a second attempt at the same Skill Roll, the TN for the Skill Roll increases by +10. Second attempts on Skill Rolls utilizing Intelligence or Perception usually cannot be made without a change in the situation, such as new information becoming available to the character. Skill Rolls made as attacks (such as virtually all uses of the Weapon Skills) may not make a second attempt at +10 TN; an attack roll that fails simply misses, and the character may not make another attack unless he has an ability that confers multiple attacks.

Cooperative Rolls

Cooperative Skill Rolls involve multiple individuals working together to achieve a single result. There are two different types of Cooperative Rolls. The first involves a group working together toward one end, without significant consequences for failure. An example might be multiple shipwrights working on a new seagoing vessel. In these cases, one individual is chosen from those participating to make the Skill Roll. He receives a bonus to the total of his roll equal to the combined Ranks of all other participants in the Skill in question.

The second manner of Cooperative Roll is one wherein the circumstances of the roll allow for one participant with poor performance to impede the entire group. An example would be a group of samurai scaling a mountain, tied together for security. In this case, an individual Skill Roll is required from each participant, but the participant with the single highest rank in the Skill being used grants a bonus equal to his Skill Rank to all others making the roll. For example, continuing the above example of several samurai roped together, each of them will roll their Athletics (Climbing) Skill. The samurai with the highest Skill in the group has Athletics 4, so the other samurai with lower Skill Ranks will gain a bonus of +4 to their rolls.

Cumulative Rolls

Cumulative Skill Rolls require multiple successes over time in order for the task at hand to be completed satisfactorily. The TN for Cumulative Skill Rolls is typically very high, but can be achieved through multiple Skill Rolls over time. Each time an individual makes a successful Skill Roll, the total of the roll is deducted from the total of the TN. For example, if a TN of 60 is required to finish a sculpture, an artisan might make an Artisan: Sculpture / Agility roll and achieve a total of 24. On the next Skill Roll, the artisan's total TN is only 36. Individual Cumulative Skill Rolls typically list how long a character must allow to pass between rolls.

It should be noted that Cumulative Skill Rolls could be abused by the unscrupulous if the GM is not careful. In general, such methods can only be used in situations where it makes sense to do so (such as the sculpture example above). The GM is also justified in requiring the individual skill rolls to hit a minimum TN (such as 15, 20, or even 25) in order for them to count against the cumulative total. Potentially, a very low "flubbed" Skill Roll might even subtract from the cumulative total, representing a mistake that must be corrected.

It is possible to have a Cumulative Skill Roll required that is also a Cooperative Skill Roll, in which case the Cooperative Roll is generated as described above, and the total is deducted from the Cumulative Roll's TN.

The Combat Round

Combats in L5R are referred to as skirmishes (to distinguish them from the Mass Combat rules in the *Book of Water*), and skirmishes are played out in a series of short time-units known as Rounds. An L5R combat Round is a very short period of time, measured in seconds. Combat situations can vary wildly depending upon the circumstances, so there is no strict determination of how long a Round lasts, but it can be assumed that one Round never takes longer than ten seconds. Although the Round is short, there are a lot of options for what a character can do during that time, and ten seconds can be very busy.

Definition of Terms

- ***Action*** – What a character does when it is their Turn during a combat Round.
- ***Initiative*** – A measure of how quickly a given character reacts compared to other participants in a skirmish.
- ***Round*** – A unit of time, 3 to 10 seconds in length, during which all participants in a skirmish have an opportunity to take Actions.
- ***Turn*** – The opportunity for an individual character to take Actions during a combat Round. Under normal circumstances, every participant in a skirmish has one Turn, which takes place on their Initiative.

Sequence of Events

A combat Round unfolds in the following stages:

- ***Stage 1: Initiative*** – During the first Round of a skirmish, all participants make an Initiative Roll, rolling Reflexes and Insight Rank (see *Book of Fire* for information on Insight Ranks), keeping Reflexes (noted as Insight Rank / Reflexes). The result of this roll, called the Initiative Score, determines the order in which all characters will act. An Initiative Roll is only made on a character's first Round of participation in the skirmish, and the resulting Initiative Score is used for the remainder of the skirmish. However, in subsequent Rounds, Initiative Scores may potentially change as a result of different character abilities or situational modifiers. During the first Round of combat, characters also select their Stance immediately before they make their Initiative Roll.
- ***Stage 2: Turns*** – The bulk of a combat Round involves each individual participant taking their Turn. When this stage begins, the character with the highest Initiative Score takes their Turn first, and may take any legal Action. A character may choose to delay taking their Turn, and instead allow the character with the next-highest Initiative Score to take their Turn. After that,

the character who delayed their Turn has the chance to take it or delay again, and so on. Delaying a Turn has no effect on a character's Initiative Score the following Round, and Turns cannot be "saved" from one Round to the next. If every participant Delays their Turn, when the participant with the lowest initiative score is reached he must take his Turn, then the Round ends. After the first Round of a skirmish, characters may change their Stances at the beginning of their Turn, before taking any Actions. A character only ever has one Turn per Round, regardless of how many Actions he may take during the Round.

- *Stage 3: Reactions* – At the end of a Round, when all characters have taken their Turn, there are certain abilities that take effect as a result of the events of the Round. For example, spell effects that have expired end during the Reaction Stage. All such effects happen simultaneously during Stage 3. Reaction effects, typically generated by Techniques, Spells, or Advantages, are always clearly labeled as such.

Attack & Defense

Any attack a character makes against an opponent requires a roll, typically a Skill Roll that includes a Weapon Skill as one of its components. Attacks may be melee or ranged in nature, depending upon the weapon being used. These rolls are made using the rules included for Skill Rolls above, and the result of an attack roll is compared to the opponent's Armor TN. All characters have an Armor TN that is calculated by multiplying their Reflexes Trait by 5, adding 5, and adding any bonuses that apply to the Armor TN (typically from Stances or from the character wearing armor of some kind). If the result of the attack roll meets or exceeds the target's Armor TN, then the attack was successful and the opponent was struck with the weapon in question. Damage must now be rolled.

Penalties or bonuses may be applied to attack rolls for a variety of reasons. The most obvious and frequent penalty is for being injured (see the discussion of Wounds immediately following this section). Any ranged attack made against an opponent who is within melee range also suffers a penalty of -10 to the total of the attack roll, due to the awkwardness of firing at someone who is a direct threat. Additional bonuses and penalties are discussed under Stances and Status Effects, and the GM can apply bonuses or penalties based on specific circumstances (a character trying to attack while balancing on a railing would probably suffer a penalty, for example).

Every weapon has a damage rating (DR). This rating indicates how much damage the weapon inflicts upon those struck with it. The katana, the most common weapon wielded by samurai, has DR 3k2. For melee attacks, characters add their Strength to the first number of a weapon's DR. A character who makes a successful attack roll wielding a katana, and who has Strength 3, would roll 6k2 for damage (3 Strength plus the 3 from the first number of the DR). The character's player selects the two dice he wishes to keep out of the six and totals them together. This is the number of Wounds the attack has inflicted upon its target. A character adds his Strength to certain types of ranged attacks in the same manner, but not all (see the equipment section in the *Book of Fire* for more information).

Wounds

Individual characters have Wound Ranks that measure the amount of damage that they can sustain before it begins to impair their ability to take actions and eventually incapacitates or kills them. The Wounds inflicted by an attack fill up these Wound Ranks in order, with each Rank containing a maximum number of Wounds determined by the character's Earth Ring. As soon as a character suffers damage that begins filling in a particular Wound Rank, the character is then considered to be in the state described by that Rank. Once that Rank has been filled, additional damage goes to the next Rank. The ranks are as follows:

Healthy

This is the default condition of any character who has not suffered damage. Regardless of what Earth Ring multiplier is chosen for a campaign (see sidebar), this Wound Rank should utilize the character's Earth x5 in order to create a buffer for normal activity.

Nicked

(Increase the TN of all rolls made by +3 while Nicked)

A character who has been nicked has suffered a mild but distracting injury.

Grazed

(Increase the TN of all rolls made by +5 while Grazed)

A grazed character is injured, but still able to function without tremendous difficulty.

Hurt

(Increase the TN of all rolls made by +10 while Hurt)

A character who is hurt has begun to suffer noticeably from the effects of his injuries.

Injured

(Increase the TN of all rolls made by +15 while Injured)

An injured character has difficulty focusing his attention on the task at hand.

Crippled

(Increase the TN of all rolls made by +20 while Crippled)

A crippled character can barely stand, much less move. Any attempt to make a Move action is increased by one level of difficulty (a Free Action becomes Simple, etc.)

Down

(Increase the TN of all rolls made by +40 while Down)

A character who is Down is virtually incapacitated. They may speak only in a whisper. Such a character may only potentially take Free Actions unless a particular wound makes such action impossible (and cannot take Move actions), and must spend a Void Point in order to be able to do so.

Out

A character who has been reduced to this level is immobile, unconscious, and likely dying. Once this Rank is filled, any additional damage inflicted to the character kills him instantly.



Ambush & Other Surprises

Under certain circumstances, it is possible for one group of combatants to surprise another. If the GM rules that one group is unaware of another's presence, the hidden group may attempt to make a surprise attack. They make a Contested Stealth (Ambush) / Agility roll opposed by the unaware group's Investigation (Notice) / Perception before the first Stage of the skirmish begins. This roll may either use the Cumulative Skill Rolls rule or, if the GM prefers, be made by the group leader. If the ambushing party wins, all characters in the surprised party suffer a penalty of -10 to their Initiative Score for the duration of the skirmish. If the party being ambushed wins the Contested Roll, then nothing happens and the skirmish immediately proceeds to Stage 1.

Some GMs may find the global Initiative penalty inappropriate for ambush situations. If that is the case, an alternative that some might prefer would be to allow only the ambushing party to act during the first round of the skirmish, or to disallow the surprised party to use certain Stances, particularly Full Defense. The GM might also rule that a surprised character is easier to hit, depending on whether that seems appropriate to the circumstances. Be aware, however, that removing the actions of the surprised party or making them overly vulnerable to attack, even for one round, could quite possibly lead to multiple fatalities. The GM should consider this carefully before applying such penalties.

Falling & Drowning

Other than combat, the most common environmental risks of damage a character faces are from falling and drowning. Falling from a height will inflict Wounds equal to 1k1 for every ten feet of distance fallen. Falls of less than about 10 feet will typically not inflict meaningful damage, although the GM can use discretion for unusual circumstances (such as falling onto sharp rocks).

A character who falls into deep water must roll Athletics (Swimming) / Strength at TN 15 each minute to stay afloat. The GM may increase this TN to reflect difficult circumstances such as a storm-tossed sea. If the PC must tread water for a long time, not only will the TN increase but also the Trait for the roll may be changed to Stamina. Once the character fails the roll, he can hold his breath for a number of Rounds equal to his Stamina, during which time he can continue trying to make the Athletics roll to resume swimming. If he is still underwater when his Stamina runs out, he begins drowning, taking 2k2 Wounds per Round. A drowning character is helpless and cannot take any Actions until rescued.

Lethality & Wounds

Since the first edition of the L5R RPG, the game has been famous for how easy it is for a character to be killed. This has been a deliberate design decision because, quite frankly, if a samurai gets hit with a katana, chances are he is maimed or dead. However, this highly lethal system is not what all players are looking for, and GMs are encouraged to tailor the system to suit the flavor of their campaigns. When considering how the Earth Ring should determine the number of Wounds per Wound Rank for characters in a campaign, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Earth x2: This is the default that is assumed to be in use for the L5R RPG, 4th Edition. This system is quite lethal, and it is entirely possible that characters can be killed or at the very least removed from a skirmish after being hit by a single blow. Combats using this multiplier for Wound Ranks should last somewhere between 1 and 3 rounds.
- Earth x3: This option increases survivability by a mild degree, and should result in combats roughly 3-4 rounds in length.
- Earth x4: This option should result in combats of up to 5-6 rounds.
- Earth x5: This option makes characters into veritable juggernauts, able to sustain massive blows with ease, and should result in combats of 7 rounds or longer.



Healing Wounds

The simplest manner to recover Wounds is by resting. For every night's rest a character gets, he recovers a number of Wounds equal to twice his Stamina Trait, plus his Insight Rank. It is possible to increase this amount, or to recover additional amounts, through treatment via certain Skills or Spells (see the *Book of Fire* for more information). Permanent wounds, such as the loss of a limb, of course do not heal and permanent penalties from those are at the discretion of the GM.

Stances

A character's Stance determines what actions they may or may not take during their Turn in a combat Round. Stances reflect the basic postures every samurai is taught to prepare them for combat, and even the most pious shugenja or effete courtier is familiar with them. During the first Round of a skirmish, characters assume their Stance during Stage 1. On every subsequent round, they can change their Stance or choose to maintain it at the beginning of their Turn in Stage 2. The Stances a character may adopt are as follows:

- ***Attack*** – Attack is the standard Stance adopted by most bushi in a combat situation, and is tied closely to the Ring of Water in that it is fluid and versatile. A character in the Attack Stance has no restrictions on the kind of Actions he may take.
- ***Full Attack*** – Full Attack is the Ring of Fire, raging and consuming all in its path. A character in the Full Attack Stance may take no Simple or Complex Actions other than those used to make attacks, and may only use Move Actions to get closer to his enemies. Characters may not use the Full Attack Stance to deliver ranged attacks. A character in the Full Attack Stance gains a bonus of +2k1 to attack rolls made that round, but his Armor TN is reduced by 10 to reflect the all-or-nothing nature of the attack. A character in the Full Attack Stance who takes a Move Action during his turn may move an additional 5 feet beyond the normal amount allowed for the Move Action. This bonus movement is granted only once per Round, and the character still may not exceed the normal maximum distance he may normally move in one Round. Full Attack may not be used while mounted.
- ***Defense*** – Defense is the Ring of Air, adaptable and reactive. Defense allows for the greatest freedom of action. Characters in the Defense Stance add their Air Ring plus their Defense Skill Rank to their Armor TN. There are no restrictions on what kind of Actions a character in the Defense Stance may take, other than that they may not attack. The Defense Stance is useful for making oneself less vulnerable while making Skill Rolls or Spell Casting Rolls during skirmishes. A bushi attempting to light a spark for a burning arrow in the middle of a melee would use Defense, as he may still need to drop what he is doing to defend himself from an enemy who attacks.
- ***Full Defense*** – The Full Defense Stance is the Ring of Earth, reserved, unmoving, and unassailable. Upon declaring his Stance, a character in the Full Defense Stance makes a Defense / Reflexes roll and adds half of the total (rounding up) to his Armor TN until his following Turn. This Skill Roll is considered a Complex Action, so a character in this Stance may only take Free Actions.
- ***Center*** – The Center Stance is the Ring of Void. The principle function of Center Stance is related to the benefits it offers in iaijutsu dueling (see the rules for Iaijutsu Duels later in this chapter), but it has benefits in skirmishes as well. Characters in the Center Stance take no Actions, instead focusing their energy in preparation for action the following round. A character in the Center Stance forfeits all Actions while in that Stance. On the round following his adoption of the Center Stance, the character gains a bonus of 1k1 plus his Void Ring on any one roll made during his Turn. The character also adds 10 to the total of his Initiative Score for that Round only.

Actions

During a combat Round, every character may take Actions on their Turn. Although a character's Stance can limit what kind of Actions they may take, in general a character may take one of the two following options:

- One Complex Action + Free Actions
- Two Simple Actions + Free Actions

Free Actions are minor activities that do not disrupt a character's ability to perform other tasks during the course of their Turn. Unless otherwise specified, a character may only perform each Free Action a maximum of once per Round.

Simple Actions are more complicated tasks that require more of a character's attention, but not so much that he is not capable of taking more than one action at a time.

Complex Actions are elaborate or time-consuming efforts that require all of a character's attention in order to complete.

Move Actions

Characters in L5R can move a certain amount per round depending upon the Action or Actions they devote to that task. Actions correspond to the following movement rates:

- ***Free Action:*** A number of feet equal to five times the character's Water Ring
- ***Simple Action:*** A number of feet equal to ten times the character's Water Ring.
- ***Complex Action:*** These are not normally available, but some mechanics can require a character to perform specific tasks as Complex Move Actions.

A character may not move more than twenty times his Water Ring in feet per round unless he has an ability that increases his maximum possible movement per round.

Movement is also modified by the type of terrain where characters are located. It is far easier to run down a city street, for instance, than a rocky beach. It is ultimately up to the Game Master to determine what level of terrain any particular area falls under. Terrain types and the movement penalties they incur include:

- ***Basic:*** City streets, plains, sparse forest, etc. A character has no movement penalties in basic terrain.
- ***Moderate:*** Tall grass, foothills, beaches, etc. A character's Water Ring is considered one Rank lower (to a minimum of one) for the purposes of determining how far he can move using Move Actions when on moderate terrain.
- ***Difficult:*** Mountains, dense forest, hip-deep water, etc. A character's Water Ring is considered two Ranks lower (to a minimum of one) for the purposes of determining how far he can move using Move Actions when on difficult terrain. GMs may optionally choose to assign penalties to physical rolls (both Skill and Trait rolls) made in Difficult terrain, typically a –5 or –10 to the roll, if it seems appropriate.

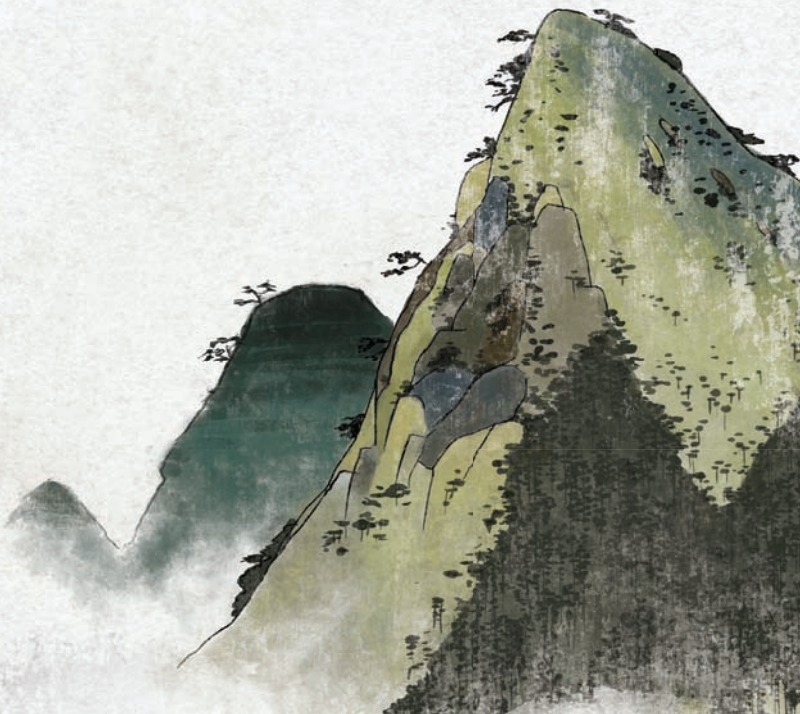
Table 2.2: Example Actions

Free Actions	Simple Actions	Complex Actions
Draw a weapon (small)	Activate a Kata (see *Book of Water*)	Make an attack (melee or ranged)
Speak (up to five words)	Draw a weapon (medium or large)	Cast a Spell
Move Action (Water x5 ft.)	Move Action (Water x10 feet)	Skill Use (any non-Weapon Skill)
Pull out a spell scroll	Dismount a horse	String a bow for use
Drop a weapon/ item	Guard someone (see Maneuvers)	Mount a horse
	Pick up a weapon/ item	
	Put away a spell scroll	
	Speak (more than five words)	
	Stand up (from Prone)	

Maneuvers

Maneuvers are specialized actions and attacks that are more difficult than the standard melee and ranged attacks that characters can make as part of a combat round. Because these attacks accomplish additional effects above normal attack damage, they require Raises in order to be made. Certain Maneuvers can only be performed in particular Stances.

It should be noted that these maneuvers do not constitute an exhaustive list of the things which a character might be able to accomplish with an attack. Rather, they specify the maneuvers that are most likely to come up during a skirmish. The GM and players should feel free to improvise other maneuvers based on the rules presented here.



Movement & Terrain

The rules included in this chapter for movement and the effects of terrain are intended to prevent the ambiguity of how far characters can move during a Round while taking other actions. They are not intended to transform your RPG into a miniatures game, although those ambitious, tactically-minded groups out there are welcome to use them as a basis for that sort of thing if they prefer! For more narrative-style GMs and players, however, we encourage you to use as much or as little of these rules as suits your play style. Throw them out if they don't work for you! You may prefer the rule from previous editions, wherein a character can move up to his Water Ring x10 feet per round in addition to whatever other actions he takes. If you do prefer to do away with the Move Action system, be advised that there are two or three Techniques and a handful of spells in the Book of Fire that reference these rules. Other than that, you can easily run a game without them.



Called Shot (Variable Raises)

A Called Shot is an attack that specifically targets one section of the body. Without the Called Shot Maneuver, it is assumed that an attack will strike the target's torso, but with an increasing number of Raises, smaller and more specific parts of the body can be targeted. A specific limb can be targeted with 1 Raise, a hand or foot with 2 Raises, the head with 3 Raises, or an eye, ear, finger, or other similarly small part with 4 Raises. There is no specific mechanical effect for striking a particular body part in this manner, although individual GMs may rule that a certain amount of damage may sever or destroy the body part in question, and any items held or worn on that part may be dropped or destroyed.

Disarm (3 Raises)

The Disarm Maneuver specifically targets a weapon held by the target, with the intent of knocking it out of the target's grasp. A successful Disarm attack inflicts only 2k1 damage from the jarring impact of the strike, regardless of the weapon used, and characters executing this Maneuver do not add their Strength to the number of rolled damage dice. If the Maneuver is successful, the character and his target make a Contested Strength Roll. If the attacking character wins, the target drops the weapon in question. Weapons with wooden components that are the target of a Disarm Maneuver by weapons with a steel blade may be broken, at the GM's discretion. Recovering a dropped weapon requires a Simple Action on the part of a character who has been Disarmed.

Extra Attack (5 Raises)

The ability to make multiple attacks per Turn is normally only granted by powerful School Techniques. This Maneuver allows anyone to gain an extra attack per Turn, however, as long as they have the skill necessary to pull it off. To gain an additional attack, a character must make 5 successful Raises on the first attack roll. These Raises confer no benefits, but if they succeed, the character may immediately make a second attack roll as soon as the first attack has been resolved (including damage). The Extra Attack Maneuver may only be used once per turn. The initial attack in this Maneuver must be successful, but the second may miss without any negative effects.

Feint (2 Raises)

A Feint is an attack that contains, as its first component, a deceptive movement intended to make a target believe that the attack will come from one direction, and then the actual attack comes from another direction, exploiting a hole in the target's defenses opened by their attempt to defend against the initial attack. If the Feint Maneuver is successful, half the amount by which the character's attack roll exceeded the target's Armor TN (taking the 2 Raises for his Maneuver into account) is added to the damage roll for that attack, to a maximum amount equal to five times the character's Insight Rank.

Guard (0 Raises)

Guard is a unique combat Action that does not actually require an attack roll. However, it has been placed here with Maneuvers for convenience, since it is used only in combat. During a skirmish, a character can choose to dedicate himself to protecting another character, making it harder for en-

emies to attack that person. Guarding is a Simple Action, and you may not take the Guard Action while in the Full Attack stance. When you declare a Guard Action, you must designate one other person within 5 feet of you. Until your next Turn, any time that person is within 5 feet of you, their Armor TN is increased by 10 and your Armor TN is decreased by 5.

Increased Damage (1 or more Raises)

The simplest of all Maneuvers, an Increased Damage Maneuver adds a bonus of 1k0 to the total of the damage roll that corresponds to the attack. Multiple Raises can be made to gain a larger amount of Increased Damage, but all Raises made in one combat Round count as one effect for the purposes of any mechanics that decrease the number of Raises required.

Knockdown (2 or 4 Raises)

The Knockdown Maneuver is a specialized attack intended to damage an opponent and knock them prone. Because this attack generally targets the legs, it is only useable against two- or four-legged opponents (requiring 2 and 4 Raises respectively). If successful, the attack deals normal damage and forces a Contested Strength Roll between the character and the target. If the character is successful, the target is knocked prone.

Iaijutsu Dueling

The iaijutsu duel is the formal means of conflict resolution in Rokugan between members of the samurai caste. Such duels are most often to first blood, but matters of a truly grievous nature can result in a duel to the death. The social rules of such duels, and the circumstances giving rise to them, are described in the *Book of Air*. Mechanically, once a challenge has been issued and accepted, the process takes place over the course of two combat rounds. In an iaijutsu duel, both duelists are considered to be in Center Stance throughout the duel, and may not take any actions other than the ones outlined below.

Assessment: On the first Round of the duel, both characters enter the Assessment stage on the Initiative Turn of the faster duelist. During the Assessment stage, each participant assumes the Center Stance and makes an Iaijutsu (Assessment) / Awareness roll against a TN equal to 10 plus their opponent's Insight Rank x 5. If successful, a duelist's roll reveals any one of the following pieces of information, plus an additional piece of information per Raise.

- The opponent's Void
- The opponent's Reflexes
- The opponent's Iaijutsu Skill
- Any Iaijutsu Emphases the opponent may possess
- The current number of Void Points the opponent has available
- The opponent's current Wound Level

If a character's Assessment roll exceeds the total of their opponent's roll by 10 or more, whether or not it gained any information, the winning character gains a bonus of +1k1 on his subsequent Focus roll. At this point, it is possible for either of the duelists to concede defeat, recognizing his opponent as superior.

Declining a Duel

When two iaijutsu duelists face one another, the Assessment stage can seem to take a tremendous amount of time as they closely observe one another, looking for any sign of weakness. It is at this point in the duel that either duelist, having assessed his opponent and realized he has no chance of victory, may concede the duel without ever drawing steel. This is considered an honorable act by most samurai, and confers no shame upon the individual withdrawing. To throw one's life away without hope of victory, denying one's lord a loyal servant in the process, is more shameful by far. However, the withdrawing duelist is still considered to have been defeated, and if the duel was to the death, he may be expected to commit seppuku.

Taryu-Jiai Duels

The *Book of Air* makes mention of a type of magical duel, known as taryu-jiai, sometimes practiced by shugenja who wish to face each other directly rather than letting swordsmen fight for them. Full rules on this special form of dueling will be included in future supplements, but for now, GMs who wish to depict these duels may do so by substituting the Spellcraft skill for the Iaijutsu skill, and rolling damage using the Ring in which the shugenja has an Affinity.



Focus: During the second Round of the duel, both characters enter the Focus stage on the Initiative Turn of the faster duelist. The opponents study one another carefully, looking for any weakness. The duelists make a Contested Iaijutsu (Focus) / Void Roll. If one duelist beats the other's roll by 5 or more, that duelist earns the right to make the first strike. He gains a Free Raise toward his strike roll for every additional increment of 5 by which he beats his opponent's roll. If neither duelist beats the other's roll by at least 5, then a simultaneous "kharmic strike" takes place.

Strike: On the third Round of the duel, both characters enter the Strike stage on the Initiative Turn of the slower duelist. The duelist who won first strike makes an Iaijutsu / Reflexes attack roll against his opponent's normal Armor TN. Any Free Raises gained from the Focus stage apply to this roll. The attack is resolved normally, including Wounds being applied. The second duelist may then make his Iaijutsu / Reflexes roll, assuming he still lives. In a duel to first blood, the second duelist has lost the duel if his opponent struck him, and striking after first blood is considered extremely dishonorable. In the event that neither opponent won the Contested Roll during the focus stage, both make their attack rolls simultaneously, an event known as a kharmic strike. Destiny has intervened,

and the cause of the duel is considered dropped by both parties. Neither is the victor or the defeated.

If neither duelist is dead at the end of the Strike phase, and if the duel is to the death, the duel becomes a standard skirmish, continuing until one combatant is dead. Regardless of the results of the duel, the act of striking counts as each character's actions for this Round.

Grappling

Like the iaijutsu duel, grappling is a unique combat situation that is different enough from a standard skirmish that it warrants its own system. Grapples occur within the normal rules for a skirmish, however, and as such use the same rules for Initiative, Actions, Rounds, and Turns.

A character may initiate a grapple by making an attack roll using Jiujutsu / Agility. This is always a Complex Action unless the character possesses an ability that specifically renders grapples a Simple or Free Action. To successfully initiate a grapple, the attacking character must hit the target's Armor TN with his attack roll. This attack roll ignores the benefits of armor to the Armor TN. If the attack is successful, both the attacker and the target are considered to be in a grapple.

When characters are involved in a grapple, one of them is in control. Initially this is the character who initiates the grapple, but it can change every round. A grappled character must try to control the grapple at the beginning of his Turn. All characters involved in the grapple must make a Contested Jiujutsu / Strength Roll. The character with the highest result on this roll is considered to be in control of the grapple until the next character's Turn.

A character who has control of a grapple may do one of the following things on his Turn:

- ***Hit:*** As a Complex Action, the character may inflict normal unarmed damage on any one other participant in the grapple. This damage cannot benefit from Raises, as there is no attack roll being made. Free Raises can still be applied, however.
- ***Throw:*** As a Complex Action, the character may throw one opponent, causing them to become prone anywhere within five feet of the character performing the throw. This removes the thrown character from the grapple.
- ***Break:*** As a Simple Action, the character may immediately remove himself from the grapple.
- ***Pass:*** As a Free Action, the character may do nothing, choosing to maintain the grapple and retain control.



Certain weapons, primarily chain weapons and certain polearms, may be used to grapple opponents. These types of grapples are identical to normal grapples, except that the attack roll and control rolls use the appropriate Weapon Skill in place of Jiujutsu, and a Hit inflicts damage based on the weapon instead of unarmed damage. There is a risk associated with this, however. If a character using a weapon loses control of the grapple, his opponent gains two free Raises on his next Turn to use the Disarm Maneuver against him.

Conditional Effects

There are a number of different conditions that can afflict a character during combat, each with its own unique mechanical effects. School Techniques can cause many of these, while others simply happen as a result of environmental factors. This list of conditions is not exhaustive, but covers all the most likely conditions for a character to suffer. The GM should use these rules as guidelines for any unusual conditions that are not covered here.

- ***Blinded*** – A character who has been struck blind or who suffers from the Blind Disadvantage suffers a penalty of -3k3 to all ranged attack rolls and -1k1 to melee attack rolls. A blind character's base Armor TN is equal to his Reflexes Trait plus 5 (armor adds bonuses as normal). The character's Water Ring is considered two ranks lower for the purposes of determining how far he can move as part of a Move Action. Any attempt at a Simple Move Action requires an Athletics/Agility roll (TN 20) or the character is knocked Prone.
- ***Dazed*** – A character who has been dazed suffers a penalty of -3k0 to all actions. Dazed characters can only use the Defense and Full Defense Stances and cannot perform an Iaijutsu duel. The character may recover from this Status Effect by making a successful Earth Ring Roll versus a TN of 20 during the Reaction Stage. The target may attempt this roll once each Round, and the TN decreases by 5 each time he fails the roll.
- ***Entangled*** – A character who has become entangled can take no Actions other than attempting to break free. This is a Strength roll against a TN determined by the GM based on the nature of the entanglement; it is a Contested Roll if someone else is actively trying to keep the character entangled. Opponents may initiate a grapple with an entangled character without an attack roll.
- ***Fasting*** – A character who goes without food and water for 24 hours loses the ability to regain Void Points from rest, although they can still be regained from meditation. After two days of fasting, a character suffers a +5 TN penalty to all his Skill rolls, physical Trait rolls, and Spell Casting Rolls until he gets food and drink. This increases by +5 for each additional day of fasting. After a number of days of fasting equal to his Stamina, he begins losing 2k1 Wounds per day until he gets food and drink or dies.
- ***Fatigued*** – A character who goes without rest for 24 hours suffers a +5 TN penalty to all his Skill rolls, physical Trait rolls, and Spell Casting Rolls until he rests. This penalty increases by an additional +5 for every day that passes without rest. After a number of days equal to the character's Stamina Trait, he must begin making Willpower Trait Rolls at TN 20 every two hours to avoid falling asleep. A fatigued character may not take the Full Attack Stance.
- ***Grappled*** – A character who is participating in a grapple is considered grappled. Characters who are grappled are much easier to hit with attacks, and have their Armor TN reduced to 5 plus any bonuses from armor they are wearing.
- ***Mounted/Higher*** – A character sitting atop a horse or other mount, or who is on higher ground (at least a four foot height advantage), gains a bonus of +1k0 on attack rolls against un-mounted/lower characters. A mounted character may not use the Full Attack Stance.
- ***Prone*** – A prone character is lying flat on his back, side, or stomach, and cannot move, attack, or defend himself to full effect. A prone character immediately suffers a -10 penalty to his Armor TN against melee attacks. This penalty lasts until he stands up. He cannot use Move Actions, and may only adopt the Defense or Attack Stances. He cannot attack with large weapons, and suffers a -2k0 penalty to attacks with medium and small weapons. It requires a Simple Action to stand up from the prone position.
- ***Stunned*** – A character who is stunned may take no actions. Such a character has an Armor TN equal to 5 plus any bonuses from armor worn. The character may recover from this Status Effect by making a successful Earth Ring Roll at TN 20 during the Reaction Stage. If he fails this roll, the status ends at the end of the next Combat Round.

Dice Penalties

Several status effects (not to mention other mechanical effects) result in dice penalties. A character who is Dazed, for instance, suffers a penalty of -3k0 to all actions while Dazed. This reduces the number of rolled dice on any action he takes by three. If the number of kept dice is higher than the number of rolled dice after this penalty is applied, then the number of kept dice is reduced as well.

- Example: A character who is Dazed attempts to make an attack roll using his katana. If he normally rolls 6k4 to make this attack, after the penalty for being Dazed he would roll 3k3, not 3k4. He could not roll 3k4 because it is impossible to keep more dice than he rolled.



Fear

Samurai are taught to be without fear, but they are human beings, and their spirit can give way in the face of terrifying phenomena or dangerous enemies. Any time a character is confronted with something which might make his courage falter, the GM can make him roll to resist a Fear effect.

Fear effects are given a Rank, ranging from 1 to 10, to represent their severity. To resist a Fear effect, a character must roll Raw Willpower at a TN equal to 5 + (5 x Fear Rank). Thus, resisting a Fear 3 effect requires a roll at TN 20. Those of high Honor, however, are better able to overcome this test – all characters may add their Honor Rank to the total of their roll.

A character who fails to resist a Fear effect suffers a penalty to all of his die rolls equal to –Xk0, where X is the Rank of the Fear effect. Thus, for example, a Fear 2 effect would inflict a –2k0 penalty on all die rolls. This penalty lasts until the end of the encounter, unless the source of the Fear is removed prior to that time.

Characters who catastrophically fail to resist Fear may actually lose control of themselves and completely succumb to terror. If a character fails a roll to resist Fear by 15 or more, he is overwhelmed by fear and either flees or cowers helplessly, as the GM warrants.

Honor, Glory, & Status

In addition to their Rings, Traits, and Skills, characters have other ranked abilities that determine a great deal about their internal worth, how recognizable they are, and how important they are in the Emerald Empire. Those qualities are represented by Honor, Glory, and Status, respectively. These are attributes that affect the daily life of virtually every samurai. Like other character attributes, these three are normally ranked from 1 to 10, although it is possible, albeit unlikely, for some to have a 0 rank.

Each Rank of Honor, Glory, and Status is composed of ten Points, representing fractional changes in these rankings. When a character accumulates ten Points of Glory, for example, his Glory Rank increases by one and the ten Glory Points are lost. While Honor can be increased (or decreased) any time, Glory and Status require official recognition by a character's lord or superior in order to increase in Rank. For example, a soldier who gains enough Glory Points to increase his Glory Rank cannot do so until and unless his lord or commanding officer commends him for his actions and recognizes the acts that character committed to gain the Glory Points in question.

Honor

Honor primarily reflects how an individual samurai rates his personal ability to adhere to the tenets of Bushido and fulfill the duties assigned to him by his lord. While Honor is primarily internal, there is an external component to it as well, as a samurai's Honor greatly impacts how he carries himself and thus how others perceive him. Honor Ranks can be roughly described as follows:

Honor Ranks 0-1: Honorless Dog

Those individuals with Honor Ranks 0 or 1 do not adhere to or even recognize the tenets of Bushido, and mock those who are restricted by such an antiquated code of conduct. Individuals of this sort cannot be trusted, and value only their own interests and well-being at the expense of anyone and anything else. Criminals fall into this category.

Honor Ranks 2-3: Untrustworthy

While characters of Honor Ranks 2 and 3 are not particularly honorable, they at least pay lip service to the concept and make a marginal effort to uphold principles under certain circumstances. Perhaps this is a vestige of the individual's upbringing, or perhaps he only wants to avoid completely dishonoring his clan or lord through his actions. Still, the most important thing to a man of this caliber is himself, and very little can convince him otherwise.

Honor Ranks 4-5: What Is Expected

Characters of Honor Ranks 4 and 5 are the standard against which most others are measured. Such samurai make an effort every day to adhere to the tenets of Bushido and to bring honor and glory to their families and clans. Still, they are human and flawed individuals. As such they fall short of their potential on occasion, but not so much that they spiral downward into shame and disappointment.

Honor Ranks 6-7: Exceptional

A samurai of Honor Ranks 6 or 7 understands the strength inherent in the code of Bushido. Such a man still feels the temptations to which lower-Honor characters succumb, but he is capable of resisting them through conviction and strength of will. These samurai may occasionally abandon virtue in the name of practicality, but such things are the exception rather than the rule.

Honor Ranks 8-9: A Soul Above Question

Samurai of Honor Ranks 8 and 9 are rare individuals who have managed to put aside their personal feelings and concerns, replacing them with zeal for duty and Bushido. To some, these men and women are paragons of virtue who are to be respected and admired, while to others, they are rigid and inflexible disciplinarians unwilling to deviate even slightly from their own intractable code of conduct.

Honor Rank 10: Strength of A Thousand Ancestors

Perhaps one soul in ten thousand reaches Honor Rank 10, and represents the greatest and most virtuous heroes of an entire Empire. Such an individual is virtually beyond reproach save from the highest ranks of the Imperial bureaucracy. Individuals of this caliber are completely selfless, devoted to their lord, clan, and Emperor, and exhibit virtue in every action.

Gaining & Losing Honor

A character gains and loses Honor depending upon his actions. An honorable character who commits dishonorable acts will find his Honor Rank reduced over time. Conversely, a character with a low Honor Rank who commits honorable acts will find his Honor Rank increasing accordingly. The amount of Honor

Table 2.3: Gaining and Losing Honor

Gains/Losses by Honor Rank

Act	0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Accepting a bribe	0	0	-3	-4	-7	-8
Accepting responsibility for a superior's shameful action	8	7	6	4	3	3
Acknowledging a superior opponent	5	4	4	2	2	0
Aiding a wounded enemy	9	8	6	6	5	3
Being an accomplice to a heinous crime	-1	-4	-8	-12	-16	-20
Being an accomplice to a minor crime	0	-1	-4	-4	-8	-8
Breach of etiquette, blasphemous	-1	-6	-10	-10	-16	-20
Breach of etiquette, major	0	-2	-2	-2	-6	-6
Breach of etiquette, minor	0	0	-1	-2	-2	-2
Disloyalty to lord, spouse, or superior	0	-2	-6	-10	-14	-18
Duped into performing a criminal act	-1	-4	-8	-12	-16	-18
Duped into performing a disloyal act	0	-2	-4	-6	-10	-14
Duped into performing a foolish act	0	-2	-4	-4	-6	-8
Disobeying a lord's command	0	-2	-2	-6	-6	-10
Enduring an insult to your ancestors	0	-2	-4	-4	-6	-8
Enduring an insult to yourself	2	2	2	0	0	2
Enduring an insult to your family or clan	0	0	-2	-2	-4	-4
Facing a superior foe in the name of your family	8	6	5	4	3	2
Fleeing from battle	0	-2	-4	-6	-8	-10
Following orders despite personal misgivings	6	4	0	0	-2	-4
Fulfilling a promise despite great personal cost	10	8	6	4	2	0
Giving a truthful report at your own expense	8	6	4	2	0	0
Lying to bolster your reputation	0	-2	-4	-6	-8	-10
Manipulating another into dishonorable behavior	0	-2	-4	-6	-8	-10
Politely ignoring another's dishonorable behavior	3	2	0	0	-2	-2
Protecting your clan/family/lord's interest despite great risk to yourself	8	8	6	6	4	2
Showing kindness to one beneath your station	6	6	4	4	2	2
Showing sincere courtesy to enemies or rivals	9	7	5	2	0	0
Using a Low Skill	0	-1	-2	-3	-6	-9
Using false courtesy to gain advantage over an enemy	0	0	-2	-6	-10	-10

gained or lost by any particular action, however, depends upon how honorable the character committing the act is. A character of Honor Rank 10, for instance, will gain less Honor for showing courtesy for his enemies because that is expected, whereas a character of Honor Rank 2 would gain proportionately more Honor because such a thing is a rare instance of that person doing what is expected of them.

The chart here represents typical Honor awards and penalties for notable actions at the various Honor ranks. How these awards and penalties should happen in play is the choice of the GM. Some GMs may wish to simply follow the chart and allow Honor gains and losses automatically, but other GMs may wish to exercise more control and make specific Honor awards and penalties based on the guidelines of this chart. This is ultimately a matter for the GM to decide, preferably in consultation with the players.

The Strength of Honor

One of the greatest benefits of having a high Honor Rank is that characters can rely upon their Honor to aid them in resisting temptations or manipulations that a true samurai should turn aside easily. Characters add their Honor Rank to the total of any roll made to resist uses of the Intimidation and Temptation Skills, as well as to all rolls to resist Fear effects of any kind.



Discerning Honor

Samurai who have a high Honor Rank conduct themselves in such a manner that their nature is obvious to those who pay close attention. Any character may attempt to discern the Honor Rank of another person by making a Lore: Bushido / Awareness roll (TN 30). If the roll is successful, the person making the roll can discern the Honor Rank of the samurai being evaluated.

Optional Rule: The Honor Roll

Some GMs may wish to offer more concrete rewards and incentives to characters who maintain a high Honor Rank. This may be done by introducing the concept of an Honor Roll into the game.

An Honor Roll allows a character to call upon his Honor once per game session to try to succeed at something he would otherwise fail. After a character fails a Skill, Trait, Ring, or Spell Casting roll, he may opt to re-roll the attempt at the same TN, but using his Honor Rank in rolled and kept dice in place of the original dice. (For example, a character of Honor Rank 6 fails an attack roll and decides to call on his Honor to re-roll. His normal attack roll is 7k4, but he now re-rolls with 6k6, since his Honor Rank is 6.) If the second roll succeeds, the character successfully performs the action. However, if it fails, not only does the character fail the original action but he also loses a full Rank (ten Points) of Honor as his faith in his own capabilities is shaken.

The GM should exercise caution in deciding whether to use the Honor Roll rule in his game. Although it does create an incentive for characters to follow the path of Bushido, it also creates the potential of tilting the game heavily in favor of high-honor characters, allowing them to succeed with near-certainty once per session. GMs should carefully consider whether they wish to allow this option.

Glory

Glory is a measure of an individual's fame throughout the Empire as a result of personal accomplishments. Unlike Honor and Status, Glory is a very fluid attribute and can vary wildly from the results of a single duel, skirmish, or battle. Individuals who participate in sensational events, such as military officers or duelists, are more prone to having a high Glory, while mild-mannered or unobtrusive individuals, such as scholars or scribes, are far less likely to be recognized. Surprisingly, socially high-ranking individuals such as the Emperor or the daimyo of the Imperial families have a relatively low Glory, because they are so unlikely to be recognized when outside of the trappings of their positions and unaccompanied by their retinue. There are few in the Empire, after all, who would recognize the Emperor if he were traveling in simple clothes without his legion of bodyguards and attendants.

Glory is a measure of fame, not prestige, and those who have lower Glory than a samurai are in no way obligated to obey him. They are expected to show him the proper respect for one of his reputation, however, and failure to do so can result in a legitimate reason for a duel or other unpleasant outcomes.

Gaining Glory

Gaining and losing Glory can be done in a variety of ways, all based upon a samurai's actions and what ramifications his actions have on his reputation in the Empire at large. Glory gains and losses are largely out of an individual's control, as Glory grows or diminishes as a result of others speaking of their exploits. Much as with Honor, it is the decision of the GM whether Glory changes should be "automatic" or not.

Effects of Glory

The higher a samurai's Glory Rank, the greater the probability he will be recognized when he encounters people he has not met before. Whenever this happens, the GM can make a Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence roll for the strangers against TN 50. This TN is reduced by an amount equal to the samurai's current Glory Rank x 5. If the roll is successful, the strangers recognize the samurai and respond appropriately.



Status

Rokugan is a feudal society, and Status is the measure of an individual's role and influence within that society. Those with higher Status command more resources, authority, and wealth, while those with low Status have little authority over anything, perhaps even their own lives. Status is a largely static attribute that changes infrequently. Generally speaking, the only way for a character to increase their Status is to gain appointments or promotions from someone who is higher-ranking in the hierarchy of their family, Clan, or the Imperial bureaucracy.

Table 2.4: Gaining & Losing Glory

Acknowledgment	Publicly acknowledged by someone of Status 7+, gain 1 Rank
Blood Feud	Avenging a feud gains Glory equal to opponent's Status or Glory (lower of two)
Caught in a Lie	Lose double the Glory gained by the act about which the samurai lied
Completing a Quest	Gain Glory points = half the Glory Rank of the individual issuing the quest
Craftsmanship	Gain one Glory point for each Raise made when creating an item
Defeat	Officer who loses a battle / duelist who loses a duel (loses opponent's Glory)
Duels	Winning a fair duel gains Glory points equal to 1/3 opponent's Status/Glory
Family Dishonor	Lose one Glory Rank if a close relative commits an act worthy of seppuku
Gifts	Gain Glory equal to Glory/Status if given a gift by a higher ranking samurai
Idleness	Lose one Glory point for every week without any Glory gain
Indifference	Being ignored for prior bad behavior, reduce all Glory gains by 1, increase losses by 2
Immortality	Inspiration for a work of art, gain Glory points = Glory rank of most prominent admirer
Learning	Gain one Glory Rank when gaining an Insight Rank
Marriage	Increase Glory Rank of lower-Glory spouse to one less than higher-Glory spouse
Public Bragging	After gaining Glory, you may gain 1 additional point through public bragging
Romance	One point of Glory for public declaration of love (without identifying lover)
Skirmishes	Gain one glory point for defeating bandits, ronin, etc.
Status	Gain Glory equal to the amount of Status gained
Stealing Credit	Gain the amount of Glory normally gained for the act being usurped
Warfare	Gain 3 points Glory for surviving a battle, 6 if on the winning side

Table 2.5: Glory Ranks

Legendary Hero	10
Emerald Champion	8
Great Clan Champion	8
Jade Champion	7
Renowned War Hero	7
Famous Playwright, Poet, Artisan	6
Great Clan Family Daimyo	6
Famous Craftsman	6
Imperial Chancellor	6
Imperial Herald	6
Shogun	6
Voice of the Emperor	6
Rikugunshokan (Commander of an army)	6
Shireikan (Commander of multiple legions)	5
Victorious War Hero	5
The Emperor	4
The Empress	4
Imperial Advisor	4
Minor Clan Champion	4
Daimyo of the Miya, Otomo, Seppun	4
Taisa (Commander of a military legion)	4
Defeated War Hero (honorable)	4
Chui (Commander of a company)	3
Emerald Magistrate, Jade Magistrate	3
The Emperor's children	3
Geisha	
Gunso (Commander of a military squadron)	3
Hatamoto (a daimyo's honored retainer)	3
Imperial Legionnaire / Jade Legionnaire	3
Provincial governor	3
City governor	2
Clan magistrate	2
Karo (advisor to governor or major household)	2
Nikutai (Second-in-command to a gunso)	2
Imperial messenger	2
Vassal family daimyo	2
Craftsman, Merchant, Diplomat	1
Estate Manager, Hohei (military private)	1
Peasant soldiers, peasant warriors	0.5
Village officers, vassal samurai	0.5

Table 2.6: Infamy Ranks

Bandit	1
Murderer	2
Exile	4
Conqueror (ruthless war hero)	4
Gaijin (diplomat)	5
Gaijin (any)	6
Maho-tsukai	8
Ninja	8
Dark Lord of the Shadowlands	10

Infamy

Characters who gain Glory for committing criminal or dishonorable acts may instead be given Infamy, which is similar to Glory in all respects save that it inspires fear and revulsion rather than awe or respect. It is gained in exactly the same manner, but for heinous and fearsome acts, typically those that would normally cause a loss of Honor. Individuals with Infamy can be recognized in the same manner as those with Glory, but the response of those who recognize them is vastly different. If a character has both Glory and Infamy, the total Ranks should be combined to determine the likelihood that the character is recognized.

Infamy Points and Ranks can most easily be attained by taking the Infamous Disadvantage, or through actions during play at the GM's discretion.



Gaining & Losing Status

Status may only be gained by the formal promotion of a samurai by his lord or another higher-ranking individual. This is traditionally done in recognition of glorious service, although political appointments are also a source for such things. Losing Status is less common, and is done by the same sort of individuals, but as punishment for some sort of failure, typically a failure of duty. There is little that can be done in such cases, although in the instance of an unfair demotion, a samurai can conceivably protest his demotion to a figure of greater authority who holds influence over the individual who performed the demotion in the first place. If a demotion is found to be unjust, it results in a restoration of the wronged party's Status and a loss of Honor for the individual who performed the unjust act in the first place. However, an inappropriate protest typically results in even more severe punishment for the protesting samurai.

Table 2.7: Status Ranks

The Emperor	10
The Empress	9.9
The Voice of the Emperor	9.5
The Emperor's Children	9.4
Daimyo of the Miya, Otomo, & Seppun	9.3
Emerald Champion, Jade Champion, Shogun	9
Imperial Chancellor, Imperial Advisor	9
Great Clan Champion	8
Minor Clan Champion	7.5
The Imperial Herald	7
The Imperial Treasurer	7
Great Clan Family Daimyo	7
Rikugunshokan (Commander of an army)	7
Hatamoto (A daimyo's chief retainer)	6
Provincial Governor	6
Shireikan (Commander of multiple legions)	6
City Governor	5
Taisa (Commander of a military legion)	5.5
Chui (Commander of a military company)	5
Vassal Family Daimyo	5
Karo (chief advisor to a lord)	4.7
Emerald or Jade Magistrate	4.5+
Revered Sensei	4
Clan Magistrate	4+
Gunso (Commander of a military squadron)	3
Average Imperial Family Samurai	3
Diplomat, Gokenin (estate manager)	2
Shisha (Imperial messenger)	2
Nikutai (Second-in-command of a gunso)	1.5
Brotherhood Abbot	1.5
Average Great Clan / Minor Clan samurai	1
Hohei (Military private)	1
Typical Brotherhood Monk	1
Ji-samurai (Vassal Families)	0.5
Ashigaru (Peasant Soldiers)	0.4
Doshin (Village Officers)	0.3
Budoka (Peasant Warriors)	0.2
Craftsmen, Merchants	0.1
Ronin	0
Peasant Levies	0
Entertainer, Geisha	-1
Leatherworker, Butcher	-4
Torturer	-5
Gravedigger	-8
Ninja	-10

Effects of Status

Status grants a samurai authority over other samurai of lower Status, but only if those samurai exist within the same hierarchy. A Lion samurai with Status 3, for instance, still cannot issue commands to a Mantis samurai with Status 2 unless the two of them are members of the same military organization or a comparable social order of some sort; otherwise the Lion simply has no authority over the Mantis. On the other hand, a Lion of Status 3 can usually issue orders to another Lion of Status 2. Samurai must always be careful in doing so, however, and make sure they do not interrupt or countermand the orders of a different samurai with an even greater Status than their own. Countermanding a superior results in lost Honor and possibly a loss of Status as well.

Monks

Monks occupy a unique position in the social order of the Emerald Empire. While they are respected for their wisdom and their devotion to the Tao of Shinsei, they have no true place in samurai society. Monks are considered to have a Status of 1 and a Glory of 0. Monks may gain both Glory and Status, but only gain half the amount of Glory that would normally be awarded to an individual of the samurai caste.









炎の巻

"An emissary of the throne should have the strength of steel that matches the strength of his honor."

- Seppun Katsura

Book of Fire



Character Creation Quick Summary

For those of you who have played previous editions of the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game, the method of character creation will seem quite familiar, though there have been a few changes. If you are new to the game, please continue reading for a full explanation of every step in the process. Here is a quick summary:

Step 1: Pick Your Clan

This is the most defining aspect of any Legend of the Five Rings character, and the one that will most impact your role-playing experience. Select the Great Clan from which your character originates, described both in the Book of Air and later in this chapter.

Step 2: Pick Your Family

Even within a single clan, the various families offer a wide variety of characters that can be created. Once your clan is chosen, pick one of the families that make up the clan in order to receive additional benefits. The mechanical benefits of individual families are listed under the Great Clans to which they belong later in this chapter.

Step 3: Pick Your School

Within the families of the Great Clans there are various Schools that teach ancient, secret Techniques of considerable power. These give characters an edge over their enemies and identify them as a trusted member of the clan. Four Schools are included for each Great Clan and can be found later in this chapter.

Step 4: Customize Your Character

Experience Points are given to characters to represent the improvement of their abilities over time based upon the hardships they have faced. They are given to characters at the end of adventures (see the Book of Void for discussion of this), but also at the time of character creation in order to represent all that a character has learned during their lifetime up to the point that the campaign begins. A normal starting character begins with 40 Experience Points to spend on purchasing Traits, Advantages, and Skills. Additional Experience Points may be acquired by purchasing Disadvantages.

Step 5: Derived Attributes

Certain abilities or traits that a character possesses are determined based upon other things. To complete your character, note his Honor (defined by School), Status (1.0 by default), Glory (1.0 by default), and calculate his Insight Rank.

Character Creation, Expanded

The process of creating a character for the L5R RPG can be as complex or as simple as individual players and GMs desire. However, the most important aspect of creating a character is not the mechanics that represent his abilities, but rather his personality, history, and ambitions. Samurai are not mindless warriors, despite what the code of Bushido dictates; they are men and women who possess an incredible zeal for life, yet also a complete lack of fear regarding their deaths. Before you create your character mechanically, it is important to understand who he is. Some players need no help in that regard, but for others, the Game of Twenty Questions can prove very useful.

The Game of Twenty Questions

Although the process of creating a character mechanically is very important, the most important aspects of your character have very little to do with mechanics at all. What kind of character do you want to play? What is his history like? What are his goals? What is the most important thing in the world to him? These are questions you should consider before you even flip through the mechanics sections of the book. To facilitate the process, we pose twenty questions, the answers to which are vital to the understanding of any well-developed, three-dimensional character.



1. What clan does your character belong to?

A character's clan is their most defining characteristic because each clan has a well-established and distinct set of philosophies, prejudices, and ideals. Whether a character adheres to the stereotypes of his clan or breaks them, one way or the other they will prove very important to his personality.

2. What family does your character belong to?

Just like a character's clan, a character's family is an especially important defining characteristic. The stereotypes of each clan are broad, but individual families within the clan have much more specific, detailed roles and attitudes that further define the identity of the clan and those who serve it.

3. Is your character a bushi, a shugenja, or a courtier?

Duty is an essential aspect of every samurai's life, and establishing exactly what manner of duty a character is obligated to perform is an important step in breathing life into him or her. Is the character a warrior and soldier, a priest and scholar, or a diplomat and politician?

4. How would others describe your character's appearance?

Every character should have a rough description in order to give him some sort of life when describing him to others. What is the character's most striking feature? Does his mood come through in his appearance or is he inscrutable? Does he make others feel at ease, or make them uncomfortable?

5. What is your character's primary motivation?

Though all samurai are, in theory, solely devoted to fulfilling the wishes of their lord, most have their own goals as well. Some may be simple, such as maintaining the honor of your ancestors, while others may revolve around the recovery of a lost heirloom or the avenging of a slight to your family's honor.

6. Who is the person your character trusts most in the world?

Characters should have some developed background in order to facilitate role-playing. This question not only includes the individual's identity, but how that person met the character, why they are so close, and other similar questions.

7. What is your character's greatest strength and weakness?

Strengths are what others see as respectable or admirable in the character, while weaknesses are what he would struggle to hide from others, lest they look down upon him for his failures. What does the character regard as his strengths and weaknesses, and how does this differ from his actual abilities?

8. What does your character think of Bushido?

Although all samurai pay homage to the code, most Clans and families revere certain tenets over others. Which does the character consider the most important and which does he consider inconsequential? Do his views differ from those of his Clan?

9. What is your character's opinion of his clan?

Of course all samurai are loyal and devoted servants of the Clan, but that does not mean they do not have their own opinions. Is the character a martial vassal of a pacifistic Clan? Or is he a pacifist in a society of warriors? Does he disagree with the Clan's current enmities and alliances?

10. Is your character married?

Marriage is a very important institution in the Empire of Rokugan. A samurai's spouse is responsible for managing the estate, and actually wields considerable political power depending upon the size of their holdings. Was the character's marriage arranged, or is he or she still betrothed? Is it someone the samurai has actually met, or a complete stranger? Is there a case of true love that will interfere with the wedding, or will the samurai embrace duty over the wants of the heart?

11. Does your character have any prejudices?

Most Clans are negatively predisposed against at least one other Clan, most often as a result of conflicts that have endured for decades or even centuries. Is the character one who readily subscribes to these prejudices or has he developed his own dislikes of other Clans, even allied Clans, based on his own experiences?

12. To whom does your character owe the most loyalty?

The simplest answer to this question would of course be "The Emperor," but very few samurai have the honor to serve the Son of Heaven directly, instead serving someone in a long chain of authority that could include the Emerald Champion, the Clan Champions, the family daimyo, the provincial governors, or even the local magistrate. Whom does the character serve immediately, and is that person the one to whom he is the most loyal?

13. What are your character's favorite and least favorite things?

This could address a wide variety of responses, including material possessions, activities, locations, or almost anything else that could spring to mind. Why does the character revere these things? What significance do they have to his history?

14. Does your character have any recurring mannerisms?

Since everyone tends to act according to the same protocol and etiquette, minor and inoffensive details of behavior tend to get noticed more frequently. Does the character chew his lip when he is nervous? Perhaps he has a unique greeting that he prefers to use. What does he do with his hands when nothing is going on?

15. What about your character's emotions?

A true samurai is not supposed to show emotion, but no one is completely disciplined at all times, and everyone demonstrates some degree of emotion at one point or another. What emotion is the character most likely to display when the circumstances arise? What are the things that push him to the edge most easily, and which emotions are the easiest for him to hold in check?

16. How would your character handle a subordinate's improper behavior?

The actions of a subordinate reflect the honor of his superior, and in such cases a superior has a considerable amount of leeway in dealing with a subordinate. Is the character the sort to demand the subordinate's seppuku over even a minor infraction (something that could get the character into significant trouble very quickly), or will he forgive the behavior and attempt to correct it?

17. How would your character's parents describe him?

Devotion to one's parents is considered proper behavior for any samurai, but devotion can be offered without any real respect between a parent and child. Does the character have a proper relationship with his parents or are they estranged? Was the character's upbringing a source of joy or dismay for his parents? Are they still alive, or were they taken from the character at a younger age?

18. What is your character's highest ambition?

Desire is a sin, but ambition tempered by duty is considered acceptable among most in the samurai caste. Bushi often aspire to become military leaders, for example, while courtiers desire nothing more than to rule over others at influential courts. What is the character's ultimate goal and, perhaps more importantly, how far is he willing to go in order to accomplish it?

19. How religious is your character?

Among bushi and courtiers, levels of religious devotion vary widely. Shugenja are of course religious, but even among their ranks some are more reverent than others. Is the character one to offer frequent prayers and make trips to the temple, or has he dismissed the need for religion and instead embraced the rule of steel in his life?

20. How will your character die?

This is a very important and intimidating question, but one that should be given consideration. Every samurai lives a few short feet from death, and death is a threat that can rear its head on any day of a samurai's entire life. What is the character's destiny? How will he meet his end when the time comes for him to join his ancestors, or to rejoin the universe as part of the Celestial Wheel?

Other Questions

For those who enjoy the game of Twenty Questions, there's no need to stop! You can develop your character as much as you like using the same system, or simply elaborating on your answers. For those who require a little inspiration, here are twenty more questions that might help spur your creative side.

1. Does your character have an ultimate goal, and if so, what is it?
2. What is your character's secret, and what will happen if it is discovered?
3. What does your character think of the political climate in Rokugan?
4. What does your character do to relax?
5. If your character were given a koku, how would he spend it?

6. Does your character have a stereotypical view of the lower classes?
7. What are the names of your character's parents and siblings, and what do they do?
8. What reward would your character most wish to receive?
9. What do your character's katana and saya look like?
10. Does your character revere the Tao of Shinsei or the Fortunes more?
11. What is your character's most sacred possession?
12. Who is your character's closest friend?
13. What does your character love, fear, and hate?
14. How does your character feel about each of the Great Clans?
15. How does your character feel about different professions in the Celestial Order?
16. Who is your character's ideal mate?
17. How does your character react to minor impurities or irreverence in others?
18. Has your character ever been exposed to maho or other major blasphemies?
19. What advice would you give to your character?
20. Who would be your character's ultimate enemy?

Once the character's background is fully developed, it is time to ensure that the mechanics match the character. The following steps are the process by which a character is created in the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game.

Step 1: Getting Started

There are some things you need to know before you ever look at your character's Skills and other abilities. First and foremost, every character possesses five Rings, which are explained in detail in the Book of Earth. Each Ring represents one aspect of the character's mental and physical abilities. As a reminder, they are:

- **Air:** Reflexes and Awareness
- **Earth:** Stamina and Willpower
- **Fire:** Agility and Intelligence
- **Water:** Strength and Perception
- **Void:** Void has no Traits, but instead produces Void Points. A character has a number of Void Points equal to his Void Ring.

A character's Rings all begin at 2. When the individual Traits that make up the Rings are increased, a Ring always remains equal to the lower of the two. For example, if a character had Agility 4 and Intelligence 2, his Fire Ring would be 2. If the character increased his Intelligence to 3, his Fire Ring would become 3 as well.

Also, by this stage you are probably aware of what clan and family you wish your character to be from. In this case, note both on your character sheet, and then determine what Trait bonus you receive from the family in question. This represents that family's legacy of training, bloodline, and expertise. That Trait begins at 3 instead of 2. For example, if your character is from the Mirumoto family of the Dragon Clan, he gains +1 Agility and thus begins with Agility 3.

Step 2: The Basics

With your character established as part of a clan and family, it's time to get a little bit more specific about what kind of character he is going to be. You should by this point know whether your character will be a bushi, a courtier, a shugenja, or one of a few other Schools that have different descriptors (such as Monk or Ninja) or that has no descriptor. These descriptors affect what kind of abilities your character can learn later, including certain Advantages or Disadvantages, as well as optional mechanics that your GM might choose to include in your campaign (see Step 3 for more information on those).

When you have chosen the School you wish your character to attend, you gain numerous benefits. First, a second Trait gains a bonus of +1. If this is the same Trait that your family granted a bonus to, then that Trait is now at 4 instead of the normal starting 2. Most combinations do not double up, however, and so your character will most likely have two Traits that begin at 3 instead of 2. For example, if a character from the Mirumoto family joined the Mirumoto Bushi School, he would begin with Agility 3 (from the family's +1 Agility benefit) and Stamina 3 (from the School's +1 Stamina benefit). In addition to the Trait bonus, your character's School determines his starting Honor Rank, which should also be noted in the appropriate place on your character sheet.

Every School teaches its students seven Ranks of Skills. Unless otherwise specified, these Skills all begin at Rank 1. Many Schools allow a character to choose one or more of these Skills from a larger group (such as Lore skills) to represent the diverse training available at most dojo. Obviously, this chosen Skill cannot be one already taught by the School. Record all the Skills granted as part of your character's School on the character sheet. For example, the character joining the Mirumoto Bushi School would enter the following Skills on his sheet (because they are listed in the School's description): Defense, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Lore: Shugenja, Lore: Theology, Meditation, and one other Skill of the player's choosing.

With the inherent benefits and Skills taken care of, you now must be sure to include your character's Outfit, which is all of his starting equipment, and his Technique. Techniques are powerful abilities taught by individual Schools that are kept secret at all costs from other clans and sometimes even from other families within the same clan. They represent perhaps the character's most potent advantage against his opponents, and should be listed on the character sheet for ease of use.

Step 3: Customization

Once all of the starting aspects a character receives from his clan, family, and School have been noted, it's time to customize the character so that he is not exactly the same as every other member of his School. This is done by purchasing additional abilities, including more Ranks in Traits or Skills, to represent the character's life up until the time the campaign begins. These abilities are purchased using Experience Points. A starting character has 40 Experience Points to use for additional abilities. These points may be spent in any of the following manners:

- A character may increase a Trait by paying a number of Experience Points equal to four times the next rank. For example, increasing a character's Reflexes from 2 to 3 would cost 12 Experience Points. Remember to check and see if your Ring increases when you purchase additional ranks in your Traits.
- Because it has no Traits, the Void Ring may be increased on its own. This is more expensive, however, because the Void Ring contributes directly to a character's Insight Rank (see below). Increasing a character's Void Ring costs a number of points equal to six times the new rank. For example, increasing a character's Void Ring from 2 to 3 would cost 18 Experience Points.
- Skills may be purchased for a number of Experience Points equal to the next rank in the Skill. To purchase a Skill the character does not already possess costs 1 Experience Point to gain that Skill at rank 1. Increasing a Skill from 2 to 3 would cost 3 Experience Points. An Emphasis may be purchased for a Skill by spending 2 Experience Points. Emphases, and their related bonuses, are explained later in this chapter.
- Advantages and Disadvantages may be purchased for the cost listed in their description. An Advantage that specifies it costs 3 points, for example, requires 3 Experience Points to add to your character. Disadvantages function similarly, except that characters gain additional Experience Points for taking them, up to a maximum of 10 extra points. For example, a character with 40 Experience Points who takes a Disadvantage worth 4 points now has 44 Experience Points to spend on improvements.
- There are other abilities that your GM may wish to add to your campaign in order to increase the number of character options available. These include Kata, Kiho, and other benefits, and are described in the Book of Water: Advanced Mechanics. If your GM chooses to add these options to your game, there are abilities described there that can be purchased for Experience Points as well.
- When spending Experience Points, please remember that no starting character may begin play with any ability, whether a Trait or a Skill, above 4.

Step 4: Details

With your Experience Points spent, the majority of your character is complete. Write down your character's starting Glory Rank and Status Rank, both of which should begin at 1.0 unless you have another ability that increases one (such as the Fame Advantage, which increases a starting character's Glory Rank). You also need to calculate your character's Insight Rank (see below). And now you're ready to start the game!

Example of Character Creation

After carefully reading about the different Clans and families, Aaron has decided he would like to play a Shiba of the Phoenix Clan. While it is possible for a Shiba to be a shugenja, Aaron is more interested in playing a bushi, and has selected the Shiba Bushi School as the obvious choice for his character, Shiba Gyukaro. Aaron notes that all Gyukaro's Traits begin at 2, except for Perception and Agility, which both start at 3 (Perception is the bonus Trait for the Shiba family, and Agility for the Shiba Bushi School). Aaron also notes that Gyukaro has the Skills of Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation (Void Recovery), Polearms, and Theology at rank 1, because those are the Skills taught by the School. He can pick one other High or Bugei Skill as well, so Aaron writes down Iaijutsu (High, Bugei, and other Skill types are explained later this chapter in the Skill section). He wants Gyukaro to be able to fight a duel for his fellow Phoenix if need be. He also jots down an Honor Rank of 5.5, and the equipment listed in the School's Outfit. Finally, he writes down the mechanics associated with the Rank 1 Technique for the Shiba Bushi School, which Gyukaro will have learned during his years in the dojo prior to the game actually starting.



With all the basics from his family and School written down, Aaron is ready to spend the 40 Experience Points that all starting characters have. He decides he wants to choose his Disadvantages first, so that he will know exactly how many Experience Points he has before he starts spending them. Aaron reads over the list of Disadvantages, knowing that he can pick up to 10 points worth, but ultimately selects only two: Doubt and Idealistic. Aaron wants Gyukaro to be unsure about his teachings in Theology, due to the terrible relationship he had with one of his sensei back at the dojo, and he wants Gyukaro to be a young and idealistic individual who believes very firmly in the code of Bushido despite its obvious shortcomings. Doubt is worth 4 points, and Idealistic is worth 2, so Aaron notes that he has a total of 46 Experience Points to spend.

Because many of the Shiba Bushi's Techniques involve the Void Ring, Aaron decides he wants to increase it right out of the gate despite how expensive it is. Increasing Gyukaro's Void Ring from 2 to 3 costs a total of 18 Experience Points (the new rank of 3, multiplied by 6), leaving him with 28 points. He also increases Gyukaro's Reflexes from 2 to 3 in order to make him more difficult to hit in combat and to make him a little bit better at dueling and archery. This costs 12 points (the new rank of 3, multiplied by 4), leaving Aaron with 16 points to spend on Skills and Advantages.

Looking at Gyukaro's Skills, Aaron decides to increase his Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, and Iaijutsu all to 2, for a total of 6 points spent (2 points for each Skill, the cost of the new rank). After a moment's consideration, he increases his Kenjutsu again to 3 to make sure that Gyukaro's abilities match his picture of an able swordsman. This costs an additional 3 points, leaving Aaron with only 7 points to spend. He spends another 2 points to increase Gyukaro's Defense to 2 and then starts looking for some Advantages with his last 5 points. After some time he finally decides on Virtuous (3 points) and Irreproachable (2 points), both of which support the character concept he has in mind for the virtuous swordsman on the road to a great future.

With his points spent, Aaron decides to tally everything up. He goes back and corrects Gyukaro's Honor Rank, which is now 6.5 thanks to the Virtuous Advantage. He also writes down a Glory Rank and Status Rank of 1.0, because that is the default for starting characters and Aaron did not purchase any Advantages that would increase them. Looking over his sheet one final time, he decides it looks pretty good and heads off to talk to his GM about his decisions.

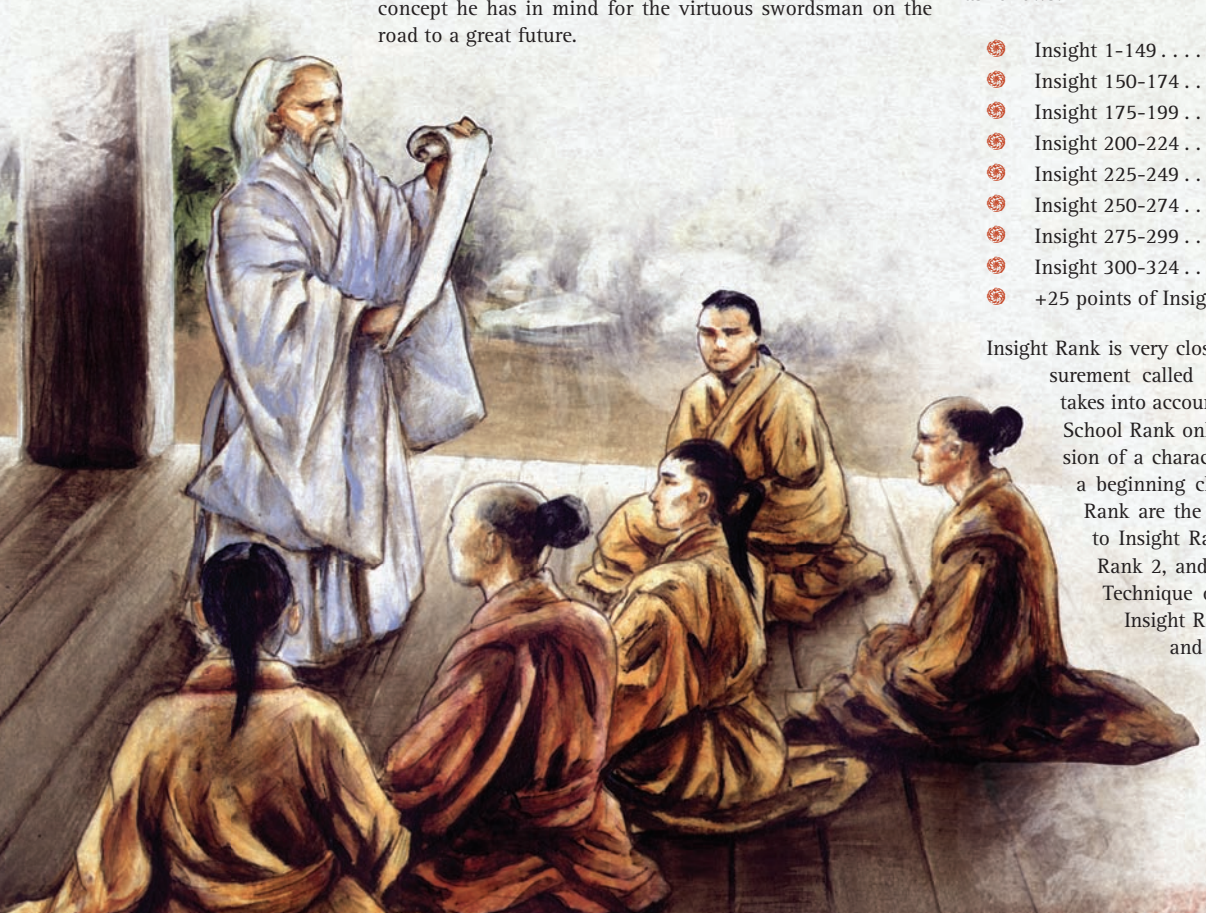
Improving Your Character

Characters in the L5R RPG are not static. They change over time as their experiences lead them to hone their abilities or pursue additional training. This is represented by your GM awarding additional Experience Points either at the end of each session or at the end of each adventure. (See the *Book of the Void* for further discussion of how many and how often Experience Point should be awarded.) These additional Experience Points may be spent in exactly the same manner as the Experience Points used to customize your beginning character. They can also be saved from one adventure to the next in order to accumulate enough to afford more expensive improvements.

One important aspect of characters that changes over time as they increase their abilities is Insight Rank. Insight Rank is a means of measuring the overall abilities of a character, both to determine how they are progressing in their study of their School's ancient Techniques and to compare them to other characters in terms of relative power. Insight Rank is measured by adding all of a character's Rings together and multiplying them by ten, then adding the total of all their Skill Ranks together and adding it to the total from the Rings. For example, a character with all five Rings at 2 and with a total of 20 ranks in different Skills would have an Insight Rank of 120. Insight Rank is measured in increments of 25 as follows:

- Insight 1-149 . . . . . Rank 1
- Insight 150-174 . . . . . Rank 2
- Insight 175-199 . . . . . Rank 3
- Insight 200-224 . . . . . Rank 4
- Insight 225-249 . . . . . Rank 5
- Insight 250-274 . . . . . Rank 6
- Insight 275-299 . . . . . Rank 7
- Insight 300-324 . . . . . Rank 8
- +25 points of Insight . . . . . +1 Rank

Insight Rank is very closely linked to another similar measurement called School Rank. While Insight Rank takes into account a character's abilities as a whole, School Rank only concerns itself with the progression of a character within a particular School. For a beginning character, School Rank and Insight Rank are the same. When a character advances to Insight Rank 2, he also advances to School Rank 2, and as such he may learn the Rank 2 Technique of that School. When he achieves Insight Rank 3, he is also at School Rank 3 and may learn the Rank 3 Technique of his School.



In some situations, a character may have Ranks in two or more different Schools. The most common means of doing this is through the Multiple Schools Advantage. This creates a disparity between Insight Rank and School Rank, but the progression remains the same. For example, a Rank 2 Akodo Bushi takes the Multiple Schools Advantage and ceases to study as an Akodo Bushi, instead beginning to study at the Moto Bushi School of the Unicorn Clan. When he increases in Insight Rank, his new School Rank in the Moto Bushi School increases rather than his old Akodo Bushi School Rank. So, when this character achieves Insight Rank 3, rather than gaining School Rank 3 as an Akodo Bushi, he instead gains School Rank 1 as a Moto Bushi and gains their Rank 1 Technique. His Akodo Bushi School Rank will no longer change as he advances in Insight Rank.

Insight Rank 6 and Beyond

Although it does not happen often, some campaigns can continue well past the point at which the characters involved master the five Techniques of their beginning School. When this happens, generally a character will select another School within his clan and begin studying at that School, beginning with its Rank 1 Technique. Characters selecting this option must meet all the requirements for the new School as described under the Multiple Schools Advantage, but they do not need to purchase that Advantage; it is granted to them for free.

The Book of Water contains additional options for high-Insight characters, such as Advanced Schools, which the GM may decide to introduce into the game as well. GMs who wish to begin a campaign at higher levels should increase the number of Experience Points granted to characters during the character creation process.

Shugenja & Insight Rank

The description on this page refers to Schools that possess five Techniques that may be achieved in progression. Certain Schools, however, have only a single Technique; shugenja Schools are the most prominent example of this. When a shugenja character advances in School Rank, he gains the following benefits in lieu of a new Technique:

- The shugenja's School Rank increases the number of dice rolled on a Spell Casting Roll.
- The new School Rank determines what Mastery Level of spells he can cast.
- He learns 3 new spells, each of which must be of a Mastery Level he can cast at his new Rank.



The Great Clans

Far and away the most powerful and influential servants of the Emperor of Rokugan, the Great Clans are the forces which have shaped the Empire's history over the course of a thousand years and more. The original seven Great Clans were created by the Kami, the sons and daughters of Lady Sun and Lord Moon, when they descended to the mortal realm. Two more have appeared since that time, but only one of them, the Mantis Clan, truly possesses the station of a Great Clan.

The Spider Clan, which claims the title of Great Clan without the sanction of the rest of the Empire, is discussed in the *Book of Water*.

The Crab Clan

The stalwart Crab are the defenders of Rokugan, responsible for ensuring the Empire's southern border is secure against the demons from the Shadowlands. Centuries of constant warfare against inhuman foes have hardened the Crab into tremendously powerful and brutally practical warriors, but they have little sense of civility or manners. As a result they are often considered crude and barbaric by the other clans.

The Hida Family: +1 Strength

The descendants of the Kami Hida are among the largest and most powerful samurai in all the Empire. The burden of defending the Empire falls upon them, and they are both incredible warriors and skilled defensive tacticians. Hida samurai often resent the other Clans for enjoying their protection even as they mock the Crab for their mannerisms.

The Hiruma Family: +1 Agility

Silent and deadly, the Hiruma are the scouts and yojimbo of the Crab. They are as agile and graceful as the Hida are powerful, and warriors from the two families tend to complement one another very well. Hiruma samurai often have the unsavory duty of scouting the Shadowlands for enemies, a task that leads many to death or ruination.

The Kaiu Family: +1 Intelligence

The industrious Kaiu are responsible for the most impressive and long-standing feats of engineering in all the Empire. They are the siege engineers and architects of the Crab Clan, and are responsible for maintaining the Great Carpenter Wall as well as its defenses.

The Kuni Family: +1 Intelligence

Sinister in appearance and deed, the Kuni are among the most feared shugenja families in the Empire. Long ago, the family's leadership determined the only hope of defeating the Shadowlands lay in understanding it, and so the Kuni possess knowledge of things that would drive most men mad.

Reduction

Some Crab Techniques and abilities reference the ability Reduction, which is a quality normally reserved for the armor found later in this chapter. A Reduction rating reduces the damage roll of any successful attack made against an individual by the amount of the Rating. So a Crab with Reduction 3 who suffers 15 Wounds from an attack would actually only suffer 12 Wounds.

The Toritaka Family: +1 Perception

The tiny Toritaka family was once known as the Falcon Clan before tragedy threatened to destroy the Minor Clan completely. It was absorbed by the Crab to prevent a threat from growing within its ranks. The Toritaka hail from a region frequented by spirits, and they are highly knowledgeable about ghosts and spirits of all different sorts.

The Yasuki Family: +1 Awareness

Strangely at odds with the other Crab families, the Yasuki are slight of build and devious of mind. They were once part of the Crane Clan, but joined the Crab in the third century, provoking the first great internal war in Rokugani history. They are merchants and courtiers, always looking for any means to gain an advantage for their Clan, and tend to be more concerned with monetary gain than is considered respectable for someone of the samurai caste.



Hida Bushi School

The Hida fighting style is one of the oldest and most respected bushi schools in the Empire, and one with a very basic premise: endure the enemy's attacks until you have the opportunity to crush him with sheer brute force. The style was shaped by the Clan's early years combating oni and other Shadowlands enemies, when only the strongest and most resilient among Hida's followers survived.

The Hida Bushi School encompasses two broad themes: damage mitigation and heavy weapon use. Hida bushi may not be the most accurate samurai in the Empire, but when they do connect, they inflict tremendous damage. And fortunately for them, they are able to withstand incredible amounts of punishment while they wait to cripple their enemies.

Hida Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo), Intimidation, Kenjutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, any one Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Crab

The Hida bushi is the epitome of 'heavy infantry,' able to endure harsh blows and deliver crushing attacks in return. You may ignore TN penalties for wearing heavy armor for all skills except Stealth. When using a Heavy Weapon, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all damage rolls.

Rank 2: The Mountain Does Not Move

The Hida bushi is famous for extraordinary tenacity, weathering wounds that would kill normal men. You gain Reduction equal to your Earth Ring.

Rank 3: Two Pincers, One Mind

A Hida bushi is relentless. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using Heavy Weapons or weapons with the Samurai keyword.

Rank 4: Devastating Blow

A Hida stops at nothing to destroy his enemies once his anger is roused. Once per encounter, when wielding a Heavy Weapon you may make a calculated strike against the enemy. Lower the enemy's Reduction by 4 for this attack. If this attack succeeds, you Daze the target. The target may recover from this Conditional Effect by making a successful Earth Ring Roll versus a TN equal to your damage roll during the Reaction Stage of each Round. The TN decreases by 5 each time the target fails the roll.

Rank 5: The Mountain Does Not Fall

Nothing can stop a Hida warrior from fulfilling his duty, not even the threat of death. You may spend a Void Point during the Reactions Stage. During your next Turn, you may take actions as if you were in the Healthy Wound Rank. You ignore the Dazed, Fatigued, and Stunned Conditional Effects. The benefits of this Technique last until the next Reactions Stage.

Kuni Shugenja School

Often misunderstood, the Kuni Shugenja School has frequently been painted as a collection of obsessive madmen who delve too deeply into secrets no one should explore. Most Kuni would object to the label of madman, but beyond that they would admit the stereotype fits fairly closely with reality. The Kuni understand they must sacrifice certain inhibitions and reservations in order to serve their Clan and Empire to the best of their ability, and they do so without protest.

The Kuni Shugenja School emphasizes the Crab Clan's specialization in fighting creatures of the Shadowlands. The Crab's alliance with the Nezumi tribes that dwell within the region also has granted them great insight into other non-human creatures, and their Technique allows them to benefit or destroy such creatures as desired.

Kuni Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Defense, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Lore: Theology, Spellcraft, any one Weapon Skill
- **Honor:** 2.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 3 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Earth / Air
- **Technique:** *Gaze Into Shadow* – The Kuni have carefully studied many of the most sinister opponents imaginable, and have learned how to combat them. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Spell Casting Rolls when the target is any non-human creature, and any spell that inflicts damage inflicts an additional +1k1 damage when used against a target who possesses the Shadowlands Taint. You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Jade keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Earth, 2 Fire, and 1 Water

Yasuki Courtier School

Once a Crane family, the Yasuki defected to join the Crab after their Doji masters refused to accept the questionable manner in which the Yasuki performed essential tasks necessary for the Crane to function. The Crab were far more practical masters, and under their leadership the Yasuki have become the most prosperous merchant patrons in the Empire. Their sensei emphasize the ability to find that thing one's opponents in court *must* have, and provide it for them at a low cost, ensuring both profit and gratitude.

The Yasuki specialize in using commerce as a means of gaining the favor of others. They are as much salesmen as courtiers and can use any number of sales tactics, including both pressure and false sincerity, to gain that which they desire from others. No one in the Empire can take a simple resource and transform it into a hot commodity with the same style and deftness as a Yasuki courtier.

Yasuki Courtier School

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Commerce (Appraisal), Courtier, Defense, Etiquette, Intimidation, Sincerity (Deceit), any one Merchant skill
- **Honor:** 2.5
- **Outfit:** Traditional Clothing, Wakizashi, Knife, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Way of the Carp

The Yasuki are masters of commerce and practice it far more openly than other samurai families; they do not consider it to be a breach of etiquette to engage in open commerce. You gain a Free Raise when using the Commerce skill, and you do not lose Honor or Glory for using the Commerce skill even in public. Also, Yasuki are taught from youth to be adept at sizing up their potential customers. When speaking with someone you may make a Contested Roll of your Commerce/Perception against their Etiquette/Awareness to discern some material object or service they want or desire.

Treasures of the Carp in Play

It is important for GMs and players to realize that the Yasuki Rank Three Technique is not designed to outfit player characters with rare and fancy items. Rather, it is intended to represent the traditional Yasuki method of political maneuver – winning allies and favors by getting people the items and services they desire. The GM should be very cautious about allowing this Technique to be used for the benefit of other PCs. Any Yasuki courtier's superiors within the family will tend to look askance at an underling who employs the family's connections and resources for such personal reasons – such an abuse of the family's wealth could lead to severe consequences. Moreover, from a game balance standpoint, the Yasuki's ability to acquire items could easily become disruptive to the game, as suddenly the entire party is conveniently outfitted with superior weapons, armor, and whatever special gear they might need. Wise GMs will remind their players that this Technique is intended for smoothing negotiations, not for gaining personal treasures.

School Tags

Most Schools in this chapter have some manner of tag describing the nature of the School: Bushi, Courtier, and Shugenja are the most common, although others include Monk and Ninja. Generally speaking, these tags affect a character's options when selecting certain Advantages and Disadvantages, and in particular are very important if a character wishes to use the Multiple Schools Advantage. Additional options related to School types can be found in the *Book of Water*.

Rank Two: Do As We Say

The flip side of Yasuki commerce is Yasuki pushiness. The Yasuki are renowned for both their glib tongues and their high-pressure sales tactics, pressuring and deceiving their customers and allies into doing what they want. A number of times per session equal to your School Rank, you may re-roll a failed Sincerity or Intimidation Skill roll. You must keep the results of the second roll.

Rank Three: Treasures of the Carp

Your contacts in the merchant and commercial circles of Rokugan make it possible for you to acquire almost anything you might need to satisfy a customer. You may roll Commerce/Awareness at TN 20 to locate a rare or useful item, subject to GM discretion, for someone else. You may track down higher-quality or rarer items by calling Raises.

Rank 4: Wiles of the Carp

As ruthless merchants, the Yasuki are also skilled at seeing through the deceptions and blandishments of others. Anyone making a Social Skill Roll for the purpose of lying to you or deceiving you has their TN increased by an amount equal to 5 times your School Rank.

Rank Five: What is Yours is Mine

The ultimate skill of the Yasuki is to influence others by offering them what they want the most. If you know of a material item someone needs, and arrange for them to get it, you gain a bonus of +5k0 to any Contested Social Rolls you make against that person for the next 24 hours.

The Hiruma Bushi School

Where the Hida Bushi School teaches endurance and strength, their Hiruma cousins teach avoidance and targeting weak points in an enemy's defenses with lightning fast strikes. The lessons taught by their sensei are essential to fulfilling their duties as warriors inside the Shadowlands. Those who do not heed their teachers well do not survive to perpetuate their mistakes. Those who excel at their lessons become a scourge upon the Shadowlands, moving through that dark realm with speed and grace, leaving death in their wake.

The Hiruma Bushi School emphasizes movement and survival, not just to endure a strike as the Hida do, but to live through an entire skirmish. In one-on-one combat the Hiruma excels at evading his opponent, while in larger skirmishes his ability to avoid damage makes him adept at reaching troublesome foes and eliminating them while his allies tie up other rank-and-file opponents.

The Hiruma Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Athletics, Hunting, Kenjutsu (Katana), Kyujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, Stealth, any one skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Bow with 20 Arrows or Knife, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Torch's Flame Flickers

The Hiruma learns to focus his strikes even while protecting himself, perfecting the penetrating quality of his blow without sacrificing his defense. While you assume the Attack Stance, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all attack rolls. You are skilled at survival and can make all food, water, and jade rations last twice as long for a number of people equal to your Hunting Skill Rank.

Rank 2: Wolf's Little Lesson

Hiruma learn to dash in and out in a single motion. While you assume the Attack Stance, you add 5 to your Armor TN every time you hit with a melee weapon. This bonus may stack a number of times equal to your School Rank and lasts until the end of the current skirmish.

Rank 3: Hummingbird Wings

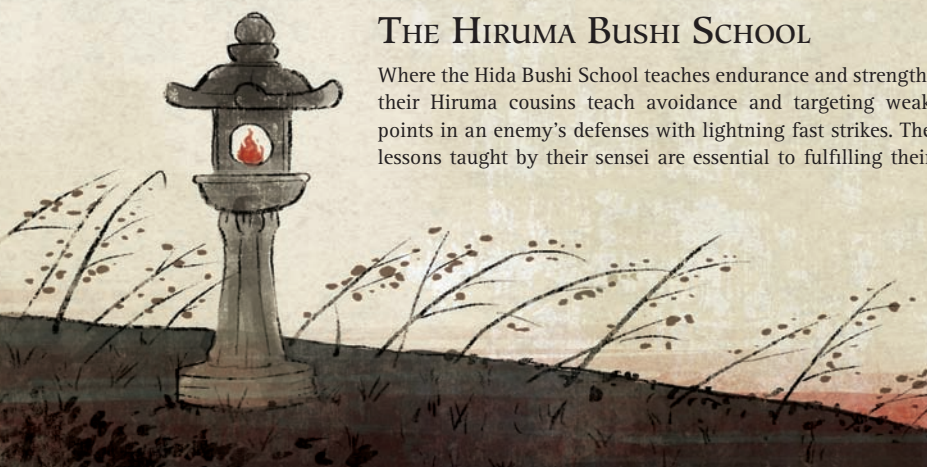
The Hiruma know how the hummingbird can move in any direction and apply this truism to battle. Once per Round you may activate this Technique when an opponent targets you with an attack. You gain a bonus of double your School Rank to your Armor TN for that attack. This stacks with any other Armor TN bonuses you gain from other means (such as spending a Void Point).

Rank 4: Shark Smells Blood

Against a weakened opponent, a Hiruma is a terrible foe indeed. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when using a weapon with the Samurai keyword.

Rank 5: Daylight Wastes No Movement

The Hiruma learns to use no more energy than is precisely needed to kill his opponent. If you deliver more Wounds than necessary to kill your target, you may apply the excess Wounds to the next target you hit. This Technique does not activate two attacks in a row. The carry-over effect does not last beyond the end of the current skirmish.



The Crane Clan

Known for centuries as the Left Hand of the Emperor, the Crane Clan is responsible for maintaining the balance and integrity of the Empire's courts and of Rokugani society in general. As such, the Crane excel at diplomacy and politics, and are widely regarded as the unquestioned masters of the courts, with all the resentment from others that title entails.

The Asahina Family: +1 Intelligence

Quiet and serene, the Asahina are among the most monastic of all samurai families. They are also perhaps the most pacifistic, even more so than the Phoenix Clan, and abhor violence, seeking other means of resolving disputes at all costs. The Asahina are also known for their devotion to philosophy and the arts.

The Daidoji Family: +1 Stamina

The so-called Iron Crane are the strong arm of the Crane Clan and the enforcers of the Doji and Kakita's will. They do not employ grace and style as their kinsmen do, but instead focus on sheer strength of arms and employ tactics that some might consider ruthless or even dishonorable. Daidoji means "defenders of Doji," and it is a name the family has earned.

The Doji Family: +1 Awareness

Lords of the Crane Clan, the Doji are the unquestioned masters of culture and politics in the Empire. It is a testament to the Doji's cunning and influence that the Clan has endured for a thousand years despite being beset by larger, more militant Clans who find the Crane's dominance of the courts endlessly antagonistic.

The Kakita Family: +1 Agility

Literal cousins of the Doji, the Kakita family was created by the children of Lady Doji and her husband Kakita during the dawn of the Empire. The Kakita believe in excelling at one's chosen task, whether that task is making war or creating the most glorious pieces of art. Like other Crane families, the Kakita are also well known for their physical beauty.

The Kakita Bushi School

The sacred art of iaijutsu is practiced by all clans, but none have truly mastered it in the same manner as the sensei at the Kakita Dueling Academy. The School focuses unapologetically upon dueling. Other skills are part of the core teachings, but they are considered incidental and in many cases are offered only because some facet of their instruction relates in some way to iaijutsu. While there are those in the Empire who have criticized the School for its narrow focus, few can argue with the results; many battles have been won by the Crane because an enemy general was slain in a duel before the fighting began. Likewise the Crane stranglehold on the courts is easier to maintain when any challenge can be answered by a Kakita champion taking the courtier's place in a duel.

The Kakita Techniques place an obvious emphasis on iaijutsu but several of them can be of use in both dueling and general skirmishing. The Kakita are generally faster than most opponents, reflected in their Initiative bonuses, and are able to utilize the Center Stance for greater benefits than normal, both in dueling and outside.

Kakita Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Reflexes
- **Skills:** Etiquette, Iaijutsu (Focus), Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Sincerity, Tea Ceremony, any one Bugei or High Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Crane

The study of the sword demonstrates the many ways in which the art of Kakita's technique can be applied. You add twice your Iaijutsu Skill Rank to all Initiative rolls. You gain a bonus of +1k1 plus your School Rank to the total of all attack and Focus rolls while assuming the Center Stance. This bonus also applies during the Combat Round following one in which you assumed the Center Stance.

Rank 2: Speed of Lightning

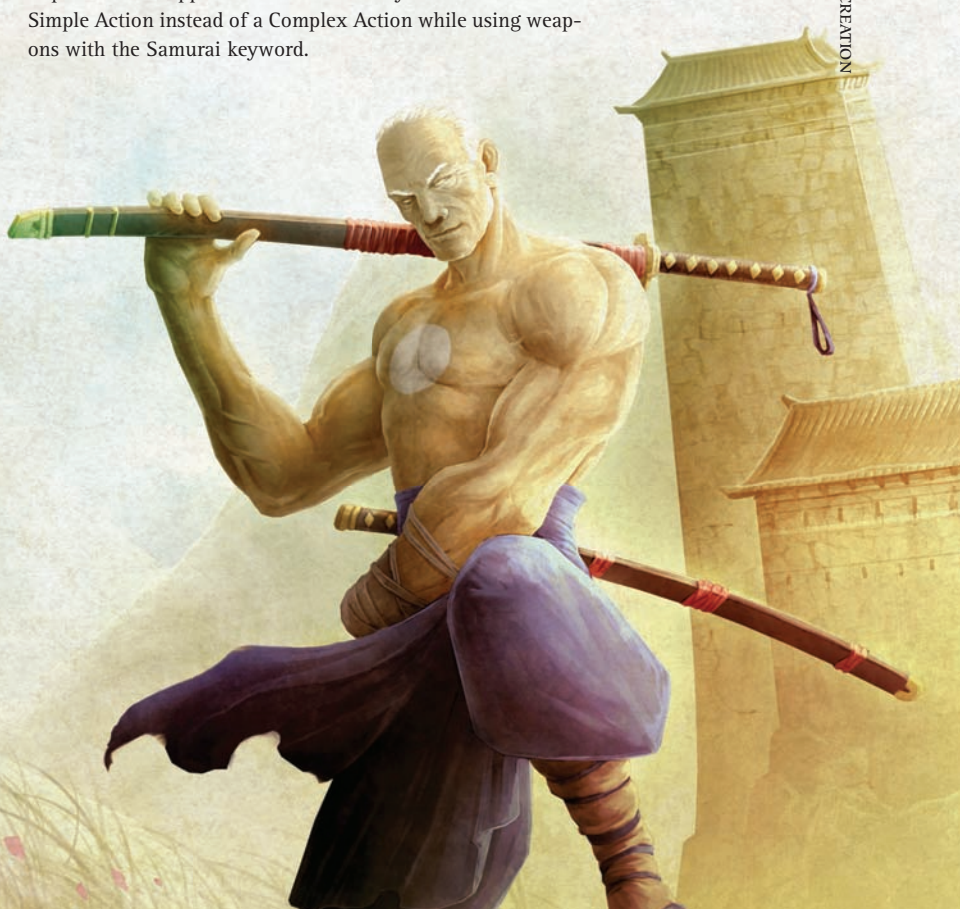
Enemies who are slow or weak of spirit are doomed to failure. You gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of all attack rolls against those with lower Initiative than your own.

Rank 3: First and Last Strike

A Kakita Bushi is feared throughout the Empire as a follower of the oldest and most venerated dueling tradition in the Empire. You may Strike first in a duel if you win the Iaijutsu/Void roll by a difference of 3 or higher. You gain a Free Raise on your Strike for each additional margin of 3 instead of 5.

Rank 4: One Strike, Two Cuts

With one pure strike, the advanced student of Kakita's technique cuts his opponent twice. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using weapons with the Samurai keyword.



Rank 5: Strike With No Thought

A true student of Kakita requires no thought before the perfect strike, depending entirely on instinct. You may take one Simple Action per Turn while assuming the Center Stance. You gain the benefits of Center Stance while you assume the Stance instead of the following Turn, and you may remain in Center Stance as many consecutive Turns as desired. The Simple Action you take can be a Move Action (bypassing the normal restriction of the Center Stance).

The Asahina Shugenja School

Much like the family as a whole, the Asahina sensei who teach at the various branches of the Asahina Shugenja School extol the virtue of preserving life over heedless destruction. As much monks as priests, the Asahina focus on scholarly pursuits and meditation as a means of finding their path in the world. They conduct the same rituals on behalf of the Crane that other shugenja families perform but they use the opportunity to raise questions for those participating or observing the rituals. The Asahina regard everything as a teaching opportunity. Likewise they place great emphasis on the creation of artwork, an act they consider essential to the improvement of the world around them.

Above all else, the Asahina Shugenja School focuses on defense and protection. Both its core Technique and its spell emphases encourage spells that reduce damage and protect others from attacks. Other spells possessed by Asahina shugenja tend to have an emphasis on crafting or creating.

Asahina Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Any one Artisan Skill, Calligraphy (Cipher), Etiquette, Lore: Theology, Meditation, Spellcraft, any one High Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Bo, Wakizashi, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 10 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Air / Fire
- **Technique:** *The Soul's Grace* – The Asahina have harnessed the power of the kami for art, not war. You may spend a Void Point to reduce the total of all opponents' damage rolls inflicted within 20' of you by 0k1 for a number of rounds equal to your School Rank. (Using this technique again before its duration expires "resets" the duration but does not increase the damage penalty.) You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Defense keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Air, 2 Water, and 1 Earth

The Doji Courtier School

The reputation the Crane Clan has for being the unquestioned masters of any court activity in which they are involved is well-deserved, and almost exclusively the result of the ancient secrets of the Doji Courtier School. The School's primary focus is on the creation of vast networks of allies upon whom the Crane can call to accomplish virtually anything, preferably indebting those involved to the Crane in the process. The curriculum in the Doji School is quite broad and encompasses a myriad of topics, more than could be mastered by any single samurai, no matter how talented. Fortunately, the sensei ensure that there are an ample number of courtiers trained in every area so no matter what the need, a Doji stands ready to fulfill it.

The Doji Courtier School is built upon the notion of trading favors. That is not the entirety of their abilities, however; what makes them even more daunting opponents is their ability to perceive what an individual needs, and then offer it to them in such a manner that refusal is difficult if not impossible.

Doji Courtier School

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Courtier (Manipulation), Etiquette (Courtesy), Perform: Storytelling, Sincerity, Tea Ceremony, any one Artisan or Perform skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Extravagant Clothing, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Soul of Honor

Apprentice Doji courtiers are taught to rely on their Honor when dealing with others, infusing their every word and gesture with the power of their purity, and to build networks of allies by discerning what others need and fulfilling those needs. So long as you maintain your Honor Rank at 6.0 or better, you gain a Free Raise on all Courtier, Sincerity, and Etiquette rolls. Also, by conversing with another person for a few minutes, you can make a Contested Roll of Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness to learn whether they are in need of any favors or assistance (such as needing travel papers to reach another province, for example).

Rank 2: Speaking in Silence

At this Rank the Doji learns Cadence, the art of communicating through subtle gestures and body language. This gives them a huge advantage in the courts by allowing them to share information while their rivals are none the wiser. You can roll Courtier/Intelligence at TN 15 to communicate simple ideas and instructions (things like "distract them," "this favors us," or "intercept that person") with any other Crane who is trained in the Doji Courtier School or who has at least 5 Ranks in the Courtier skill. More complex ideas can be conveyed with Raises, although there is an upper limit (set by the GM) on how complicated Cadence can become.

Rank 3: The Perfect Gift

The Doji build their networks of alliances through selflessness, offering others what they need so that in future the Doji may rely on their assistance. Any time you are in court or in an urban area, you can roll Courtier/Awareness at TN 20 to come up with a suitable gift or a helpful political favor for someone else. By calling Raises on this roll, you can acquire a rarer or more potent gift or favor. If such a gift or favor is accepted, you may immediately take that person as an Ally with 1-point Devotion, without XP cost (subject to the GM's permission).

Rank 4: Voice of Honor

At this Rank the Doji has learned the art of political maneuvering, making his positions and arguments appear synonymous with Honor, forcing anyone who disagrees with him to take a dishonorable position. In any debate or argument, you may make a Contested Roll of Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness. If you win the roll, the opponent is forced to concede that his position conflicts with the demands of Honor and Bushido, and if he persists in his position he will commit a breach of etiquette. (It is the GM's discretion, based on the circumstances, as to whether it is a minor or major breach.)

Rank 5: The Gift of the Lady

The final training of the Doji teaches them the art of influencing the emotions of others, making friends and allies out of almost anyone – even bitter enemies. By conversing with someone for a few minutes, you may make a Contested Roll of Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. If the target is an Ally, you gain a bonus of +5k0 to the total of this roll. With a success, you shift the target's emotions in a favorable direction, persuading them to listen to your advice and counsel. The GM is the final arbiter but in general, the target will go along with anything you suggest which does not conflict with his basic loyalties.

Gifts and Their Uses

In Rokugani society and culture, gifts are something different from mere physical objects or wealth. The perceived value of a gift often derives more from its emotional, historical, or personal significance rather than its material or monetary worth. A gold statue may not be a particularly impressive gift, although a merchant might prize the gold and an artisan admires its workmanship. But a gold statue from the temple where Isawa taught his first students the ways of the kami – that is a gift which any samurai, and especially any shugenja, would prize quite highly.

The Doji are adept at offering gifts perfectly attuned to the wishes, needs, and interests of their potential allies. Of course, the Doji also can use their vast political network to supply non-material favors such as travel papers, prestigious marriages, or admission to a prestigious school.



The Daidoji Iron Warriors

The skills of the Doji and the Kakita have raised the Crane into their position as masters of the court, but when words alone cannot attain victory; it is the strength and the courage of the Daidoji Iron Warriors that carry the day. The Daidoji have always considered themselves the silent steel of the Crane, and that perception is not inaccurate. The Daidoji Iron Warriors are both the rank and file and the heavy infantry of the Crane armies, comprising a sizeable portion of the Clan's first army and the majority of the second. They also serve as yojimbo, and this duty is the one most often ascribed to the Daidoji, even if it is but one of their many roles.

The Daidoji are a versatile group, with Techniques that emphasize both enduring the damage of one's opponents and protecting their charge. This fighting style is not exclusively protective, however, and it allows an Iron Warrior to fight defensively in a skirmish to great effect.

Daidoji Iron Warrior [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Battle, Defense 2, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), Kyujutsu, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Force of Honor

The Iron Warrior serves as the shield of his clan, defending the honor and homes of the Crane. You gain a bonus of your Honor Rank (rounded down) minus 4 to your Wounds at each Wound Rank, to a minimum bonus of one. (Thus at Honor Rank 6.5, you gain a bonus of 2 Wounds to each Wound Rank.) Additionally, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all attack rolls while in the Attack Stance.

Rank 2: The Shield of Faith

The Iron Warrior truly believes that his work serves a higher purpose. When you perform the Guard Maneuver, the benefits last for an additional Round. Additionally, the Armor TN bonus of the Guard Maneuver is increased by 5. (This bonus applies to both your Armor TN and your target's Armor TN – thus, you suffer no TN penalty when Guarding, and your target gains a bonus of +15 to his Armor TN instead of +10.)

Rank 3: Strike Beneath the Veil

The Daidoji is an intractable foe, devastating to face under any circumstances. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while in the Attack Stance.

Rank 4: Vigilance of Mind

The Iron Warrior is always on the lookout for dangers. You may spend a Void Point during the Reactions Stage to target an opponent who has attempted to strike at either you or the target of your Guard Maneuver during the Round. You gain a bonus of +2k1 to the total of all attack and damage rolls against that opponent during the next Round.

Rank 5: To Tread on the Sword

When the Iron Warrior fights to protect his charge, he will continue on long after others would perish. You may spend two Void Points as a Free Action when someone declares an action against the target of your Guard Maneuver. You become the target of the action instead (if it would be a legal action – GM's discretion in questionable instances). You also gain one Free Action that you may use immediately for the sole purpose of moving toward the target of your Guard Maneuver. If you cannot reach your target, this Technique has no effect.

The Dragon Clan

Enigmatic and mysterious, the samurai of the Dragon Clan have walked their own path since the Empire was first created. More individualistic and less concerned with material wealth than other clans, the Dragon have much in common with the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, despite the considerable variety among their individual families.

The Kitsuki Family: +1 Awareness

The ever-perceptive Kitsuki serve the Dragon Clan as magistrates and court representatives, although they are better suited as the former. Even in court, however, a Kitsuki's ability to perceive truth when presented with lies has proven a tremendous asset to the Dragon in their pursuit of an Empire free of deceit and treachery.

The Mirumoto Family: +1 Agility

The Mirumoto are the broad shoulders that carry the burdens of the Dragon Clan. While the Togashi pursue their unique brand of enlightenment, the Mirumoto rule the clan in all but name, overseeing its day to day operations and filling the ranks of its military. Comprising more than half the Clan's ranks, the Mirumoto are the most commonly encountered Dragon samurai in the Empire.

The Tamori Family: +1 Willpower

Perhaps the most militant shugenja family in the Empire, the Tamori embrace unique magical styles, including alchemy, blacksmithing, and melding the arts of magic and war. The Tamori are more feared than other shugenja because of their willingness to commit to violence when other priests would turn away.

The Togashi Order: +1 Reflexes

A monastic order rather than a true family, the Togashi accept all who wish to join their ranks, provided they are able to embrace the order's teachings and endure its trials, which many are not. Over the centuries, the monks of this order have used the divine blood of the Dragon Kami to create mystical tattoos that grant them incredible, supernatural abilities.

The Mirumoto Bushi School

Famous throughout the Empire for its unique teachings, the Mirumoto Bushi School is the lone fighting style that utilizes the Niten technique, wherein a samurai wields both the katana and the wakizashi simultaneously. This is a controversial style because it flies in the face of the traditional style used by the other clans for centuries, although Niten was actually developed at the same time as the one-sword style. In particular, the rivalry between students of the Mirumoto Bushi School and the Kakita Bushi School, the greatest advocates of Kakita's "One soul, one sword" philosophy, is



heated even during times of peace. Many opponents, anticipating the reputation of the Dragon as erratic, are surprised to face the calm, implacable Mirumoto as an enemy, a mistake that has cost more than one samurai victory on the field of battle.

The Mirumoto Bushi School focuses on the mechanical benefits of wielding two weapons simultaneously, both in forgiving the penalties associated with doing so and improving the benefits. It also increases the samurai's Armor TN and grants him additional attacks at an increased rate due to the availability of his weapons.

Mirumoto Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Skills:** Defense, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), Lore: Shugenja, Meditation, Theology, any one Bugei or High Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Way of the Dragon

Initiates of the Mirumoto Bushi School must master the basic principles of *Niten*, the two-sword technique founded by Mirumoto himself. When wielding a katana in your main hand and a wakizashi in your off hand, you suffer no penalties of any kind for dual wielding, and you gain a bonus of your School Rank to your Armor TN (this is cumulative with the normal bonus for wielding two weapons). Additionally, when you are targeted with a spell, you may raise or lower the TN of that spell's Spellcasting Roll by 5.

Rank 2: The Calm In Midst of Thunder

In addition to their focus on the art of kenjutsu, the Mirumoto study the art of the duel as well in order to properly face their traditional opponents among the Kakita. While you assume the Center Stance, you gain a bonus to the total of your Iaijutsu rolls equal to your Kenjutsu Skill Rank.

Rank 3: Strong and Swift

As the exploration of Niten continues, the student learns to overwhelm opponents with a flurry of blows while maintaining a superior defense. Attacking is a Simple Action for you while you use weapons with the Samurai keyword.

Rank 4: Furious Retaliation

Once an opponent presents himself as a threat, the Mirumoto will stop at nothing to defeat him to defend the honor of the family's teachings. During the Reactions Stage of Combat, you may choose one opponent who made or attempted an attack against you this Round. During your next Turn, you gain a bonus of +3k0 to all attack rolls against that target.

Rank 5: Heart of the Dragon

Masters of the Mirumoto Bushi School seem to strike from everywhere at once. If you attack twice in the same Turn while you are wielding a katana in your main hand and a wakizashi in your off hand, you may make one additional attack with your off hand as a Free Action.

The Tamori Shugenja School

Formed from the remnants of the Agasha family following their defection to the Phoenix Clan, the Tamori have inherited centuries of experimental studies conducted by their predecessors, and have embraced it just as they did. The most prominent among these unusual disciplines is the study of alchemy. The Tamori have mastered the abandoned Agasha secret of containing the essence of a spell within ritually prepared liquids, allowing them to be used later. Coupled with the martial training that Tamori shugenja receive, this is enough to make the family's secret teachings unique in all the Empire.

The Tamori Technique allows for greater versatility in the use of spells, extended so far as to allow others to use them in the Tamori's stead, if proper preparations have been made. The Technique also allows for a dramatic reduction in casting time, but again only if adequate preparation time is provided, making the Tamori particularly deadly in ambush situations.

Tamori Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Skills:** Athletics, Calligraphy (Cipher), Defense, Divination, Lore: Theology, Medicine, and Spellcraft
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 5 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Earth / Air
- **Technique:** *Flesh of the Elements* – The Tamori have learned to distill the essence of magic and contain it within concoctions or objects for later use. You may expend one spell slot to store a spell you know that has the Area of Effect "one target person" or "one target creature" in a potion, to be activated later. This stored spell may be activated instantly by anyone holding the potion by expending a Simple Action to drink it or a Complex Action to throw it (depending upon the spell's target), using Athletics (Throwing) / Agility. Spells stored in this manner may be stored indefinitely, but count against your spell slots per day for each day that they continue to await activation. Creating a potion in this manner requires a number of hours equal to the stored spell's Mastery Level. You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Craft keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Earth, 2 Fire, and 1 Water



The Kitsuki Investigator School

Even among the Dragon, the methods and beliefs imparted at the Kitsuki School are unusual. Alone in the Empire, the Kitsuki believe in the importance of evidence, something that most others cannot comprehend. The sensei of this unusual School place tremendous emphasis on developing the family's trademark powers of observation, honing them to a razor point, so much so that those trained in its Techniques possess a nearly infallible memory, perfect recall, and an almost inhuman attention to detail. Very little escapes the eye of a trained Kitsuki investigator.

Although their primary role is as the court representatives of the Dragon, the Kitsuki Investigators obviously make excellent magistrates, and their strengths lie in gathering information both from the environment and from other people.

Kitsuki Investigator School [Courtier]

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette (Courtesy), Investigation (Interrogation), Kenjutsu, Meditation, Sincerity, any one Lore skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Traditional Clothing, Wakizashi, Knife, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Kitsuki's Method

The Kitsuki are masters of investigation and perception, noticing the most minute and telling details with merely a glance. You gain a Free Raise on all your Investigation Skill Rolls. However, while the Kitsuki are trained for investigation and diplomacy, unlike other courtiers they do not wholly neglect the ways of the warrior. In a skirmish, you add your Perception Trait Rank to your Armor TN.

Rank 2: Wisdom the Wind Brings

The Kitsuki skill at noticing small details makes it very difficult to deceive them. Anyone making a Social Skill Roll for the purpose of lying to you or otherwise deceiving you, or making a Feint or Disarm Maneuver against you in a skirmish, must add +5 to their TN for each of your Kitsuki Investigator School Ranks.

Rank 3: Know the Rhythm of the Heart

The Kitsuki study a secret methodology known as Ichi Miru, or "first look," which allows them to size up another person in almost a single glance. After speaking with someone for a few moments, you can roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception against a TN of their Intelligence x 5. A success grants you a true and accurate, if simple, picture of their personality and motivations. For example, you might perceive that a boisterous ronin is actually a calculating man who is trying to put on the picture of being a rude, simple fellow.

Rank 4: Finding the Path

The Kitsuki has learned the art of uncovering and tracking others' social connections and networks of alliances. By conversing with someone for a few minutes, you can make a Contested Roll of your Investigation (Interrogation) / Intelligence against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Intelligence to identify one of their allies or enemies. Each successful Raise you make on this roll will identify another of their allies or enemies (you choose whether you learn an ally or an enemy – the GM chooses which specific person is revealed).

This technique can be used against each specific person once per day.

Rank 5: The Eyes Betray the Heart

Kitsuki's method allows its master practitioners to see through even the most practiced falsehoods and tricks. At this rank, *any* knowing attempt to lie to you (as opposed to unwittingly passing on false information) will almost certainly fail. You automatically make a Contested Roll of your Investigation (Interrogation) / Perception against the liar's Sincerity (Deceit) / Willpower, whether or not you suspect them of lying. Further, if you already know someone is lying to you, you gain a bonus of +5k0 on this Contested Roll, and may call Raises on the roll in an attempt to make them inadvertently give away more information than they intended (GM's choice what information they reveal).

The Togashi Tattooed Order

The monks of the Togashi order, known as *ise zumi*, are the most recognizable and well known members of the Dragon Clan, due in large part to their highly unorthodox appearance. The Togashi monks embrace a strange philosophy that includes as part of its doctrine extensive tattooing of their bodies with ink crafted from divine blood of the Kami Togashi. These tattoos confer incredible, supernatural abilities that defy explanation even by the most powerful shugenja. Due to their behavior, which tends to be unusual even for a monk, the ise zumi are both revered and feared by the people of Rokugan, who never truly know what to expect from these mysterious figures.

Togashi monks specialize in unarmed combat and supernatural feats of athleticism, with a wide variety of other abilities thrown in for good measure. Generally speaking, a Togashi monk can lend support to other characters in whatever capacity is necessary, and usually bring unique abilities to the table as well.

Togashi Tattooed Order [Monk]

- **Benefit:** +1 Void
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Craft: Tattooing, Jiujutsu, Any one Lore Skill, Meditation, any one non-Low Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Bo, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Blood of the Kami

The blood of the Kami is barely diluted in the ruling line of the Togashi order, and the brothers chosen to serve the

Dragon as Togashi vassals receive the mystical blood of a god in the form of unique tattoos. You gain two Tattoos at this rank.

Rank 2: Body of Stone

Mastery of the body is the first essential step of a monk's journey toward enlightenment, and martial arts are the perfect tool to bring the body and spirit into harmony. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all unarmed attack and damage rolls.

Rank 3: Blessing of the Kami

As an ise zumi continues his journey of self-discovery, accumulating new experiences along the way, he will eventually be judged worthy of additional insight in the form of new tattoos. You gain two additional Tattoos.

Rank 4: Will of Stone

Perfect mastery of the flesh is an indication that a soul's journey is nearing its end. You may make unarmed attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action.

Rank 5: Touch of the Kami

Insight into the true nature of the universe is the reward for a soul that seeks true mastery of the spirit. You gain two additional Tattoos.

Tattoos

Below are a few of the tattoos found upon members of the Togashi Order. There are countless dozens or even hundreds in existence, some unique, but those listed below are those most commonly encountered. Members of the Togashi Order gain these mystical tattoos in lieu of Techniques at Ranks 1, 3, and 5 (as described above). Tattoos can only be activated if they are exposed; tattoos covered by cloth or armor cannot be used. Unless otherwise specified, the following conditions apply to all tattoos: they can be activated as Free Actions, only one tattoo may be active at a time, and tattoo effects last a number of rounds equal to twice the character's School Rank.

- **Balance:** This tattoo of the spiritual yin-yang symbol calms the mind and spirit. While this tattoo is active, the TN of all Spell Casting Rolls made with you as the target are increased or decreased by an amount equal to twice your School Rank plus 5. You determine whether this is an increase or a decrease when you activate the tattoo.
- **Bamboo:** The bamboo plant is ubiquitous throughout the Empire, and is well known not only for the speed with which it grows, but also its durability. While this tattoo is active, your Armor TN is increased by an amount equal to twice your School Rank + 5.
- **Blaze:** The power and fury of fire is unleashed in the Blaze tattoo. When activated, this tattoo causes your unarmed strikes to be bolstered with pure fire. Your unarmed attacks are accompanied by flickering flames that inflict an additional amount of fire damage equal to your Fire Ring plus your School Rank.
- **Centipede:** The tiny centipede has hundreds of legs working in unison, and that power can be commanded by the monks who bear its image. When this tattoo is activated, you may make a special Complex Move Action that allows you to move a distance equal to your Water Ring x 100'. This effect lasts for an entire day, essentially allowing you to cross the face of the Empire in a day. If you stop for more than one minute, the effect ends. When the effect ends, you collapse into an exhausted state and can take no physical actions for a period of twelve hours.
- **Crab:** The tiny crab is resilient beyond all measure for its size. While this tattoo is active, you gain a Reduction rating equal to your Earth Ring.
- **Crane:** The crane is a symbol of luck and beauty. When you activate this tattoo, you gain a number of bonus dice equal to your School Rank plus your Air Ring. These dice may be spent on any Social Skill Rolls. Each die contributes a bonus of +1k0. If these bonus dice are not used within an hour, they are lost. You may not add more bonus dice to a single roll than your Void Ring. This tattoo is considered active the entire hour, and if another tattoo is activated, any unspent dice from this tattoo are lost.
- **Dragon:** The dragon is a fearsome tattoo, and contains frightening power waiting to be unleashed. As a Complex Action, you may breathe fire in a cone, equal to ten feet plus your School Rank in length, and five feet wide at the end. This fire deals damage to all in its area of effect, with a DR equal your Fire Ring. You take damage equal to your Fire Ring upon each use.
- **Hawk:** You may borrow the essence of the hawk, and cover great distances with ease. As a Complex Action, you may leap a distance equal to your Water Ring x 25'.
- **Ki-Rin:** There are few omens of good fortune more significant than that of the sacred ki-rin. Upon activating this tattoo, you may immediately re-roll any one roll per round, keeping the higher of the two results.
- **Lion:** The lion is a proud and noble warrior. Upon activating this tattoo, you gain ranks equal to your School Rank in any Bugei Skill of your choice.
- **Mantis:** The mantis is a fierce and fearless warrior out of all proportion to its tiny size. Upon receiving this tattoo, you are completely immune to all Fear effects. This tattoo is active at all times, and does not prevent the use of other tattoos.
- **Mountain:** The mountain is eternal and unmoving. When you activate this tattoo, all your Wound Penalties are reduced by an amount equal to your School Rank plus 2.
- **Ocean:** The ocean's boundless depths hold the secrets of life and rejuvenation. When granted this tattoo, you no longer have need of food or drink, although you may still partake of them if you wish. When this tattoo is activated, you are instantly refreshed as if you had spent eight hours of sleep, and you regain all spent Void Points. This tattoo may only be used once every three days.

- **Phoenix:** The Phoenix can never truly be defeated, rising as it does from the ashes to be born anew. You must have at least one unspent Void Point for this tattoo to be triggered. When you are reduced to the Down Wound Level or below, this tattoo automatically activates. All unspent Void Points are lost, and you immediately heal a number of Wounds equal to your School Rank x 10. This tattoo cannot be activated more than once per week.
- **Scorpion:** The scorpion is silent and deadly. While this tattoo is active, you roll additional dice on any Stealth Skill Roll equal to your School Rank. Also, during this time your unarmed attacks automatically Daze your opponent if any dice explode on your damage roll.
- **Spider:** The spider is quick and dexterous, escaping predators with its speed and agility. While this tattoo is active, you may move across vertical and inverted surfaces (such as sheer walls or ceilings) while making Move Actions. You move at half your normal rate when doing so.
- **Storm:** The storm is nature's fury, and few can stand against its raw power. While this tattoo is active, your unarmed attacks require only one Raise to use the Knockdown Maneuver.
- **Void:** This ink black kanji represents oneness with all. When this tattoo is activated, you gain awareness of all life around you. You know the location and rough details of all living things within a radius of your School Rank x 10', even if you cannot see them. You know only rough details, such as "two warriors" or "a pair of rabbits," not specific identities. You can recognize individuals well-known to you, however.
- **Wind:** The wind is swift and moves without hindrance. While this tattoo is active, you gain an additional Simple Action per round, which may not be used to make an attack. Your maximum total movement is not limited to your Water Ring x 20.
- **Wolf:** The wolf is the great tracker of the wilds. When you activate this tattoo, your senses become superhumanly sharp, allowing you to perceive small details and even individual scents. You gain a number of Free Raises on Hunting (Tracking) Skill Rolls equal to your School Rank. This tattoo's effect lasts a number of hours equal to your School Rank.

The Lion Clan

The Lion Clan is the Right Hand of the Emperor, the defender of his lands and his person, although many times the Seppun family and the Imperial Legions are allowed to stand as poor substitutes (or so the Lion believe). The Lion are militant to a fault and possess the greatest army in the known world. They are feared for their prowess and respected for their unflinchingly honorable natures.

The Akodo Family: +1 Agility

The lords of the Lion Clan, the Akodo are the unquestioned masters of battle throughout the Empire. It is said that no army led by an Akodo has ever known defeat, and while this is something of an exaggeration, it is not all that far from the truth. Akodo samurai tend to be calm and analytical, and often lack the fiery nature for which the Lion are so well known.

The Ikoma Family: +1 Awareness

The voice of the Lion Clan, the Ikoma speak on behalf of the Clan in court and in the annals of history. The family provides not only the majority of the clan's courtiers, but virtually all of its historians and storytellers as well, studies that the Clan considers extremely important. For every stoic Lion who refuses to allow emotion to affect him, there is an Ikoma bard who weeps openly when he tells the samurai's story to others.

The Kitsu Family: +1 Intelligence

Quiet and reserved, the Kitsu are the most traditional and conservative, some might say old-fashioned, shugenja family in the Empire. Descended from the union of men and the ancient kitsu creatures that were driven nearly to extinction by the Lion during the dawn of the Empire, the Kitsu possess several bloodlines with strange, otherworldly abilities, such as the ability to walk between the mortal world and the spirit realms.

The Matsu Family: +1 Strength

The Matsu are the largest family in the Empire, and they are the reason for the image many have of the vast legions of the Lion Clan. They are also the source of the tempestuous stereotype for the Lion, and it is largely correct; the Matsu are fiery in nature, quick to anger, and eager for battle at all times. They were founded by a female warrior, Matsu, and have a famous all-female military unit, the Lion's Pride.

The Akodo Bushi School

Over the centuries, the primary bushi Schools of many Clans have developed specialties that have narrowed their focus. The Akodo consider such things a mistake, and have carefully avoided it. The Akodo School focuses on precision in the art of kenjutsu, the basic swordsmanship style of the Empire. The Akodo believe that if you strike your target exactly as you intend every time, there is no need for anything more complicated as part of your studies. Some regard this as simplistic, but no one argues with Akodo capabilities in battle. The study of battle itself is also a strong component of every Akodo's training, and there are virtually no Akodo-trained samurai who do not possess a rudimentary knowledge of tactics and strategy.

The Akodo Techniques focus on precision and success, transforming marginal successes into greater ones and, at higher levels, changing failure to success. To some extent the School also negates bonuses an opponent might possess, but generally speaking the Techniques exist only to ensure success on the part of the Akodo-trained samurai.

Akodo Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Battle (Mass Combat), Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore: History, Sincerity, any one Bugei or High Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Lion

Bushi of the Akodo School hone their fury until it is as precise as a blade. You may either ignore the portion of an opponent's Armor TN derived from Armor, or gain a Free Raise when attacking. (You do not ignore Reduction from the Armor while choosing the first option.) Also, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all attack rolls on your first melee attack against an opponent in a skirmish, or against any opponent who has declared a Raise on an attack against you since your last turn. You add only a total of 1k0 for an enemy who Raised against you, no matter how many times they actually Raised.

Rank 2: Strength of Purity

Akodo-trained warriors are known for their dedication to bushido, and take a fierce satisfaction in defeating dishonorable foes. During a skirmish you may add your Honor Rank to the total of any single roll during your Turn. You may not increase damage rolls in this fashion, nor can you do this while assuming the Center Stance.

Rank 3: Strength of My Ancestors

The Akodo bushi attacks twice, once for himself and once for his ancestors. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using weapons with the Samurai keyword.

Rank 4: Triumph Before Battle

No foe is beyond the reach of the devoted Lion warrior. Once per skirmish, you may designate an opponent during the Reactions Stage. You may ignore any Armor TN bonuses your target receives from his Stance during the next Round.

Rank 5: Akodo's Final Lesson

Mastery of the Akodo Bushi School imparts an unshakable faith in victory. When you make Raises on any Bugei Skill Roll, if you meet or exceed the original TN (before Raises) but fail to meet the Raised TN, you still succeed without the benefits of Raises.

The Kitsu Shugenja School

The ancient rituals of the Kitsu School have remained virtually unchanged since the family's creation, and the notion of putting aside the relics of the past has never even occurred to the family. Because of the Kitsu family's unique origins, they have always possessed insights into the relationship between the mortal world and the realms beyond. Their ability to perceive the bonds that tie the living to their ancestors have gradually expanded to the point that they are also able to sense and even manipulate the bonds that an individual might possess to other realms.

The Kitsu possess a unique ability to interfere with the link another has to other realms, represented by their Technique that allows the disruption of certain kinds of Advantages. Their secondary focus is on large-scale magic that can be employed in battle, which is the lifeblood of every Lion samurai, and can allow them to influence the outcome of skirmishes through use of powerful spells.



Kitsu Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Battle, Calligraphy (Cipher), Etiquette, Lore: History, Lore: Theology, Spellcraft, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 5 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Water / Fire
- **Technique:** *Eyes of the Ancestors* – The Kitsu are descended from mystical creatures, and as such are able to reach across the veil between worlds and speak with their ancestors. You may make a Spell Casting Roll (as though casting a Water spell) against a target's Willpower x 5. If successful, you learn all Spiritual Advantages or Disadvantages that individual possesses. By spending a Void Point, you may negate any one Spiritual Advantage an opponent possesses for a number of minutes equal to your School Rank. You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Battle keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Water, 2 Air, and 1 Earth

The Ikoma Bard School

If one examines the greatest storytellers of every generation across the history of Rokugan, the pattern that emerges will indicate clearly that the Ikoma dominate this aspect of the Empire's social circles. Unlike most courtiers who focus on manipulation and shades of deception, the Ikoma bards or *omoidasu* strive to live by example, citing historical precedents and mythical tales of heroes in order to demonstrate the desired outcome of whatever discussion they are involved in. While this might seem a curious tactic, there are many courtiers in other Clans who have difficulty conducting themselves against the Ikoma when the Ikoma can demonstratively prove that the individual's ancestors might well have disapproved of a course of action. In a society so steeped in history and tradition, argument via parable is a surprisingly effective technique.

The Ikoma Techniques allow a courtier to inspire others as well as to resist manipulation by his opponents. Furthermore, by comparing others to historical figures, the Ikoma can gain Glory not only for himself but for others far easier than most.

Ikoma Bard School [Courtier]

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette, Lore: History (Lion Clan), Perform: Storytelling, Sincerity (Honesty), any one High Skill, any one Bugei Skill.
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Traditional Clothing, Wakizashi, Knife, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Herald of Glory

The Ikoma are historians and storytellers, tasked with recording the glorious deeds of others for posterity, ensuring that courageous and honorable accomplishments are never forgotten. You gain the Precise Memory Advantage for no cost in Experience Points (if you already have Precise Memory, you are refunded that many Experience Points). You may use the Perform: Storytelling skill to engage in public bragging on behalf of another person. If you can cite heroic or noble actions by that person and successfully roll Perform: Storytelling / Awareness at TN 20, that person will gain a number of points of Glory equal to your School Rank. This may be done a number of times per person per month equal to your School Rank.

Rank 2: The Heart of the Lion

The Ikoma are tasked with conveying the emotions which the rest of the Clan keeps bottled away in stoic rectitude. You do not lose Honor or Glory for displaying emotion in public, so long as you do so on behalf of another Lion or for an honorable cause greater than yourself (such as your clan, the Empire, or the Code of Bushido). At the same time, your understanding of both honor and emotion strengthens your own soul against temptation. Anyone attempting to sway your emotions through the use of the Intimidation or Temptation skills must add +5 to their TN for each of your School Ranks.

Rank 3: The Voice of the Ancestors

The Ikoma act as Battle-Criers for the Lion, inspiring their soldiers on the battlefield with tales of the heroic deeds of their ancestors. Prior to a battle or skirmish, you may inspire your allies by speaking for a few minutes and rolling Perform: Oratory / Awareness at a TN equal to 15 + 5 per person you are inspiring. Targets who are not members of the Lion Clan increase the TN by 5 for each such person. With a successful roll, each person you inspired may add their Honor Rank to the total of any one Skill Roll during that battle or skirmish. (If this benefit is not used by the end of the battle, it is lost.)

Rank 4: The Strength of Tradition

The Ikoma's steadfast encouragement calls on the examples of noble ancestors to infuse their allies with a strength they did not know they had. A number of times per session equal to your School Rank, as a Simple Action, you may verbally encourage an ally with a tale of great deeds from the past, rolling Perform: Storytelling/Awareness at TN 25. With a success, the next time during the same day that the chosen ally fails a roll, he may re-roll it, adding your Honor Rank in unkept dice to his roll. However, if he fails this second roll, you lose 2 points of Honor.

Rank 5: Every Lion is Your Brother

The Ikoma's understanding of Bushido, history, emotion, and human nature empowers them in court, filling their arguments with the ringing power of generations of noble Lion, and calling on the precedents of a thousand years and more to support their cause. Five times per session, when you are making a Contested Social Roll against an opponent, you may cite historical precedent to support your views and roll additional unkept dice equal to your Rank in Perform: Storytelling. (In situations where citing history seems inappropriate or strange, the GM has the final say on whether this Technique may be used.)

The Matsu Berserker School

The great majority of the vast legions of Matsu samurai study at the family's home School, if for no other reason than that most Matsu believe other fighting styles are too conservative and reserved. A true Matsu has no fear of death, and as such the Techniques imparted by their sensei embrace absolute, unwavering commitment to battle. Although this leaves the Matsu vulnerable to an opponent's attacks, the philosophy behind the Techniques is that an opponent who has been defeated has no opportunity to retaliate. It is for this reason that the legions of the Matsu family are so feared on the battlefield: how can one defeat an enemy who does not care if he lives or dies, so long as you are defeated first?

The Matsu Techniques focus heavily upon the Full Attack Stance, which makes them heavy-hitting opponents who have to position themselves carefully in order to prevent an opponent from exploiting their lower Armor TN. As a secondary focus, the Matsu can generate Fear effects that can further destabilize opponents and make them easier targets for himself and allies.

Matsu Berserker School [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Battle, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), Kyujutsu, Lore: History, any two Bugei Skills
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Lion's Roar

Warriors of the Matsu School respect their Akodo cousins' leadership skills, but they know that a furious attack often simply overwhelms an enemy. You add your Honor Rank to all damage rolls. Whenever you assume the Full Attack Stance, you may move an additional 5 feet per Turn in addition to the bonus you receive from the Stance. (This does not allow you to move farther than your maximum move per Turn.)

Rank 2: Matsu's Fury

The target of a Matsu's fury has little hope of victory. When you assume the Full Attack Stance, choose an opponent within 30'. If you successfully hit him this Turn, the target is frozen with fear and cannot take Move Actions to move from his current position. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may attempt a Willpower roll against a TN equal to the amount of damage dealt from your latest attack to negate the effects of this Technique (the opponent does not suffer penalties from his Wound Rank for this roll). If he fails, the effects of this Technique end during the next Reactions Stage (the second after he was struck).

Enemies who are immune to Fear cannot be affected by this Technique.

Rank 3: The Lion's Charge

When a Lion strikes, he grants the gift of final rest to all who stand against him. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank 4: Matsu's Courage

Death means nothing in the face of the loss of honor, and no Matsu will yield while he yet draws breath. You ignore TN penalties from Wound Levels equal to your Honor Rank, or twice your Honor Rank while in the Full Attack Stance.

Rank 5: The Lion's Victory

The death of an opponent is the only measure of victory for a Matsu. Once per encounter after you roll damage for an attack, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to activate this Technique. You rend the opponent, ripping open his wounds and dealing grievous injury to him. All of the dice you chose to keep explode, re-rolling and adding the result to your damage total.

The Mantis Clan

The Mantis Clan is adaptable and unpredictable, and many find the Mantis to be much like the seas on which they travel from their island holdings to the mainland Empire. The Mantis were not born a Great Clan, but seized the position during one of the greatest conflicts in history, the Clan War. Comprised of families formed from different Minor Clans, the Mantis are perhaps the most diverse and individualistic of the Great Clans.

The Kitsune Family: +1 Awareness

Formerly known as the Fox Clan, the Kitsune joined the Mantis Clan decades after the other families founded it, and only then because the Fox were on the brink of annihilation and the Yoritomo could save them, with the only price being an oath of fealty. The Kitsune are a simple, quiet people who prefer to commune with the spirits of nature in the forest rather than travel across the Empire on formal business.

The Moshi Family: +1 Intelligence

Before the formation of the Mantis as a Great Clan, the Moshi were the Centipede Clan. An extremely devout and matriarchal people, the Moshi devoted themselves to the worship of the Sun for centuries, and find their active role among the other families of the Mantis mildly uncomfortable. Still, the family has sworn an oath to the Yoritomo and refuses to break it, no matter how much their duties conflict with their philosophies.

The Tsuruchi Family: +1 Perception

Formerly known as the Wasp Clan, the Tsuruchi are without question the greatest archers in the Empire, and have focused the majority of their efforts toward maintaining that level of skill. Generally perceptive and highly athletic, the Tsuruchi excel as warriors and magistrates.

The Yoritomo Family: +1 Stamina

The lords of the Mantis are descended from the Crab, and are equally hardy in their own way. They are the unquestioned masters of the seas, having dwelled on the Islands of Silk and Spice for the entirety of their existence. The Yoritomo are a hardy, industrious people ever eager to prove themselves against the other Great Clans.

The Yoritomo Bushi School

The Yoritomo are masters of the sea, and as a result of centuries spent fighting from ship to ship and on the beaches, their fighting style is highly unusual. The pitching and rolling of the waves has been incorporated into their style, which uses more movement than many major Schools. Likewise the Yoritomo have learned that protracted fighting is almost always detrimental to naval combat, and they have learned to ruthlessly exploit any weaknesses in their opponents' defenses. Finally, the corrosive effect of sea air on steel is well known, and as a result the Mantis have centuries of experience fighting with highly unconventional weaponry, in particular the kind of weapons most often relegated to peasants.

The Yoritomo Techniques essentially focus on dabbling in a little bit of everything. They have potent attacks, unhindered movement, and can cripple an opponent's Armor TN, among other things. The Yoritomo are jacks of all trades, but master of none, making them highly adaptable assets in a skirmish.

Yoritomo Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Commerce, Defense, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons), Kenjutsu, Knives (Kama), Sailing, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon (or pair of Knives), Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Mantis

Mantis bushi learn to fight on the pitching decks of ships and to use anything within reach as a weapon. You suffer no penalties to movement or attacks for rough or uneven terrain. You do not lose Glory or Honor when using improvised weapons, or weapons with the Peasant keyword, in combat. You suffer no penalties for fighting with a Small or Medium weapon in your off-hand if that weapon has the Peasant keyword. Finally, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to all attack rolls.

Rank 2: Voice of the Storm

Your wild, unfettered attacks disorient your opponent and opens holes in his defenses. Every time you hit an opponent in melee, his Armor TN is reduced by 5. This penalty only applies to your attacks, and lasts for 2 Rounds. This Technique is cumulative (a number of times equal to your School Rank), and the duration resets with each application.

Rank 3: Strike of the Mantis

A Yoritomo strikes as swiftly as the storm. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using weapons with the Samurai or Peasant keyword.

Rank 4: The Rolling Wave

The Yoritomo Bushi reacts with the flow of combat, deftly dodging blows while reaching his target. If you move at least 5 feet, you gain a bonus of +10 to your Armor TN until your next Turn. You may sacrifice this bonus during your Turn before you roll for any attack to gain two Free Raises that may only be used to perform the Knockdown Maneuver.

Rank 5: Hand of Osano-Wo

The Yoritomo Bushi strikes with brutal force, digging his weapons deep into his target. You may choose to activate this Technique by spending a Void Point as a Free Action. You keep an additional number of damage dice equal to your Strength. If these attacks hit a Prone target, you gain a bonus of +0k2 to the total of your damage rolls against that target.

The Moshi Shugenja School

The practices of the Moshi shugenja were developed over the course of many years spent in unwavering devotion to the

Sun Goddess. Despite the celestial upheaval that has occurred within the Celestial Order during Rokugan's history, the Moshi have managed to retain their devotion even if the nature of their magical studies has changed somewhat. Since joining the Mantis Clan, their focus has shifted from one of pure theology to more practical concerns, and they excel at invoking the kami who hold sway over the weather. As such, the Moshi, who are far more numerous than the modest Yoritomo bloodline that maintains its own shugenja tradition, are frequently stationed aboard Yoritomo vessels in order to placate the seas during the clan's all-important mercantile voyages.

Like their Yoritomo kinsmen, the Moshi are highly adaptable. Their ability to gain an additional Affinity during the day, particularly since it is not accompanied by an additional Deficiency, allows them extreme versatility in their spell-casting choices, enough to rival even the Isawa of the Phoenix Clan.

Moshi Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Divination, Lore: Theology, Meditation, Spellcraft, any two High or Bugei Skills
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 10 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Air / Earth
- **Technique:** *Favor of the Sun* – No family has been more reverent of the various incarnations of the Sun throughout their history, and their piety has granted them great favor with the Heavens. During the day, you gain an additional Affinity for Fire spells. This benefit is lost at night. You also gain a Free Raise on any spells with the Thunder keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Air, and 3 Fire spells

The Yoritomo Courtier School

Left to their own devices by an Empire that largely discounted them, the Yoritomo family refused to disappear, instead devoting their considerable resources to every possible aspect of a Clan's normal development. Understanding the impact that trained courtiers could have on their mercantile interests, the Yoritomo developed a School to serve them in that regard. Although successful in business endeavors, the Yoritomo courtiers have only rarely made strides in court, historically speaking, because of their brusque manner and dependence upon intimidation. Since their elevation to Great Clan status, however, the increased clout the Mantis possess has diminished the need for these tactics, and the Yoritomo Courtier School has begun to see more success in different political arenas.

The Yoritomo Techniques specialize in intimidation and, frankly, bullying. This makes them particularly effective when facing opponents unaccustomed to such tactics, or who are weak-willed. Unfortunately, more capable opponents such as the Crane or Scorpion may well be completely immune to a Yoritomo's primary abilities.

Yoritomo Courtier School

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Commerce (Appraisal), Courtier, Defense, Etiquette, Intimidation (Control), Sincerity, any one Merchant or Lore skill
- **Honor:** 2.5
- **Outfit:** Extravagant Clothing, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Duty Before Honor

Like the Yasuki, the Mantis courtiers are merchants as well as diplomats, and they cultivate a personal style built around intimidation rather than friendship. Furthermore, they spend much of their lives outside of the courts dealing with some of the more unsavory characters in Rokugan. You do not lose Glory or Honor for using the Commerce skill in public, and you do not lose Honor for using the Intimidation (Control) skill. Any time you are making Social Skill Rolls against ronin, bandits, gang members, mercenaries, pirates, and other lawless types, you gain a number of Free Raises equal to your School Rank.

Rank Two: Storm Heart

When the time comes to act in the courts, the Yoritomo eschew the eloquent words of the Doji or the subtle gibes of the Scorpion in favor of straightforward bullying, browbeating friend and foe alike into accepting their position. When you use the Intimidation (Control) Skill, your Willpower is considered to be one Rank higher. When you use the Intimidation (Control) skill against a samurai with lower Status Rank than you, your Willpower is considered two Ranks higher instead.

Rank Three: Command the Winds

The Mantis are taught to put the force of their boorish and aggressive behavior behind their words in court, making it difficult to tell whether they are lying or telling the truth. A number of times per session equal to your School Rank, if you have failed a Sincerity Social Skill Roll, you may re-roll it as an Intimidation (Control) Social Skill Roll instead. You must take the result of the Intimidation roll.

Rank Four: Will of the Storm

An experienced Mantis has learned to shatter and demoralize his opponents in court with his mere presence. When initiating a conversation with someone, you may make a Contested Roll of your Intimidation (Control) / Willpower against his Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. If you win the roll, he cannot spend any Void points against you for the next hour. Also, during that time he suffers a –3k0 penalty to all Social Rolls made against you. (This Technique cannot be used again until its effect expires.)

Rank 5: Strength in All Things

At this Rank the Mantis courtier's iron willpower and threatening nature have reached perfection, allowing him to overcome all foes and to laugh in the face of threats that would make even a Hida bushi turn pale. Any time you are attempting to use the Intimidation skill against someone else, or are rolling to resist an Intimidation or Temptation Skill Roll or a Fear effect, you gain a bonus of +5k0 to the roll.

The Tsuruchi Archer School

Even before joining the Mantis, when they were the Wasp Clan, there was little question that the Tsuruchi were the greatest archers in the Empire. That they have so embraced this as to virtually put aside the study of the blade, however, has often caused others to look at them with great suspicion. The Tsuruchi rarely care, however; they believe in the purity of the bow, and while their sensei teach proficiency with other weapons as well, such are purely secondary concerns. The Tsuruchi Techniques are the epitome of the Rokugani philosophy of archery, which is that the arrow knows the way, and should be fired without hesitation or aiming.

The Tsuruchi Techniques focus almost exclusively on ranged combat, an area in which they are unquestionably the finest in all the Empire. While this is a considerable advantage, when pressed into melee, a Tsuruchi will be badly outclassed by virtually any other bushi School.

Tsuruchi Archer School [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Reflexes
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Investigation, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 2, any one Bugei or High Skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Bow and 20 arrows, Wakizashi, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Always Be Ready

The Tsuruchi Archer must be prepared to fight against his foes with little warning. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all attack rolls while using a bow. Additionally, you gain a bonus of +3 to your Initiative Score.

Rank 2: The Arrow Knows the Way

A Tsuruchi must not aim, but simply allows the arrow to follow its own path. You gain one Free Raise that can only be used to make the Called Shot Maneuver. Additionally, you gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of all damage rolls while using a bow.

Rank 3: The Wasp's Sting

Tsuruchi's technique teaches its students uncanny speed. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when using a bow.

Rank 4: Flight of No-Mind

The true archer does not concern himself with the arrow, but exists only to loose it. Once per skirmish, you may spend a Void Point as a Complex Action to shoot an arrow that knows exactly where it must go. This attack ignores all effects of armor, as well as any penalties from Wound Ranks or visibility. You may make Raises but you cannot perform the Extra Attack Maneuver for this attack.

You may not shoot a target that is further than your bow's normal range with this Technique.

Rank 5: Tsuruchi's Eye

The final lesson of Tsuruchi is that there is nothing that cannot be felled by a single arrow. You may make a ranged attack as a Complex Action to gain a bonus of +4k1 to the total of both the attack and damage rolls. You may not use this Technique in conjunction with Flight of No-Mind.



The Phoenix Clan

With regard to the subject of shugenja, the consensus of an entire Empire is that the Phoenix possess both the largest number of shugenja and the most powerful of them. The descendants of the Tribe of Isawa and those who have sworn allegiance to them command mystical power unlike anything seen in the other Clans, and the followers of the Kami Shiba have sworn to protect them for all time, no matter the cost.

The Agasha Family: +1 Perception

Once a family of the Dragon Clan, the Agasha abandoned their Togashi masters when they felt the Dragon abandoned their duties to the Empire. The Phoenix have proven much more amenable to their unique brand of magic. The Agasha are highly experimental and curious, always pushing the boundaries of what is known and what can be safely attempted when dealing with magic.

The Asako Family: +1 Awareness

The quiet, reclusive Asako are a very monastic family, living scholarly and ascetic lives more befitting the Brotherhood of Shinsei than a family of samurai. They comprise the majority of the Phoenix Clan's courtiers, and the entirety of the mysterious Henshin monks. Asako are contemplative and inquisitive, but generally without ambition other than to serve and learn.

The Isawa Family: +1 Willpower

The Isawa truly rule the Phoenix Clan, despite the presence of a Shiba Clan Champion. They are unquestionably the most knowledgeable, most powerful, and most numerous shugenja family in the Empire. Unfortunately, this has made them arrogant as well, and many Isawa constantly struggle against their own shortcomings.

The Shiba Family: +1 Perception

The Shiba are among the most scholarly and least aggressive of all bushi families. They serve the Clan and the Isawa without complaint or consideration for themselves. Although they prefer peace and compassion, the Shiba will not retreat from a battle once the Phoenix have committed themselves to an engagement.

The Shiba Bushi School

The Shiba Bushi are well known as a relatively peaceful group, at least as bushi are concerned. Their training emphasizes a number of non-martial skills in addition to the traditional weapons training, which has led to a reputation as warrior-scholars in some circles. A Shiba bushi considers all options before committing to combat, searching for any possible alternative other than the loss of life. If those a Shiba protects are threatened, however, or if combat is an inevitability, he attacks swiftly and without reservation, committing himself fully to the act until it is done. Those who mistake the desire of a Shiba bushi to preserve life for an inability to take it are woefully unprepared to face them on the battlefield.

The Shiba Techniques optimize the use of Void Points and specialize in the protection of others, allowing Shiba bushi to more than adequately fill their common role as yojimbo. They also possess an affinity for the use of polearms, and can excel at dueling if properly tailored.

Shiba Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation (Void Recovery), Spears, Theology, any one Bugei or High Skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Phoenix

Shiba bushi move through battle as the Void moves through all the elements. When spending a Void Point to gain +1k1 on a roll, you may choose to spend 2 Void Points (to gain +2k2) on the roll instead. You may Guard as a Free Action; however, if you do so, your target only adds +5 to his Armor TN instead of +10.

Rank 2: Dancing With the Elements

Shiba bushi become attuned to the shugenja they protect, aiding their spells and deterring those of their enemies. When you assume your Stance for the Round, you may choose a target within 30'. Whenever your target casts or is the target of a spell, you may choose to increase or decrease the TN of the spell by 5. Additionally, whenever you are the target of a spell, you may immediately choose to increase or decrease the TN of the spell by 5.

Rank 3: One With the Void

In battle, the Shiba can find his place in the world. This Technique automatically activates during the Reactions Stage of Combat if another character spent a Void Point during this Combat Round. You regain a Void Point. This Void Point may exceed your maximum, but all excess Void Points are lost after combat resolves. You do not learn anything regarding the source of the Void Point or how it was originally spent. This Technique only activates twice per skirmish.

Rank 4: Move With the World

Serenity brings certainty, and certainty brings speed. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using Polearms, Spears, or weapons with the Samurai keyword.

Rank 5: Touch of the Void

Masters of the Shiba style can draw back the veil and allow the universe to act through them. For every Void Point you spend, you gain the effects of spending two, when applicable. Additionally, you may now spend Void Points on enhancements (as listed in the *Book of Earth*) twice in one Turn.

The Isawa Shugenja School

The Isawa are the greatest shugenja in the Empire, and while the family would never claim this openly, the behavior of those who have trained in their prestigious School bears this out. Fortunately, most others recognize the truth of it as well, and accept it with varying degrees of resentment or resignation. The Isawa are nearly twice as large as the next largest shugenja family in the Empire. Indeed, there are so many among their ranks that they are nearly the size of a typical bushi family. That so many among them are born with the gift to speak to the kami has allowed the family to diversify into numerous areas of magical specialization, but the core of their power has always been the Isawa Shugenja School. It is literally the oldest School of its kind in Rokugan, and the Isawa have been struggling to master the secrets of the universe for more than one thousand years.

The Isawa Shugenja has no particular specialization, but instead are constructed around the premise of being the finest at spell-casting in general. Their ability to choose an Affinity without a corresponding Deficiency, and their unrestricted Free Raise on all Spell Casting Rolls of their Affinity, make them extremely competent and the equal of virtually any other shugenja character.

Isawa Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Lore: Theology, any one Lore Skill, Medicine, Meditation, Spellcraft, any one High Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 5 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Isawa shugenja may select any element of their choosing, including Void, as their Affinity. They do not have a Deficiency.
- **Technique:** *Isawa's Gift* – There are no greater masters of the shugenja tradition than those among the Isawa. You gain a Free Raise on all Spell Casting Rolls for spells of the element which you chose as your Affinity.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 spells of any one element, 2 spells of any other element, 1 spell of a third element, and 1 spell of a fourth element.

The Asako Loremaster School

The Asako are monastic and scholarly by nature, and nowhere is this more evident than in the courtier tradition they maintain on behalf of the Phoenix Clan. Their training consists of extensive studies in a large number of subjects, some of which may be chosen by the students themselves. A broad knowledge base gives the Asako a frame of reference from which to examine any new data or situation, and allows them great insight into the social situations of court.

The Loremasters specialize in scholarly pursuits, and use those as a means of succeeding in social situations. Asako courtiers use Lore Skills to augment their Social Skills, gaining influence and success in court through their learned natures.



Asako Loremaster School [Courtier]

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette (Courtesy), Lore: History, Lore: Theology (Fortunes), Meditation, Sincerity, any Lore skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Sensible Clothing, Wakizashi, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Temple of the Soul

The Asako are historians and scholars, and their studies are broader than those of any others in the Empire. They pride themselves on the depth of their knowledge in all fields of intellectual endeavor. They also share the Phoenix devotion to peace and civility, relying on genteel discourse to resolve problems. You gain a Free Raise on any Skill Roll with a Lore Skill. Any time you spend a Void point on an Etiquette Skill Roll, you gain a bonus of +3k1 to the total of the roll instead of the normal +1k1.

Rank Two: From the Ashes

The Asako Loremasters' in-depth study of historical events allows them to detect subtle patterns of behavior in every court, patterns invisible to their more worldly rivals from other Clans. After spending at least one day observing the events in a particular court, you can roll Lore: History / Perception at TN 20 to gain a bonus +2k0 to the total of all your Social Skill Rolls for the next two days, so long as you remain in that court. (This Technique's effect can be re-activated with another skill roll when it expires – it is not necessary to spend additional days observing so long as you remain in the same court.)

Rank Three: Voice of the Universe

As the Asako's training progresses, his recall of obscure historical facts allows him to provide useful contemporary advice to his allies. You may spend an hour conversing with a friend or ally and then roll Lore: History / Intelligence at TN 25. With a success, that ally may add your Lore: History Skill Rank to the total of any Social Skill Rolls he makes within the next twenty-four hours. You may Raise twice to affect one (and only one) additional ally, provided that ally also participates in the conversation. (This Technique cannot be used on the same person again until its effect expires.)

Rank Four: Invincible Mind

The enlightened and educated Asako can see through the games, tricks, and deceits of the material world. Any time you fail a Contested Social Skill Roll to resist someone trying to influence your emotions, opinions, or behavior (such as with the Courtier, Temptation, or Intimidation skills), you may re-roll using Intelligence as the Trait for the second roll in place of whichever Trait was originally required. You must keep the results of the second roll. This Technique cannot be used to resist Fear.

Rank Five: Wisdom of the Ages

At this rank, the Asako truly demonstrate that the wisdom of the Phoenix is eternal. Any time you are rolling a Lore Skill, including for your other School Techniques, you gain a +5k0 bonus to the total of the roll.

The Agasha Shugenja School

During their centuries of service to the Dragon Clan, the Agasha pursued many unconventional paths of magic, pursuits which were carried out with the full resources and endorsement of the Agasha Shugenja School. In addition to their alchemical interests, the Agasha have always had an interest in the creation of spells that invoked kami of multiple elements simultaneously. Among the Phoenix the Agasha have been given leave to pursue this area of study as far as they wish, and they have made tremendous strides in the area of multi-elemental spells.

The Agasha Technique focuses on the family's interest in merging the elements and casting multi-elemental spells. Although this practice has yet to be accepted, their Technique allows them to change the element of the spell they are casting, which gives them unmatched versatility in managing both their spells per day as well as their spell slots.

Agasha Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), any one Craft Skill, Defense, Etiquette, Lore: Theology, Spellcraft, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 5 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Fire / Water
- **Technique:** *Elements of All Things* – The Agasha understand the interactions of the elements more so than perhaps any other family. When casting a spell, you may spend a Void Point to use a different Ring of your choosing rather than the appropriate Ring for that spell. This spell uses a spell slot for the Ring used to actually cast the spell. You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Craft keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Fire, 2 Earth, and 1 Air

The Scorpion Clan

When the Empire was first formed, the Scorpion were tasked with two sacred duties: one was to safeguard the Black Scrolls in which was bound the power of the fallen dark god Fu Leng, and the second was to serve as a villain against which the Great Clans could unite so that they would never unite against the Emperor. It is the latter duty at which the Scorpion have excelled, and in which they revel.

The Bayushi Family: +1 Agility

Ruthless and deceitful, the lords of the Scorpion Clan possess many talents, all of which have been put to sinister use for the benefit of their Clan and their Emperor. The Bayushi are dark, dangerous, and manipulative, and always evaluate any situation in terms of how it can best benefit themselves and the Scorpion.

The Shosuro Family: +1 Awareness

The Shosuro dwell in shadows, rarely being seen but always having an influence on those around them. They are secretive and withdrawn, keeping their own counsel but never failing to obey a command from their Bayushi lords. When the Scorpion require some impossible task performed without complication, it is a Shosuro who fulfills the duty.

The Soshi Family: +1 Intelligence

The Soshi are the main shugenja family of the Scorpion Clan, founded soon after the Clan's beginnings, and specialize in using magic to enhance the Clan's efforts in politics, deceit, and manipulation. They often work in close concert with the Shosuro, using their magic to support the Shosuro's ruthless and secret activities.

The Yogo Family: +1 Willpower

No family among the accepted Great Clans is more feared or reviled than the Yogo, the Scorpion Clan's second shugenja family. They are descended from a Phoenix who was cursed during the early days of the Empire to betray the one he loved the most. The curse has been passed down into the family's bloodline, and as such many avoid the Yogo whenever possible. The Yogo pay no heed to their reputation, however, and use their powerful magic in service to the Scorpion regardless of how expendable they may be considered.

The Bayushi Bushi School

The greatest villains in Rokugan's most successful plays are always Scorpions, because it is so easy for most samurai to believe. It is the actions of students from the Bayushi Bushi School that have brought this stereotype to life and reinforced it over and over again. Every student in the Bayushi dojo is trained to be the perfect weapon of discord, capable of turning the Clans against one another with minimal effort. Weapons training is only one aspect of their education, which often includes social manipulation, stealth, and even the use of poisons when the student is deemed suitable for such things.

The Bayushi Techniques might best be described as dirty tricks. They focus on granting the character an advantage, such as an increase in Initiative, or ruthlessly exploiting any other advantage that might already exist. In particular the ability to cripple an opponent with Conditions can turn the tide of a battle against a vastly superior opponent, if one has but a little luck.

Bayushi Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Courtier (Manipulation), Defense, Etiquette, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Sincerity, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 2.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Scorpion

Scorpion bushi always seem to get the jump on opponents. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to your Initiative Rolls. You also gain a bonus of +5 to your Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.

Rank 2: Pincers and Tail

The infamous Scorpion feint has been the demise of many foolhardy samurai. You may make the Feint Maneuver for one Raise instead of two.

Rank 3: Strike at the Tail

Scorpion bushi strive to keep their enemies off guard, stopping their attacks and slowing them down. When you assume a Stance at the start of your Turn, you may choose a target within 30'. If you successfully hit him during your Turn, the target is Fatigued as if he had gone without rest for 24 hours. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may attempt an Earth Ring roll against a TN of 25 to negate the effects of this Technique. If he fails, the effects of this Technique end during the next Reactions Stage (the second Reactions Stage after he was struck).

Rank 4: Strike From Above, Strike From Below

The swiftness of the Scorpion allows him to cut down foes before they realize they have been attacked. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank 5: The Pincers Hold, The Tail Strikes

Striking an opponent's weakest point is the Scorpion's true path to victory. Once per encounter, you may spend a Void Point as a Complex Action to attack your opponent with a me-

lee weapon. If the attack is successful, the target is Stunned. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may attempt an Earth Ring roll against a TN equal to the amount of damage dealt to end the Stun effect. If he fails or does not attempt this roll, the Stun effect ends during the next Reactions Stage (the second Reactions Stage after he was struck).

The Soshi Shugenja School

Although it is admittedly rare, there are times when the prodigious physical abilities of the Bayushi and Shosuro are inadequate to accomplish a task requiring stealth and subtlety. When this happens, a student of the Soshi Shugenja School is brought in to deal with the matter. The Soshi understand better than most that the kami are not honorable beings as many envision them, but rather completely alien creatures with no firm concept of human behavior or even of honor itself. They can and will do virtually anything asked of them if properly entreated, so long as the request is not a violation of the natural order such as blood sorcery. The Soshi excel at exploiting this to channel the kami into feats of stealth, trickery, and deception.

Although all shugenja have the potential to cast spells discreetly, none excel at it as the Soshi do. Their ability to cast virtually any non-damaging spell without any outward indications of its origin make them perfect for infiltration and subtle manipulation at court.

Soshi Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Courtier, Etiquette, Lore: Theology, Spellcraft, Stealth, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 2.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 5 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Air / Earth
- **Technique:** *The Kami's Whisper* – The Soshi cast their spells as quietly as the kami themselves. You may sacrifice an additional spell slot (of the same Element) when casting any spell with no potential to inflict damage in order to eliminate all visible signs of the spell having been cast. All spell effects take place normally; there is simply no outward sign of what has happened. You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Illusion keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Air, 2 Fire, and 1 Water

The Bayushi Courtier School

The reputation of the Scorpion in court is nearly equal to that of the Crane, and certainly more fearsome. This is a direct result of the malevolent machinations of Bayushi courtiers over the course of centuries. The much vaunted information network of the Scorpion is largely a product of their masterful courtiers, ferreting out even minute bits of information that can be used as a whole to bring ruin to individuals, families, or even Clans.

A Scorpion courtier is a master of manipulation and deceit. Even more than that, however, they excel at discovering the weaknesses or dark secrets of their opponents (or even allies!) and ruthlessly exploiting them for the good of the Scorpion. Any foe, no matter how seemingly implacable, can be the target for a Bayushi courtier's abilities, opening avenues previously closed.

Bayushi Courtier School

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Courtier (Gossip), Etiquette, Investigation, Sincerity (Deceit), Temptation, any one High skill
- **Honor:** 2.5
- **Outfit:** Extravagant Clothing, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

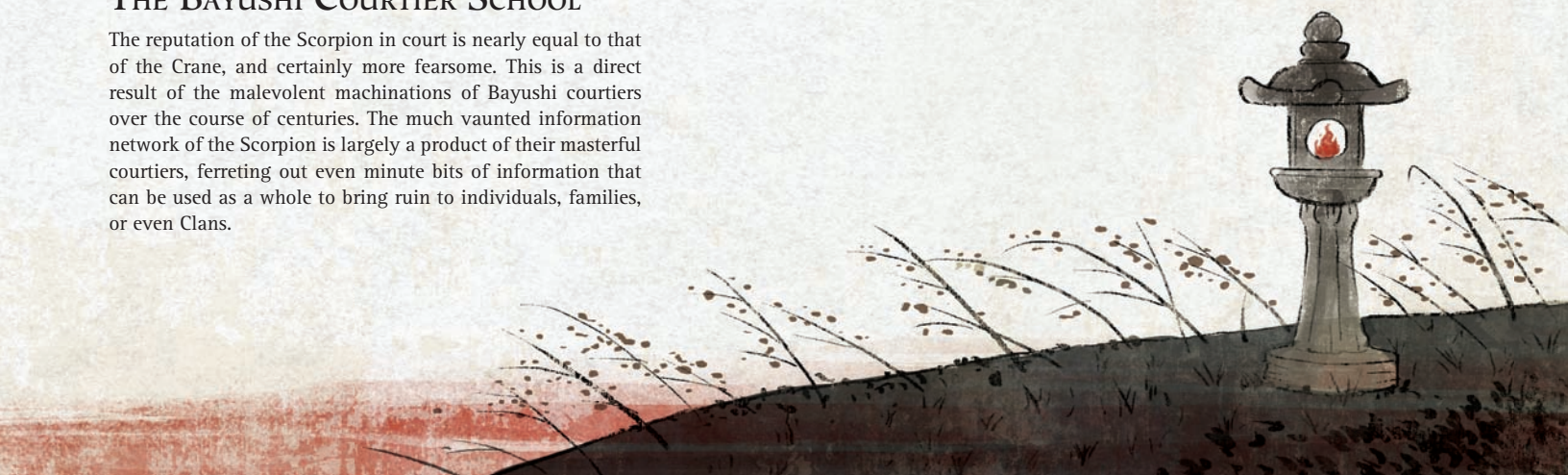
Rank 1: Weakness is My Strength

The Bayushi are masters at ferreting out and exploiting the weaknesses and failures of others. Even if they do not know the exact nature of a rival's secrets, the mere realization that he has some sort of secret is enough for them to work with. When you are making a Contested Social Roll against someone else, you gain a Free Raise to your roll for every 3 points of Mental or Social Disadvantages (rounded off) he possesses. Disadvantages which did not award Experience Points still count for their normal point value for the purposes of this Technique. This technique cannot award more than 5 Free Raises.

The Bayushi are also known as the masters of both truth and lies, speaking so smoothly that both are indistinguishable in their mouths. You gain a Free Raise when using the Courtier skill to spread gossip, and need not Raise in order to conceal that you are the source of that gossip.

Rank 2: Shallow Waters

The Scorpion know how to assess others, sensing their weaknesses so as to determine how best to bring them down. By conversing with someone for a few minutes, you can make a Contested Roll of your Investigation / Awareness against their Etiquette / Awareness. With a success, you learn the identity and rank of their lowest Mental Trait and their lowest Social Skill that has at least one Rank (the GM chooses in the case of ties). You may spend a Void point to also learn their next lowest Mental Trait and next lowest Social Skill.



Rank 3: Secrets are Birthmarks

At this rank, the Scorpion has become so adept at ferreting out secrets that he can lure others into revealing them in casual conversation. By speaking with someone for a few minutes, you may make a Contested Roll of your Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness to force them into revealing one Mental or Social Disadvantage they possess. If they have no such Disadvantages, this will instead reveal one Mental or Social Advantage. (Note this will only reveal the rulebook title of the Advantage / Disadvantage, not the specific nature of it. For example, you might learn that the target has "Dark Secret," but not the specific nature of the secret.) If the roll succeeded in revealing a Disadvantage, with the GM's permission you may take a 2-point Blackmail Advantage against this individual, for no cost in Experience Points.



Rank 4: Scrutiny's Sweet Sting

At this rank, the Bayushi Courtier has learned to use all the information he has collected to subtly wreck his enemies, undermining their every word and deed. Any time you make a Contested Social Skill Roll against someone on whom you have Blackmail, his dice cannot explode. In addition, any time you make a Contested Social Skill Roll against someone, regardless of whether you have Blackmail on them or not, you may spend a Void point to force them to use a mental Trait of your choice (instead of the normal Trait used for the roll).

Rank 5: No More Masks

The final lesson of the Bayushi School is to force the rest of the court to see the corrupt, dishonorable world he knows, shattering the reputations of those he speaks against. A number of times per session equal to your School Rank, you may make an Opposed Social Roll of Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness against an opponent's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness. If you have Blackmail on the person you are targeting with this technique, you gain a bonus of +5k0 to total of this roll. With a success, you may inflict one social Disadvantage on the target: Bad Reputation, Sworn Enemy, or Obligation (to someone of your choice). The Disadvantage lasts for one month, unless the GM judges that the target has taken action which can expunge it sooner. (This Technique cannot be used on the same target again until its effect expires.)

The Shosuro Infiltrator School

Few outside the Scorpion Clan are aware of the existence of the Shosuro Infiltrator School, and those few who do are either so inextricably bound to the Clan that they dare not reveal its existence, or have been so thoroughly discredited that no one takes their wild accusations seriously. The Shosuro are that which most believe all Scorpion to be, but without the arrogance and cruelty that such villains are commonly ascribed in plays and poems. The Infiltrators are silent, merciless killers who take no pleasure or satisfaction from their role. They are simply fulfilling their duty, and experience neither joy nor remorse as a result.

The specialization of the Shosuro Infiltrators is relatively simple: they attack unknowing targets and destroy them utterly. Their bonuses to stealth make them virtually impossible to detect and, once hidden from an opponent, they can strike from shadows and inflict incredible amounts of damage.

Shosuro Infiltrator School [Ninja]

- **Benefit:** +1 Reflexes
- **Skills:** Acting, Athletics, Ninjutsu, Sincerity, Stealth (Sneaking) 2, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 1.5
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Black Clothing, Daisho, Bow or Knife, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Path of Shadows

The first lesson of an infiltrator is to mask all signs of one's true nature. You lose no Honor for use of Low Skills or Ninjutsu Weapons in the service of the Scorpion Clan (subject to GM approval). You gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of all Stealth Skill Rolls.

Rank 2: Strike from Darkness

A student of the Shosuro Techniques never fails to exploit any advantage held over a foe. Whenever you declare an attack against an opponent who is unaware of your presence until the moment of the attack, your Raises are not limited by your Void and you roll additional dice equal to your School Rank on the attack roll. You also roll half this number of additional unkept dice on an attack roll made against an opponent who is suffering from a Condition effect (such as Stunned or Fatigued). These two effects are not cumulative, and if both could apply, you must choose one of them. (You do not add one and one half times your School Rank in dice to an attack roll against an opponent who is both Blinded and unaware of your presence, for example.)

Rank 3: Steel Within Silk

Striking quickly and effectively is the hallmark of a true shadow warrior. When attacking from ambush as described above, or when using ninjutsu weapons (including any weapons with the Ninja keyword), you may make a melee attack (or ranged attack, in the case of shuriken or tsubute) as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action.

Rank 4: Whisper of Steel

A master assassin strikes from shadow without ever revealing his presence. Even after attacking a target, your opponents and bystanders must succeed at a Contested Roll using Investigation (Notice) / Perception against Stealth / Agility to detect you. You may only use this Technique if you make a single attack per round. (The GM may rule that this technique does not work in situations where concealment is impossible.)

Rank 5: The Final Silence

The true assassin requires but a single strike. After you make a damage roll as a result of a successful attack, you may spend a Void Point to increase any two dice to show 10s. These 10s do not explode. You may spend multiple Void Points in this manner, with each Void Point spent increasing the result of up to two damage dice.



The Unicorn Clan

The Unicorn, once known as the Ki-Rin Clan, were absent from the Empire for nearly eight centuries as they wandered the world, exploring and ensuring that there were no external threats to the Emperor that might remain unknown. Since their return, they have been regarded by many as barbarians and outsiders, due mostly to their embrace of customs that are in stark contrast to the norm for Rokugan. Still, the Unicorn are universally respected because of their cavalry. They use gaijin steeds and their horse-mounted troops are without compare in the Empire.

The Horiuchi Family: +1 Willpower

The tiny Horiuchi family has never claimed more than a few dozen members at most. Created a few decades before the Clan War, the Horiuchi are a branch of the Iuchi family that specializes in defensive and protective magic. Horiuchi samurai are compassionate individuals who tend to intervene in the affairs of others during times of crisis.

The Ide Family: +1 Perception

The public face of the Unicorn, the Ide have worked tirelessly to combat the perception many have of the Clan as barbarians and near-gaijin. They flawlessly merge the traditions of their people with the customs of the Empire, and in doing so seek to earn the gradual respect and acceptance of other clans. Samurai of the Ide family are almost universally even-tempered and eager to forge alliances with others, whether personal or larger in scale.

The Iuchi Family: +1 Intelligence

With the exception of the Tamori, the Iuchi family is probably the most militant shugenja family in the Empire. They serve in the armies of the Unicorn Clan in considerable numbers, and while they enjoy friendship and scholarly debate as much as any priests, they do not shy away from conflict when pressed.

The Moto Family: +1 Agility

The Moto exemplify virtually every negative stereotype that the Unicorn Clan as a whole has struggled with since their return to the Empire centuries ago. More than any other family, their gaijin blood is obvious from the look of them, short and squat as they are. They are alternately boisterous and brusque, depending upon the circumstances, and rarely fit in well with samurai of other Clans. They are respected, however, for their warrior traditions.

The Shinjo Family: +1 Reflexes

The Shinjo family ruled the Unicorn Clan for most of their history, although in the latter portion of the Empire's development they were removed from power by their founder, the Kami Shinjo, due to corruption within their ranks. The Shinjo are an affable, industrious family whose members adapt easily to almost any task set before them, and who work well with others in virtually any situation.

The Utaku Family: +1 Stamina

The matriarchal Utaku family are rigidly honorable and pious individuals with carefully defined duties depending upon their gender. Women are generally trained to serve with the most elite cavalry units in the world, the Utaku Battle Maidens, while the men manage the households and serve among the legions of infantry in the Unicorn army.

The Moto Bushi School

The Moto Bushi are the living stereotype that many hold of the Unicorn Clan. More so than any other family, they are born of a union between the Rokugani people and the gaijin who were allowed to join the Unicorn during their travels abroad. Owing to their descent from the wild, nomadic, barbarian tribes of the northern steppes, the Moto practice an unfettered fighting style that makes them awe-inspiring opponents on the battlefield, even as it earns them the enmity of all those who despise deviation from the customs and nature of Rokugani warfare.

The Moto Bushi are heavy cavalry, a role around which their Techniques are unabashedly centered. They excel at the Full Attack Stance, and many of their Techniques are geared toward allowing them to do additional damage with any of an assortment of weaponry.

Moto Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Horsemanship, Hunting, Kenjutsu (Scimitar), any one Bugei Skill, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Riding or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Traveling Pack, Horse (Unicorn riding horse), 10 koku, any one weapon

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Unicorn

The Moto combat style is a wild, unfettered fury that intimidates witnesses. You may wield any two-handed weapon with one hand (except for bows). You gain a bonus of +1k0 to damage rolls while mounted, using a scimitar, or while using a two-handed melee weapon (these bonuses do not stack). Scimitars have the Samurai keyword for you.

Rank 2: Shinsei's Smile

The Moto are famed for slicing their enemies' throats from ear to ear, a gruesome display they proudly call Shinsei's Smile. You take advantage of your opponent's weakened state, gaining a bonus to your attack rolls equal to half of his Wound Rank TN penalties, rounded down. For example, if your opponent is unhurt and in the Healthy Wound Rank, you do not gain a bonus. If your opponent is in the Crippled Wound Rank, you gain a bonus of +10 to the total of attack rolls.

Rank 3: Desert Wind Strike

Power and precision are equally valuable to the Moto. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when using a melee weapon.

Rank 4: The Charge of Madness

The Moto fighting style is utterly relentless, allowing him to move from one foe to another without ceasing. Once per skirmish, if you successfully bring a target down to the Out Wound Level, you may immediately make an additional attack as a Free Action. This attack may not target the same target as the attack that activated this Technique. You may not make Raises on this attack.

Rank 5: Moto Cannot Yield

A Moto never surrenders. While mounted or while assuming the Full Attack Stance you keep an additional number of damage dice equal to half your Strength, rounded down. You only gain this bonus while wielding a two-handed weapon or a weapon with the Samurai keyword.

The Iuchi Shugenja School

With the possible exception of the Tamori, the Iuchi are the least conventional and conservative shugenja family in the Empire. They are wild and carefree, and as many of their sensei's lessons are taught in the open plains as in the temple. This stems from their history of teaching while the Clan was traveling through distant realms. The impact of those years is also felt in the diversity of the family's magical styles. The Iuchi embrace, among others, the style called *meishodo*, which involves the creation of magical talismans that shugenja can draw on in lieu of the kami.

In keeping with the theme of the Unicorn in general, the Iuchi Technique enhances movement and allows for unparalleled speed, even among the Unicorn. Their ability to cast more powerful Travel spells further enhances their skill in this area.

Iuchi Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Battle, Calligraphy (Cipher), Horsemanship, Lore: Theology, Meditation, Spellcraft, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Extravagant Clothing, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, Horse (Unicorn riding horse), 10 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Water / Fire
- **Technique:** *Spirit of the Wind* – The Iuchi harness the power of the elements to grant the waves' speed to others. As a Complex Action, you may sacrifice one spell slot of any element to grant one target individual an additional Simple Move Action. This Simple Action is in addition to the target's normal Actions per Round. The additional Action must be used on the target's next Turn or it is lost. You also gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Travel keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Water, 2 Earth, and 1 Air

The Ide Emissary School

The Ide Techniques focus on a calm mind, serenity in all things, and mediation. They are the most pacifistic of any courtier tradition among the Great Clans, save possibly for the Asako of the Phoenix Clan. The intensity of their conviction with regard to pacifism has waxed and waned over the years, but on the whole they remain devoted to defusing conflict whenever possible. This makes them welcome allies to some Clans, and meddling outsiders to others. The Ide accept compliments and criticism with equal cheer.

The Ide Techniques are different from most courtier Techniques in that they are entirely non-offensive in nature. The Ide specialize in protecting themselves from the ramifications of their actions, and in attempting to defuse conflicts among others.

Ide Emissary School [Courtier]

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Commerce, Courtier, Etiquette (Conversation), Horsemanship, Sincerity (Honesty), any one High or Perform skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Extravagant Clothing, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Heart Speaks

The Ide are taught to adapt instantly to new customs and social nuances, allowing them to avoid giving offense in even the most dangerous and hostile of courts. Also, since they must often deal with foreigners who might react poorly to lies or manipulation, they are taught to employ honesty and direct speech wherever possible. In any situation in which you might inadvertently give offense, whether through accident or ignorance (such as being unaware of a daimyo's hostility to a particular subject of conversation), you may roll Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness at TN 20 to avoid doing so. You gain a Free Raise when rolling Sincerity (Honesty), but any time you roll Sincerity (Deceit), your TN is increased by +5.

Rank 2: Piercing the Veils

After centuries of dealing with unpredictable and sometimes violent folk in the Burning Sands, the Ide have learned an almost preternatural ability to read the emotions of others, recognizing their true feelings and, hopefully, steering away from trouble. You may attempt to read someone else's true emotions in a social situation by making a Contested Social Roll of your Etiquette / Awareness against the target's Etiquette / Willpower. With a success, you gain a simple, general idea of their true feelings – which can be very useful when those feelings are not the same as their outward actions. You may Raise for better information, subject to the GM's adjudication. (For example, two Raises might tell you, "The Doji is actually hoping for your success against the Dragon.")

Rank 3: The Heart Listens

The Ide family's training emphasizes friendship and good personal relations as the key to successful diplomacy. You may attempt to sway someone's attitudes toward you in a positive direction. This requires spending at least 10 minutes in conversation, after which you may make a Contested Roll of your Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. With a success, you shift their attitude toward you in a positive direction. (A hostile individual will become more neutral, an undecided individual will become friendly, etc.) If you make at least two successful Raises on this roll, the target will regard you as an Ally for the remainder of this day (subject to GM approval).

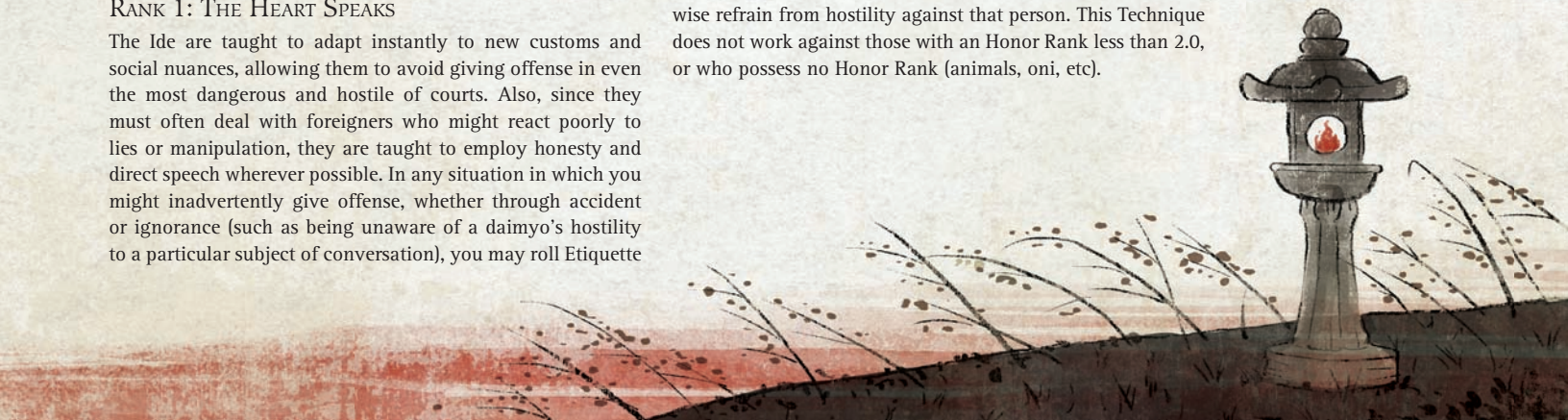
This technique cannot be used on Sworn Enemies, and the GM is the final arbiter on whether it functions against unusual targets such as nonhuman creatures.

Rank 4: Answering the Heart

At this level of training, the Ide have become true masters of mediation, able to see past all the deceptions and false fronts of diplomacy and discern the true solution to any problem. When using your Rank Two and Rank Three techniques, you may roll additional unkept dice equal to your School Rank.

Rank 5: The Immovable Hand of Peace

The final lesson the Ide school teaches its students is to be such perfect mediators that no honorable person can raise a hand against them in violence. You may spend a Void point to make a Contested Roll of your Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness against a target individual's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness. If you win the roll, the target cannot take any hostile action against you (physical, social, or magical) for a number of hours equal to twice your School Rank, as long as you likewise refrain from hostility against that person. This Technique does not work against those with an Honor Rank less than 2.0, or who possess no Honor Rank (animals, oni, etc).



The Utaku Battle Maiden School

The Utaku Battle Maidens, also known as the *shiotome*, are the finest and most respected cavalry in all the Empire, feared by reputation even more so than their kinsmen among the Moto and Shinjo families. While the remainder of the Clan trains on gaijin riding horses, a larger and sturdier breed than the simple Rokugani pony, the Utaku alone have the right to breed, raise, and ride into battle the legendary Utaku steeds, the finest horses in the world.

Like other Unicorn bushi Schools, the Utaku Battle Maiden Techniques focus on mounted combat, although not to the total exclusion of non-mounted abilities. On a horse, however, an Utaku is a threat to virtually any human opponent. Honor is an important trait for a Battle Maiden as well, and the higher an individual's Honor, the greater the bonuses they receive.

Utaku Battle Maiden [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Reflexes
- **Skills:** Battle, Defense, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu, Sincerity, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Riding Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, Horse (Utaku Warhorse), 10 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: Riding in Harmony

The Utaku Battle Maidens value honor above all. You gain a bonus equal to your Honor Rank to one attack roll per Round. While mounted, you may instead choose to apply this bonus to one damage roll if you choose. You gain a bonus equal to your Honor Rank to the total of all Horsemanship rolls.

Rank 2: The Void of War

An Utaku can sacrifice defense for speed if the flow of the battle calls for it. During Stage 1 of any Combat Round, you may add 5 to either your Initiative Score or your Armor TN. This bonus lasts until you use this Technique again or the skirmish ends.

Rank 3: Sensing the Breeze

The natural feel of the saddle lends an Utaku unnatural freedom of movement. While mounted, you may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank 4: Wind Never Stops

Like the wind across the battlefield, the charge of an Utaku is unstoppable. While mounted, you may overrun the enemy by spending a Void Point. You may take a Simple Action to charge the enemy and attack him at the end of your movement. (Both the movement and attack take the same Simple Action. If you are mounted, this Action uses the movement rate of your steed.) If this attack succeeds, you gain a bonus of +2k1 to the total of all damage rolls this Turn.

Rank 5: Otaku's Blessing

The Utaku carry the honor of their founder as their shield. At the beginning of your Turn, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to activate this Technique. You add your Honor Rank to all damage rolls and Bugei Skill Rolls this Turn. This bonus stacks with those from Riding in Harmony.



Skills

More so than almost any other mechanic, Skills define the knowledge and competency of a character in the Legend of the Five Rings role-playing game. While Traits demonstrate what a character is capable of in terms of sheer mental and physical abilities, Skills are the sum of everything they have learned throughout the course of their entire lifetime, and as such allow them to accomplish a tremendous amount.

As described in the *Book of Earth*, Skill Rolls are the most common rolls made during play. For the purposes of making rolls, Skills are almost always paired with a Trait. This is denoted in the game by listing the names together, such as Kenjutsu / Agility. When this notation occurs, it means that the player in question should roll a number of dice equal to his character's Kenjutsu Skill plus his Agility Trait, and keep a number equal to his Agility.

Skills fall into a number of categories. The most significant of these is referred to as the subtype, a system where all Skills are sorted into one of four broad categories depending upon how the use of that Skill is regarded in Rokugani society. The Skill subtypes include:

- **High Skills** are exclusively the province of the samurai caste. These are the Skills one would typically see in use at a daimyo's court, or even among the attendants of the Emperor's court. They reflect sophistication and nobility, and typically require considerable education in order to attain and practice.
- **Bugei Skills** are the domain of the bushi. These are the Skills of the warrior, and while the samurai are not the only ones who practice them (since ashigaru and budoka learn some of these as well), they are unquestionably the masters of the craft.
- **Merchant Skills** represent knowledge of certain practices that are not the domain of the samurai. While it is not inherently dishonorable to practice these Skills, it is somewhat questionable, and those who do so openly and regularly are looked upon with mild disdain by their more sophisticated kinsmen.
- **Low Skills** represent deplorable crafts and practices that no honorable soul would even imagine taking up. Practicing any of these Skills will usually result in a loss of Honor for a samurai who does so, and if done in public, quite possibly Glory as well.

Emphases

Individual Skills may cover a number of different activities, all of which fall under the auspices of the primary Skill. These different aspects are called Emphases, and can give a bonus to characters who choose to pay special attention to that aspect of the Skill. Many Skills described in this chapter include a number of Emphases.

The number of Emphases a character may possess for a Skill is determined by his rank in that Skill. A character may possess one Emphasis for a Skill at rank 1, two Emphases at rank 3, three Emphases at rank 5, four at Rank 7, and a maximum of five Emphases at rank 9. It costs two Experience Points to purchase an Emphasis in a Skill. An Emphasis is indicated in parentheses after the name of the Skill to which it is attached. For example, a character with three ranks in the Kyujutsu Skill and an Emphasis for the yumi would note the Skill as follows: Kyujutsu (Yumi) 3.

When making a Skill Roll, if the character has an Emphasis that applies to the situation requiring the roll, he may immediately re-roll any dice that result in a 1. This may only be done once per roll. For example, if a character with Kenjutsu (Katana) 3 and Agility 2 is making an attack with a katana, he rolls 5k2 for the attack and gets 1, 1, 4, 6, 8. Because he is using a katana and has the Katana Emphasis for Kenjutsu, he immediately re-rolls the two dice that resulted in a 1, getting a 1 and a 7. He would then presumably keep the 7 and the 8, for a total of 15. The die that rolled a one the second time would not be re-rolled.

Mastery Abilities

Because of the nature of the Roll & Keep system, Traits are often considered more important than Skills, since they contribute not only to the number of dice rolled, but also determine how many are kept. Skills have a number of benefits of their own, however, and the most potent of these are Mastery Abilities.

Mastery Abilities are additional benefits that characters gain from having higher ranks in a given Skill. Although most Skills have them, there are some that do not. Those Skills that have Mastery Abilities typically gain them at Ranks 3, 5, and 7, although there are some Skills that gain a single Mastery Ability at Rank 5. These benefits are listed in the individual Skill write-ups. Unless otherwise specified, Mastery Abilities only apply when the actual Skill in question is being used.

All Skills possess a single Mastery Ability at Rank 10, which is a Free Raise on all rolls made using that Skill.

Skill List

All Skills are described in the following manner:

- Skill Name (Trait): The Skill name also includes the Trait with which the Skill is most frequently paired. Any Skill can be combined with any Trait for a Skill Roll (at the GM's discretion), but the listed Trait is the one most likely to be used in any given situation.
- Sub-types: Any sub-types or qualifiers that the Skill possesses are included immediately after the Skill's name. These keywords may have mechanical considerations. If the Skill is a Macro-skill, examples of the specific Skills which it encompasses will be listed here.
- Emphases: Any Emphases associated with the Skill are included here.
- Description: This is a general description of how the Skill is used in Rokugan, any social impact associated with its use, and other general notes regarding its use.
- Mastery Abilities: Any Mastery Abilities the Skill may have associated with it are described at the end of the entry.

What Skills are Useful?

Players who are new to Legend of the Five Rings may be uncertain as to which skills are the most useful to learn and improve. To some extent this is different for every campaign, so consultation with the GM is strongly recommended – if your GM plans a combat-oriented campaign, Bugei skills will have high value but Craft and Artisan skills will most likely seldom come into play. However, the following skills are almost always useful:

- Defense – needed in order to make effective use of the Defense and Full Defense Stances, which are both useful for any character facing danger.
- Etiquette – the primary "social defense" skill, used to resist most Social skills and courtier techniques, and thus useful for almost any character.
- Investigation – very useful for spotting ambushes, locating hidden clues, and figuring out whether someone is lying to you.
- Lore: Heraldry – used to identify someone based on their Glory rank.
- Lore: Bushido – used when trying to sense someone's Honor rank.



Other Skill Types and Macro Skills

Although not as important as subtypes, there are a handful of Skill classifications that have mechanical considerations.

- School Skills are the basic seven Skills taught to a character by his sensei while studying at his clan's School. These vary from School to School, and are specified in the write-ups for the individual Schools in this chapter. Various mechanical effects impact a character's School Skills.
- Social Skills are used by characters in social settings, particularly court. Politics is another form of battlefield for the samurai caste, and their courtiers can have duels of words that are every bit as deadly as a duel of blades. Social Skills are frequently targeted by Courtier School Techniques.

Macro-skills is a term used to describe large groups of similar skills that do not warrant their own unique name and mechanical considerations. Typically a Macro-skill includes a number of different specializations that can be served by the same Skill system but that are just dissimilar enough that mastery of one does not entail mastery of another. Each of these specializations is thus a unique Skill that must be purchased and improved separately, and is denoted by a specific name after the Macro-skill name. For example, the Skill of playing the game of Go falls under the Macro-skill category of Games and is denoted as Games: Go.

Macro-skills include the following:

- Artisan represents the various forms of art that are highly prized by Rokugan.
- Craft represents the ability to create practical objects of one form or another.
- Games represents a number of pastimes enjoyed throughout the Empire.
- Lore is mastery of one or more scholarly topics.
- Perform indicates a character's ability to entertain others.
- Weapons are Skills used in combat. Unlike other Macro-Skills, there are a number of individual Weapon Skills that have their own unique abilities. Any other weapon not described in this chapter falls under Weapons, however, and will not have its own abilities.

High Skills

Acting (Awareness)

Sub-types: Social Skill, Acting is considered a Perform Skill for the purposes of effects that target Perform Skills

Emphases: Clan, Gender, Profession

Description: This is a measure of an individual's ability to convincingly pass himself off as someone else, whether assuming a role in a play or attempting to infiltrate the fortress of his lord's enemy. It also represents a character's knowledge of the primary theater styles in Rokugan: Kabuki, a flamboyant, high-action style; and Noh, a more subdued, stylistic manner of play.

The TN to disguise yourself is 15. This assumes that you are taking on the role of a non-specific individual who shares the same Clan affiliation, gender, and profession (bushi, courtier, or shugenja). Each of these basic features that are changed increase the total TN of the Skill Roll by +5 (for example, a male Scorpion bushi attempting to impersonate a female Crane courtier would have a base TN of 30). Attempting to imitate a specific individual is significantly more difficult, and increases the TN by a total of +15 in addition to any other increases because of Clan, gender, or profession. You may also Raise on your roll to make your disguise harder to see through. A character who is trying to see through your disguise must roll Investigation / Perception against a TN of 15, +5 for each Raise you made.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The TN to create a disguise is reduced by 5.
- Rank 5: The TN to create a disguise is reduced by 10 (total).
- Rank 7: The TN to create a disguise is reduced by 15 (total).

Artisan (Awareness)

Sub-types: Macro-skill (includes Bonsai, Gardening, Ikebana (flower arranging), Origami (paper folding), Painting, Poetry, Sculpture, and Tattooing, among others)

Emphases: Varies by sub-skill

Description: This is a catch-all that represents a character's talent in one of the many recognized noble arts in Rokugani society. In addition to being soldiers and priests, samurai are the epitome of culture, and as such an occupation as an artisan is regarded by many Clans as a noble and honorable pursuit. Artisan Skill Rolls are used to create works of art, and generally have variable TNs as decided by the GM.

Mastery Abilities: None

Calligraphy (Intelligence)

Sub-types: Calligraphy is considered an Artisan Skill for the purposes of effects that target Artisan Skills

Emphases: Cipher, High Rokugani

Description: Calligraphy is considered an art form by many, and is typically used not only among shugenja, who use advanced ciphers and scripts to protect their mystical secrets, but also by artisans and courtiers, who use it to impress others as part of their complex schemes to gain favor in court. Training in calligraphy is not necessary as part of literacy, as all samurai are literate, but it does allow one to show refinement and sophistication.

If you possess the Cipher Emphasis, you are assumed to know one cipher commonly used by your Clan. Ciphers can be very difficult to break, with varying TNs depending upon their commonality of use and means of creation. Typically, the TN to break a cipher is the result of the Calligraphy (Cipher) / Intelligence roll used to create it. The High Rokugani Emphasis is used to make use of the ancient, florid, and sophisticated style of language used in the Imperial Court.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +10 when attempting to break a code or cipher.

Courtier (Awareness)

Sub-types: Social Skill

Emphases: Gossip, Manipulation, Rhetoric

Description: The essential skill of any Rokugani court, this is a measure of a character's ability to participate in the deadly political games that are so prevalent in the Empire's highest social echelons. Courtiers have their own style of warfare, and are able to maneuver one another into disadvantageous positions through their skill with words.

Essentially, Courtier is the "social offense" Skill. Socially-adept characters that are on the offensive against their opponents use Courtier, often with the Manipulation or Rhetoric Emphases, to outmaneuver their opponents, influence their views and opinions, steer conversations in a desired direction, win arguments, or deliver cunning put-downs. Courtier can also be used to obtain or spread rumors about someone, using the Gossip Emphasis. This can be more difficult depending upon the target's Glory, with a suggested TN of 10 plus the target's Glory x5, minus your Glory x5. GMs can have players Raise on the roll to conceal that they are the source of the gossip, and it should be noted that attempting to spread malicious rumors about someone with higher Status is generally unwise and can easily lead to a death sentence in Rokugan.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The character gains an additional +3 Insight above the total normally indicated by his Rings and Skill Ranks.
- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Contested Rolls made using Courtier.
- Rank 7: The character gains an additional +7 Insight above the total normally indicated by his Rings and Skill Ranks (in addition to the bonus from Rank 3).

Divination (Intelligence)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Astrology, Kawaru

Description: Some individuals possess the ability to glimpse the strands of fate and destiny that make up the universe, and can gain some glimmer of insight into the future as a result. This sometimes involves studying the stars and their placement via astrology, but most often comes from use of *kawaru*, small stones, sticks, and coins with a variety of hexagram symbols engraved upon them. Kawaru are typically thrown into a bowl or other receptacle and then examined to determine the patterns.

You may attempt a divination once per day. The TN for this Skill Roll is 15, although depending upon the circumstances the GM may dictate a higher TN. If the roll is failed, a sec-

Using the Courtier Skill in Play

Typically, when a character is trying to use Courtier, the player will role-play what the character is trying to accomplish, after which the GM calls for a Courtier roll to see if he succeeds. Players and GMs who are less role-play oriented in their style may prefer to simply state what they are trying to accomplish ("I try to persuade them to oppose the Unicorn Clan") and then make a skill roll.

A Courtier roll need not be made in a vacuum. If a character is trying to influence another with Courtier, this should typically be a Contested Roll, opposed with Etiquette (or another skill like Sincerity if the GM thinks it more appropriate). Also, the GM should be wary of calling for too many rolls with Courtier or other social skills. Requiring a Courtier or Sincerity roll every time a character says something will quickly bog down the game.



ond roll may be attempted immediately if you expend a Void Point. (As usual, the TN for the second roll is increased by +10.) The results of divination attempts are notoriously vague, but should give some indistinct inkling of what is to come in the immediate future (i.e. "you see difficult times ahead," "an old enemy returns soon," "a shadow will fall over your father's house," etc).

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: A second Divination Skill Roll may be made without the cost of spending a Void Point. All other conditions for making the second Skill Roll still apply.

Etiquette (Awareness)

Sub-types: Social Skill

Emphases: Bureaucracy, Conversation, Courtesy

Description: In a rigid hierarchical society such as the Emerald Empire, knowledge of appropriate conduct is essential for all but the most jaded and uncouth bushi. In many ways a proper code of etiquette is a defense for samurai, who can use their knowledge of how one should behave in a court setting as a shield against the manipulation of others. It can also allow them to avoid embarrassing faux pas by ensuring that they know to whom any particular concern should be addressed in the vast and often confusing Imperial bureaucracy, as well as the lesser bureaucracies maintained by the Great Clans.

Etiquette is essentially the "social defense" Skill of honorable characters in Rokugan's courts. When someone tries to tempt, manipulate, or otherwise influence you (typically with skills like Courtier or Temptation), Etiquette is usually used in the ensuing Contested Roll, most often with the Courtesy Emphasis. Courtesy also allows you to offer an opinion without risking offense (at a TN chosen by the GM) or to remember important social mores that might otherwise be forgotten (TN of anywhere from 5 to 20, depending on obscurity). The Bureaucracy Emphasis is used when trying to maneuver through government channels appropriately, such as trying to arrange a meeting with someone of high Status (the Imperial bureaucracy is notoriously difficult to navigate). Conversation allows you to determine an appropriate, non-offensive topic for discussion (TN 15+).

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The character gains an additional +3 Insight above the total normally indicated by his Rings and Skill Ranks.
- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Contested Rolls made using Etiquette.
- Rank 7: The character gains an additional +7 Insight above the total normally indicated by his Rings and Skill Ranks (in addition to the bonus from Rank 3).

Games (Various)

Sub-types: Macro-skill (includes: Fortunes & Winds (Awareness), Go (Intelligence), Kemari (Agility), Letters (Awareness), Sadane (Awareness), Shogi (Intelligence), etc.)

Emphases: Varies by sub-skill

Description: Games are an important diversion for the normally somber samurai caste of Rokugan. Although some clans generally prefer direct physical activities such as wrestling or other competitive pursuits, virtually everyone in the Empire plays a game of one form or another on a regular basis. Some popular games include: kemari, which involves one or more participants kicking a small ball to keep it off of the ground; go, a strategic game that uses colored stones placed on a game board; letters, in which two or more individuals correspond with one another, using elaborately written letters as a sort of strategic back-and-forth; shogi, a chess-like strategic game; and sadane, a game of trading impromptu criticism of an agreed subject. Games Skill Rolls are typically Contested Rolls made between two individuals, each attempting to defeat the other at the game in question.

Mastery Abilities: None

Investigation (Perception)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Interrogation, Notice, Search

Description: One of the most prestigious appointments a samurai can receive is that of magistrate, an official tasked with enforcing the laws within his lord's domain. As magistrates, samurai must often determine what has taken place under mysterious circumstances, and search out who is to blame for violating the word of their daimyo. Those with a keen eye and a sharp mind are often promoted to higher positions, serving their family, clan, or even the Empire as a whole.

Investigation represents your ability to assess your surroundings and gather information based on physical clues. It can also represent an ability to gather information from others over a longer period of time, hours or even days, in order to piece together different bits of information into a cohesive picture. Unlike other Intelligence or Perception Skill Rolls, Investigation can be re-rolled if you fail the initial roll. The second roll may not be made for at least an hour, however, and suffers a +15 increase to TN.

Investigation is most frequently used to locate something (or someone) hidden or concealed. If this is a person in hiding, a Contested Roll will be used, pitting the character's Investigation (Notice or Search Emphasis according to the circumstances) against the target's Stealth. The Interrogation Emphasis can be used to try to figure out if someone is lying, typically in a Contested Roll against the target's Sincerity.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: A second attempt to use the Search Emphasis may be made without an increase in the original TN.
- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +5 to the total of any Contested Roll made using Investigation.
- Rank 7: A third attempt to use the Search Emphasis may be made even if the second attempt fails.

Lore (Intelligence)

Sub-types: Macro-skill (includes Anatomy*, Architecture, Bushido, Great Clan (choose one), Elements, Gaijin Culture (choose one), Ghosts, Heraldry, History, Maho*, Nature, Nonhuman Culture (choose one), Omens, Shadowlands*, Shugenja, Spirit Realms, Theology, Underworld*, War, and almost anything else) [Sub-skills marked with a * are considered Low Skills]

Emphases: Varies by individual sub-skill

Description: Many among the samurai caste are called to pursue the role of the scholar in order to better serve their lord, or for their own purposes. Although this is most common among shugenja, it is not unusual for a courtier or a bushi to study some subject or another that catches their interest. History and heraldry are among the most common and useful, but literally any subject can be taken up. Lore Skill Rolls are made to determine if a character possesses certain information regarding the subject area (i.e., a bushi character might make a Lore: Shugenja Skill Roll to see if he could determine the purpose of a ritual being conducted).

Mastery Abilities: None

Medicine (Intelligence)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Antidotes, Disease, Herbalism, Non-Humans, Wound Treatment

Description: War is the purpose of all samurai, and war often results in those who are wounded but not slain. A wounded samurai is a burden on his lord, unable to perform his duties and yet still requiring resources. Those who practice medicine have the sacred task of ensuring that a samurai recovers from his wounds and can rise again to serve once more.

Medicine can be used to treat many different injuries and ailments, including some spiritual ones. Specific diseases may be treated with the Disease Emphasis, although the TN for treatment will vary depending upon the disease in question. The same applies to poisons and the Antidote Emphasis. Non-human races may be treated using the Non-human Emphasis, but it must be purchased separately for each race (i.e. Nezumi Medicine, Naga Medicine, Zokujin Medicine, etc.). When you treat Wounds that an ally has suffered from damage, a successful Medicine (Wound Treatment) / Intelligence roll (TN 15) will remove one die (1k1) of Wounds from the victim. Each successful Raise on this roll allows an additional die to be rolled, but no more than one die is ever kept on such a roll. An injured individual may only benefit from a single Medicine Skill Roll per day, and each such roll made requires the use of a Medicine Kit, which allows for ten Medicine Skill Rolls before being consumed.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The amount of Wounds healed on a successful Medicine roll is increased by +1k0.

Meditation (Void)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Fasting, Void Recovery

Description: A dutiful samurai is a spiritual soul. In order to fully embrace the code of Bushido, all samurai are expected to study the Tao of Shinsei and meditate upon its wisdom. In practice, of course, this is rarely the case among many martial families, but a surprising number of soldiers can often be found meditating in a shrine or temple to prepare themselves for war.

Meditation is the simplest means other than resting that you can recover spent Void Points. A Meditation (Void Recovery) / Void roll versus TN 20 allows you to recover one Void Point with a half hour of uninterrupted meditation. The Fasting Emphasis allows you to make a Meditation / Stamina roll (TN 15 + 5 per day of fasting) to ignore the effects of going without food and water.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: A successful Meditation Skill Roll restores up to 2 Void Points.
- Rank 5: The TN for all Meditation (Fasting) Skill Rolls is reduced by 5.
- Rank 7: A successful Meditation Skill Roll restores up to 3 Void Points.

Perform (Varies)

Sub-types: Macro-skill (includes Biwa (Agility), Dance (Agility), Drums (Agility), Flute (Agility), Oratory (Awareness), Puppeteer (Agility), Samisen (Agility), Song (Awareness), Storytelling (Awareness), etc.), Social Skill

Emphases: Varies by sub-skill

Description: While not as numerous as other artisans, performers are still considered by many Clans to fulfill a vital aspect of maintaining Rokugan's culture. Musicians, orators, poets, and even actors are lauded in the highest circles of court because of the entertainment they provide. Many bushi have a different opinion on the value of a performer, but even they must admit that nothing rouses the spirits for war like a play wherein the actions of their ancestors are memorialized and the actions of their enemies demonized. Performers are not merely entertainment, but a form of living memory that all samurai enjoy, even if some of them do not always respect those who provide it. Perform Skill Rolls are made to complete a performance successfully. The TN for such a roll generally depends upon the mood of the audience and is determined by the GM.

Mastery Abilities: None

Sincerity (Awareness)

Sub-types: Social Skill

Emphases: Honesty, Deceit* (Emphases marked with a * are considered Low Skills)

Description: Many in the Empire have a curious stance on the notion of lying; in many courts, it is not considered dishonorable to lie so long as the individual speaking genuinely appears to believe what he says is the truth. This is a skill that many have honed in order to defend themselves from the predation of more skilled opponents in court. Even bushi attending court as yojimbo often practice such things, to ensure that they are not viable targets of their charges' enemies. This can also be used to avoid offering insult.

Honesty is used when you must speak the truth in a convincing manner, while Deceit is used when you must tell a lie and appear to tell the truth ("I assure you, magistrate, I was meditating in the shrine well after sunset last night"). Sincerity can also be employed to tell the truth in a very cautious manner to avoid giving insult (when a morbidly obese governor asks a samurai if he is not the greatest warrior in the Empire, the samurai cautiously responds with "All other warriors would surely vanish within your mighty shadow"). Rolls made with Sincerity can be opposed with Investigation by those who doubt the truth of the speaker's words.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +5 to the total of all Contested Rolls made using Sincerity.

Spellcraft (Intelligence)

Sub-types: Use of the Importune Emphasis when interacting with kami spirits is considered use of a Social Skill

Emphases: Importune, Spell Research

Description: The path of the shugenja begins with the innate ability to speak to the kami, but it continues with a life of rigorous study and devotion to research. Although non-shugenja can take up this craft, the essential understanding of how the invocation of the kami works makes it primarily the domain of shugenja. This research also allows scholarly shugenja to create new prayers that others can use, and allows them to entreat certain types of kami to perform tasks for them.

The Spell Research Emphasis allows you to formulate new spells. This typically requires a Spellcraft (Spell Research) / Intelligence roll with a TN equal to 10 plus the new spell's Mastery Level x10. This requires a number of weeks of uninterrupted study equal to the new spell's Mastery Level. New spells should be submitted to the GM for consultation and approval before they are used.

The Importune Emphasis is used in the manner of a Social Skill when using the Commune spell to converse with a spirit, and especially when trying to persuade that spirit to be helpful. More information on this can be found in the description of the Commune spell later in this chapter.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character gains +1k0 on Spell Casting Rolls.



Tea Ceremony (Void)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: None

Description: The tea ceremony is an ancient and sacred tradition that was created in the Empire's earliest days, ostensibly by Lady Doji herself. It is a ritual that is handed down from parent to child, often with as much weight and attention as the passing down of a family blade from one to another. In a formal tea ceremony, the individual conducting the ritual formally sets the table, prepares the tea, and pours it for all participants, who then consume it in unison, all in complete silence. The ceremony has great spiritual significance, and helps clear the mind for those involved.

When conducting a tea ceremony, you must make a Tea Ceremony / Void roll (TN 15 + 5 for each participant after the second). The ceremony is intended for two people, but you may conduct it alone if desired, or up to five people total may be included. If the Skill Roll is successful, all participants regain a spent Void Point. The ceremony takes thirty minutes to complete successfully, and requires a quiet location to be conducted.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: All participants regain 2 Void Points rather than 1.

Bugei Skills

Athletics (Strength)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Climbing, Running, Swimming, Throwing

Description: The training that every bushi student receives includes vigorous physical conditioning. For some, this results in a lifelong enjoyment of athletics. Like many who pursue a martial lifestyle, some bushi spend their off duty hours engaging in competitions with one another, or simply pitting themselves against challenges designed to test the limits of their physical abilities.

Athletics covers many areas normally governed by Trait Rolls. If you have a background in Athletics, however, you can perform these activities, principally climbing, running, and swimming, with considerably more ease than most. Athletics can also increase your capacity for movement, even when restricted by heavy armor and the like. The Throwing Emphasis allows you to throw items with greater accuracy, including certain weapons such as knives or even the wakizashi (see the Equipment section for more information on which weapons can be thrown). Using Athletics to throw a weapon offensively is considered an attack roll.

Athletics Skill Rolls to climb, run, or swim use Strength, whereas the Throwing Emphasis requires Agility.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Moderate Terrain no longer impedes movement, and movement across Difficult Terrain reduces the character's Water Ring by 1 instead of 2.
- Rank 5: The character no longer suffers movement penalties regardless of terrain.
- Rank 7: The character may add 5 feet to the total of one Move Action per Round (this does not increase his maximum possible movement per round).

Battle (Perception)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Mass Combat, Skirmish

Description: A samurai's calling is to war, whether on the battlefield with steel in hand, in the courts confounding the enemies of one's lord, or behind the lines, summoning the kami to punish the sins of one's enemies. The study of war is highly regarded among all divisions of the samurai caste, and many lengthy debates can be enjoyed both in court and in the temples over tactics, strategy, maneuvers, and the like.

The principle use of the Battle Skill is in the Mass Battle System found in the *Book of Water*.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character adds his Battle Skill Rank to his Initiative Score during skirmishes.

Defense (Reflexes)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: None

Description: A warrior who cannot defend himself is of little use, for he will serve his lord but once in battle before he falls and must be replaced. The Rokugani understanding of battle does not permit things such as parries and ripostes, but instead involves positioning one's blade and body so that the katana and armor deflect incoming blows.

Defense is an essential Skill necessary to adopt the Defense and Full Defense Stances, both of which increase your Armor TN and make you more difficult to hit in a skirmish or a duel. More information on this application of Defense can be found in the *Book of Earth*.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The character may retain the result of a previous Defense / Reflexes roll rather than make a new roll if the Full Defense Stance is being maintained in subsequent rounds.
- Rank 5: The character's Armor TN is considered 3 higher in the Defense and Full Defense Stances.
- Rank 7: One Simple Action may be taken while in the Full Defense Stance (no attacks may be made).

Horsemanship (Agility)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Gaijin Riding Horse, Rokugani Pony, Utaku Steed

Description: The ability to use a mount is essential to participation in cavalry units, and to swift travel through the Empire. It is a utilitarian skill, taught in most bushi schools in the Empire without having any real degree of prestige attached (save among the ranks of the Unicorn Clan, who consider an inability to ride roughly equivalent to a crippling physical disability). In general, all samurai can ride a horse at normal speed on level ground without the need for a Skill roll – the Skill only comes into play when riding a horse in difficult or stressful situations (bad terrain, thunderstorm, combat, etc.).

Individual types of horses react differently to various circumstances, and some can be much harder to control under stressful situations such as combat. Statistics for the common horses found in Rokugan are located in the *Book of the Void*, including typical TNs for controlling them in different circumstances.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The character may utilize the Full Attack Stance when on horseback.
- Rank 5: Mounting a horse is a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action, and dismounting is a Free Action rather than a Simple Action.
- Rank 7: Mounting a horse is a Free Action rather than a Simple Action.

Hunting (Perception)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Survival, Tracking, Trailblazing

Description: Hunting is a sport favored by warriors, even though game is rarely if ever consumed by members of the samurai caste. The types of game hunted in Rokugan can be quite dangerous, however, and as a result there is a great deal of survival knowledge associated with the sport of hunting. Hunting is never done with a samurai's daisho; it is typically performed either with bow and arrow or, in the case of particularly large game, spears.

The Survival Emphasis allows you to forage for sustenance and shelter in the wilderness, with a TN varying upon the severity of the conditions (the forest is simpler than the mountains, which are simpler than the desert, etc.). The Tracking Emphasis allows you to locate and follow the tracks of prey through rural environments, although repeated Skill Rolls are necessary for longer trails. Trailblazing allows you to forge a trail through the wilderness that others can follow, making better time and requiring less work in order to follow it.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character receives a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Stealth Skill Rolls made in wilderness environments.

Iaijutsu (Reflexes)

Sub-types: None.

Emphases: Assessment, Focus

Description: Iaijutsu is the formal dueling system of Rokugan, an ancient and venerated tradition that even the most irreverent bushi would never imagine slandering. When two parties are in dispute, and the matter cannot be resolved in any other manner, a duel is often the result, and the form of a duel is almost always iaijutsu. The winner of the duel is proven correct, and the defeated party is proven to be wrong. There can be no contestation of a duel's outcome, barring dishonorable conduct on the part of the winner during the duel.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Readying a katana is a Free Action rather than a Simple Action.
- Rank 5: During an Iaijutsu Duel, the character gains one Free Raise on his Iaijutsu (Focus) / Void roll during the Focus Stage.
- Rank 7: During the Assessment portion of an Iaijutsu Duel, the character gains a bonus of +2k2 to the total of all Focus Rolls if his Assessment roll exceeds his opponent's by 10 or more (instead of the normal +1k1).

Jiujutsu (Agility)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Grappling, Improvised Weapons, Martial Arts

Description: The art of unarmed combat is something that all bushi appreciate, although not all pursue it in the dojo. Many rely upon the weapon-based techniques they learn from their sensei to defend them even without their weapons, and while this can be marginally effective, the actual study of unarmed combat is much more useful. Monks in particular devote a great amount of time to the art of hand-to-hand combat, believing they both hone the body and unify it with the mind.

Jiujutsu can be used as a Weapon Skill, rolling Jiujitsu / Agility against an opponent's Armor TN to hit and rolling a number of dice equal to your Strength, keeping one for damage (so if you had Strength 3, you would roll 3k1 damage for an unarmed attack). Jiujutsu is also used for initiating and maintaining Grapples, which are explained in the *Book of Earth*. The Improvised Weapons Emphasis allows you to use almost anything you can get your hands on to increase your capacity to inflict damage. The GM is the final arbiter of what damage a particular improvised weapon inflicts, but generally it should grant additional rolled or kept dice, but not both.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The damage of all unarmed attacks is increased by +1k0.
- Rank 5: Use of Jiujutsu confers a Free Raise toward initiating a Grapple.
- Rank 7: The damage of all unarmed attacks is increased by +0k1 (+1k1 total).

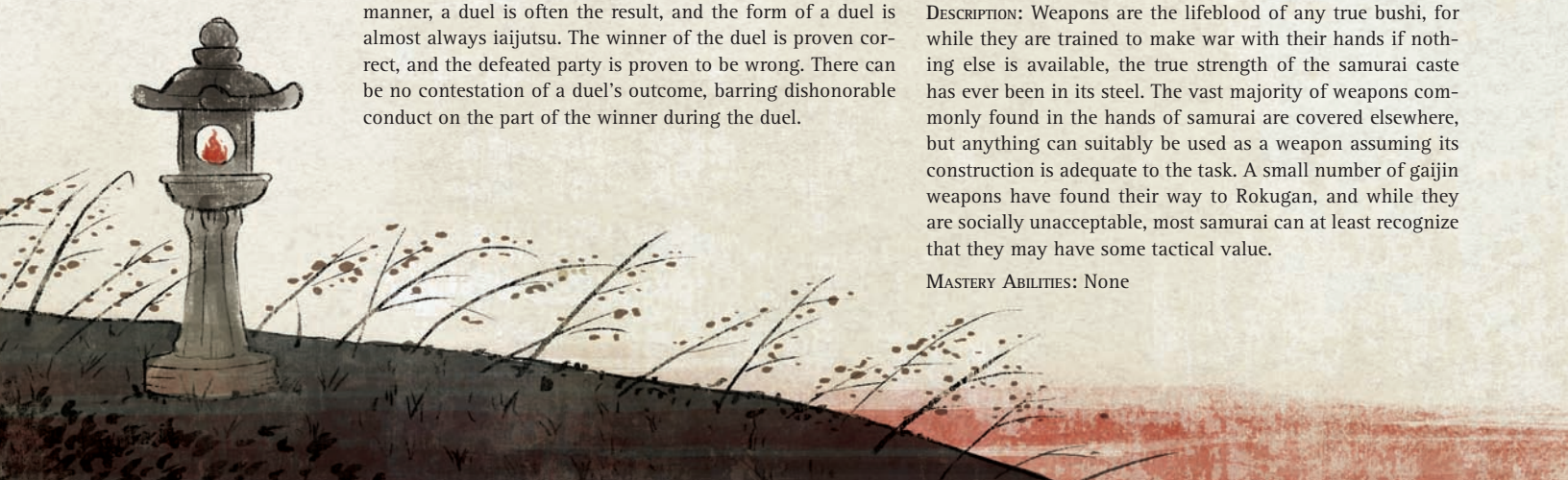
Weapons (Various)

Sub-types: Macro-skill (Includes all the Weapon Skills listed below as well as any other weapon not covered by one of the pre-existing listed Skills, such as Weapon: Crossbow, used by some tribes of Yobanjin in the mountains north of Rokugan).

Emphases: Varies by sub-skill

Description: Weapons are the lifeblood of any true bushi, for while they are trained to make war with their hands if nothing else is available, the true strength of the samurai caste has ever been in its steel. The vast majority of weapons commonly found in the hands of samurai are covered elsewhere, but anything can suitably be used as a weapon assuming its construction is adequate to the task. A small number of gaijin weapons have found their way to Rokugan, and while they are socially unacceptable, most samurai can at least recognize that they may have some tactical value.

Mastery Abilities: None



Chain Weapons (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Kusarigama, Kyoketsu-shogi, Manrikikusari

Description: Chain weapons are considered unconventional by most traditional bushi, but they have become accepted as legitimate weapons because of the complexity and effectiveness of their use. Generally, chain weapons see a higher degree of use among the Mantis Clan, who favor exotic and unconventional weapons, but see only periodic use among other Great Clans, and typically then only by small groups of specialized warriors.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Chain weapons may be used to initiate a Grapple (see the Book of Earth)
- Rank 5: Characters wielding a chain weapon gain a bonus of +1k0 on Contested Rolls against opponents who are entangled or Grappled via their weapon
- Rank 7: Use of a chain weapon confers one Free Raise toward use of the Disarm or Knockdown Maneuvers.

Heavy Weapons (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Dai Tsuchi, Masakari, Ono, Tetsubo

Description: Training in the use of heavy weapons, a skill known as *tsubojutsu*, is the hallmark of bushi in service to the Crab Clan. While the dojo of virtually all Great Clans address the use of heavy weapons during training, they are seldom seen in use in the ranks of any army other than the Crab. For the sons of Hida, however, the sheer power of these weapons is an essential component in their defense of the Great Wall, where the use of weapons such as the tetsubo and ono allow them to defeat formidable enemies that a katana would not be able to harm.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Opponents with a Reduction rating have their rating reduced by 2 when attacked with a heavy weapon.
- Rank 5: Use of a heavy weapon confers one Free Raise toward use of the Knockdown Maneuver.
- Rank 7: Damage dice explode on a result of 9 and 10 when using heavy weapons.

Kenjutsu (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Katana, Ninja-to, No-dachi, Parangu, Scimitar, Wakizashi

Description: Kenjutsu is the path of the sword, the essential training in use of the katana and other blades that all bushi receive as part of their training. Almost without exception, the principle weapon training that all bushi receive centers around the katana, the signature weapon of the samurai caste and the representation of a warrior's soul. All dojo offer weapon training in other areas for those interested in learning, but only the katana is considered mandatory, save perhaps for the bow in some areas.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The total of all damage rolls made with a sword is increased by 1k0.
- Rank 5: A sword may be readied as a Free Action rather than a Simple Action.
- Rank 7: Damage dice explode on a result of 9 and 10 when using a sword.

Knives (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Aiguchi, Jitte, Kama, Sai, Tanto

Description: The art of wielding a knife, or *tantojutsu*, is not typically considered a priority at most bushi dojo. The katana is the principle weapon of the samurai, of course, and even if one chooses to take up another weapon instead, there are many more effective, more lethal weapons than a simple knife. Yet despite this, virtually every bushi in the Empire is trained in the use of the knife, and carries one at all times. Bushi are imminently practical warriors, after all.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Off-hand penalties do not apply when using a knife.
- Rank 5: Use of a sai or jitte confers one Free Raise toward use of the Disarm Maneuver.
- Rank 7: Use of any knife confers a Free Raise toward use of the Extra Attack Maneuver.

Off-hand Weapons & Multiple Attacks

Many players are interested in having their characters use two weapons simultaneously. This is not particularly common in Rokugan, as the vast majority of bushi use the katana, which is traditionally wielded in both hands. Exceptions exist, notably with the Dragon Clan and their daisho technique, the Mantis and their tendency to use matched pairs of small weapons, and the Lion's favoring of the katana and war fan combination.

A character's handedness is determined by the player. A character attempting to make an attack with a weapon in his off-hand suffers a penalty of -5 to the roll if it is a small weapon, -10 if it is medium, and -15 if it is large. Additionally, attacks made with the character's dominant hand suffer a penalty of -5 to attacks as long as a secondary weapon is held in the off hand. However, a character wielding two weapons is more difficult to hit due to the larger area covered. As a result, characters wielding two weapons add their Insight Rank to their Armor TN.



Kyujutsu (Reflexes)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Dai-kyu, Han-kyu, Yumi

Description: The art of the bow is an accepted part of all bushi's training, save perhaps for a handful of esoteric warriors who place misguided principle above practicality. To all others, the value of the bow in striking at an enemy who is not within range is obvious. Indeed, the way of the samurai has sometimes been called the Way of the Horse and Bow. The Rokugani form of archery does not rely upon aiming, however; rather, the practitioners are taught to assess their target, then draw and fire as a smooth, fluid motion, the bow held near the waist at all times. As the saying goes, the arrow knows the way. A character making a ranged attack who is firing at someone within melee range suffers a penalty of -10 to the total of his attack roll.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Stringing a bow for use is a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action.
- Rank 5: The maximum range of any bow is increased by 50%.
- Rank 7: When using any bow, the Strength of the bow is increased by 1.

Ninjutsu (Agility or Reflexes)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill, considered a Low Skill

Emphases: Blowgun, Shuriken, Tsubute

Description: A disgraceful practice, ninjutsu is the art of using specialized weapons created specifically for use by the deadly assassins and shadow warriors known as ninja. No honorable warrior would ever humiliate himself and his ancestors by demonstrating knowledge of such a shameful nature, and indeed many samurai, when confronted with the bizarre implements of the ninja, have difficulty fathoming their use altogether, other than as crude and relatively ineffective weapons.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The damage of all ninjutsu weapons is increased by +1k0.
- Rank 5: Dice on damage rolls made for ninjutsu weapons explode normally (Ninjutsu weapon damage dice do not normally explode due to equipment rules later in this chapter).
- Rank 7: The damage of all ninjutsu weapons is increased by +0k1 (+1k1 total).

Polearms (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Bisento, Nagamaki, Naginata, Sasumata, Sodegarami

Description: Long-reaching weapons with considerable power and versatility, polearms are essentially a stopgap between heavy weapons and the traditional katana. They consist of bladed weapons mounted atop sturdy poles of wood or metal, granting a warrior skilled in their use the ability to keep his opponents at bay while taking a terrible toll on them at the same time. The practice of using polearms is sometimes referred to as *umayarijutsu*.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: During the first round of a skirmish, a character wielding a polearm gains a bonus of +5 to his Initiative Score. This lasts for only the first round.
- Rank 5: Damage rolls made with polearms against mounted or significantly larger opponents is increased by +1k0.
- Rank 7: Polearms may be readied as a Free Action.

Spears (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Mai Chong, Kumade, Lance, Nage-yari, Yari

Description: *Yarijutsu*, the art of the spear, is a longstanding tradition in many bushi families, most notably the Daidoji family of the Crane Clan. Unlike polearms, which are primarily slashing weapons, spears are typically designed for puncturing or thrusting, and can be an extremely effective weapon against cavalry.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: During the first round of a skirmish, a character wielding a spear may ignore 3 points of Reduction when making melee attacks against his opponent.
- Rank 5: Ranged attacks made using a spear increase their maximum possible range by 5'.
- Rank 7: Spears may be readied as a Free Action.

Staves (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: Bo, Jo, Machi-kanshisha, Nunchaku, Sang Kauw, Tonfa

Description: Seldom seen among the ranks of most respectable bushi families, the practice of using staves (also known as *bojutsu*) is more common among monks and even some peasants, given that a walking stick cannot reasonably be assumed to be a weapon. Staves are excellent for delivering brute force to stun or incapacitate an opponent, but their blunt nature can make killing an opponent difficult and messy work without proper training. Also staves have tremendous trouble overcoming armor, which diffuses their impact very effectively. Armor bonuses to the Armor TN are doubled against attacks made with a staff.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Opponents' armor bonuses are no longer doubled against staff attacks.
- Rank 5: Use of a staff confers one Free Raise toward use of the Knockdown Maneuver.
- Rank 7: Staves that are large may be readied as a Free Action instead of a Simple Action. Staves that are small gain a bonus to damage rolls equal to +1k0.

War Fan (Agility)

Sub-types: Weapon Skill

Emphases: None

Description: War fans, or *tessen*, are tools that serve a number of purposes, not the least of which is as weapons. They were originally created for the purpose of sending signals to different units on the battlefield, and were specifically made from metal because paper fans were so ill suited to the unpredictability of battlefield conditions. While they continue to

serve such a purpose, as well as the various purposes of the traditional paper fan, some groups have made excellent use of these metal fans as weapons as well, particularly among the Lion Clan and a group of ronin called the Tessen, who make Toshi Ranbo their home.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Off-hand penalties do not apply when using a war fan.
- Rank 5: When using a war fan, the wielder's Armor TN is increased by +1.
- Rank 7: When using a war fan, the wielder's Armor TN is increased by +3.

Merchant Skills

Animal Handling (Awareness)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: By animal (Dogs, Horses, and Falcons are the most common)

Description: Animals play a vital role in a number of samurai endeavors, including recreation, transportation, or the actual waging of war. Horses and falcons are the animals most commonly trained by samurai, but a number of others exist: the Lion Clan uses trained warcats in battle, the Unicorn use war dogs, and many families use trained pigeons to carry correspondence.

The difficulty to domesticate and train an animal for use varies widely depending upon the animal in question. An assortment of animals can be found in the bestiary in the *Book of Void*, along with some guidelines on what they can do when trained.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: Commonly domesticated animals such as dogs, horses, or falcons may be trained for use by others.
- Rank 5: Trained animals still in possession of the trainer may be commanded to attack a target of his choosing. The animal will flee for its life if badly wounded regardless of commands issued.
- Rank 7: Animals trained by the character may be issued commands non-verbally.

Commerce (Intelligence)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Appraisal, Mathematics

Description: Occupations that involve money are distasteful to the samurai caste. They are not inherently dishonorable, of course, for it is absolutely necessary for a samurai to oversee such activities to ensure that his Clan and family are adequately provided for, but it is definitely considered something of a social stigma to deal in commerce. The actual day to day trading and conducting of business is typically left to merchant vassals, but it is not unheard of for samurai to have training in such matters. These individuals are typically referred to as "merchant patrons."

The Appraisal Emphasis allows you to quickly determine the approximate value of an object in any given market. The value will vary depending upon the quality of the object's construction, how exotic or unusual it is, and how practically it can be put to use. More exotic or rare objects are not only more expensive, but also are significantly more difficult to appraise properly. The Mathematics Emphasis is typically used to calculate things like taxes and tariffs, but can obviously be used in a number of non-business applications as well.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character may increase or decrease the price of an item he is buying or selling by a maximum of 20%.

Craft (Varies)

Sub-types: Macro-skill (includes Armorsmithing#, Blacksmithing, Bowyer#, Brewing, Carpentry, Cartography, Cobbling, Cooking, Farming, Fishing, Masonry, Mining, Poison*, Pottery, Shipbuilding, Tailoring, Weaponsmithing#, Weaving, etc.) [Note: sub-skills marked with a * are considered Low Skills; sub-skills marked with a # are considered High Skills]

Emphases: Varies by sub-skill

Description: If artisans are tasked with producing items that are considered abstract and beautiful by the people of the Empire, then craftsmen have a duty to create things of practical value. Blacksmiths, armorsmiths, cartwrights, carpenters, and shipwrights are all craftsmen. Fishermen and farmers are as well, although they do not produce an item but rather the food that is the lifeblood of the Empire. While crafting is not as honorable and noble a profession as being an artist, it is still highly valued and looked upon without stigma.

Mastery Abilities: None

Engineering (Intelligence)

Sub-types: Engineering is considered a Craft Skill for the purposes of effects that target Craft Skills.

Emphases: Construction, Siege

Description: Far more complex than a simple crafting skill, engineering is a rare gift among the people of Rokugan, even the samurai who rule over it. It involves an understanding of how things are constructed and, as a result, how they can best be deconstructed. The siege engineers of the Kaiu family are the unquestioned masters of this, but there are others among other clans who have such gifts as well.

The Construction Emphasis specializes in making plans for others to follow, building things from a simple tower to an elaborate palace. The Siege Emphasis is the exact opposite of this, and tells you best how such things can be destroyed in battle.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +5 to the total of any Engineering Skill Roll made as part of a Cooperative or Cumulative Skill Roll.

Sailing (Agility or Intelligence)

Sub-types: Sailing is considered a Craft Skill for the purposes of effects that target Craft Skills.

Emphases: Knot-work, Navigation

Description: Rokugan has a vast coastline, and there is a tremendous amount of activity on the sea during the majority of the year. Trade vessels and fishing vessels make their way across the shallow waters along the coast during spring, summer, and fall, and the hardier ships belonging to the Mantis Clan make the long voyage to and from the Islands of Silk & Spice even during the depths of winter.

The Navigation Emphasis can be used to determine your approximate location using the stars, and determine in what direction a specific destination lies (assuming you already know where the destination is and simply want to know where it is relative to you). Navigation can be used on land, but the TN is increased by +10 when doing so. The Knot-work Emphasis is used in working with the ropes and cloths aboard a Rokugani sailing vessel.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +5 to the total of any Sailing Skill Roll made as part of a Cooperative or Cumulative Skill Roll.



Low Skills

The use of Low Skills generally results in loss of Honor, as per the Honor table found in the *Book of Earth*, although the GM can make exceptions when he judges the skill is being employed in an honorable fashion.

Forgery (Agility)

Sub-types: Forgery is considered a Craft Skill for effects that target Craft Skills.

Emphases: By type of item being forged (Artwork, Documents, Personal Seals, etc.)

Description: Documentation is very important in Rokugan, from information on an individual's illustrious lineage to travel papers issued by magistrates, and even the official Imperial Decrees of the Emperor himself. Those with an eye for detail, a steady hand, and a distinct lack of honor can take advantage of this system by falsifying such papers, either for their own use or to sell to others.

When a forgery is created, the result of your Forgery / Agility Skill Roll should be noted. This is the TN for others to detect the forgery using an Investigation / Perception Skill Roll.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: The character gains a bonus of +1k0 to his Forgery Skill Roll result for the purposes of establishing the TN of an Investigation / Perception Skill Roll to detect it.
- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +1k0 on any roll to detect a forgery made by someone else.
- Rank 7: The character gains a bonus of +0k1 (for a total of +1k1) to his Forgery Skill Roll result for the purposes of establishing the TN of an Investigation / Perception Skill Roll to detect it.

Intimidation (Awareness)

Sub-types: Social Skill

Emphases: Bullying, Control, Torture

Description: The manipulation of others through the use of threats, both stated and implied, is an oft-employed tool for those who have left their honor behind. Even bushi who are generally honorable but have a strong sense of pragmatism will occasionally abandon decorum and threaten those who refuse to cooperate. It is a shameful act, but one that many are willing to commit (and promptly forget) in order to ensure the successful completion of their duty.

The Bullying Emphasis is the simplest form of Intimidation, and involves the immediate,

short-term threat of violence to get another to perform a specific act. Control, on the other hand, indicates a longer-term attempt to shape another's behavior to your will, and is often used by courtiers to manipulate lower-ranking, weaker-willed individuals. Torture, which is never a subject for polite conversation, is used by *hinin* working for magistrates in order to elicit confessions and information from criminals. No proper samurai will dirty his soul by torturing in person.

Intimidation is usually a Contested Roll, resisted with Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. The GM may require a different Skill or Trait to resist the Intimidation attempt if it seems more appropriate to the situation. Regardless, the resisting character's Honor Rank is added to the total of his roll.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +5 to the total of any Contested Roll made using Intimidation.

Sleight of Hand (Agility)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Conceal, Escape, Pick Pocket, Prestidigitation

Description: The dexterous manipulation of small objects for the purpose of misdirection or concealment is not looked upon favorably by most honorable samurai. The code of Bushido flatly calls for sincerity in action, word, and thought, and such parlor tricks smack of deception and dishonesty, which no honorable samurai can abide.

The Conceal Emphasis allows you to hide small objects (something that can fit in your hand) on your person, requiring a Contested Roll using Sleight of Hand / Agility against Investigation / Perception to detect it. The Escape Emphasis allows you to slip free of bonds. The TN for this varies considerably, and can be TN 15 for simple ropes or as high as TN 25 or 30 for high-grade chains or bindings, or it can be a Contested Roll against the responsible party's Sailing (Knotwork). Pick Pockets is fairly self explanatory, requiring the same manner of Contested Roll as Conceal in order to avoid detection, and Prestidigitation allows you to use the Skill to entertain or distract people by performing tricks.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character may use the Conceal Emphasis to conceal small weapons.

Stealth (Agility)

Sub-types: None

Emphases: Ambush, Shadowing, Sneaking, Spell Casting

Description: Although generally a dishonorable practice, stealth has its uses in such situations as hunting or while scouting during a military engagement. For most samurai, however, these are necessary evils, and under any other circumstances, no honorable souls will ever dare disgrace themselves by sneaking about in the shadows like common criminals, or failing to face their opponents like true samurai would.

While concealed via Stealth, you may take Move Actions. When taking a Move Action while using Stealth, you may only make Simple Move Actions, and these only allow you to move a number of feet equal to your Water Ring (although Mastery Abilities can increase this significantly). The Ambush Emphasis allows you to make a Stealth (Ambush) / Agility roll, contested by an opponent's Investigation (Notice) / Perception, to gain an advantage over them during the first round of combat if they are unaware of your presence. The Spell Casting Emphasis allows you to make a Contested Roll against an opponent's Investigation (Notice) / Perception when casting a spell. If you win, they are unable to determine where the spell originated from. You lose no Honor for using Stealth (Sneaking), although other Emphases do usually result in Honor loss as normal.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 3: A character's Simple Move Actions while using Stealth allow him to move a distance equal to his Water x 5.
- Rank 5: A character's Simple Move Actions while using Stealth allow him to move a distance equal to his Water x 10.
- Rank 7: A character using Stealth may make Free Move Actions as normal.

Temptation (Awareness)

Sub-types: Social Skill

Emphases: Bribery, Seduction

Description: The art of offering another something that they desire in order to gain in turn something one desires is as old as civilization itself, and in truth very little has changed. The two greatest temptations for most are financial gain and physical pleasure, and both are frequently bandied about in court settings to fulfill the agendas of the Clans.

Temptation is best used against opponents who possess certain kinds of Disadvantages, such as Lechery, Fascination, Greed, or perhaps a Dark Secret. The GM will usually require a Contested Roll using Temptation / Awareness (with the appropriate Emphasis) against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. Much as with Intimidation, the GM can choose to let a PC roll against a flat TN when employing Temptation against a minor NPC.

Mastery Abilities:

- Rank 5: The character gains a bonus of +5 to the total of any Contested Roll made using Temptation.

Advantages & Disadvantages

There are some aspects of a character that cannot be represented through a comparative measure of their raw mental and physical abilities (Traits), or through knowledge gained via study or training (Skills). Typically, Advantages and Disadvantages represent abilities, relationships, or possessions that go above and beyond other mechanical representations. Disadvantages represent deficits that exist in a character's nature that can impact a number of different aspects of their mechanical and personal make-up. Advantages can be purchased using Experience Points, whereas taking Disadvantages grants additional Experience Points for use in other areas, up to a maximum of 10 additional Experience Points.

Subtypes

There are numerous types of Advantages and Disadvantages, each of which interacts with other mechanics in different ways. In particular, an ability can be targeted by other mechanical effects based upon its subtype. Whether or not an Advantage or Disadvantage can be purchased during play is also determined by its subtype. The subtypes include:

- **Physical –** These represent an ability or disability inherent to the character's body in some way. They may not be purchased after character creation without extenuating circumstances, and conversely they may sometimes be awarded without deliberate purchase (losing a limb results in Missing Limb, for example).
- **Mental –** These abilities represent part of a character's mental or psychological make-up in some way, and cannot be purchased after character creation unless approved by the GM.
- **Social –** Social Advantages and Disadvantages represent a character's ability or inability to interact with others in a successful manner. They may be purchased during play with GM approval if the circumstances are appropriate (a character should only purchase the Allies Advantage if he actually has allies, and so on).
- **Material –** These abilities represent possession of a physical item. They are riskier than other Advantages or Disadvantages because such an item can be stolen or destroyed, depriving the character of the mechanical benefit for which Experience Points were spent. These may be purchased during play with approval from the GM.
- **Spiritual –** These abilities represent a link between the character and something else that is not normally experienced by the average person. This might be a bond with a creature from a spirit realm, or even just a kharmic tie with another person in some way. These may only be purchased after character creation if the GM judges the circumstances dictate the character would in fact have this relationship.

Advantages

The following Advantages are available for purchase at the time of character creation or, depending upon the subtype, during campaign play. An Advantage can be purchased for the number of Experience Points listed in the description. Individual GMs may wish to increase the cost of Advantages purchased during play, either by a fixed amount (+2 Experience Points per Advantage) or by a geometric amount (double the listed cost).

Absolute Direction [Mental] (1 points)

You possess an almost supernatural sense of direction, and you always know what direction is north, no matter the circumstances. This ability does not function if you are more than one day's travel inside the Shadowlands.

Allies [Social] (Variable cost)

You have carefully nurtured social connections. Some of those in your web of connections would go to great lengths to protect you, while others have considerable resources. And some precious few are both. The total cost of this Advantage is determined by how many points you spend on your ally's degree of influence and their devotion to you. Crane characters may purchase this Advantage for 1 point less than its normal cost.

Table 3.1: Allies Advantage

Influence

1 point	*Minor (no land or appointments)*
2 points	*Moderate (some land or political influence)*
4 points	*Major (vast lands or prestigious appointments)*

Devotion

1 point	*Your ally would go out of his way to help you, but not risk his honor*
2 points	*Your ally would risk his honor to help you, but would do so secretly*
4 points	*Your ally would do anything to aid you, regardless of the cost*

Balance [Mental] (2 points)

You possess an inherent calm and serenity that others have difficulty overcoming when attempting to antagonize or taunt you, and that strengthens you when your honor is tested. When adding your Honor Rank to the total of any roll made to resist Intimidation or Temptation, you add an additional +1k0 to the roll as well.

Blackmail [Social] (Variable)

You possess knowledge and proof of a dark secret held by another, and can use that secret to elicit their cooperation in a number of ways. The cost of the Advantage is equal to the Status Rank of the individual whom you are blackmailing. Using this Advantage too frequently or making grandiose demands on the person in question may result in them deciding your death is worth the risk of exposing their secret, no matter what the consequences might be. Scorpion characters may purchase this Advantage for 1 point less than its normal cost.

Bland [Physical] (2 points)

You are extremely unremarkable in every regard, and others have a difficult time recognizing you unless you deliberately draw attention to your identity or affiliations. Whenever someone is making a Lore: Bushido / Awareness roll to determine your Honor Rank, or a Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence roll to determine your identity (based on your Glory Rank), you may voluntarily choose to increase the TN of that roll by 10.

Blissful Betrothal [Social] (3 points)

Your marriage has been arranged and, much to your delight, you have come to truly love your intended spouse. The social connections you have established as part of your enthusiastic marriage preparations allow you to purchase the following Advantages for two points less each (to a minimum of 1 point): Gentry, Kharmic Tie (with your betrothed only), Social Position, and Wealth.

Blood of Osano-Wo [Spiritual] (4 points)

You are descended from a bloodline of Hida Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, and his resilience lives on in you. You are immune to any penalties or damage from natural weather conditions, such as winter cold, summer heat, etc. If you suffer damage from a spell that employs natural forces (such as the mighty storm created by Hurricane, or the lightning bolt summoned by Fury of Osano-Wo), reduce the amount of damage you suffer by 1k1. Crab and Mantis characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Chosen by the Oracles [Spiritual] (6 points)

For reasons beyond your understanding, you have caught the notice of one of the Oracles, humans suffused with the divine power of the Elemental Dragons. You must select one Ring when you take this Advantage. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all Ring Rolls using that Ring.

Clear Thinker [Mental] (3 points)

You possess a sharp mind and keen powers of perception, making it very difficult for others to deceive you. Whenever you make a Contested Roll against someone who is attempting to confuse or manipulate you in any way, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of your roll. Dragon characters may purchase this Advantage for 2 points.

Crab Hands [Physical] (3 points)

You possess a natural affinity for weapons of all kinds, and can take up even an unfamiliar blade without difficulty in times of stress. Any time that you would be forced to make an Unskilled Roll when using a Weapon Skill, you are instead considered to have 1 rank in that Weapon Skill. Crab and bushi characters may purchase this Advantage for 2 points.

Crafty [Mental] (3 points)

You have a knack for instinctively knowing how to do things that most people prefer to avoid at all costs. Whenever you are in a situation where you would be forced to make an Unskilled Roll using a Low Skill, you are considered to have 1 rank in the Skill instead. Scorpion, Spider, and ninja characters may purchase this Advantage for 2 points.

Dangerous Beauty [Physical] (3 points)

You possess a certain quality that makes you all but irresistible to members of the opposite sex, and they succumb easily to your manipulations. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Temptation Skill Rolls made with members of the opposite sex. Scorpion characters may purchase this Advantage for 2 points.

Daredevil [Mental] (3 points)

You have a natural flair for athleticism and a complete lack of self-preservation when it comes to physical danger. Whenever you spend a Void Point to enhance an Athletics Skill Roll, you gain a bonus of +3k1 to the total of the roll instead of the normal +1k1. Mantis characters may purchase this Advantage for 2 points.

Dark Paragon [Mental] (5 points)

You have mastered one of the precepts of Shourido, the dark code that forms an antithesis of Bushido. Once per session, you may voluntarily sacrifice 5 points of Honor as a Free Action in order to affect a particular type of roll as indicated below, and gain a bonus of +5 to the total of that roll. If you do not have 5 points of Honor to spend in this manner, you may spend a Void Point instead. Spider characters may purchase this Advantage for 4 points. The type of roll that each precept of Shourido affects is:

- **Control:** Re-roll any Social Skill Roll
- **Determination:** Negate all TN/Wound penalties on one Skill or Spell Casting roll (no +5 bonus is applied to the roll)
- **Insight:** Re-roll any roll that used the Awareness Trait
- **Knowledge:** Re-roll any roll that used the Intelligence Trait
- **Perfection:** Spending the Honor causes any one die of your choice on a Skill Roll to explode (no +5 bonus added)
- **Strength:** Re-roll any damage Roll
- **Will:** Spending the Honor negates 10 Wounds at the moment they are suffered



Advantage/Disadvantage Sets

This chapter contains several sets of corresponding Advantages and Disadvantages, many of which are new to this edition of Legend of the Five Rings. Because of the philosophical and spiritual aspects of a character that these traits represent, there are certain restrictions regarding how they may be combined:

- No character may have both a Paragon Advantage and a Dark Paragon Advantage.
- No character may have both a Consumed Disadvantage and a Failure of Bushido Disadvantage.
- No character may have more than one Advantage or Disadvantage from a matched set (including Seven Fortunes' Blessings/Curses, Paragon/Failure, Dark Paragon/Consumed, Touched by the Realm/Cursed by the Realm, etc.) For example, if you have Hotei's Blessing, you may not also possess Benten's Blessing.
- If a character possesses an Advantage from one set (Dark Paragon, Paragon, Touched by the Realm), then he may not possess a Disadvantage from the corresponding set (Consumed, Failure of Bushido, and Cursed by the Realm, respectively). The Seven Fortunes' Blessings/Curses are exempt from this restriction, as it is possible for one Fortune to bless an individual and another to curse them without regard for one another's wishes.
- The GM is of course entitled to override these restrictions if he wishes, but such decisions should not be made lightly, since combining these Advantages and Disadvantages can have an unbalancing effect on game play.

Darling of the Court [Social] (2 points)

During a recent court session, you did something that gained the notice of the host, resulting in an instant increase in your importance with all those in attendance. Select one court, such as the court of Kyuden Bayushi, the court of the Okura district in Toshi Ranbo, etc. When in attendance at this court, your Status is effectively one rank higher, but only while court is in session. Courtier characters may purchase this Advantage for 1 point. You may take this Advantage multiple times for different courts, but only once for each particular court.

Different School [Social] (5 points)

Your family sacrificed considerable resources and favors in order to sponsor your entrance into the School of another Clan. When creating your character, you may select a School of a different Clan to attend. You are still a member of your own Clan, however, creating a potential conflict between your loyalty to your sensei and your loyalty to your lord and family.

Elemental Blessing [Spiritual] (4 points)

You are much beloved by the kami of a particular element, although you know not why that might be. As a result, the cost of increasing the Traits associated with one particular Ring, chosen when this Advantage is purchased, is decreased by 1. For example, if you choose Earth when you purchase this Advantage, the cost of increasing Stamina and Willpower is reduced by 1 Experience Point every time you increase them. Void may not be chosen for this Advantage. Phoenix characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Enlightened [Spiritual] (6 points)

Your spiritual journey toward complete harmony with the universe as a whole has begun to reach its destination. In addition to whatever storyline effects your GM may choose to bestow on you, you also find it easier to enhance your connection to the Void. When you are using Experience Points to increase your Void Ring, the total cost is decreased by 2 points each time. Dragon and monk characters may purchase this Advantage for 5 points.

Fame [Social] (3 points)

As a result of your actions, there are many in the Empire who know your name. You gain +1 Glory Rank.

Forbidden Knowledge [Mental] (5 points)

There is a subject about which you possess considerable knowledge and insight. The problem is that this subject is forbidden, and considered grossly socially inappropriate if not outright illegal. Anyone who discovers your expertise in this area might rightly wonder how you came upon it. The benefits of the Advantage vary depending upon the nature of the information, and players should discuss with their GM how this Advantage will work. The most common examples of Forbidden Knowledge include:

- **Gaijin Pepper:** You possess firsthand knowledge of gunpowder, both how to create it and how to use it. You gain one rank in Craft: Explosives, and possess a small pouch of gaijin pepper that you may carry with you if you so choose.
- **Gozoku:** You possess an intricate knowledge of the Gozoku conspiracy against the throne, either in its first or second incarnation, and may in fact be a member of that organization. You gain one rank in Lore: Gozoku and gain a bonus of +1k1 on Social Skill rolls with known members of the Gozoku.
- **Kolat:** You are intimately familiar with the nature and operations of the blasphemous Kolat order, and may be a member of that organization. You gain one rank in Lore: Kolat and gain a bonus of +1k1 on Social Skill rolls with known members of the Kolat.

- **Lying Darkness:** You are familiar with the entity known as the Lying Darkness, its methods, and its minions. You may have come into conflict with it in the past, and perhaps it hunts you still. You gain one rank of Lore: Lying Darkness, and you may observe an individual and make a Lore: Lying Darkness / Perception Roll (TN 30) to determine if he has been corrupted by the Lying Darkness.
- **Maho:** You are familiar with the forbidden and blasphemous magic known as maho, and may in fact be a practicing *maho-tsukai* (black sorcerer) yourself. You gain 1 rank in Lore: Maho and, at the GM's discretion, might begin play knowing a maho spell.

Friendly Kami [Spiritual] (5 points)

A particular kami has befriended you, and stays in your vicinity at all times. Choose one element when this Advantage is purchased. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all Spell Casting Rolls made to cast Sense, Commune, or Summon with regard to that Element only. Only shugenja may purchase this Advantage. You may not select this Advantage for an Element in which you are Deficient.

Friend of the Brotherhood [Spiritual] (5 points)

You have studied among your allies at the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and as a result you understand your place in the universe slightly better than most. You may purchase Kiho (rules for Kiho are found in the *Book of Water*) as though you are a Monk of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, instead of paying a higher cost. You must still meet all other normal restrictions on learning Kiho. Only characters from Monk or Shugenja Schools (and not Monk characters from the Brotherhood of Shinsei) may purchase this Advantage. Dragon characters may purchase this Advantage for 4 points.

Friend of the Elements [Spiritual] (4 points)

The spirits of a certain Element swirl about you at all times, lending their aid when possible even though you are likely unaware of their presence. Choose a Ring when this Advantage is purchased. Whenever you make a Trait Roll with either Trait associated with that Ring, you gain a Free Raise. Shugenja characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Gaijin Gear [Material] (5 points)

You possess a single piece of equipment that is gaijin in origin, constructed somewhere beyond the boundaries of the Emerald Empire. It may be a weapon from one of the many warrior cultures around Rokugan, such as the Senpet Empire, the overseas kingdoms of Merenae and Thrane, the barbarian Yobanjin tribes to the north, or even the distant Yodotai Empire far to the northwest. In this case simply establish a comparable weapon from Rokugan and use its mechanics, but the item will require its own unique Weapon Skill to utilize it. Non-weapon options include such bizarre objects as compasses, spyglasses, magnifying glasses, scissors, etc. Mantis and Unicorn characters may purchase this Advantage for 4 points.

Advantage/Disadvantage Discounts

Some Advantages and Disadvantages cost more (or less) for members of certain clans or professions. This is to represent both the frequency with which these things are found among that group, and how appropriate they are for members of that group. Unless otherwise specified, discounts are cumulative, but can never reduce the cost of an Advantage below 1.

Advantage Limits

There are a wide variety of Advantages available in this section, many of which offer benefits that could conceivably stack with one another to create potent combinations. For this reason, individual GMs are encouraged to work with their players to create limits on Advantages that are suitable for their campaign. Our basic recommendation is to limit the number of points that characters may spend on Advantages during character creation to 15 points. For some groups, limiting the number of bonuses that can apply to a single Skill or Trait roll might be another option. Regardless of what GMs choose for their campaigns, this is an important area to consider before character creation begins. The Book of Void contains additional discussion of this problem and some other possible solutions.



Gentry [Material] (Variable)

In the manner of all samurai, you have been given a duty to oversee that which ultimately belongs to the Emperor. In your case, however, your charge is significantly larger than most ever achieve. The number of points assigned to this Advantage determines the size of the holding you have been assigned to oversee. Multiple characters can combine points in this Advantage in order to jointly oversee a larger holding. Characters assigned to oversee a holding are responsible for defending it, administrating it, and ensuring that all taxes are paid to all responsible parties. This can be the basis for an entire campaign.

Holding	*Point Cost*
Village	*8 points*
Large Village	*15 points*
Unique Holding (Sake Works, Falconry, etc.)	*18 points*
Town	*20 points*
City	*25 points*
Province	*30 points*



Great Destiny [Spiritual] (5 points)

The kharmic cycle has some great purpose in store for you, and the Celestial Order will conspire to keep you alive, no matter what, until your destiny can be fulfilled. Once per session, when you suffer Wounds that would kill you, you are reduced to a single Wound remaining instead. This will only happen once per session, as there are limits to the extent that the Heavens will intervene in mortal affairs.

Great Potential [Varies] (5 points)

Within you lies the potential to excel at one particular endeavor, perhaps more so than any other living soul in the Empire. Select any one Skill when you purchase this Advantage. When you make Raises on a Skill Roll using that Skill, your Raises are limited by your rank in that Skill instead of your Void Ring. If your Void Ring is higher, however, you may use that as a measure for your Raises if you so choose.

Hands of Stone [Physical] (6 points)

Some have a natural talent for unarmed combat, and you are one such individual. The Damage Rolls for your unarmed attacks are increased by +0k1. Monk characters may purchase this Advantage for 5 points.

Heart of Vengeance [Social] (5 points)

One Clan has earned your eternal, undying hatred, and nothing will ever quench your rage. Select one Clan or other faction (such as the Brotherhood of Shinsei or one of the Imperial families) when purchasing this Advantage. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of any Contested Roll made against a member of that Clan/faction. Spider characters may purchase this Advantage for 4 points.

Hero of the People [Social] (2 points)

Although your reputation among your fellow samurai may not be any better than that of the next individual, your actions have garnered the adoration of the common folk. When meeting citizens of Rokugan who are not members of the samurai caste, the TN for them to recognize you, as determined by your Glory Rank, is lowered by 10.

Higher Purpose [Mental] (3 points)

There is some greater purpose to which you have devoted your life. This is not a simple matter, but some grand work that will take years or perhaps even the whole of your life to accomplish. Whatever this goal is, during any session in which you and the GM agree you have made demonstrable progress toward it, you gain one additional Experience Point.

Imperial Spouse [Social] (5 points)

Through a careful exchange of favors and resources, your family arranged for you to be married to a minor member of an Imperial family. Your spouse was not of high enough station to warrant you taking an Imperial name, but there are benefits all the same. You gain +0.5 Status Ranks, and gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all Social Skill rolls made with members of the Imperial families.

Inari's Blessing [Spiritual] (3 points)

The Fortune of Rice is a lesser Fortune, but nevertheless is among the most revered entities throughout the whole of Rokugan, particularly by the common people of the Empire. When fasting or deprived of food, you do not suffer from the normal inability to regain Void Points, although other penalties apply as normal.

Inheritance [Material] (5 points)

When you received your gempukku ceremony, your family honored you with an heirloom of your ancestors. It is among your most precious possessions, and you would die before you allowed it to be harmed or brought dishonor to it. You possess one item in addition to the normal starting equipment provided by your School. Whenever you make a Skill Roll using this item, such as a Perform: Biwa roll with a biwa, a Games: Go

roll with a go set, or a Kenjutsu roll with a katana, you gain a bonus of +1k1 to the roll. This bonus does not apply to any attack or damage rolls, only Skill Rolls made for non-combat purposes (rolls made outside of a skirmish).

Players and GMs may agree to allow a more powerful or unique item to be inherited for a higher Experience Point cost. Such special cases should be discussed carefully beforehand to ensure fairness and balance.

Inner Gift [Spiritual] (7 points)

You possess a mysterious gift that even shugenja cannot fully understand. Monks describe individuals such as yourself as existing in a unique state of harmony with the universe, but then they say that sort of thing a lot. Your gift may be a manifestation of the kami, perhaps an indicator of spirit ancestry, or any of a number of different theories. The exact nature of an Inner Gift should be discussed with the GM before taking this Advantage. Examples of Inner Gifts include the following:

Gift	*Effect*
Animal Ken	*You may instinctively sense the mood of animals; animals regard you as friendly.*
Empathy	*You gain a bonus of +1k1 to Courtier rolls made to determine another's feelings/desires.*
Foresight	*You are difficult to surprise, and gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of Initiative rolls.*
Lesser Prophecy	*You sometimes have vague dreams of the future, such as a bloody knife before a murder.*
Spirit Touch	*You may make an Awareness roll (TN 15) to see the last person to touch an object you are touching.*

Irreproachable [Mental] (2 points)

You have a soul of virtue that is beyond reproach, and others find it difficult if not impossible to lead you into dishonorable behavior. When making a Contested Roll where the other party is using the Temptation Skill, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to your roll. Imperial characters may purchase this Advantage for 1 point.

Ishiken-do [Spiritual] (8 points)

You have that rarest of gifts, the ability to commune with the Void itself. This gift is similar in many respects to the ability to speak to the kami, save that there are no naturally occurring kami of the Void; the Void itself is a living thing, both everything and nothing all at once. You may cast Void spells as described later in this chapter. Only shugenja may take this Advantage, and without this Advantage a character cannot cast Void spells. Phoenix characters may purchase this Advantage for 6 points.

Kharmic Tie [Spiritual] (1-5 points)

Your destiny is not yours alone, but is bonded to that of another in some fundamental way. You may have been close to this other person during a previous life, or perhaps your destiny in this life will yet be entwined in theirs in some essential manner. Select one person when purchasing this Advantage. For each point spent on this Advantage, once per session you gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all attack rolls made when fighting for or protecting the person to whom you are bonded.

Languages [Mental] (1 or 3 points)

The Empire has only one language with two dialects. The world around Rokugan, however, has a wide variety of nations and cultures, each with their own language. For 1 point, you may learn one human language from any surrounding culture, including but not limited to: the Yobanjin dialect, Senpet, Yodotai, Mekham, Merenae, Rhuumal, Thrane, etc. A non-human language, such as the Nezumi or Naga languages, requires three points and confers only an ability to understand the language and a limited ability to express very basic concepts verbally.

Large [Physical] (4 points)

You are significantly larger than the average Rokugani, ranging in height from 6'0" to 6'3" in height. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Damage Rolls for any large melee weapon. Crab characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Leadership [Social] (6 points)

You have an innate knack for leading and inspiring others in battle. Once per Round during the Reactions stage, you may add your School Rank plus 1k1 to the Initiative Score of one ally in a skirmish. This bonus lasts until the Reactions stage of the following round. An individual may only benefit from one use of this Advantage per Round. Lion characters may purchase this Advantage for 5 points.

Luck [Spiritual] (3/6/9 points)

Fortune favors the mortal man. A number of times per session equal to your rank in this Advantage, you may choose to immediately re-roll any one roll you make, keeping the higher of the two results.

Magic Resistance [Spiritual] (2/4/6 points)

For reasons beyond your understanding, the kami are reluctant to involve themselves with you in any way. For each rank you possess in this Advantage, all elemental spells targeting you have the TN of the Spell Casting Roll made to enact it increased by +3. Maho, gaijin, and non-human forms of magic are not affected by this Advantage.

Multiple Schools [Social] (10 points)

You have been given an incredible opportunity to study at multiple dojo, each associated with a different major School. This is a rare opportunity indeed, as being released from one's oaths to one sensei in order to study with another requires extraordinary circumstances. This Advantage may only be purchased during play, and once it is taken, the character stops progression in his current School. Upon reaching the next Insight Rank, he begins learning Techniques from the new School beginning at Rank 1. Before learning any Techniques from a given School, you must possess at least one rank in all School Skills taught there. Under no circumstances can a character ever take ranks in both a Bushi School and a Shugenja School; the two are simply incompatible in every respect.

Paragon [Mental] (7 points)

You exemplify the code of Bushido, and have taken one particular tenet to heart and made it your way of life. In addition to the benefit listed below, any time you gain Honor for exhibiting the virtue for which you have the Paragon Advantage, you gain an additional +1 Honor. Lion characters may purchase this Advantage for 6 points.

- **Compassion:** Any time you spend a Void Point to improve a roll made to directly help those lower than you in the Celestial Order, you gain +2k2 instead of +1k1.
- **Courage:** You add a bonus of +1k1 to the total of any roll made to resist Intimidation or to overcome Fear effects.
- **Courtesy:** Any time you make an Etiquette roll to avoid an embarrassment or breach of honor, you add +2k0 to the roll.
- **Duty:** You may spend a Void Point on any Skill Roll or Spell Casting Roll to negate all TN penalties for that roll, including Wound penalties.
- **Honesty:** On any Sincerity (Honesty) roll, you add a bonus of +1k1. You may add this bonus even if you do not possess the Emphasis, but it would apply in the situation at hand.
- **Honor:** You may add twice your Honor Rank to all rolls to resist Temptation or Intimidation rolls, instead of the normal bonus.
- **Sincerity:** You may add a bonus of +2k0 to all Contested Rolls using Sincerity.

Perceived Honor [Social] (2 points/rank)

Others find it difficult to perceive your true nature, a fact that benefits you in concealing your sometimes questionable actions. For each rank you possess in this Advantage, your Honor is considered one full rank higher for the purpose of all attempts to discern it. Anyone attempting to roll Lore: Bushido / Awareness to determine your Honor Rank will determine the false rank instead of your actual Honor.

Precise Memory [Mental] (3 points)

You have an incredible ability to recall exactly things you have seen or heard. In any situation where you need to remember something exactly the way it was, whether the wording of something you read or the details of a person's physical appearance, you add a bonus of +1k1 to your Intelligence Trait Roll.

Prodigy [Physical] (12 points)

You are a marvel of the dojo, and your sensei believe that you will accomplish incredible things in your lifetime. Whenever you make a School Skill Roll, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to the roll.

Quick [Physical] (6 points)

You can react quickly to others, seizing advantage where previously there had been none. If you did not act first during a Combat Round, during the Reactions Stage of combat you may add your Reflexes Trait to the total of your Initiative Score for all subsequent rounds of this skirmish. This may done each Round that you did not act first. Ninja characters may purchase this Advantage for 5 points.

Quick Healer [Physical] (3 points)

Your body mends incredibly quickly, allowing you to recover from even devastating wounds with amazing speed. For the purposes of recovering Wounds, your Stamina is considered to be two ranks higher.

Read Lips [Mental] (4 points)

Either through natural ability or incredible patience and practice, you have the ability to understand what others are saying even if you cannot hear them, simply by observing how their lips move. When you are in a situation where others are speaking and you cannot hear them, you can understand what they are saying by making a Perception Trait Roll against TN 15 + 5 for every twenty feet away from you the speakers are. Courtier characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Sacred Weapon [Material] (Varies)

You possess a special weapon created by the master weaponsmiths of your Clan, and considered to be an icon of all who bear the mon of your Clan. The cost of each individual weapon is denoted by the number after its name.

Multiple Schools in Play

The Multiple Schools Advantage is one which can easily be mechanically abused, since combining two different schools can create very potent capabilities. Players and GMs alike should remember that it is extremely rare for a samurai to be allowed to leave his dojo and train in another one. After all, he has been entrusted with the secret techniques which his sensei have preserved for hundreds of years, and now he will be taking those secrets with him while he attends another dojo, perhaps one in another family or even another Clan. Not many sensei or daimyo will agree to such a thing, and any such privilege must be properly justified by character development in play. The GM is fully within his rights to prohibit the purchase of this Advantage if he judges the player has not suitably justified it.

Clan	Weapon	Mechanics
Crab	*Kaiu Blade (6)*	*3k3 katana; unbreakable; -2 to target's Reduction*
Crane	*Kakita Blade (5)*	*4k2 katana; may reroll damage once per Iaijutsu duel*
Dragon	*Twin Sister Blades (3)*	*Daisho; +5 to the TN of all Disarm Maneuvers against you*
Lion	*Akodo Blade (6)*	*4k2 katana; Honor Rank considered at +1 while carried*
Mantis	*Storm Kama (pair) (6)*	*2k2 kama; +1k0 to attack rolls when wielding both*
Phoenix	*Inquisitor's Strike (6)*	*3k2 wakizashi; considered jade against targets with Taint*
Scorpion	*Shosuro Blade (5)*	*4k2 katana; add +5 to TN to resist poisons applied to blade*
Spider	*Black Steel Blade (6)*	*4k2 katana; any exploding damage dice require target to make an Earth Ring Roll (TN 15) or gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint*
Unicorn	*Moto Scimitar (6)*	*3k3 scimitar; +3 to Damage Rolls made while on horseback*

Sacrosanct [Social] (4 points)

Because of some great service you or perhaps your parents performed on behalf of the Emperor, the Son of Heaven has placed you under his protection. You may not purchase this Advantage unless you possess an Honor Rank of 6 or higher. So long as your Honor does not drop below 6.0, no one of Honor Rank 5 or higher may attack you unless you attack them first; their rigid code of honor simply will not allow them to blatantly go against the Emperor's wishes. Willingly entered duels ignore the effects of this Advantage. Imperial characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Sage [Mental] (4 points)

You have a love of learning, and have accumulated a staggering amount of information during the course of your lifetime. Whenever you would be forced to make an Unskilled Roll when using a Lore Skill, you instead are considered to have 1 rank in that Skill. Phoenix and shugenja characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Sensation [Social] (3 points)

You are capable of enrapturing the crowd, no matter the circumstances. Whenever you would be required to make a Skill Roll using a Perform Skill you do not possess, you are considered to have 1 rank in that skill.

Servant [Material] (5 points)

A servant has been assigned to assist you by your family, or possibly one whose help you purchased with your own resources in order to make life a little bit easier. You may have a maximum number of servants equal to twice your Status Rank. Different kinds of servants have different useful abilities and can more easily be supplied by different Clans. Typically, a servant has all Traits at rank 2 and a single Skill at rank 3. You may add additional Skill Ranks or Emphases to a servant at the time the Advantage is purchased by paying 3 additional points per Skill Rank or Emphasis. Consult the following table for sample servants and their costs:

Servant	Notable Abilities	Discounts
Artisan	*One Artisan Skill at 3*	*-2 points for Crane*
Attendant	*Etiquette (Conversation) 3*	*-2 points for Scorpion*
Budoka	*One Weapon Skill at 3*	*-2 points for Lion*
Craftsman	*One Craft Skill at 3*	*-2 points for Dragon*
Eta Attendant	*Lore: Anatomy 3*	*-2 points for Crab*
Groom	*Animal Handling (Horses) 3*	*-2 points for Unicorn*
Merchant	*Commerce (Appraisal) 3*	*-2 points for Mantis*
Scribe	*One Lore Skill at 3*	*-2 points for Phoenix*
Sohei	*Jiujutsu 3*	*-2 points for Spider*

Seven Fortunes' Blessing [Spiritual] (4 points)

One of the Seven Fortunes, the most powerful of all the Fortunes, has taken notice of you and showered you with his or her blessings. These can be powerful bonuses, but sometimes come with expectations. The Fortunes are both fickle and wrathful, after all. The Clans listed after each blessing may purchase that Advantage for 1 point less than its normal cost.

- **Benten's Blessing (Crane):** The Fortune of Romantic Love has showered you with her blessings. Whenever you are attempting to persuade someone, regardless of the circumstances, you gain a bonus of +0k1 to the total of the Social Skill Roll in question. This bonus only applies to persuasion, not coercion.
- **Bishamon's Blessing (5 points) (Crab, Lion):** The Fortune of Strength has taken notice of your might, and has favored you with his blessings. Whenever you declare and make three successful Raises on an attack roll for the purposes of the Increased Damage Maneuver, you gain one additional Raise. Free Raises do not count toward activating this effect. You also gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of any Strength Trait Rolls.

Disadvantages & Role-playing

Disadvantages are a tremendous opportunity to add realism and depth to your character. It is also nice to have those extra points to spend on other things! However, over-use of Disadvantages can also become somewhat abusive, especially if the burden is on the GM to make sure that the Disadvantages come into play. In order to encourage players to add only those Disadvantages that work within the framework of the campaign and within the confines of the individual characters' backgrounds, we suggest that characters whose Disadvantages actively impact the events of a gaming session or impede the character in some way during the course of the session should be awarded one additional Experience Point for that session. This serves to remind players to keep up with their Disadvantages, rather than leaving that burden on the GM.



- **Daikoku's Blessing (Mantis):** The Fortune of Wealth has favored you with his patronage, and you excel in matters pertaining to wealth and mercantile pursuits. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all Commerce Skill Rolls.
- **Ebisu's Blessing (Unicorn):** You have captured the attention, if only briefly, of the Fortune of Honest Work, and his favor is clear to those who serve him best. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all Social Skill Rolls made with citizens of Rokugan who are not members of the samurai caste.
- **Fukurokujin's Blessing (Dragon, Phoenix):** The Fortune of Wisdom favors you above all others, and you reap the benefits of his patronage. Select one Lore Skill when you purchase this Advantage. Whenever you make a Skill Roll using that Skill, you gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of that roll.
- **Hotei's Blessing:** The Fortune of Contentment finds you a pleasing tribute to his works, and favors you with his sense of serenity and his jovial nature. Whenever an effect of any sort, either a spell, Advantage, Technique, or other effect, would cause you to lose Void Points, the instigator of the effect must first defeat you in a Contested Void Roll. If the effect already calls for a Contested Roll of some kind, your roll is instead increased by +10.
- **Jurojin's Blessing (Scorpion):** The Fortune of Longevity favors you, and as a result you can expect a long and healthy life. Whenever you are rolling to resist the effects of a disease or poison, you gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of the roll.

Silent [Physical] (3 points)

You have a natural talent for moving silently at all times. You add +1k0 to the total of all Stealth rolls. Ninja characters may purchase this Advantage for 2 points.

Social Position [Social] (6 points)

You have received an illustrious social appointment, whether through your own accomplishments or purely because of political reasons. You gain +1 Status Rank.

Soul of Artistry [Mental] (4 points)

Your soul soars with the spirit of creativity. Choose either Artisan Skills or Craft Skills when purchasing this Advantage. Any time that you would be required to make an Unskilled Roll using a Skill of the chosen type, you are considered to have 1 rank in that Skill. Crane and courtier characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Strength of the Earth [Physical] (3 points)

In your soul can be found the spirit of the mountains and the strength of stone. You can overcome injuries that would cripple other men. The TN penalties you suffer from Wound Ranks are reduced by 3. Bushi characters may purchase this Advantage for 2 points.

Tactician [Mental] (4 points)

You have a mind well suited to the ebb and flow of battle. When making a roll on the Mass Battle Table, you may increase or decrease your result by 5. Lion and bushi characters may purchase this Advantage for 3 points.

Touch of the Spirit Realms [Spiritual] (5 points)

Somehow, a fragment of the essence of a spirit realm is present in your soul, and suffuses everything you do. Shugenja characters may purchase this Advantage for 4 points.

- **Chikushudo:** You gain a bonus of +1k1 on all Animal Handling rolls.
- **Gaki-do:** When you resolve an attack that kills an opponent, you immediately regain 5 Wounds.
- **Jigoku:** You may add your Taint Rank to any attack roll and any Skill roll or Trait roll that uses a Physical Trait. If you are Lost, you add twice your Taint Rank rather than your normal bonus. You may not take this Advantage unless you possess the Shadowlands Taint.
- **Maigo no Musha:** When you are awarded Glory in an amount greater than 3 points, you receive one additional point.
- **Meido:** You gain a bonus of +2k0 to Contested Rolls versus attempts to manipulate you in social interactions, such as use of the Courtier Skill.
- **Sakkaku:** You gain a bonus of +1k1 on Sincerity (Deceit) rolls.
- **Tengoku:** You gain a bonus of +2k0 on Earth Ring Rolls made to resist the Shadowlands Taint.
- **Toshigoku:** When making a Move Action to get into range to attack an opponent, the distance of your move is increased by 5 feet. (This costs 8 points instead of 5.)

- **Yomi:** Select one School Skill. You gain a bonus of +1k0 on all Skill Rolls made using that Skill. (This costs 7 points instead of 5.)
- **Yume-do:** You can recover all expended Void Points with only four hours of rest, rather than the normal full night of eight hours of rest.

Virtuous [Mental] (3 points)

You embrace virtue in your every thought and action. You possess one additional rank of Honor above your normal starting value (as determined by your School).

Voice [Physical] (3 points)

You have a voice that others find pleasing in virtually every respect. You gain a bonus of +1k1 on any Perform Skill Roll that utilizes your voice, such as Perform: Singing or Perform: Oratory.

Wary [Mental] (3 points)

You are constantly on alert, always looking out for the unexpected. When rolling Investigation (Notice) / Perception against Stealth (Ambush) / Agility to detect an ambush, you add +1k1 to your roll.

Way of the Land [Mental] (2 points)

You are intimately familiar with a particular region, having traveled it extensively to the point that you know it as well as the interior of your own house. Select the lands of one family, a major city, or some other reasonably sized region. While you are within that region, it is not possible for you to get lost, and you know the location of any available resources to be found there. Unicorn characters may purchase this Advantage for 1 point.

Wealthy [Material] (1 point/rank)

Your branch of the family is particularly wealthy, and they have granted you additional resources in order to facilitate your fulfillment of your duty. For each point spent on this Advantage, you gain two additional koku, to be added to the amount in your School outfit. Crane, Unicorn, and Imperial characters may purchase this Advantage for 1 point less off its total cost.



Disadvantages

The following Disadvantages may be purchased at the time of character creation. Doing so grants a character an additional number of Experience Points equal to the amount listed in the individual entries. A character may never gain more than 10 additional Experience Points from taking Disadvantages. If a player would like his character to have more Disadvantages, he may take them, but he gains no additional points for them.

Antisocial [Social] (2/4 points)

You find the presence of others uncomfortable, so much so that it is immediately obvious to those around you. Your preference for solitude causes you to behave in a manner that might best be described as rude. If you take the 2 point version of this Disadvantage, you suffer a penalty of -1k0 to all Social Skill Rolls. For 4 points, the penalty is -1k1. This Disadvantage is worth 1 additional point to Crab characters.

Ascetic [Mental] (2 points)

You have no taste for or interest in material things, and this minimalist attitude has impacted how others view you. Your School Outfit includes only weapons, armor, clothing, necessary tools of the trade for your profession (such as a scroll satchel for shugenja), and nothing else. Any time you would be awarded Glory as a result of your actions, you receive only half the normal amount. Coupled with the normal restriction for Monks in gaining Glory, ascetic monk characters would only gain one quarter the normal amount of Glory. This Disadvantage is worth 3 points to Dragon and monk characters.

Bad Eyesight [Physical] (3 points)

Your eyesight is exceptionally poor, whether as a result of some medical condition or even from a missing eye. You suffer a penalty of -1k1 to all ranged attack rolls and to any Perception-based rolls.

Bad Fortune [Spiritual] (3 points)

Kharma is a powerful force, and sometimes it is a destructive one as well. There is something unpleasant in store for you, and you may have no idea what it is until it is far too late. Bad fortunes take an almost infinite variety of forms, all worth the same number of points, and players and GMs should discuss the form of a Bad Fortune during character creation. Some of the more common versions include:

- **Secret Love:** Somewhere, someone is madly in love with you, and will go to any lengths to sabotage your romantic interests, even politically arranged marriages, in order to ensure that you remain available, for them.
- **Disfigurement:** You have a birthmark of some sort that appears on a visible portion of your body. Others regard it as a clear mark of bad fortune (which in Rokugan, it is), and give you a very wide berth.
- **Evil Eye:** One of your eyes is discolored. People avoid looking you in the eyes at all costs, and some believe your very presence invites evil spirits.
- **Allergy:** You are allergic to a common substance, something you come into contact with regularly, such as silk, cotton, or sushi. Its presence breaks you out in a very uncomfortable rash, which in turn makes others react poorly to your presence.
- **Lingering Misfortune:** At some point in your future, you will fail an extremely important dice roll in a spectacularly disastrous fashion. The GM will decide when this happens, and no mechanical effect will allow you to overcome it or to circumvent it.
- **Unknown Enemy:** Someone somewhere in another Clan hates you, and wishes to see you dead. You have no idea who they are or why they hate you, but you will very soon.
- **Moto Curse:** You possess a spiritual weakness that makes you extremely susceptible to the Shadowlands Taint. You suffer a penalty of -1k0 to any roll made to resist acquiring the Taint. Only members of the Unicorn Clan may take this Disadvantage, and they receive 4 points for it.
- **Yogo Curse:** You are cursed to betray the one you love the most, just as the first Yogo was cursed by Fu Leng himself. Normally only members of the Scorpion Clan may take this Disadvantage, and they receive 4 points for it. (GMs may allow other characters of the Yogo bloodline to take the Curse as well, if they wish.)

Bad Health [Physical] (4 points)

You suffer from a chronic medical condition that constantly renders you weak and susceptible to both illness and injury. Your Earth Ring is considered one rank lower for the purposes of determining Wound Ranks and for resisting diseases.

Bitter Betrothal [Social] (2 points)

You have been promised to another, or perhaps are already married, and neither of you are at all pleased with the situation. Your spouse despises you, but he or she at least has the decorum to manage your estate properly... for the most part. Your mutual dislike, however, can result in tremendous difficulty with even simple domestic or bureaucratic tasks. This Disadvantage is worth 3 points to Imperial characters.

Blackmailed [Social] (Variable)

Someone out there knows of some dark secret of yours, or some horrible indiscretion you committed in a moment of weakness. What's worse, they intend to make you pay for it. The cost of this Disadvantage is equal to your Status Rank. The person blackmailing you will contact you periodically and require certain things of you. You must weigh these actions against the potential disgrace if your secret is discovered, and act accordingly.

Black Sheep [Social] (3 points)

For whatever reason, your family is completely disgusted with you and your actions. You have not been cast out and made ronin, but you are no longer welcome in your own household. You may only maintain proper relations with any member of your family via the Allies Advantage, and if you attend one of your own family's Schools, you may not advance in School Rank without going to great lengths to find a willing teacher.

Blind [Physical] (6 points)

You possess no natural eyesight whatsoever save for a slight ability to determine light and dark. You suffer a penalty of -3k3

to all ranged attack rolls and -1k1 to melee attack rolls. Your base Armor TN is equal to your Reflexes Trait plus 5 (armor adds bonuses as normal). Your Water Ring is considered two ranks lower for the purposes of determining how far you may move as part of a Move Action. Any attempt at a Simple Move Action requires an Athletics/Agility roll (TN 20) or you are knocked Prone. You may not make Perception rolls unless the GM judges that you can use senses other than sight for the roll.

Brash [Mental] (3 points)

You have a notoriously short temper and are likely to answer anything you perceive as a threat with steel. If you are threatened or insulted, you must make a Willpower Trait roll (adding your Honor Rank to the total) at a TN of 25, or you will attack immediately. This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to Lion characters.

Can't Lie [Mental] (2 points)

You are psychologically incapable of telling a lie, perhaps because it has been so thoroughly drilled into your nature by your honorable family. Not only can you not tell a lie, but if someone in your presence tells a lie and you know that it is untrue, you must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll (TN 20) or immediately correct them. This can cause untold difficulty in court settings and can lead to complete disgrace if you are not careful.

Cast Out [Social] (1/3 points)

You, or perhaps your entire line, were at some point denounced by an order of monks, an act that can bring shame to even the least pious samurai. One point in this Disadvantage indicates the disapproval of a single temple, while three points represents a major sect within the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Monks of this sect treat you as if your Glory Rank were in fact Infamy (see the Infamous Disadvantage).

Compulsion [Mental] (2-4 points)

There is some activity in which you are hopelessly compelled to partake. It is a ritual that is so ingrained in your behavior that it requires a feat of will to forsake it, even in dire circumstances. This may be something illicit and addictive, such as sake or gambling, or it may be as innocuous as visiting every major temple you pass. The basic Disadvantage requires a Willpower Trait Roll of TN 15 to overcome. The TN of the roll increases by 5 for every additional point gained by the Disadvantage, to a maximum of TN 25 (4 points).

Consumed [Mental] (Varies)

You have walked the path of Shourido, and it has consumed you utterly. One of the tenets has become your existence, and you live only to enact it. These Disadvantages are worth one additional point to Spider characters.

- **Control (4 Points):** You are determined to control and dominate others, no matter what the cost, and can never admit that you are wrong or might have made a mistake. You suffer a –1k1 penalty on all Etiquette and Sincerity rolls.
- **Determination (6 Points):** You believe you can do anything on your own, without the need for any outside help or agency, or even any inner strength. You cannot spend Void Points to enhance die-rolls. (You can still spend Void Points for other purposes and enhancements.)
- **Insight (4 Points):** You seek profound insight in even the most trivial things, to the exclusion of normal activity. Choose one of your School Skills. Any time you use this Skill, you must make a Willpower Trait Roll at TN 20 or become lost in reverie as you seek a deeper understanding of this skill. (You can be snapped out of this reverie by pain, loud noise, shaking, etc.)
- **Knowledge (4 Points):** You are obsessed with gaining more knowledge and understanding of all things, no matter what the cost. Any time you encounter some topic, area of research, or new idea, no matter how trivial, scandalous, or blasphemous it might be, you must make a Willpower Trait Roll at TN 25 or decide to study it.
- **Perfection (5 Points):** You must do everything perfectly, even when there is no need to do so in order to succeed. Any time you make a Skill or Spell Casting Roll, you must call one extra Raise for no effect, or the roll will automatically fail. This Disadvantage is worth 6 points to Crane characters.



- **Strength (5 Points):** Raw physical power is the only way to defeat your foes. Finesse and negotiation are for fools. You must call one extra Raise (for no effect) in order to use the Called Shot, Feint, or Disarm Maneuvers in combat, and you suffer a -1k0 penalty to any Etiquette roll.
- **Will (4 Points):** You must get your way, and others must give way to your wishes. You have no respect for the opinions or desires of others. You suffer a –1k1 penalty to all Courtier and Temptation Skill Rolls, as your refusal to compromise or respect others makes you socially intolerable.

Contrary [Mental] (3 points)

Your strong will and rigid view of the world insists not only that you develop an opinion on everything, but that you must share it at every opportunity. During any debate or dispute, or even casual discussion, you feel compelled to weigh in and attempt to persuade others to see the matter from your point of view. In any tense situation, you must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll to avoid taking action, whether to resolve a conflict physically or simply to interject into an argument. The TN for this roll can vary widely, and should be determined by the GM (typically somewhere between 5 and 25). This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to Imperial and courtier characters.

Cursed by the Realm [Spiritual] (4 points)

The influence of the spirit realms can be felt throughout the mortal realm of Ningen-do, and for whatever reason, the essence of one realm in particular has marked you as a foe of all that emanate from that realm. This Disadvantage is worth 5 points to shugenja characters.

- **Chikushudo:** You suffer a penalty of -1k1 to all Animal Handling rolls.
- **Gaki-do:** The hungry dead crave your life essence above all others. All gaki and other hungry dead will attack you before any other available target, no matter the cost.
- **Jigoku:** The Realm of Evil thirsts for your soul. Any roll you make to resist the Shadowlands Taint suffers a penalty of -1k1.
- **Maigo no Musha:** Your existence thwarts destiny in some manner. Any roll you make against a spirit of any kind suffers a penalty of -1k1.
- **Meido:** The ennui of the Realm of Waiting fills your soul. When unoccupied by physical activity or social interaction, you tend to lapse into a trance-like state that causes you to suffer a penalty of -1k0 to all Perception-based rolls.
- **Sakkaku:** Trickster spirits plague you, and at least once a month you are the victim of some elaborate, cruel prank by some malicious spirit.
- **Tengoku:** The Celestial Heavens reject you as unclean. While within a temple devoted to the Heavens (any Fortune, the Kami, the Elemental Dragons, or the Sun or Moon), the TNs of all your rolls is increased by +10.
- **Toshigoku:** At the sight of a wounded opponent, you are overcome with bloodlust and must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll (TN 15) or immediately attack the wounded party.
- **Yomi:** You may not possess any Advantages or abilities that specifically reference ancestral links (Inheritance, for example).
- **Yume-do:** You are plagued with horrific nightmares, making sleep difficult. You require 10 hours of sleep to regain Void Points, rather than the normal 8.

Dark Fate [Spiritual] (3 points)

There is a destiny of tremendous significance in store for you, and sadly it is not an illustrious one. Before your death, you will usher tremendous darkness into the world in some way. Perhaps you will allow family secrets to fall into the hands of enemies, or perhaps you will allow the Great Kaiu Wall to fall to the Shadowlands. Destiny protects those for whom it has great plans, even if they do not desire it. Once per session, when you suffer Wounds that would kill you, you are instead reduced to one Wound.

Dark Secret [Social] (4 points)

You possess some horrific secret that could lead not only to your ruination, but perhaps others in your family as well. It may be something terrible you have learned about your family that you alone know (if a venerated ancestor was secretly a dishonorable buffoon), or something you personally have done (you may be a member of the Kolat or Gozoku). If your secret is exposed, you may be required to commit seppuku or possibly even be executed. This Disadvantage is worth 5 points to ninja characters.

Dependant [Social] (Varies)

Someone who is largely incapable of defending himself or herself requires you to look after them. This may be an elderly relative, a naïve spouse, or a small child. The point value of this Disadvantage varies depending upon how helpless the individual is and how frequently they appear in the campaign. A small child completely dependant upon you for everything might cost 5 or 6 points, while a spouse who is independent but whom you must consider before all major decisions might be worth 2 or 3 points.

Dishonored [Social] (5 points)

You have been dishonored so spectacularly that your name has been removed from your family's records, and most within the family act as if you were dead. However, the Clan has granted you the opportunity to wash away your dishonor if you perish in battle. This custom, which started with the Lion Clan, is known as the Deathseeker tradition. You possess Status Rank 1 and may not gain Status so long as you possess this Disadvantage.

Disbeliever [Mental] (3 points)

You have experienced a dramatic revelation that has shattered your faith in Rokugani theology. Perhaps you believe that the Fortunes have no interest in mankind, or perhaps you have come to believe that the Tao of Shinsei holds nothing but empty promises. If your disbelief were made public knowledge, you would be shunned by all properly pious in-

dividuals everywhere, and any memberships you possess in temples or monastic orders would be instantly revoked. Your lack of piety makes you uncomfortable around shugenja and monks, and any Social Skill Rolls made with them have their TN increased by +5.

Disturbing Countenance [Physical] (3 points)

Something about your appearance causes others to respond to you with concern and caution. You are not necessarily unattractive, merely disturbing in some way. The TN of all your Social Skill Rolls is increased by +5. This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to Spider characters.

Doubt [Mental] (4 points)

Something has happened to cause you to question your training, so much so that it interferes with your ability to perform properly. Select one of your School Skills. Every time you use this Skill, you must declare one Raise that confers no benefit.

Driven [Mental] (2 points)

You are possessed by some goal, and will sacrifice almost anything to accomplish it, even your honor. Family, friends, material possessions, and even Bushido mean nothing compared to the potential completion of this goal, whatever it may be.

Elemental Imbalance [Spiritual] (2 points/rank)

The kami of one element favor you, but so much so that their voices sometimes overpower your will and cause your invocations to achieve results other than what you intended. Only shugenja may take this Disadvantage. Choose an element in which you do not possess a Deficiency. Whenever you cast a spell of this element, you must make a Willpower Trait Roll at TN 15 + 5 per rank of this Disadvantage. If you fail the roll, something disastrous happens. The spell may fail outright, it may target someone altogether different from who you intended, or other effects as determined by the GM.

Epilepsy [Physical] (4 points)

You possess a rare and poorly understood condition that causes you to experience seizures from time to time, consisting of a trance-like state, rigid muscle spasms, and frothing at the mouth. These are brought on by high stress or flashing lights, such as fireworks displays. Under such circumstances, you must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll at TN 15 to avoid the seizure. If you fail, you experience a seizure and may roll a second Willpower Trait Roll (TN 10) each minute to end it. This Disadvantage is worth 5 points to Crane characters.

Fascination [Mental] (1 points)

You are completely fascinated by some subject, and will go to great lengths to learn more about it or to experience it in new ways. Typical subjects of a samurai's fascination include music, horses, poetry, and history. This fascination badly impedes your judgment, and you will take even dishonorable actions to learn more, which could end in absolute disgrace if your actions are discovered.

Failure of Bushido [Mental] (Varies)

Try though you might to adhere to the code of bushido, one tenet in particular is simply foreign to you, and you have no concept of how to exemplify it through your actions. This Disadvantage is worth 1 additional point to ninja characters.

- **Compassion (3 Points):** You must spend a Void point before you are able to act on behalf of someone of lower Status or social caste.
- **Courage (4 Points):** When facing an opponent of higher Glory or Status, or when facing a Shadowlands opponent, the TN of all rolls you make is increased by +5.
- **Courtesy (4 Points):** Any time you make a Social Skill Roll to apologize or avoid giving offense, you must call a Raise for no effect, or the roll will automatically fail.
- **Duty (6 Points):** You cannot spend Void Points to negate Wounds.
- **Honesty (3 Points):** You cannot spend Void points on any Sincerity Skill Roll to which the Honesty emphasis could apply (whether or not you have the emphasis).
- **Honor (3 Points):** You cannot add your Honor Rank to any roll to resist Intimidation or Temptation.
- **Sincerity (4 Points):** Any time you are rolling the Sincerity Skill to convince someone of what you are saying, you must call an extra Raise for no effect, or the roll automatically fails.

Forced Retirement [Social] (4 points)

You have been forced into early retirement by entering a monastery, perhaps due to political reasons or because of some public disgrace. You may not advance any further in your School. When you gain a new Insight Rank, you must instead begin taking ranks of an unaligned Monk School (see the *Book of Water*). You need not purchase the Multiple Schools Advantage for this. You are no longer considered a member of your Clan. This Disadvantage is worth 5 points to monk characters.

Frail Mind [Mental] (3 points)

You have difficulty concentrating, even when focusing your attention on an opponent. Whenever you make a Contested Roll using Willpower, your opponent gains a bonus of +2k0.

Gaijin Name [Social] (1 point)

Either due to your lineage or your parents' fascination with another culture, you possess a name that is clearly not of Rokugani origin. Although there is no honor loss for such a thing, others regard you questionably as a result. Your individual dice may only explode once on a Social Skill Roll (that is, each die has a maximum possible result of 20). This Disadvantage is worth 2 points to Unicorn characters.

Greedy [Mental] (3 points)

Material wealth is more important to you than anything else, even though samurai are not meant to be sullied with commercial interests. Opponents attempting to use Temptation (Bribery) rolls against you gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of the roll. This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to Mantis characters.

Gullible [Mental] (4 points)

Your trust is given easily and you place tremendous faith in those whom you trust, unfortunately making it very simple for others to take advantage of your naïve nature. Opponents attempting to use Sincerity (Deceit) against you gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of their rolls.

Haunted [Spiritual] (3 points)

One of your ancestors has chosen to bestow personal attention on you, constantly offering you advice and making demands. Perhaps the ancestor merely wishes you to live up to the ideals of your Clan and family, or perhaps he has some unfinished task or duty which he wishes you to complete. You must show all due deference and respect to your ancestor, and do your best to live up to his (or her) expectations. If you fail to do so, your ancestor's disapproval will bring bad fortune upon you: so long as your ancestor remains angry, once per session one of your die rolls (chosen by the GM) will suffer a –1k1 penalty.

Hostage [Social] (3 points)

In the resolution of a dispute between Clans, it is not uncommon for hostages to be exchanged as "guests" of one another's Clans for a specified amount of time. This ensures that the treaty in question is not broken. Although you are treated respectfully and as a guest in the lands of another Clan, you are not permitted to leave without escort and, should war break out between your Clan and your hosts, your life will be forfeit.

Idealistic [Mental] (2 points)

You adhere closely to the code of Bushido, perhaps too closely, and you have a hopelessly naïve view of the world and how things work. You have impossible standards that not even the most heroic individual could hope to meet, much less you. Whenever you lose Honor, the loss is increased by 1 point. This Disadvantage is worth 3 points to Lion characters.

Infamous [Social] (2 points)

You are well known among some circles, but not in the manner you might wish. Rather than being known for your valor and your courage, you are known for being ruthless, cruel, and dangerous. This reputation may not be deserved, but it is widespread enough that it no longer matters if it is true. Your starting Glory Rank is replaced with an Infamy Rank, which serves in exactly the same capacity, save for the reaction of those who recognize you.

Insensitive [Mental] (2 points)

Your primary interest is in yourself and things that you care about. The plight of others simply does not interest you, and you find it difficult to pretend otherwise. With the exception of those who contribute directly to your well being, such as your lord, you must spend a Void Point to place yourself at risk for the welfare of any other person unless there is an immediate benefit for you personally. This Disadvantage is worth 3 points to Scorpion characters.

Jealousy [Mental] (3 points)

You are obsessed with outperforming another individual in order to prove that you deserve all the things he has, things you perceive as superior to your own. Choose one other PC or a major NPC in your campaign. You are obsessed with overcoming them at all costs, and will go to any lengths to do so. Once you have bested the target of your jealousy, your nature will cause you to become jealous of someone else.

Lame [Physical] (4 points)

One of your legs is withered or perhaps even near-useless, either due to a birth defect, a crippling injury, or a ravaging disease. Your Water Ring is considered 1 for the purposes of determining Move Actions, and any Agility Trait Rolls or Agility-based Skill Rolls that require any sort of activity in your lower limbs suffer a penalty of +10 to the TN.

Lechery [Social] (2 points)

Physical pleasure is a weakness of yours, and you spend considerable time pursuing it. When an opponent makes a Temptation (Seduction) roll against you, he gains a bonus of +1k1 to the total of his roll.

Lord Moon's Curse [Spiritual] (3/5/7 points)

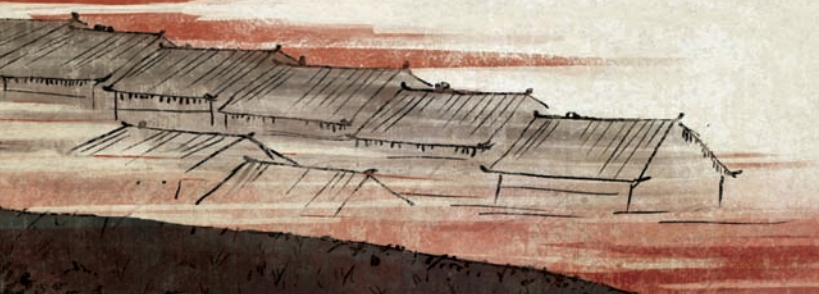
The madness of Lord Moon, Onnotangu, lingers in your soul, driving you to fits of madness despite your increased understanding of the universe. You gain an additional Void Point at sunset on any night of the full moon. If you do not use this Void Point, it is lost with the sunrise. However, when the full moon rises, you must make a Willpower Trait Roll against TN 15 +5 for each level in this Disadvantage after the first. If you fail the roll, you lose control of your character for the evening. You awaken the next morning with no idea what atrocious acts you might have committed...

Lost Love [Mental] (3 points)

You shared a bond of true love with someone once, and have since lost it. This need not be romantic love, as familial or brotherly love lost is equally tragic. You tend to suffer bouts of melancholy when reminded of your lost love. When you are reminded of your loss, all your TNs are increased by 5 until you spend a Void Point to regain your focus. This disruption of your concentration cannot happen more than twice per day, and at least one hour must pass between instances.

Low Pain Threshold [Physical] (4 points)

Your ability to focus in the face of pain is less than that of others. The TN penalties you suffer due to Wound Ranks are increased by +5 each rank.



Missing Limb [Physical] (6 points)

One of your limbs is missing, either through catastrophic injury or due to an unfortunate defect of your birth. You suffer a penalty of +10 to all TNs involving the use of the limb missing. For example, wielding a two-handed weapon with only one arm would have a +10 to all TNs, but an Athletics (Running) Skill Roll would not.

Momoku [Spiritual] (8 points)

There is a fundamental spiritual imbalance present in your soul that no one can explain or rectify, but it has a dramatic impact on your place within the universe, and harmony is a state virtually unknown to you. You possess Void Points, but you may not spend them on anything except School Techniques which specifically require Void Points. The basic uses of Void Points listed in the Book of Earth are unavailable to you.

Obligation [Social] (3/6 points)

There is someone to whom you are indebted or for whom you must fulfill some significant duty. The nature of this debt can vary considerably, but when it comes due, nothing else matters. You must honor it, even if it leads to your ruination. The first level of this Disadvantage is a relatively minor matter that nevertheless demands your full attention. The second level represents a major, significant obligation that could potentially damage your family's standing if you do not devote considerable time and resources to fulfilling it.

Obtuse [Mental] (3 points)

The point of many fine things simply escapes you. Poetry, art, music... it all seems meaningless to you. The Experience Point cost for increasing any High Skill other than Investigation or Medicine is doubled. This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to Crab and bushi characters.

Overconfident [Mental] (3 points)

You possess a grossly inflated view of your own prowess, and are often incapable of recognizing when a situation is beyond your ability to handle. When outnumbered or facing a clearly superior enemy (whether in court or in battle), you must succeed at a Perception Trait Roll (TN 20) in order to recognize the situation for what it is and leave instead of engaging. This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to Lion and Mantis characters.

Permanent Wound [Physical] (4 points)

Some wounds will not heal, not matter how often they are treated or by what means. Your first Wound Rank is always considered full. This Disadvantage is worth 5 points to bushi characters.

Phobia [Mental] (1-3 points)

You possess an irrational fear that you cannot overcome, no matter how much you struggle to convince yourself that there is no reason behind it. When confronted with the object of your phobia, all of your TNs are increased by +5 for every point you possess in this Disadvantage.

Rumormonger [Social] (4 points)

You cannot resist the temptation to spread rumors and gossip, no matter how ridiculous or outlandish they might seem. When presented with an opportunity to spread rumors, to resist doing so you must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll with a TN equal to 5x the Glory Rank of the highest-Glory individual involved in the rumor. This Disadvantage is worth 5 points to courtier characters.

Seven Fortunes' Curse [Spiritual] (3 points)

One of the Seven Fortunes has found your behavior unacceptable, and visited his or her wrath upon you. This curse manifests itself in a very real way, and few are ever able to placate beings as powerful and as fickle as the Seven Fortunes.

- **Benten's Curse:** The Fortune of Romantic Love has forsaken you utterly, and others find your company unpleasant as a result. The TN of any Etiquette roll you make is increased by +10.
- **Bishamon's Curse:** The Fortune of Strength finds you offensive to his divine essence, and has denied you his domain. Your Strength is considered one rank lower for determining the Damage Roll of any weapon you wield.
- **Daikoku's Curse:** The Fortune of Wealth finds you unpleasant, and as a result all your mercantile interests come to very little. You suffer a penalty of -1k1 to all Commerce rolls, and the koku of your School's starting outfit is reduced by 1.





- **Ebisu's Curse:** The Fortune of Honest Work finds you a distrustful soul, and others can instinctively sense the aura of mistrust surrounding you. You suffer a penalty of -1k1 on all Social Skill rolls made with non-samurai citizens of Rokugan.
- **Fukurokujin's Curse:** The Fortune of Wisdom has denied you his blessings, and you find yourself none the wiser for it. When making a Lore Skill Roll, your TN is increased by +5.
- **Hotei's Curse (6 points):** The Fortune of Happiness has denied you his blessings, and you are poorer for it. Any Technique or Advantage that requires you to spend a Void Point to activate instead requires two Void Points.
- **Jurojin's Curse:** The Fortune of Longevity has turned his back on you. You suffer a penalty of -2k0 to resist all poisons and diseases.

Shadowlands Taint [Spiritual] (4 points)

You have felt the touch of darkness, and it has not left you unscathed. You possess the Shadowlands Taint, a condition that makes you hopelessly spiritually lost in the eyes of virtually the entire Empire, and which is essentially incurable. You have 0.5 ranks of Shadowlands Taint. It is up to you whether you are actually aware of your Taint, since it is not detectable at this level.

Small [Physical] (3 points)

You are noticeably smaller than average for a denizen of the Emerald Empire. As a result, your Water Ring is considered one rank lower for determining the distance of your Move Actions, and you suffer a penalty of -1k0 on the Damage Rolls of all your melee attacks. You may not take the Large Advantage.

Social Disadvantage [Social] (3 points)

You have slipped from your position within the Celestial Order, and your place in society reflects that. You begin with Status Rank 0.

Soft-Hearted [Mental] (2 points)

Human life is precious to you, so much so that you have difficulty executing the basic duty of the samurai caste: to kill. When faced with the opportunity to kill another human being, you must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll (TN 20), or you are unable to do so. If you do kill another, the TNs of all your rolls are increased by +10 for one day as you are wracked with guilt. This penalty is not cumulative with multiple deaths. This Disadvantage could potentially also apply to killing nonhuman creatures or even Shadowlands monsters, although the Experience Point value should be increased in such cases. This Disadvantage is worth 3 points to Phoenix characters.

Sworn Enemy [Social] (3 points)

You have earned an enemy, one who will stop at nothing to see you defeated or even killed. The basic version of this Advantage assumes that your enemy is of equal Insight Rank. For each Insight Rank above yours your enemy possesses, increase the value of this Disadvantage by 1. For 2 additional points, the enemy becomes your kharmic nemesis, and you may not spend Void Points when opposing him or her in any situation.

Touch of the Void [Spiritual] (3 points)

You have been touched by the essence of the Void, and it has forever damaged your mind. Whenever you draw upon the Void, the effect is powerful, but can overwhelm you. When you spend a Void Point to augment a roll, you gain a bonus of +2k1 instead of +1k1. Every time you spend a Void Point, however, you must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll (TN 30) or be Dazed for one Round. This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to Phoenix characters.

True Love [Mental] (3 points)

True love in Rokugan can be a wonderful experience, but more often than not it is a disaster, for it is rare for samurai to be allowed to marry for love. Whenever you are in a position where you must choose between love and duty, you must spend a Void Point before you can choose your duty over your lover.

Unlucky [Spiritual] (2 points per Rank)

Fortune favors the mortal man... just not in your case. A number of times per session equal to your rank in this Disadvantage, the GM may force you to immediately re-roll one roll, keeping the second roll in all cases.

Weakness [Physical] (6 points)

You have a significant weakness of some sort, either physical or mental, that is difficult to overcome even under ideal circumstances. Select one Trait. That Trait is treated as if it were one rank lower for the purposes of all rolls and Trait-based mechanical effects.

Wrath of the Kami [Spiritual] (3 points)

The spirits of a particular element have a vehement dislike for you, and when invoked to smite you, they gleefully and enthusiastically comply. This may be the result of a shugenja's curse, an offense you offered to the Fortunes, or a variety of other spiritual causes. Select one element when you purchase this Disadvantage. Spells of this element cast against you confer one Free Raise on the Spell Casting Roll. This Disadvantage is worth 4 points to shugenja characters.

Magic & Spells

Although the term spells is generally used to describe the abilities of shugenja both in game terms and within the world of Rokugan, in point of fact it is incorrect. The invocations used by shugenja to accomplish incredible effects are ritualized prayers that invoke the kami in a carefully researched, specific manner. Because the kami lack free will as mankind understands it, they tend to respond in roughly the same manner each time a specific prayer is invoked, hence the relatively static effects of the spells described in this section.

Spell Casting Rolls & Spell Target Numbers

As described in the Book of Earth, the Spell Casting Roll is a unique roll used by shugenja to entreat the kami and cast a spell. When casting a spell, a shugenja rolls a number of dice equal to his rank in the relevant Ring plus his Shugenja School Rank, and keeps a number of dice equal to his Ring. This result is compared to the spell's TN, which is equal to 5 plus (5x the spell's Mastery Level).

> Example: *Lucas's character Isawa Butaro is casting Fires from Within, a Mastery Level 2 spell. Butaro is a Rank 1 Isawa Shugenja, and has Fire 3. He rolls 4k3 (4 = Fire 3 + Rank 1, keeping Fire) against TN 15 (5 + ML 2 x 5). He rolls a 2, 4, 7, and 8, keeping the 4, 7, and 8 for a total of 19. The spell has been cast successfully.*

A shugenja may cast only a finite number of spells per day. A shugenja character has "spell slots" equal to his Ring in the element in question. For example, a shugenja with Fire 3 can only cast up to 3 Fire spells per day. All shugenja have bonus spell slots equal to their Void Ring, however, and these can be used to cast additional spells in any element of their choice. If the shugenja described above had Fire 3 and Void 2, for example, he could theoretically cast up to 5 Fire spells in one day if he used both of his bonus spell slots to cast additional Fire spells.

A shugenja who fails a Spell Casting Roll is still considered to have used up the appropriate spell slot, as the kami are angered by his failure. However, a shugenja who succeeds in the Spell Casting Roll but then is interrupted before the spell is completed (see below) does not lose a spell slot.

Actions & Casting Time

A spell requires a number of Complex Actions equal to its Mastery Level to cast. The first of these is spent when the caster successfully makes the Spell Casting Roll against the normal TN, which is equal to 5 plus the spell's Mastery Level x5. Each round thereafter, the shugenja must spend a Complex Action to continue the spell. For example, a spell of Mastery Level 3 would require three Complex Actions to complete. A shugenja casting such a spell would make his Spell Casting Roll in the first round, expend another Complex Action the second round to maintain the casting process, and complete the spell in the third round with a third and final Complex Action. A spell takes effect immediately upon the completion of the last Complex Action required to cast it, unless otherwise specified in the spell description.

A character may reduce the number of Complex Actions required to cast a spell by one for every Raise made specifically for that purpose on the Spell Casting Roll. However, this cannot reduce the casting time to less than one Complex Action.

Characters who are attempting to complete a spell can be interrupted if they suffer damage or are significantly distracted during the casting process. A shugenja who is interrupted must succeed at a Willpower Trait Roll (TN 10) to overcome distraction. If the shugenja suffers damage, the TN for the Willpower roll is 5 plus the amount of damage suffered. A spell that is disrupted in this manner cannot be completed, but the shugenja does not lose a spell slot.



How Are Spells Cast?

Rokugani spells are actually prayers and invocations to the kami, spoken in a mystical tongue which the kami can understand. All shugenja study this speech as part of their schooling. These prayers are complex, and most shugenja must read them from scrolls in order to cast them properly. This is why shugenja normally must have their spell-scroll in hand while they cast, so they can read off the prayers correctly. A skilled shugenja, however, can memorize the incantations by spending a number of Experience Points equal to the Mastery Level of the spell. This allows the spell to be cast without a scroll.

Because the kami must hear the prayers, spells are normally spoken aloud. It is possible to conceal a spell, however, by muttering the prayers under one's breath. See the Stealth Skill earlier in this chapter for details.

Affinities & Deficiencies

Virtually all shugenja Schools have an Affinity for one element and a Deficiency for another. Most often, Affinities and Deficiencies are of opposing elements (Air and Earth are opposed, as are Fire and Water; Void has no opposing element). This represents both the ritualized teachings of the Great Clans and the inherently oppositional nature of the elements. A shugenja with an Affinity for an element casts spells of that element as if his Shugenja School Rank were one higher. Conversely, a shugenja Deficient in an element casts spells of that element as if his Shugenja School Rank were one lower. If this reduces the shugenja's effective School Rank to zero, he cannot cast spells of that element.

Example: *Kit's character, Soshi Toshiken, is a Rank 1 Soshi Shugenja with an Affinity for Air and an Air Ring of 3. Under normal circumstances, Kit would roll 4k3 for Toshiken to cast an Air spell. Because of the Affinity for Air, however, Toshiken's School Rank is effectively 2, meaning that Kit rolls 5k3 for Air spells instead.*

Example: *Daniel's character, Kitsu Hatsuo, is a Rank 2 Kitsu Shugenja with a Deficiency for Fire and a Fire Ring of 2. Under normal circumstances, Daniel would roll 4k2 when Hatsuo was casting a Fire spell. Because of the Deficiency for Fire spells, however, Hatsuo's effective School Rank is 1, meaning that Daniel instead rolls only 3k2 when casting Fire spells.*

Spell Descriptions

The descriptions of individual spells contain the following information:

- **Ring/Mastery:** This indicates the Ring and the Mastery Level of the spell. The Ring determines the spell slot expended when casting the spell, and the Mastery level determines the difficulty of the Spell Casting roll required to cast the spell. A shugenja cannot casts spells with a Mastery level higher than his School Rank. Any keywords a spell might have are listed in parentheses after its Ring/Mastery. Many mechanical effects, especially shugenja School Techniques, involve spell keywords.
- **Range:** This indicates the maximum possible distance the spell's effect can reach. The notation *Personal* indicates that the spell originates from the caster and affects an area described in the Area of Effect descriptor.
- **Area of Effect:** This describes either the area that the effect covers, or the target of the spell (if it specifically targets something). The notation *Self* indicates that the effect is limited to the caster.
- **Duration:** This describes how long the spell lasts, either in rounds or by a specific time interval. *Instantaneous* indicates that the spell happens in an instant, with no duration beyond its immediate effect. *Concentration* indicates that the effect lasts only as long as the caster focuses attention on it.
- **Raises:** Each spell lists ways in which the effect can be enhanced by a successful Raise. These are in increments, and require a single Raise unless otherwise specified. For example, the notation "Range (+10')" indicates that each Raise declared toward increasing the spell's range increases it by ten feet.

Universal Spells

The following spells are the most basic, essential lessons taught to young students aspiring to learn the secrets of the kami. Every shugenja in Rokugan knows these spells, and virtually every other spell in existence is a modified, more powerful version of one or more of these spells.

Sense

- **Ring/Mastery:** All 1
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 50' radius from the caster
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+10')

This spell can be cast in any of the four standard elements. It allows the caster to sense the presence, quantity, and rough location of elemental spirits (not the evil spirits known as *kansen*) of that element within the range of the spell. This is most frequently applied when looking for spirits with which to Commune (see below), but can also be useful as a crude, basic location device. For example, a caster lost in the wilderness could cast Sense (Water) in hopes of locating a source of drinking water.

Summon

- **Ring/Mastery:** All 1
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 cubic foot of summoned material
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Range (+10'), quantity (+1 cubic foot), composition of material (1-4 Raises, as outlined below)

This spell can be cast in any of the four standard elements. It allows the caster to summon a modest quantity (one cubic foot) of the chosen element. The summoned matter appears (usually in a rough ball shape) in any open space within the spell's range. This cannot place the summoned material inside another physical object or living creature. The summoned element will behave in a normal and mundane matter – earth falls to the ground, water soaks anything it lands on, air blows away, and fire winks out unless there is something present for it to burn. In general it is impossible to use this spell effectively in combat, although clever shugenja may find a few modest combat uses, such as using Summon (Fire) to ignite a foe soaked in cooking oil. More commonly, the spell's value is in simpler functions, such as summoning Water while in a desert, or summoning Fire to light a campfire without flint and tinder.

Raises may be used with this spell to summon a more specific type of the appropriate element, such as wood or iron with Earth, or tea with Water. The GM should choose how many Raises (generally anywhere from 1 to 4) this requires. However, these Raises cannot be used to create rare/precious materials (such as gold) or spiritually powerful substances (such as jade or crystal).

Commune

- **Ring/Mastery:** All 1
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** See below

This spell can be cast in any element save Void. It allows the caster to speak with one of the local elemental kami, asking it a few questions, which it will answer honestly to the best of its ability. Typically this spell will invoke the most active and energetic spirit of the chosen element in the area of effect; if all of the local spirits are quiescent, the GM may require the caster to call 1 or 2 Raises to "wake up" a local spirit enough to answer questions.

A spirit reached with Commune will answer two questions. The caster may Raise to get more questions (one per Raise). The caster may also Raise for clarity, to get a more accurate and informative answer to the questions. (Kami are notorious for their inability to fully comprehend human behavior, and asking questions without Raises for clarity can often result in confusing, enigmatic, or incomplete answers.) Spirits do not forget anything, so theoretically a shugenja can ask a spirit about something that happened decades ago; however, they also do not experience time in the same way as mortals, so trying to ask about something from long ago will usually require Raises in order to make the caster's wishes clear to the spirit. The nature of the information which spirits can impart varies by element:

- Air spirits tend to be playful and easily distracted, conveying information as emotions or as riddles and jokes. Since they are more interested in feelings than in facts, and enjoy playing games with those who speak with them, communing with an Air spirit can sometimes be very frustrating.
- Earth spirits are straightforward and matter-of-fact, often blunt, but are also often rather uninterested in the behavior of mortals, have a poor understanding of human emotion, and tend to be overly focused on obscure details such as the color of a piece of clothing or the weight of a horse.
- Fire spirits are irritable and temperamental, and are often angry at being summoned unless they are propitiated with an offering of something to burn. On the other hand, if a shugenja can please them they tend to offer the clearest and most accurate information.
- Water spirits communicate their knowledge through soundless visual images. This can be very helpful to a shugenja trying to investigate a past incident, but since the spirits cannot convey scent, sound, or emotion, the information they provide can often be incomplete or misleading.



Concentration

Many spells described in this section have a listed Duration of "Concentration." This means the effects of the spell can be maintained as long as the shugenja continues to focus his energies upon them. Concentrating requires the expenditure of a Simple Action each Round. If a shugenja is unable to use a Simple Action to maintain the spell, its effects end immediately. Any shugenja who suffers more Wounds than his Earth Ring while maintaining Concentration must immediately make a Willpower Roll (TN 20 + 5 per Mastery Level of the spell). A shugenja who is distracted in some other way (such as by a shove or a loud noise) must make a Willpower Roll at TN 15. Failure in either case indicates he has lost concentration and the spell's effects end immediately.

Banishing and Importuning the Spirits

Powerful shugenja have the ability to dismiss or "banish" the elemental kami from an area, replacing them with new spirits who have no prior knowledge of what has happened in the area. This is most frequently done to prevent other shugenja from uncovering their activities with a Commune spell.

To banish the spirits from an area, a shugenja must cast Sense with three Raises (to identify all the spirits in the area) and then cast Commune with five Raises (to persuade those spirits to leave). This must be done separately for each Element, of course.

All Rokugani spells, from the simplest to the most powerful, are actually prayers to the spirits, entreating them to produce an effect for the shugenja. This means that an especially devout shugenja can, in theory, cast almost any spell (whether or not he has the scroll) simply by asking the spirits with sufficient devotion and piety. This process is known as "importuning" the spirits, and it uses the Spellcraft skill.

To importune a spell, a shugenja must cast Commune and spend a considerable time in speech with the kami: five minutes for each Mastery Rank of the desired spell. At the end of that time, the caster must roll Spellcraft (Importune) / (Ring for the appropriate Element), at a TN of 15 +5 per Mastery Level of the spell. With a success, the spirits will grant him the ability to try to cast the spell, once, within the next hour, at a TN of 15 plus the spell's Mastery Level x 5. The shugenja cannot importune for a spell of higher Mastery Level than he could normally cast.

Air Spells: Mastery Level 1

Blessed Wind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 10' radius around the caster
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Special (you may target another with this spell with 3 Raises)

You summon a swirling aura of winds to protect you from ranged attacks. The buffeting winds deflect arrows and other projectiles. While you maintain your concentration, this spell adds +15 to your Armor TN versus all non-magical ranged attacks.

By the Light of the Moon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 20' radius around the caster
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius), Duration (+1 minute)

You call upon the kami to reveal that which has been hidden. All concealed objects within the area of effect appear as slightly luminous outlines to you. Any non-magical concealment is revealed, including secret compartments, trap doors, concealed weapons, etc. Only you can see the presence of these objects.

Cloak of Night

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Illusion)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One object
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour)

You can call upon the kami to wrap an object in their embrace, hiding it from the sight of mortal beings. You may target any one non-living object smaller than you. This object becomes invisible to the naked eye. Attempts to perceive it magically will automatically succeed if the Mastery Level of the spell used is higher than that of this spell. Spells of equal Mastery Level require a Contested Air Roll to detect the hidden object. The object is still physically present and can be touched, smelled, or sensed with any normal sense other than vision.

Legacy of Kaze-no-Kami

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Craft)
- **Range:** School Rank x 10 miles
- **Area of Effect:** One known individual within range
- **Duration:** Special
- **Raises:** Area (+1 individual), Range (+10 miles)

You are able to call upon the spirits of the wind to take form as a bird and carry a message for you. The bird that is created by this spell appears perfectly normal in all regards, but if it takes any damage it dissipates into wind immediately, ending the spell. Upon creating the bird, you may speak to it, giving it a spoken message of up to one minute in length. The bird will then fly away to deliver the message to the person (or persons) specified when the spell is cast. The bird will fly to their location, deliver the message via a whisper (it can be overheard by others, but not easily), and then disappear. If the bird is unable to reach the individual, but they are within range (if they are within a building with no windows, for instance) it will remain outside waiting for up to one week before disappearing. If the person specified by the spell is not within range, the bird will fly away in a random direction and disappear when it is out of your line of sight.

Nature's Touch

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** One creature
- **Duration:** Special
- **Raises:** Range (+10')

You are able to use the spirits of the wind to speak to an animal and ensure that it understands what you are saying. This spell works only on natural animals, and will not work with Shadowlands creatures or creatures from other realms. It does not guarantee that the animal will regard you positively or that it will fulfill requests made of it, but the creature will understand anything you tell it (within its ability to do so, naturally – political relationships will have no meaning to a horse, no matter how many times you explain them). This spell lasts as long as you maintain your full and undivided attention on the animal and continue speaking to it.

Tempest of Air

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Thunder)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** A cone 75' long and 15' wide at its end
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Area (+5' to the width of the cone), Damage (+1k0), Range (+5' to the length of the cone), Special (+5 to Air TN against Knockdown per Raise)

You summon a powerful gust of air emanating from your position that crashes into all in its path, knocking them to the ground. All targets within the area of effect suffer 1k1 Wounds and must make a Contested Roll using their Earth against your Air. Every target that fails suffers Knockdown.

Token of Memory

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Craft, Illusion)
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** One small (1 cubic foot or smaller) illusory object
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Area (+1 cubic foot in size of illusory object), Duration (+1 hour)

You can create a flawless illusion of one object. The item appears real in every way up until the spell expires, at which point it disappears. If you are attempting to create a specific, familiar object, such as another samurai's katana, you must declare one Raise, and that individual may make a Contested

Roll using his Perception against the total of your Spell Casting Roll to detect the forgery. Images created by this spell are completely stationary, and if placed in a situation where they must move (such as floating in water), disappear instantly. An image of a katana could be created sitting on a rack, for example, but not in a samurai's obi because it would not be able to move with the samurai. Objects created with this spell have no true physical substance and cannot bear weight or inflict damage.

To Seek the Truth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1
- **Range:** Personal / Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One individual touched (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

You call upon the wind to purge the mind of your target, granting him clarity. This spell may negate temporary mental or social penalties suffered as a result of a mechanical effect, including Techniques, Wound Ranks, or other spells. The TN of the Spell Casting Roll made to cast this spell is increased by an amount equal to the Technique Rank, Wound Rank, or spell Mastery Level used to create the penalty in the first place. Disadvantages permanently possessed by an individual may not be countered using this spell.

Way of Deception

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Illusion)
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One illusory duplicate of the caster
- **Duration:** Concentration plus 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Area (+1 duplicate per 2 Raises), Range (+5 feet), Special (see below)

You can entreat the capricious spirits of the wind to create a perfect duplicate image of you a short distance away. The illusion exactly reflects your appearance at the time the spell is cast, including your clothing and any equipment. The illusion may appear anywhere within the spell's range, and will perform whatever actions you perform while it is in effect. (If you sit down, for instance, your duplicate will sit down as well, even if there is nothing to sit on.) Once you leave the normal range of the spell, the duplicate disappears. If you make two Raises on the Spell Casting Roll, you may leave the area of effect and the illusion will remain in whatever position it was in when you left for as long as you continue concentrating on maintaining the spell.

Yari of Air

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Craft, Thunder)
- **Range:** Personal or 20' (see below)
- **Area of Effect:** One created weapon
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Duration (+5 minutes), Range (+5 feet)

You summon a swirling weapon of pure air, only visible as a foggy outline. The weapon's default form is a yari, but one Raise can change its form to any other spear of your choosing. The weapon has DR 1k1. If you do not possess the Spears Skill, you may instead use your School Rank in its place. If you do possess the Spears Skill, using this weapon grants you one Free Raise that can only be used on the Feint or Increased Damage Maneuvers. This weapon disappears if is lost from your hand. Instead of summoning the yari for yourself, you may cause it to appear in the hands of an ally within 20 feet. He is treated as the caster for all purposes of the spell, but he does not gain the Free Raise bonus.

Air Spells: Mastery Level 2

Benten's Touch

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2
- **Range:** Personal / Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Target individual (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Range (may increase range to 5' with a single Raise)

By calling upon the air kami to whisper suggestions to others, you may cause them to perceive the target of this spell more positively than they otherwise might. The target of this spell gains a bonus of +1k1, plus your Air Ring, to the total of all Social Skill rolls made for the duration of the spell.

Call Upon the Wind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Travel)
- **Range:** Personal or 20'
- **Area of Effect:** Target individual (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute), Range (+5')

The winds can lift and buoy, carrying even the heaviest burden into the skies for short periods. The target of this spell gains a limited form of flight, allowing him to move through the air unimpeded. The target of the spell may make Free Move Actions, but not Simple Move Actions, and may never move more than 10' per round. Heavy winds can interfere with this movement or prevent it altogether. At the end of the spell's duration, the target drifts harmlessly to the ground, no matter how high he might be.

Hidden Visage

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Illusion)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area:** Self
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Area of Effect (another person **in line of sight** can be targeted by this spell by making three Raises), Duration (+5 minutes)

Air kami are mischievous and capricious, and enjoy anything they perceive as a joke. You may call upon them to create a subtle illusion, altering your facial features just enough that you appear to be a different person. This spell does not allow you to impersonate specific individuals, or even people radically different from you. You appear as a person of the same age, build, race, and gender. The differences are subtle,

enough so that you could be mistaken for your own brother or cousin.

The Kami's Whisper

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Illusion)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** 10' radius
- **Duration:** 1 round
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius), Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

The kami of the wind can carry whispers for great distances, and can even create them if properly entreated. You can petition the kami to create a false sound, either a voice or a natural sound such as an animal's growl or running water, for example. The sound can be no louder than a normal speaking voice, and cannot impersonate a specific person's voice. If used to create the sound of a voice, the spell is limited to twenty words.

Mists of Illusion

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Craft, Illusion)
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** 10' radius
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Area (+5'), Duration (+1 minute), Range (+5')

With greater fluency with the kami comes the ability to craft increasingly convincing images from the stuff of the wind itself. You may create illusions of any object, individual, or image that you can imagine. These images are stationary, and they must fit within the spell's area of effect, but they can be as simple or complex as desired. These illusions are visual only, with no auditory component, no odors, etc.

Secrets on the Wind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2
- **Range:** 10 miles
- **Area of Effect:** 20' radius
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius), Range (+5 miles)

The kami can carry whispers across an Empire, if properly entreated to do so. This spell requires you to perform a preparation ritual in order to cast it effectively. The ritual requires ten minutes of uninterrupted meditation in the area designated as the spell's area of effect. Any time within the 48 hours immediately following this ritual, you may cast this spell, and overhear anything being said in the prepared area. If your concentration is disrupted, the effect ends and may not be renewed without an additional preparation ritual. Only one area may be prepared via this ritual at one time.

Whispering Wind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Divination)
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** Target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

The air kami see very little difference between speech and thought, and can perceive both with relative ease. By comparing the two, the kami can determine if what has been spoken is true, or a lie. Unfortunately, they have notoriously short attention spans, and thus can only assess extremely recent conversations. By invoking this spell, you may determine if the last thing said by the target was true or false. The kami have no concept of personal opinion, however, and if the target truly believes what he said was true, the kami will believe it as well.

Wolf's Proposal

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Illusion)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Area (may target another with 2 Raises), Duration (+5 minutes), Special (+1 Honor Rank per two Raises)

This spell, crafted to facilitate initial relations between groups, is easily twisted to nefarious purposes. It calls the kami to create a subtle aura of suggestion around the caster, one that does not disguise the caster but rather causes others to perceive him as slightly more benevolent than perhaps he truly is. For the duration of this spell, your Honor Rank is considered three ranks higher for the purposes of any Lore: Bushido rolls made to determine your Honor Rank.

Air Spells: Mastery Level 3

Essence of Air

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round)

Air can be merged with the essence of a mortal, and doing so can impart tremendous abilities, albeit at great risk to the caster. You mix with the wind itself and become insubstantial. You may not interact with any physical objects while insubstantial, although you do remain on the ground, and you may pass through solid objects at a rate of one foot per round. Your Water Ring is considered halved (rounded down) while you remain insubstantial, and you may not cast any other spells until you return to solidity.

The Eye Shall Not See

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal or Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Self or target individual
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** None

You call upon the kami to create an area of distraction surrounding you, drawing all attention away from you and your actions. The kami whisper in the ears of those within 20' of you (or of the target if you cast the spell on someone else), causing them to be conveniently distracted from your pres-

ence. You are not invisible, but those within 20' of you will not see you as long as you do not make any loud noises or otherwise draw attention to yourself. Those outside that distance are not distracted, however, and will see you perfectly well regardless of your action or inaction.

Mask of Wind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Illusion)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Area (may target another with two Raises), Duration (+10 minutes)

A skilled shugenja can petition the kami to create incredibly elaborate illusions to obscure one's identity and appearance. You may use this spell to adopt the appearance of any humanoid creature of approximately the same size, up to one foot taller or shorter than you. You could use this spell to assume the guise of a kenku, for example, because they are roughly the same size as humans. A goblin or an ogre would be impossible, however, because they are too short and too large, respectively.

Striking the Storm

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round)

The most powerful winds can turn aside not only arrows, but steel as well. You may summon a buffet of winds that surrounds you in an unrelenting cocoon of swirling air. Your Armor TN is increased by +20 against both melee and ranged attacks. The force of the winds surrounding you prevents you from hearing others if they speak to you, however.

Summoning the Gale

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Defense)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** Target individual (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

Swirling winds can be commanded to circle a designated target, preventing ranged attacks being made in either direction. This spell affects an area thirty feet around the target in all directions. Everyone within the affected area gains a +15 bonus to their Armor TN against ranged attacks. However, everyone within the area also suffers a penalty of -3k3 to all ranged attack rolls.

Summon Fog

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 50' radius
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius), Duration (+1 minute), Range (+10')

The kami can be petitioned to coalesce in an area as they do on the coast, creating a thick, obscuring fog. Within the area affected by your spell, the visibility is decreased to a meager five feet. Fabrics and other absorbent materials within the spell's area of effect will become damp or even wet if they remain within it long enough. Small sources of open flame, such as candles, might be extinguished as well, at the GM's discretion. The moistness of fog is extremely damaging to rice paper.



Your Heart's Enemy

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Illusion)
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

The kami can see into the hearts of mortals, and can use that information at a shugenja's request. You manifest the kami as an illusion of the thing your target fears most in the world. It may be an individual (the man who killed his father), or an item (a cursed blade that brought ruin to his family), or even a vista of some sort (an image of an enemy slaying his family). This effectively generates Fear 4 that the target must overcome (see the *Book of Earth* for rules regarding Fear). Only the target can see the specifics of the illusion; others see only a hazy outline that appears to be a small fog cloud.

Air Spells: Mastery Level 4

Call the Spirit

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Range:** Special
- **Area of Effect:** Target spirit
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

Essentially an extremely powerful, specific form of the basic spell Summon, Call the Spirit allows a shugenja to summon any particular spirit, regardless of its realm, to have a discussion. You may use this spell to summon any spirit from any of the spirit realms, although realm denizens that are not spirits (such as Fortunes) are immune. If you know something specific about the spirit, either having seen it before or having intimate knowledge of its actions (for example, "the spirit that killed my father"), you may summon that spirit in particular. The nature of the spell prevents the spirit from attacking you unless you attack first, but it will not necessarily be friendly. The spirit disappears as soon as the spell's duration expires. This spell can potentially summon extremely dangerous creatures, such as oni, and should be used with caution.

False Realm

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4 (Battle, Illusion)
- **Range:** 250'
- **Area of Effect:** 100' radius
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Area (+10' radius), Duration (+10 minutes)

The greatest masters of the wind can create illusions of such beauty and clarity that those affected by them might truly believe they were somewhere else. You can completely alter the appearance of the terrain within the area of effect of this spell. You can make a miserable swamp look, sound, and smell like a beautiful garden, or vice versa. Although these illusions can be extraordinarily intricate and completely convincing to all other senses, they still have no substance and cannot be touched.

Gift of Wind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4 (Illusion)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

The ultimate gift of the wind spirits is to become like the wind itself: unseen. The wind kami surround you and render you completely invisible. No non-magical vision can detect your presence. You can still be touched, heard, and smelled, but unless you attack someone else, you remain invisible for the duration of the spell. The kami consider attacking someone to be ruining the joke, and immediately end the spell's effect if you do so.

Know the Mind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** Target individual
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

Although the ultimate secrets of the human mind are hidden even to the winds, air kami can pluck the most immediate thoughts from the minds of others and whisper them to those who carry their favor. For the duration of this spell, you essentially hear the surface thoughts of the spell's target. You only learn things they are actively thinking about. For example, if you asked the name of the target's daughter, that name would appear in their mind instantly even if they had no intention of speaking it aloud. A Contested Roll using your Perception against the target's Awareness will also allow you to assess their true emotional state, regardless of how they appear physically.

Netsuke of Wind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4 (Craft, Illusion)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One hand-held object
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+10 minutes)

Although it requires great favor, the air kami are willing to coalesce into a solid form for a short period of time if they are fond enough of the priest asking them. You may create a small object out of the air itself, something that can be held in one or both hands and that does not weigh more than twenty pounds at the most. This creation is an illusion, but it can be used functionally, including inflicting damage if it is a weapon. The object disappears completely at the end of the spell's duration.

Symbol of Air

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4 (Ward)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Special
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** None

Priests of the kami are capable of inscribing powerful wards that invoke the power of the elements against all who attempt to pass them. A Symbol of Air must be inscribed on a solid object, most often a door, window, gate, or other passageway. Anyone attempting to pass through this passageway or otherwise pass by the area protected by the Symbol is affected by the protective ward. Such persons must succeed at a Contested Roll using their Earth against the caster's Air. Those who fail are affected by a powerful drowsiness, and must succeed at a Willpower Roll against the total of the Spell Casting Roll used to create the ward or fall into a deep sleep for one hour. Those affected by the spell cannot be woken by normal means, but will awaken instantly if subjected to any attack or form of harm, as the kami will not be party to such humorless tricks. You may only have one Symbol of Air in existence at any time, and Symbol spells of different elements may never affect the same area. This spell may be dispelled by another casting of Symbol of Air from any shugenja, or by destroying the surface where the Symbol was etched.

Air Spells: Mastery Level 5

Cloud the Mind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Special (+1 day of effect)

This extremely invasive spell is considered blasphemous by most honorable shugenja, and many respectable shugenja orders would find its use reason for excommunication if not outright execution. This spell calls upon the air kami to befuddle and dismay a target, invading their mind and influencing their ability to recall exactly what happened to them over a certain length of time. When this spell is successfully cast against a target, you must succeed at a Contested Roll using your Air versus the target's Earth. If successful, the target's memories are disrupted, and they forget what has happened to them over the course of the past week (five days). This information is completely lost to the target. What's more, the spell renders them extremely susceptible to suggestion, and you can tell them what happened to them over the course of the missing time. This allows unscrupulous shugenja to exploit others and essentially give them false memories, although certain individuals are highly resistant to this manner of manipulation. It is possible to determine that an individual was the target of this spell through use of the Commune spell, but it requires that the kami be specifically asked if they can detect any such manipulation.

Draw Back the Shadow

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 30' radius
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius), Range (+10')

Just as the kami craft illusions, they can cast them aside. Within the area affected by this spell, any illusions created by spells of Mastery Level 4 or lower are automatically dispelled. Spells of Mastery Level 5 or 6 require a Contested Air Roll between you and the shugenja who created those spells; if you are successful, those illusions are dispelled as well. Ongoing magical effects that are not illusions may also be dispelled by this spell, but require a Contested Ring Roll between you and their creator, using your Air versus his appropriate Ring.

Echoes on the Breeze

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** None

No destination is beyond the reach of the wind. With a simple prayer to the kami, you can send your words across the span of the Empire, whispering into the ear of anyone you need to send a message. The person must be someone you know, and the spell will establish a link between the two of you only as long as you concentrate. You may communicate with one another, although you only hear each other's voices as whispers. Both participants are instantly aware when the connection is forged, and either can end it at any point.

Legion of the Moon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5 (Illusion)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 10' radius from the caster
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Area (+5'), Duration (+1 minute)

The Moon can reveal what is hidden, but also conceal those who receive its blessings. You may summon the greater blessing of the Moon and envelop a large group of people within it, completely obscuring them from sight. Every individual you choose within the area of effect of this spell is rendered invisible to all normal senses for the duration of the spell. Those within the area that you choose to exclude are not affected. Anyone affected by the spell who performs any action that physically interacts with an unaffected individual is immediately excluded from the spell effect.

Slayer's Knives

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5 (Thunder)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** Corridor of air 10' wide
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Area (+3' wide), Damage (+1k0 per three Raises)

The wind can be deadly to those unprepared for its fury. You summon a powerful wind that tears through anything in its path. At your behest, the kami create a corridor of air filled with a cutting wind that inflicts damage with a DR equal to your Air Ring +2k0 to everything in its path. (For example, a shugenja with Air 4 would inflict 6k4 damage with this spell). Paper and light cloth are destroyed instantly, although heavier cloth may only be damaged. Anyone damaged by these winds must succeed at an Earth Ring Roll (TN 20) or be Knocked Down.

Air Spells: Mastery Level 6

Rise, Air

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 6
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One summoned spirit
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** None

The wind itself will take form to defend you. The ultimate actualization of the Summon spell, this spell summons a massive kami of pure air to serve you. It takes the form of a vaguely humanoid shape, roughly ten feet in height, with an indistinct outline visible only because of small debris caught up in its body. The kami may move up to 10' x your Air per round, and generates powerful winds in a twenty foot radius around it that hinder movement, preventing anyone from making Simple Move Actions within its area of effect. The manifest kami is treated as if it has all Physical Traits equal to your Air Ring, and attacks with a Jiujitsu Skill Rank equal to half your Air Ring. Damage from these attacks has a DR equal to your Air Ring (for example, a spirit summoned by a shugenja with Air 6 would inflict 6k6 damage with its attacks). For purposes of taking damage, the spirit is considered to have Wounds as though it were a human with Earth equal to your Air Ring, but suffers no Wound penalties. It is Invulnerable (see the creature rules in the *Book of Void* for details of this ability). If it is successfully reduced to zero Wounds, it is dispelled.

The False Legion

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 6 (Battle, Illusion)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Within 100' of the caster
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Area (+10'), Special (+5 illusory figures per Raise)

The greatest illusory gift of the wind is legion. Within the area of effect of this spell, you can create a number of illusory figures up to your Air Ring x 10. These figures may be as detailed or as vague as you prefer (such as "Crane bushi" versus "heavy infantry of the fourth Daidoji legion"), although you must be familiar with their appearance in order for this spell to take effect (you could not, for example, replicate a family mon you have never seen). The figures are fully mobile and will take whatever actions you desire as long as they do not leave the spell's area of effect. They can be seen, heard, or even smelled, but as with most illusions, they cannot physically interact with objects or individuals in any way.

Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami (Hurricane)

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 6 (Thunder)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 1 mile radius, centered on the caster
- **Duration:** Concentration (special)
- **Raises:** None

The wrath of the air kami, and of the Fortune of the Wind, is truly dreadful to behold. In casting this spell, you unleash the full force of a hurricane upon your enemies. When the spell takes effect, you are standing in the eye of the storm, a zone radiating twenty feet in every direction from you, and in which no ill effects of the spell are suffered. Outside the eye, however, the brutal effects of the storm tear at everything in its path. Objects weighing less than five hundred pounds are lifted by the wind and tossed into the storm. Individuals in this area must hold on to something immobile or be cast into the winds to their certain death. Everyone within the affected region who does not have sturdy shelter suffers 1k1 Wounds per minute from the winds and minor debris. There is a one in ten chance each minute that an exposed individual will instead suffer 5k5 Wounds due to being struck by a wind-borne object. This spell lasts for a maximum of one hour, although it can last far shorter times if you are disrupted while maintaining the spell.

This spell may not be cast in a given area more than once per month, as it completely exhausts the favors of the air kami to perform it.

Earth, Mastery Level 1

Armor of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Battle, Defense)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 rounds)

This spell infuses the caster's body with the strength of Earth, weakening the force of any physical or magical attack which strikes him. For the duration of the spell, you gain Reduction in an amount equal to your Earth Ring + School Rank. However, this infusion of Earth slows your movements – your Water is considered 1 Rank lower for purposes of movement while you are under the effects of this spell.

Courage of the Seven Thunders

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Battle)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** Targets up to caster's Shugenja School Rank
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute), Targets (+1)

This spell infuses the targets (who may include the caster) with firm and unyielding courage, bolstered by the eternal power of the Earth. For the duration of the spell, all the targets gain +5k0 to resist any kind of Fear effect, whether magical or natural. However, this spell is associated with the memory of the legendary Seven Thunders, and those whose connection to the Thunders is tenuous do not receive the same degree of blessing from the Earth kami. Samurai who are not of the original Seven Great Clans receive only +3k0 to their rolls to resist Fear. Anyone who has at least a full Rank of Shadowlands Taint cannot benefit from this spell, although this will not actually reveal that they are Tainted.

This spell may be cast as a combined ritual by two or more shugenja who know the spell, in which case they may add their highest single Earth Rank to their combined total School Ranks to determine how many targets the spell can affect.

Earth's Stagnation

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 6 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 rounds), Range (+10'), Targets (+1, to a maximum of 4 total targets)

This spell calls on the Earth in the target's body to weigh him down, impeding his movements. The target suffers a –2k0 penalty to all rolls using the Agility trait, and his Water Ring is considered 1 Rank lower for the purpose of how far he can move.

Earth's Touch

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Defense)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1/2 hour), Targets (+1 per 2 raises, maximum of 3 total targets)

With this spell, the shugenja calls forth the Earth of the target (which may be himself), invoking the kami to strengthen his health and mental fortitude. For the duration of the spell, one of the target's Earth Traits (chosen by the caster) is increased by 1. This does not increase the Ring itself, but it can enhance the target's ability to withstand temptation, resist poisons, or dominate others.

Elemental Ward

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Wards)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1/2 hour), Targets (+1 per two Raises)

This spell uses the power of Earth to enhance resistance to hostile magic. The spirits of Earth armor the target's body and soul, rejecting other kami when they try to affect the target. When the shugenja casts this spell, he chooses one Element (which cannot be Void or Maho). Spells of that element suffer a TN penalty equal to the caster's School Rank x 5 when they are cast on anyone under the protection of this spell. (Unfortunately, this includes "friendly" magic such as healing.)

Jade Strike

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Jade, Thunder)
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Range (+10'), Targets (+1 target, maximum of 5 total targets)

This spell summons forth the purest of Earth kami, those of jade, in the form of a blast of iridescent green energy. The jade power flies out and unerringly strikes the chosen target – it cannot be intercepted or deflected, although Magic Resistance or other forms of magical defense can thwart it. If the target has at least one Rank of Taint, the Jade Strike will inflict damage with a DR of 3k3, burning and blackening the Tainted flesh. However, a target who does not have at least a full Rank of Taint will not suffer any damage from the spell. Casting Jade Strike on a non-Tainted target is generally regarded as a grave insult – except perhaps among the more paranoid ranks of the Kuni family, where it is seen as merely a sensible precaution.

Jurojin's Balm

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1/2 hour), Targets (+1 per 2 Raises, maximum of 5 total targets)

This spell fills the target's body with the purity and vigor of Earth, driving out poisons and impurities. If the target suffers the effects of any poison or toxin within the duration of the spell, or is already under the effects of a poison when the spell targets him, he may re-roll any failed Stamina roll to resist the poison, with a bonus of +2k0 to the second roll. (However, if the second roll is also failed, the poison has full effect.) An interesting side-effect of this spell is that it also cures drunkenness and other such effects, and it is impossible for the target to become intoxicated during the spell's duration.

Minor Binding

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Craft)
- **Range:** 60'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 2 hours
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour), Range (+20')

This spell was pioneered by the Kuni family but has come into use among other shugenja who battle the forces of the Shadowlands, such as the Scorpion and the Phoenix. It is used to safely imprison minor Shadowlands creatures, typically for purposes of interrogation. Any Shadowlands creature with an Earth of 3 or less can be targeted with this spell. It cannot affect the Lost, Oni Lords or their spawn, or creatures with an Earth of 4 or higher, nor can it affect creatures who are not Tainted.

If the spell is cast successfully, it calls forth manacles of iron, formed from pure Earth spirits, which trap and bind the target creature, rendering it physically helpless for the duration of the spell. When the spell expires, the manacles instantly crumble away into dust.

Soul of Stone

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Defense)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1/2 hour)

This spell fills the target's soul with the firm and unyielding strength of stone. For the duration of the spell, the target's feelings are immovable, and any attempt to divert or distract him will be resisted with supernatural determination. He gains a +3k0 bonus to any rolls made to resist emotional manipulation or the distractions of desire, including Courtier (Manipulation) rolls, Temptation rolls, Compulsions, and any similar effects which the GM judges to be appropriate. However, this stony self-control also makes it difficult for the target to read and affect the emotions of others, and for the duration of the spell he suffers a –1k0 penalty to all Awareness Trait rolls and Awareness-related Skill Rolls made for the purpose of influencing others.

Tetsubo of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Craft, Jade)
- **Range:** Personal or 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One created weapon
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Duration (+5 minutes), Range (+5 feet)

You summon a tetsubo of pure earth, studded with all manner of stones. The weapon's default form is a tetsubo, but one Raise can change its form to any other heavy weapon of your choosing. The tetsubo has a DR of 2k2. When wielding this weapon, you may use your School Rank in place of your Heavy Weapons Skill if you wish. If you do have the Heavy Weapon skill, the tetsubo grants you a Free Raise for the Knockdown maneuver (this bonus does not apply if you grant the Tetsubo to another person instead of wielding it yourself). The tetsubo disappears if it is lost from your hand. Instead of summoning the tetsubo for yourself, you may cause it to appear in the hands of an ally within 20 feet. He is treated as the caster for all purposes of the spell, but does not gain the Free Raise bonus.

Earth, Mastery Level 2

Be the Mountain

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Defense)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 4 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round)

A variant of the spell Armor of Earth, designed to protect allies, this prayer causes the Earth kami to envelop the target with their embrace, covering his skin with a stony barrier that repels physical blows. The target gains Reduction of a value equal to 5x the caster's School Rank, to a maximum of 20, but cannot take Simple Move Actions for the duration of the spell (Free Move Actions are still allowed). Only a willing ally can be targeted with this spell.

Earth Becomes Sky

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Jade, Thunder)
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Targets (+1 target), Special (make boulders Jade with 2 Raises)

This spell summons up several huge boulders from the earth, and hurls them through the air to unerringly strike one (or more) target creatures. The target struck by these boulders suffers damage with a DR equal to the caster's Earth rank. If the caster strikes multiple targets, the DR is reduced by 1k1 for each additional target, to a minimum of 1k1 damage per target. These boulders are made of normal, mundane stone, and thus cannot normally bypass Reduction or Invulnerability, but a powerful caster can infuse the boulders with the power of Jade.



Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Travel)
- **Range:** Personal or Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1/2 hour)

This spell allows the target (who can be the caster or one other person) to literally dive into the ground, which becomes as clear and easy to traverse as water for him. He can see for a distance of 100 yards through the earth, and can move through it in any direction as easily as though he were in normal air. The target can see through the edge of the earth into the normal world, but he cannot attack, cast spells, speak, hear, or otherwise interact with those outside the earth unless he emerges from the ground (at which point the spell immediately ends). If the spell ends while the target is still underground, the Earth spirits are offended by the target's continued presence, and immediately expel him into the nearest open air, wherever that might be.

Force of Will

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Battle)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 2 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round, maximum 4 Rounds duration)

This spell infuses the target with an intense resistance to pain and death, as the Earth kami bolster his will to live to superhuman levels. He is able to shrug off the pain and shock of his wounds, even continuing in the face of lethal injuries for a short time. For the duration of this spell, the target is immune to all Wound Rank penalties and effects – including the effect of being dead if the Out rank is completely filled. When the spell expires, however, the full effects of any Wounds apply immediately – thus, this spell typically affords either a brief chance to be healed before it is too late, or the chance to wage a final battle in the face of certain death.

Grasp of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round), Range (5'), Targets (+1 Target per 2 Raises)

This spell causes the Earth kami to reach up and seize hold of the target, often taking the form of a massive hand or claw which grips the unfortunate creature in stony digits. The target is rendered near-immobile, able to move only 3' per round as a Simple Move Action, and unable to move at all with a Free Move Action. The target may break free by spending a Complex Action and rolling Raw Strength at a TN equal to 5x the caster's Earth.

Hands of Clay

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Travel)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+5 minutes)

This spell infuses Earth spirits into the hands and feet of the caster, allowing them to merge with the Earth found in wood, earth, and stone. This allows the caster to walk and climb along sheer surfaces, including walls and cliffs, at half his normal movement speed (rounded up). He can even hang from ceilings and move along them, although in that case he can only move 3' with a Simple Action. When the spell ends, the effect concludes without warning, possibly leading to a painful fall.

The Mountain's Feet

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal or 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1/2 hour), Targets (+1 per two Raises)

This spell fortifies the target by rooting his feet to the stone and soil beneath, allowing him to shrug off anything that might separate him from the touch of Earth. The target gains +3k0 to resist all Knockdown maneuvers, and any spell which seeks to knock down the target, lift him into the air, or otherwise break his connection to the Earth must win a Contested roll of the spell's Element against the caster's Earth.

Wholeness of the World

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal or 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute), Range (+5'), Targets (+1 per two Raises)

This spell infuses the target with the strength of Earth to such a degree that his Rings and Traits become wholly resistant to any effort to change them. Any physical or magical effect which would raise or lower his Traits or Rings is completely ineffective for the duration of this spell, as the Earth kami firmly rebuff any such efforts to alter the target's Elemental balance.

Earth, Mastery Level 3

Bonds of Ningen-Do

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3 (Wards)
- **Range:** 500'
- **Area of Effect:** One target spirit creature
- **Duration:** 30 days
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day), Range (+10'), Targets (+1 per 2 Raises)

This spell, a more powerful and specialized form of Minor Binding, is a ritual designed to bind or dispel troublesome creatures from the various spirit realms. Any creature from the realms of Sakkaku, Chikushudo, Gaki-Do, Toshigoku, or Yume-Do can be affected by this spell. Casting it requires 10 minutes, although if additional shugenja who know the spell assist in the ritual, the time is reduced by 1 minute per additional shugenja, to a minimum of 1 minute.

If the targeted creature is within range of the caster(s) when the spell is successfully completed, the creature can be either bound or dispelled. If it is bound, it must obey the caster's commands for the duration of the spell, although suicidal commands will break the spell – this is how the Kuni have forced mujina spirits to labor for them in their iron mines. (It should be noted that this use of the spell is considered controversial and even blasphemous by many in Rokugan.) If the creature is dispelled, it immediately leaves Ningen-Do for its native spirit realm, and cannot return until the spell's duration ends. Either way, the spirit creature will regard the caster as an enemy thereafter, and is likely to seek vengeance if it can.

Earth Kami's Blessing

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3 (Battle)
- **Range:** Personal or 20'
- **Area of Effect:** Caster or one target creature
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

This spell infuses the target (which may be the caster or one of his allies) with the strength and resilience of the Earth, making him tougher and more firm-minded. For the duration of the spell, the target gains +2 Wounds per Wound Rank, and gains +1k1 on all rolls involving the Earth Ring and its associated Traits. When the spell expires, any Wounds the target has suffered still remain, and this may drive him into a lower Wound Rank or even kill him.

Earth's Protection

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3 (Defense, Wards)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 10' radius from caster
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius per 2 Raises, to maximum of 30' radius), Special (damage reduced by an additional +1k1 for 2 Raises)

This spell calls on the spirits of Earth to protect the area around the caster from the effects of the other three Elements (Air, Fire, and Water) for a short time. While the caster concentrates on maintaining the favor of the Earth spirits, the effects of spells which call on those other three elements are mitigated. Any hostile Air, Fire, or Water spell cast within the area of Earth's Protection, or extending its effects into that area, will suffer a +10 TN penalty to the Spell Casting roll. In addition, any damage which those spells inflict on creatures within Earth's Protection will be reduced by 1k1 (to a minimum of 1k1).

Purge the Taint

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3 (Jade)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 50' radius around caster
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Area (+10' radius)

This spell was originally created by the Kuni family and is still primarily practiced by them, although knowledge of its prayers has spread to other Clans. It is an elaborate ritual spell, requiring an hour to cast, that calls on the powers of Earth to purge the land of the Shadowlands Taint, driving out all the evil *kansen* in the area. The spell will remove all the Taint from the land, plant life, and inanimate objects within the area of effect. It will not remove Taint from living creatures, nor will it affect powerful Tainted artifacts or objects made of obsidian.

The removal of the Taint, however, is not without price. The elemental kami in the area of effect are also weakened and purged by the spell, especially the Earth spirits whose efforts are called upon to power it. In the aftermath of casting this spell, the local spirits will be scattered and weakened, inflicting a +15 TN penalty on all Spell Casting rolls within the area. This negative effect will sometimes fade with time, especially if it was cast in a single location surrounded by normal lands. But if the spell is cast over a wide area, such as the Kuni Wastes, the elemental kami will usually permanently leave the area, reducing it to a gray, lifeless wasteland.

Sharing the Strength of Many

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One to six target persons within range
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

This spell infuses its targets, up to six people (who can include the caster), with the power of Earth, allowing them each to call upon the Earth of their comrades to bolster their efforts. For the duration of the spell, the lowest Earth Ring Rank among all the targets is added to the total of all Ring, Trait, and Skill rolls (but not Spell Casting rolls) they make.

Strength of the Crow

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3 (Jade)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** Hours equal to caster's Shugenja School Rank
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour), Targets (+1)

This spell infuses the target (who can be the caster) with a powerful resistance to the Shadowlands Taint, repelling the dark kansen of the Taint with the pure power of Earth. For the duration of the spell, the target(s) gain a +5k5 bonus to all rolls made to resist gaining the Shadowlands Taint, and any Maho spells suffer a +10 TN penalty to affect them. This bonus does not apply to any rolls made to resist an increase in Taint the target already possesses – it only applies to new Taint gained from outside sources. Likewise it cannot protect the target from gaining Taint by casting Maho.

The Wolf's Mercy

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Range (+10'), Targets (+1)

This spell has existed in Rokugan for centuries, but is best known for its extensive use by Toturi Sezaru, "the Wolf," who employed it during his hunts for Bloodspeakers. It calls on the power of the Earth to afflict the target, weighing down his body and impeding his muscles, leaving him weak and vulnerable.

The target's Earth Ring is lowered by 1 Rank, and his Wound Ranks are reduced correspondingly for the duration of the spell. (This can potentially kill him immediately if he has already suffered Wounds.) In addition, his Strength Rank is also lowered by 1 for the same duration. If the target has at least one full Rank of Shadowlands Taint, the Earth spirits will be filled with wrath, and punish him more severely, lowering his Earth Ring by 2 Ranks (to a minimum of 1).

Earth, Mastery Level 4

Armor of the Emperor

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 Rounds)

This spell covers the caster in a thick layer of tough, resilient Earth spirits who repel all damage, whether physical blows or magical effects. Any time the caster suffers damage from an enemy physical or magical attack, each individual damage die has its total Reduced by the caster's Shugenja School Rank. This cannot reduce a die's total below 0.

Essence of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4 (Battle)
- **Range:** Personal or 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature (self or another)
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5'), Targets (+1 per 2 Raises), Special (+1 Rank of Earth per 2 Raises, maximum increase 3 Ranks of Earth)

This spell infuses the target with the true strength of Earth, allowing him to shrug off blows which might otherwise take his life. For the duration of the spell, the target's Earth Ring is considered to be 1 Rank higher, and his Wounds are increased correspondingly. However, when the spell ends, the Earth spirits immediately depart and the target's Wounds return to normal – possibly resulting in death, if he has suffered sufficient injury.

Symbol of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4 (Wards)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Special
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0)

Priests of the kami are capable of inscribing powerful wards that invoke the power of the elements against all who attempt to pass them. A symbol of Earth can be inscribed on a solid object, most often a door, window, gate, or any other passageway. Anyone attempting to pass through this passageway or otherwise pass by the ward is affected by its power, and must succeed at a Contested Roll using their Air against the caster's Earth. Those who fail are struck with a powerful shockwave, and must succeed at a Strength roll against the total of the Spell Casting Roll used to create the ward or be knocked Prone and Stunned. If they have at least one Rank of Taint, they also suffer 2k2 Wounds. You may only have one Symbol of Earth in existence at any time, and Symbol spells of different elements may never affect the same area. This spell may be dispelled by another casting of Symbol of Earth from any shugenja, or by destroying the surface where the Symbol was etched.

Tomb of Jade

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4 (Jade)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Range (+10'), Special (Contested Roll, +1k1 to caster for each Raise)

Considered by many shugenja to be the ultimate spell for opposing the creatures of the Shadowlands, this spell calls on the purest of Earth spirits, those of jade, to consume the very Taint within the target. The spell can only affect a target who has at least one full Rank of Shadowlands Taint, but if the spell fails, the caster will not automatically know that the target is Taint-free – there is always the possibility that the target was able to resist the spell.

When Tomb of Jade is cast, the target is momentarily immobilized as the Earth spirits enter his body. Each round, starting with the first round, the caster must make a Contested Earth roll against the target. If the target wins, the spell ends. If the caster wins, the target takes 2k2 Wounds as the spirits begin to transform his body into jade. This continues each round until the target successfully resists, the caster stops concentrating, or the target dies. Those killed by this spell are transformed into statues of pure jade, which crumbles away into mundane dust in 24 hours.

Wall of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4 (Defense)
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** Wall measuring a maximum of 10' high and 100' wide
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Area (increase height by 1' or width by 10' per Raise), Duration (+1 minute), Range (+10')

This spell coaxes the spirits of Earth into rising up and forming a thick, powerful barrier to protect the caster. The wall of rock-hard earth which this spell creates can be shaped as the caster desires, and can be curved, placed on the side of a hill, or even formed in a circle. It is extremely tough, requiring a Strength roll against a TN of the caster's (Earth + School Rank) x 5 in order to break through. It is strong enough to hold back a raging flood, a lava flow, or hurricane winds, at least as long as the spell lasts. When the spell expires, however, the earthen barrier crumbles away in moments.

Earth, Mastery Level 5

Earthquake

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 1 mile radius
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Area (+500 yards), Duration (+1 minute per 2 Raises)

This spell unleashes a terrible, ground-wracking earthquake, centered on the caster, who alone is unaffected. The earthquake utterly destroys all wooden buildings within the radius of effect, and inflicts severe damage on stone structures. All persons within the area of the earthquake are thrown to the ground, and remain Prone and Stunned for the duration of the spell, as well as suffering 2k1 Wounds. Individuals who are inside buildings (including the caster) will suffer 6k6 damage from falling debris, collapsing roofs, etc. Casting this spell within range of a major inhabited area is generally considered an act of war.

Major Binding

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5 (Jade, Wards)
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target Shadowlands creature
- **Duration:** 12 hours
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour), Range (+50')

The more powerful counterpart to the Kuni family's Minor Binding spell, this spell has also been employed by other clan shugenja, especially those of the Phoenix Clan. It is used to imprison more powerful Shadowlands creatures and members of the Lost, typically for purposes of interrogation. Any Lost and any Shadowlands creature can be targeted with this spell. It can also target other spirit creatures who are Tainted. It cannot affect any other creatures.

The spell is a ritual, and requires ten minutes to cast (making it quite hazardous when dealing with a rampaging oni), but if additional shugenja join in casting the spell the casting time is reduced by 1 minute per shugenja, to a minimum of 1 minute. If it is cast successfully, the casters make a Contested Roll of their combined Earth Rings against the Earth of the target. If the casters win, the spell calls forth manacles of pure elemental jade, which imprison the creature and render it helpless with the pain of its searing bonds for the duration of the spell. When the spell expires, however, the manacles instantly crumble into dust, and the creature is liable to seek immediate and bloody vengeance on its captors.

Strike at the Roots

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round), Range (+10'), Targets (+1 target per 2 Raises), Special (Contested Roll, +1k1 to the caster for each Raise)

A more powerful and devastating form of The Wolf's Mercy, this spell brings the true wrath of the Earth onto the target, draining all favor of the Earth from his body and leaving him a weak, trembling, helpless victim. After casting this spell, the caster must succeed in a Contested Earth roll against the targets of the spell (rolling separately if he is targeting multiple people). If the target loses the roll, his Earth Ring is immediately reduced to 1 for the duration of the spell. This also reduces his Wound Ranks and may result in his immediate death if he has already suffered injuries.

The Kami's Strength

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5 (Battle)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+10')

This spell allows the caster to fortify one person with the power of Earth, greatly enhancing their physical capabilities and their resistance to damage. The target of this spell gains Reduction of 20 and increases his Strength and one other physical Trait by an amount equal to the caster's Earth Ring. In return, however, the target is weighed down by the burden of Earth and cannot take Simple Move Actions (he can still take a Free Move Action).

The Kami's Will

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5 (Defense)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+10')

The counterpoint to The Kami's Strength, this spell infuses one person with the stubbornness and determination of Earth, greatly enhancing their willpower and making them all but immune to the effects of elemental magic. The target of this spell increases his Willpower by an amount equal to the caster's Earth Ring, and any spells (friendly or hostile, but not including Maho spells) which target him suffer a penalty of –XkX to their Spell Casting roll, where X is the caster's Earth Ring. In return, however, the target is made so stubborn and willful that he cannot function properly in a social environment, and suffers a penalty to all Social Skill rolls of –Xk0, where X is the Earth Ring of the caster.

Earth, Mastery Level 6

Essence of Jade

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 6 (Defense, Jade)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5'), Targets (+1 target for 2 Raises, maximum of 3 total targets)

This spell calls on the purity of jade to protect its targets against the power of Jigoku, whether manifested as Taint or as the dreaded magic known as maho. The target radiates the sacred green light of jade, and while the spell lasts, he cannot gain the Shadowlands Taint and is completely immune to the effects of all maho spells. This spell cannot be cast on anyone who possesses at least one full Rank of Taint, for the pure jade spirits will recoil from such a corrupt individual, immediately alerting the caster to this individual's Tainted nature.

Power of the Earth Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 6 (Defense)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute), Range (+10'), Targets (+1), Special (Damage absorption +10 Wounds per Raise)

This spell is the most powerful of the physically protective Earth spells, calling on the favor of the Dragon of Earth to enshroud the targets with protection against all forms of harm. The Earth spirits absorb all damage which the targets suffer while the spell lasts. However, there are limits to even Earth's endurance. Nemuranai can bypass the protection. Further, if the Earth spirits protecting a specific target absorb a total of 100 Wounds of damage, they will be exhausted and the spell's effects on that target come to an end.

Prison of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 6 (Wards)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Range (+5'), Special (Contested Roll, +1k1 to the caster for each Raise)

The most powerful of the binding spells which Earth shugenja use to deal with dangerous creatures, this spell can literally imprison the essence of such a creature for as long as the caster desires. Casting this spell requires that the caster possess a gem or pearl in which to imprison the creature (the GM may, discretionally, allow other rare or precious items to be used, such as a beautifully inlaid puzzle-box or a crystal pendant). The spell can target any creature native to the realms of Jigoku, Gaki-Do, or Toshigoku, and any other non-human creature with at least 1 full Rank of Taint.

After casting the spell, the caster must make a Contested Willpower roll against the target. If the caster wins, the creature's physical body vanishes and its essence is imprisoned within the item. It will remain there indefinitely unless the item is physically destroyed. If that happens, the released creature immediately resumes its physical form, and will most likely seek vengeance against the caster or his descendants.

Rise, Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 6
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One summoned spirit
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** None

The Earth itself arises and takes form to defend you. The ultimate realization of the Summon spell, this prayer summons a massive kami of pure Earth to serve you. It takes the form of a vaguely humanoid shape, roughly ten feet in height, with a broad body and thick limbs all formed from earth and stone. This mighty Earth kami may move up to 5 x your Earth per round, and its footsteps shake the earth in a twenty foot radius around it, preventing anyone from making Simple Move Actions within its area of effect. This Earth spirit is treated as if it has all Physical Traits equal to your Earth Ring, and attacks with a Jiujitsu Skill Rank equal to half your Earth Rank. The DR from these attacks is equal to your Earth Ring. The kami can carry up to 1,000 pounds of weight if so commanded, and its blows are strong enough to destroy any wooden structure and to shatter stone walls of one-foot thickness. For purposes of taking damage, the spirit is considered to have Wounds as though it were a human with Earth equal to your Earth Ring, but suffers no Wound penalties. It is Invulnerable (see the creature rules in the *Book of Void* for details of this ability). If it is successfully reduced to zero Wounds, it is dispelled.

Fire, Mastery Level 1

Biting Steel

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1 (Craft)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 bladed weapon
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

Fire spirits can infuse metal with their own fury, turning a sharp edge into a supremely perfect one. This spell enhances the damage of steel bladed weapons, such as swords, knives, naginata, etc. Biting Steel cannot affect weapons which are not metal blades, which are nemuranai, or which have already been enhanced by magical effects. The weapon's DR is increased by 1k1 for the duration of the spell.

Burning Kiss of Steel

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1 (Battle)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One melee weapon in caster's hand
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 minutes)

This spell embraces a weapon with fire, causing it to be larger and more effective. When the spell is cast, a tendril of fire extends from your hands to engulf your weapon. (If you drop

or lose the weapon, the spell effect ends.) This weapon gains a +1k1 bonus to melee attack rolls. The bonus is +2k2 when making attacks against mounted opponents or opponents of larger than human size.

Envious Flames

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

Fire's most basic power is destruction, and summoned Fire spirits can easily be unleashed on one's enemies. This spell invokes a single Fire kami, which lances toward the target, hitting unerringly so long as the target is within range. The spell deals 2k2 Wounds. The burns this spell inflicts are quite painful, and if the spell targets a shugenja who is casting a spell, his Willpower roll has a TN of 20 plus the damage dealt, instead of the normal 10 plus damage dealt.

Extinguish

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 100' radius
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Area (+20 feet)

Fire spirits can be driven away by the proper invocation, a very useful ability in Rokugani towns and cities where the construction is all wood and paper. This spell dismisses the active Fire kami in the area. All non-magical fire in the area of effect is immediately snuffed out, and any damage dealt by fire (magical or not) reduces its DR by 1k1 until the start of the next Round.

Fires of Purity

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1 (Defense)
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 per two Raises)

This spell, one of the few directly protective prayers involving the Fire kami, asks the kami to protect one person, enveloping the target in a shroud of bright flames. Neither the target nor anything he carries takes damage from the spell, but anyone who comes into contact with him or strikes him with a melee attack takes 2k2 Wounds. Anyone the target strikes in melee with an unarmed attack or a weapon he carried when the spell was cast also takes an extra 2k2 Wounds. Anything the target puts down, however, cannot be picked back up without subjecting it to the damage from the spell. Ranged weapons such as arrows bypass this barrier of fire, dealing Wounds as normal.

The Fires That Cleanse

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1
- **Range:** Self
- **Area:** 30' radius
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Area of Effect (+5 feet per two Raises)

Destruction is one of the basic impulses of Fire, and this spell calls on that urge to spread destruction in the caster's surroundings. The spell whips the kami into a frenetic chaos, destroying everything around you. Everyone in the area of effect, including you, suffers damage with DR equal to your Fire Ring. This result is rolled once and applied to everyone within the area – however, you take only half damage (rounded up), since the kami do make some effort to avoid you.

Fury of Osano-Wo

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1 (Thunder)
- **Range:** 300'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 per two Raises)

This spell is actually a prayer to the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, inviting his wrath upon your enemy. It can only be cast outdoors, and summons a bolt of lightning from the sky, striking the target for 5k2 Wounds. Everyone within 10' of the target must make a Stamina roll versus a TN of 15 to avoid being deafened for 2 Rounds. If this spell is cast during a thunderstorm, the damage is increased to 6k2 for a moderate storm and 6k3 for a disastrous storm or hurricane.

Katana of Fire

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1 (Battle, Craft)
- **Range:** Personal or 20' (see below)
- **Area of Effect:** One created weapon
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Duration (+5 minutes), Range (+5 feet)



You summon a blade of pure fire, blazing like the soul of an honorable warrior. The weapon's default form is a katana, but one Raise can change its form to any other sword of your choosing. The katana has a DR of 2k2. When wielding this weapon, you may use your School Rank in place of your Kenjutsu Skill if you wish. If you do possess the Kenjutsu Skill, you add your Honor Rank to all damage rolls made with this weapon. The katana of fire disappears if it is lost from your hand. Instead of summoning the katana for yourself, you may cause it to appear in the hands of an ally within 20 feet. He is treated as the caster for all purposes of the spell, but does not gain the Honor boost to damage.

Never Alone

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds (see below)
- **Raises:** Targets (+1)

This spell invokes Fire's element of knowledge and understanding, strengthening the spirit of one of your allies by opening his eyes to the courage of his ancestors. The target of the spell receives a bonus to all attack rolls, Skill rolls, and Trait Rolls equal to your Fire Ring. This effect lasts until either the spell expires, or until the target fails an attack roll or Skill Roll, or until the target suffers Wounds from any source, whichever comes first.

The Raging Forge

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1 (Craft)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One weapon or armor
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

Fire is the element of creation as well as destruction, and a skilled shugenja can use this to great effect. This spell invokes the powers of the forge, mighty and merciless, to remake a material item, such as a weapon or suit of armor, into its perfect form. The target item loses all blemishes, including cracks or nicks. This spell cannot repair an item which has actually been broken or destroyed, however, and it can only affect items that are of ordinary quality.

Fire, Mastery Level 2

Disrupt the Aura

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** Target person or creature
- **Duration:** 24 hours
- **Raises:** Duration (+12 hours per Raise)

Anyone whose elements are out of balance will feel the effects, and this spell creates this condition deliberately by aggravating the Fire present in the target's body. While the spell is in effect, the target cannot be healed by magical means. Magical spells, items, or Techniques that attempt to restore Wounds to the target automatically fail. (Mundane wound treatment with the Medicine skill will still be effective.) The target may realize something is physically wrong with him but cannot find out what is happening without the help of a shugenja – casting Sense (Fire) will show the presence of many excited Fire spirits within the target.

Enticing Dance of the Flame

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** 20' radius
- **Duration:** 2 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round)

A more potent version of The Fires That Cleanse, this spell keeps the Fire kami under tighter control and persuades them to remain present for longer. If the spell is cast successfully, Fire kami erupt into a violent, ferocious dance at a location of your choice, igniting that area into flames. Every target in the area takes 3k2 Wounds on the Round the spell takes effect. At the beginning of each subsequent Round, if the spell is still active, every target still in the affected area takes an additional 2k1 Wounds.

The Fires From Within

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Target (+1 target per two Raises)

Probably the most widely known and recognized offensive spell in the element of Fire, this prayer has been in use by Rokugani shugenja since the very earliest days of the Empire. You summon Fire kami to form an orb of flame that hovers in your palm for a moment before streaking toward the target. The sphere gains momentum and size until it hits its target, making it quite spectacular visually. The spell has a DR equal to your Fire Ring.

Hurried Steps

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 2 rounds (see below)
- **Raises:** None

Fire is the element of thought, and thought is swift indeed. You draw upon the speed of the Fire kami to aid you in the next spell you cast. The casting time of the next Fire spell you cast is reduced by 4 Rounds. If the next spell is Mastery Level 3 or lower, it casts instantaneously as a Simple Action. If you do not begin casting the new spell within the next 2 Rounds, however, the benefit of Hurried Steps elapses.

Mental Quickness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One item
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** None

Fire kami can be imbued into physical objects, allowing them to remain present for longer periods of time. Shugenja have devised many ways to use this technique to aid themselves and others. This spell, one of the most basic of this kind, imbues a material item with the cleverness and wit of fire. Anyone who carries that item has their Intelligence Trait increased by 3 for the duration of the spell.

Relentless Heat

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2 (Defense)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One armor
- **Duration:** 10 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 Rounds)

This spell is designed to protect bushi by infusing a Fire kami into their armor. The spell targets one suit of armor, which glows with the strength of the merciless desert sun. Any opponent who attempts to strike the person wearing the armor, whether or not the attack hits, is immediately considered to be Fatigued until the beginning of their next Turn. The penalties apply to the attack roll that triggered the spell, and any attackers in the Full Attack Posture immediately assume the Attack Posture instead. This spell has no effect on ranged attacks or spells that target the wearer of the armor.

Tail of the Fire Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 4 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round)

This spell invokes several Fire kami to form a whip-like tendril that extends from the caster's hand. The tendril of flame will not burn you, since the kami are grateful for the opportunity to burn others at your command. You may use this tendril to strike enemies as far as 30' away, extending it out and back with blinding speed. Your attack roll with the tendril is equal to your Agility + (twice your School Rank), keeping your Agility. The tendril has a DR equal to your Fire Ring.

Ward of Purity

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2 (Ward)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 15' radius from the object touched
- **Duration:** 1 day
- **Raises:** None

Although Earth is the traditional method of opposing evil forces like the Shadowlands Taint, the spirits of Fire can also be invoked to purge and destroy such spiritual abominations. This spell binds a Fire kami into a specific location which it protects against the forces of evil. Casting the spell requires inscribing elaborate kanji on a flat surface in chalk or ink, and takes one minute of concentrated effort, after which the Spell Casting Roll must be made. Once the Ward of Purity is activated and the power of the kami is fully engaged, however, the kami within the inscription protects the area against the influence of the Shadowlands or the Lying Darkness.

Persons or creatures with at least 1 Shadowlands Taint Rank, or who are under the control of the Lying Darkness, must make a successful Contested Willpower Roll against you in order to enter the Ward's area of effect; you gain a +5 bonus to this roll. In addition, those creatures who successfully enter the area suffer extreme pain, as the power of the ward burns their very essence. Their bodies ignite and they suffer Wounds equal to the total of your Fire Ring + Insight Rank each Round they remain within the area of effect.

Spells and missiles are unaffected by Ward of Purity. The object upon which the ward is inscribed must remain immobile and the inscription must remain clearly visible at all times, or else the Ward is dispelled.

If overlapping Wards of Purity are present, their effects do not stack.

Fire, Mastery Level 3

Breath of the Fire Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 15' long, 5' wide blast
- **Duration:** 4 rounds
- **Raises:** None

This spell is a prayer to the Dragon of Fire, one of the mightiest of celestial beings, entreating him for a bit of his power. If the spell is successful, you gain the ability to breathe a bolt of flames from your open mouth once per Round as a Simple Action. The bolt has a DR equal to your Fire Ring and strikes every target in front of you within the area of effect. You may choose to take actions other than breathing fire while under the effects of this spell, but you cannot speak or cast spells. The spell expires after four Rounds, but you may choose to end this spell during the Reactions Stage of any earlier Round.

Fiery Wrath

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One free-standing structure, or 50' x 50' area
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

Fiery Wrath was originally created to clear brush for farming and to demolish wooden structures with a minimum of work and no hazard; it is also used to start bonfires for rituals and celebrations. The spell allows you to destroy a building or other structure by appealing to the excitable Fire kami within the target's materials. All flammable materials within the area of effect immediately catch fire and burn until nothing but ash is left. The fire cannot be extinguished except by magical means; mundane water, sand, and other retardants will have no effect.

Only one structure may be targeted by the spell, and the fire will not spread out to adjoining structures, as your prayers keep the Fire kami under tight control. Living beings and materials that are not flammable are not affected; in fact, while clothes worn by people caught within the area of effect will burn, their flesh will not so much as singe.

The Fist of Osano-Wo

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3 (Thunder)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area:** 20' radius
- **Duration:** 1 round
- **Raises:** Area of Effect (+10' radius)

A more powerful prayer to the Fortune of Thunder, this spell invokes his anger to devastate a targeted area. Massive lightning strikes and vaguely fist-shaped bolts of flame streak from the skies, smiting the area of effect. Weak structures and those easily set on fire (such as most Rokugani homes) are destroyed by the spell's fury, or catch fire and are consumed. The spell has a DR equal to your Fire Ring, inflicting this damage on anyone caught within the area of effect. Using this spell in populated areas is generally considered a criminal act, unless the shugenja can cite extreme circumstances, since fires are terribly dangerous to Rokugani cities.

Haze of Battle

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3 (Battle)
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds, or 1 hour out of combat
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round)

Fire spirits are known for their erratic and temperamental nature, and shugenja can badly disrupt their foes in battle by imbuing them with this aspect of the element. The target of this spell is filled with the unfocused fury of Fire, enraging him and forcing him to lose perspective. The target immediately assumes the Full Attack Stance and cannot switch from that Stance for the duration of the spell. If the spell is cast out of battle, the target gains the Brash and Contrary Disadvantages for the duration of the spell.

This spell's effects can be overcome by those of strong will. The target can attempt to resist with an opposed Willpower roll, but you add your Fire to the total of your roll. If the spell is cast in battle, this roll occurs during the Reactions Stage (and may be attempted each Round). If the spell is cast out of battle, the roll occurs once every 10 minutes.

Hungry Blade

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3 (Craft)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One weapon
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round)

This spell is a more potent version of Biting Steel, designed to enhance any weapon rather than merely a sword. The spell strengthens the Fire spirits in a single target weapon, causing them to come forth and form a faint sheath of fire around it. The weapon's wielder adds +1k0 to all attack rolls, and all of his damage dice explode on a result of 8 or better. Each die can explode on an 8 or 9 only once per roll, however, even if the wielder has other effects that allow the die to explode on 9s.

Ravenous Swarms

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round)

A more powerful and sophisticated form of the prayer which invokes the Fires From Within, this spell not only damages the target but also disrupts his own attempts to invoke the Fire kami, making it a very effective weapon against a rival Fire shugenja. You summon forth a bolt of flames that streaks toward the target with wild abandon. The flames deal 4k3 Wounds on impact and then encircle the opponent for the duration of the spell, waiting for him to make a mistake. If the target casts any Fire spell during that time, the Fire kami instantly strike, dealing 3k3 extra Wounds and causing the Spell Casting Roll to automatically fail. (The target loses the appropriate spell slot as usual.)

Shining Light

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3 (Defense)
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target armor
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 per two Raises), Duration (+2 Rounds)

Another example of spells which can imbue Fire kami into items, this spell temporarily binds a Fire kami into a piece of armor (such as a helmet or chest plate). The armor emits a bright light that becomes blinding whenever the wearer is attacked. Any time the armor's wearer is attacked in melee, immediately afterward the opponent takes 2k2 Wounds and is Blinded until the Reactions Stage of the same Round. The spell has no effect on ranged attacks.

Fire, Mastery Level 4

Death of Flame

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** None

This spell brings the anger of Fire on the target, suppressing his elemental Fire and lowering both his Agility and his Intelligence Ranks by an amount equal to your Fire Ring, to a minimum of one. If you maintain Concentration for the duration of the spell's effect, the target cannot escape its effects. If you do not maintain Concentration, each Round at the start of his Turn the target may make a contested Fire roll against you (using his original, unmodified Fire Ring) to end the spell's effect.

Defense of the Firestorm

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4 (Defense)
- **Range:** Touch

- **Area of Effect:** One target armor
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round)

A more potent form of spells like Shining Light, this prayer summons forth an aura of magical flames from a suit of armor, surrounding and protecting the armor's wearer. These flames do not harm the armor's bearer and do not harm living things. However, all wooden weapons (including arrows and many polearms) burn instantly before they reach the target, doing no damage. The flames also impede sight to the target, increasing his Armor TN by 20.

The Mending Forge

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4 (Craft)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target item
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

This simple and powerful spell has only one function: to call on the creative power of Fire to bring back what has been destroyed. Any damaged or destroyed material item can be restored with this spell, provided all of its pieces are gathered in front of the caster. (If some pieces are missing, the spell will automatically fail.) The spell takes 1 minute to cast, and you must concentrate during that minute. If successful, the spell restores the item to a whole and undamaged state. It should be noted that the Fire kami must work harder to repair items of unusual quality – if you use this spell to repair a nemuranai or an item of Fine quality or better, you must offer the Fire kami a gift (another item for them to burn and destroy) appropriate to the worth of the item.

Symbol of Fire

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4 (Ward)
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 10' radius
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** None

Priests of the kami are capable of inscribing powerful wards that invoke the power of the elements against all who attempt to pass them. A symbol of Fire can be inscribed on a solid object, most often a door, window, gate, or any other passageway. Anyone attempting to pass through this passageway or otherwise pass by the ward is affected by its power, and must succeed at a Contested Roll using their Water against the caster's Fire. Those who fail are Dazed, Blinded for one Round, and take 3k3 Wounds. This spell may be dispelled by another casting of Symbol of Fire from any shugenja, or by destroying the surface where the Symbol was etched. You may only have one Symbol of Fire in existence at any time, and Symbol spells of different elements may never affect the same area.

Wall of Fire

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area:** Special
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Area of Effect (+1 increment, see below)

You invoke the Fire kami to spring up and form a wall of flames, barring passage to all. The wall is a 10' tall, 1' wide, and 25' long, and causes 6k6 Wounds to anyone who touches it. This wall may be made shorter or thinner as desired, within the total specifications, but all of the mass of flames must be used somehow. The wall may be created in an area where people or creatures are standing, forcing them to make a Reflexes Trait Roll against a TN of 20 to avoid taking Wounds from the fire.

You may Raise to increase one of the specifications (height, width, or length) by its base increment (10', 1', or 25' respectively).

Ward of Thunder

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4 (Defense, Ward, Thunder)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 15' radius from the armor
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** None

Osano-Wo's protection can be temporarily invoked for a suit of armor by casting this spell and inscribing the kanji for thunder on the armor. Those within 15' of the armor are under Osano-Wo's care, and are completely protected from non-magical fire and thunder for the duration of the spell. Additionally, any Fire spell cast by a shugenja other than yourself which targets something within the area of effect has its Spell Casting TN increased by 20.

Fire, Mastery Level 5

Destructive Wave

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 25' radius
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k1 per two Raises)

A highly potent offensive spell, originally devised by the Isawa Elemental Masters, this prayer summons up a great mass of Fire kami, which roll outward from the caster in a wave of searing flames. Every target within the area of effect, whether friendly or hostile, takes 7k7 Wounds, for the raging flames make no distinction between ally and enemy. You alone do not take damage from the spell.

Everburning Rage

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** 1 Round
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round), Targets (+1)

A powerful curse that infuses the target's body with angry Fire spirits, wracking him with pain as the kami sear his nerves and ligaments. For the duration of the spell, the victim is considered to be at the Down Wound Level and suffers all associated penalties and conditions, although he takes no actual Wounds from the spell. When the spell expires, the pain

instantly ceases and the target may stand up as if nothing had happened. This spell is somewhat controversial with some shugenja schools, particularly the more peaceful ones, since it amounts to little more than the deliberate infliction of pain. A few shugenja have even noted certain disturbing similarities between this spell's effects and those of certain *maho* curses.

Follow the Flame

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** See below
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 per Raise)

This spell grants you exceptional control of the nearby Fire kami, allowing you to coax them into a very unusual and terrifying attack. On the Round this spell is cast and every Round thereafter, you may declare a line of sight target within 300' and send a stream of fire toward it that snakes along the ground. (On later Rounds, designating a target in this manner is a Simple Action.) The stream of fire moves at a rate of 75' each Round and moves around impassable (or inflammable) barriers in order to reach its target. Once the fire reaches its destination, the target bursts into flames, suffering 6k5 Wounds. The subject catches fire and takes half that many Wounds (rounded down) every subsequent Round until the fire is doused normally or the spell's duration expires.

Light of the Sun

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5 (Jade)
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 30' radius
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** None

This prayer invokes the power of the Sun, worshipped and venerated throughout Rokugan, and is an especial favorite among the Moshi family, although shugenja all across the Empire have learned it. The spell calls down a concentrated beam of pure sunlight to punish the unworthy. Everyone caught in the area of effect takes 2k2 Wounds per Round from the intense heat. Human targets (only) take an additional 2k1 Wounds for every Honor Rank they are below 4, and an additional 2k2 Wounds if they possess at least 1 Rank of the Shadowlands Taint or are controlled by the Lying Darkness. Human targets who have an Honor Rank of 0 are Blinded for a number of Rounds equal to your Fire Ring.

Wings of the Phoenix

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5 (Travel)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 10 Rounds
- **Raises:** None

The Phoenix is one of the most powerful symbols of Fire known to the Rokugani, and this spell calls on the essence of that being to grant its caster the power of flight. When this spell is cast, you summon clouds of Fire kami who take the form of giant wings sprouting from your back. You gain the ability to fly for the duration of the spell, moving at a speed of Water x 10 for a Free Action or Water x 20 for a Simple Action. If you are airborne when the spell expires, the Fire kami will bear you down to earth before departing.

Fire, Mastery Level 6

Beam of the Inferno

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 6
- **Range:** 200'
- **Area of Effect:** One Target
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

This is perhaps the deadliest single spell available to a shugenja, and one of the most fearsome spells ever developed in the Empire. The prayer invokes a tremendous blast of fire against the chosen target, who takes 10k10 Wounds. The spell puts all the Fire kami in the area into a state of agitation, and normal fires within range will burn hotter and more violently for many minutes after this spell is cast.

Globe of the Everlasting Sun

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 6 (Defense)
- **Range:** 500'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 mile
- **Duration:** 1 day
- **Raises:** None

This mighty prayer calls on all the Fire kami in the area to remain quiet and calm, soothing the agitation which so often afflicts them. It is often invoked during major festivals, such as the crowning of a new Emperor. For the duration of the spell, all buildings within the area of effect are immune to the effects of magical fire, and all Fire spells cast within that area have the TN of their Spell Casting Rolls increased by 15. Normal fires will still ignite and burn, but they do so sluggishly, and do not spread easily.

The Soul's Blade

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 6 (Craft)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target weapon
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round per 3 Raises)

This spell imbues incredibly powerful Fire kami into a weapon, granting it the full fury of a raging firestorm. A bushi armed with this weapon is a terrible opponent, for the Fire spirits shock and daze his enemies with every blow. For the duration of the spell, the weapon will overcome Invulnerability, and every target hit with it is automatically Stunned.

Water Spells, Mastery Level 1

Bo of Water

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Craft)
- **Range:** Personal or 20' (see below)
- **Area of Effect:** One created weapon
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Duration (+5 minutes), Range (+5 feet)

You summon a staff of pure water, as rigid as the real thing despite its fluid nature. The weapon's default form is a bo, but one Raise can change its form to any other staff of your choosing. The weapon has DR 1k2. If you do not possess the Staves Skill, you may instead use your School Rank in its place. If you do possess the Staves Skill, using this weapon grants you one Free Raise that can only be used on the Knockdown Maneuver. This weapon disappears if it is lost from your hand. Instead of summoning the bo for yourself, you may cause it to appear in the hands of an ally within 20 feet. He is treated as the caster for all purposes of the spell, but he does not gain the Free Raise bonus.

Clarity of Purpose

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Battle)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 10' radius around caster
- **Duration:** 2 rounds
- **Raises:** Area (+5'), Duration (+1 round per two Raises)

One of the many strengths of water is in its speed. All allies within the area of effect of this spell gain a bonus of +5 to their Initiative Scores for the duration of the spell.

Ebbing Strength

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Defense)
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

Energy flows through the universe just as water flows through the mortal shell. You may send your energy to another, weakening yourself and strengthening them in the process. You may reduce any one of your Physical Traits by an amount up to your School Rank. The target of this spell increases the same Physical Trait by the same amount. If your Trait is reduced to 0 as a result of this spell, you immediately fall unconscious and the spell's duration is reduced to 1 round. No Trait may be enhanced above double its normal rank by this spell.

Path to Inner Peace

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

The water kami can influence the flow of water through the body, dramatically hastening the natural healing process. You can use this spell to heal Wounds that another individual has suffered. This spell restores a number of Wounds to the target equal to the amount by which the Spell Casting Roll exceeded the spell's TN to cast.

Reflections of Pan Ku

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Divination)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One object
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

Divining the abilities of an object is among the simplest lessons a student of water learns in the temple. If this spell is successfully cast on an object, you automatically learn all powers and abilities that object possesses. This is most frequently used to identify any supernatural qualities an item possesses, such as a nemuranai or a cursed weapon, but it can also identify the spell contained within a shugenja's prayer scroll. This spell will not allow a shugenja to read a scroll if it is written in a cipher he does not understand, but he can at least identify the spell in question. This spell will also grant the caster knowledge of the item's origin in very broad strokes, such as where it was forged, the Clan of the individual who has carried it the longest, or something similar at the GM's discretion.



Reversal of Fortunes

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

Versatility is the domain of water, and those who carry its blessing reap the rewards. For the duration of this spell, the target may immediately re-roll any one roll per round. This must be done immediately after the first roll is completed, and the target may keep either result.

The Rushing Wave

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Travel)
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 1 round
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

You can temporarily increase the speed of your target. This spell allows the target to make a Free Move Action of up his Water Ring x 10' (instead of the normal x 5'). Without Raises for Duration, this benefit must be used on the target's next Turn or it is lost.

Speed of the Waterfall

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Travel)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual or creature
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+10 minutes), Range (may increase to 10' for two Raises)

Those filled with the essence of water find their movement far faster than ever before. The target of this spell may move a total distance per round equal to their Water x 20' plus an amount equal to twice your Water Ring. This spell does not grant the target additional movement, it simply increases the maximum possible amount they can move during a Round for the duration of the spell.

Spirit of the Water

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Battle)
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5'), Special (Increase additional action to Complex for 5 Raises)

The spirit of water is both fluid and rapid. The target gains one additional Simple Action during the Reactions Stage of the Round in which this spell is completed. This Action cannot be used to make an attack.

Sympathetic Energies

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5'), Special (see below)

Energy flows between all living things as water flows through the earth. You may transfer any one existing spell effect from you to the willing target of this spell. With three Raises, you may transfer one spell effect from one willing target to another willing target. You cannot transfer spells between unwilling targets.

Water Spells, Mastery Level 2

Cloak of the Miya

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round)

You wrap yourself in the protective embrace of the wave. Your Armor TN is increased by an amount equal to your Water Ring plus your School Rank for the duration of this spell.

Inari's Blessing

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2 (Craft)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Created sustenance
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Special (Enough food for one additional person per Raise)

Inari is the Fortune of Rice, and one of the most beloved of all divine entities throughout the Empire. This spell invokes Inari's blessing, and creates nourishing food and drink at your command. This spell generates enough food and drink to sustain a number of individuals equal to your School Rank +1 for one day. Without Raises, this food is bland but sustaining, such as unflavored rice and water, but with Raises, you can increase the quality of the food to seafood or tea at the GM's discretion. The TN to cast this spell is doubled when in the Shadowlands.

Reflective Pool

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2 (Divination)
- **Range:** 10 miles
- **Area of Effect:** Body of water / target location
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute), Range (+10 miles)

The inscrutable knowledge of water is a great boon to those who know the means by which it can be invoked. You may stare into a body of water, which may be as small as a puddle, and through it view a familiar location as if you were present, although you can only see what is taking place, not hear it. In order for a location to be familiar to you, you must either have spent a great deal of time there (your home, the dojo, a preferred temple, etc.), or have spent a minimum of ten minutes in meditation at the location. Any body of water can be used for this spell, but since the visions imparted are visual, images depicted will be clearer with larger bodies.

Rejuvenating Vapors

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Targets (one additional person per 2 Raises)

Water washes away all that is impure, refreshing and reinvigorating all it touches. The target of this spell is instantly refreshed as if he had just arisen from a full night's sleep. This does not restore spent Void Points, but can eliminate fatigue and exhaustion. When used on a shugenja, this spell does restore the spell slots associated with the Void Ring (which can be used for any elements), but not the spell slots associated with other Rings. Abilities that characters may use a limited number of times per day are not refreshed by this spell. No individual can benefit from Rejuvenating Vapors more than once within a 24-hour period.

Stand Against the Waves

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2 (Battle)
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (10' per 3 Raises)

A samurai who possesses the speed and strength of the mighty river is a dangerous foe indeed. The target of this spell gains a Simple Action during the Reaction Stage of the current Combat Round. This action may only be used to make an attack. If the target is incapable of making an attack as a Simple Action, this spell grants him a Complex Action instead. This spell cannot award a shugenja the ability to cast a second spell in the same Round.

The Ties That Bind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2 (Divination)
- **Range:** 10 miles
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+2 miles)

Even the lightest touch forges a connection, and through the spirits of water that connection may be explored. This spell allows you to seek out the spirits of Water within a single, specific object. You must be familiar with the object in question, either having spent a great deal of time around it or handled it personally. If the object is within the range of this spell, you will know the direction and relative distance it is from your current position.

Wave-Borne Speed

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2 (Travel)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 2 Rounds
- **Raises:** None

The speed of the river can be imparted by knowledgeable shugenja. Your Water Ring is increased by 2 for the purposes of determining how far you may move as part of any Move Actions made during the present Round or the following Round.

Wisdom & Clarity

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+30 minutes), Targets (may target another with 2 Raises)

By entreating the insight of the Water kami, a shugenja may dramatically increase his ability to perceive the world around him. For the duration of this spell, your reading speed doubles, and you will have perfect recall of everything read while under the influence of this spell. This spell does not enhance comprehension, however, so any language or cipher you are not familiar with is still completely indecipherable.

Water Spells, Mastery Level 3

Near to Ice

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (increased to 10' with 2 Raises)

As water grows durable and resistant with the coming winter, so too can the water within the human form become sterner and more durable. The target of this spell has all current Wound Penalties negated for the duration of the spell. Any additional penalties incurred take full effect, using the difference between the negated penalty and the new penalty as the effective penalty incurred. Wounds are not healed by this effect, they simply cease to inhibit those suffering from them.

Regrow the Wound

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Special (your Water is increased by 1 for the purposes of healing, per Raise)

Water flows into all things, and flows out. In flowing out, it can carry away that which is undesirable. The pain and suffering inflicted by injuries can be channeled away from an individual, and cast into the infinite ocean where they are lost forever. The target of this spell recovers a number of Wounds equal to your Water Ring plus your School Rank each round the spell is in effect. You must touch the target when the spell is cast, but after that it may be maintained without physical contact.

Silent Waters

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3 (Defense)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Variable
- **Raises:** None

The memory of the ocean is infinite, and its vast power can lay in wait for a very long time indeed. Upon completion of a successful casting of this spell, you may immediately cast a second spell of any element. This second spell must be a spell you can normally cast, and it must be of Mastery Level 3 or lower. If the second Spell Casting Roll is successful, the second spell is stored within you, and will not activate until a specific physical effect takes place, which you specify at the time of the casting. The spell's trigger could be that you speak a certain word, draw a blade, or fall in battle, for example. Whatever the trigger, when it occurs, the second spell immediately takes effect as if you had just finished casting the spell. A character may never benefit from multiple uses of Silent Waters at one time. If a second use of the spell is cast on the same individual, the current "stored" spell is immediately dispelled and replaced with the new one.

Strike of the Tsunami

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3 (Battle)
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** A cone originating from the caster, ten feet wide at the end
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Range (+5'), Special (+5 to the Earth Roll TN per Raise)

Water is everywhere, and obeys the commands of its favored shugenja. You summon a crushing wave of water that overruns everything in its path. The wave inflicts 3k3 Wounds on everything within the affected area, and all opponents within the area of effect must make an Earth Roll (TN 15) or suffer Knockdown. Obviously, everything within the area of effect is saturated with water.

Visions of the Future

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3 (Divination)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** None

Although not as reliable as the natural (if extremely rare) gift of foresight or the (equally rare) Void spells that enable divination, this spell still allows powerful visions of the future. It was first developed by the Tonbo family of the Dragonfly Clan, and is found infrequently outside their ranks. The spell requires use of a large pool of still water into which you must gaze. Upon completion of the spell, you enter a brief trance, and see images of things that have not yet come to pass. These images are rarely direct, and tend to be symbolic (violence is depicted as a scene of battle, for instance), but the events foreseen are completely accurate, and will come to pass unless prevented by your direct intervention. Only the shugenja casting this spell may see the events depicted in the vision. Many shugenja believe that use of this spell is a means of thwarting the natural order, and regard both it and those who make use of it negatively.

Walking Upon the Waves

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3 (Travel)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute), Targets (+1 individual per Raise)

The Water kami buoy those who carry their favor and grant them passage. The target of this spell may move across the surface of water as if it were solid ground (Basic Terrain). If the surface of the water is disturbed, as by a storm, rolling waves, or any other similar event, it counts as Difficult Terrain.

Water Kami's Blessing

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Special (your Water Ring is considered one rank higher per two Raises)

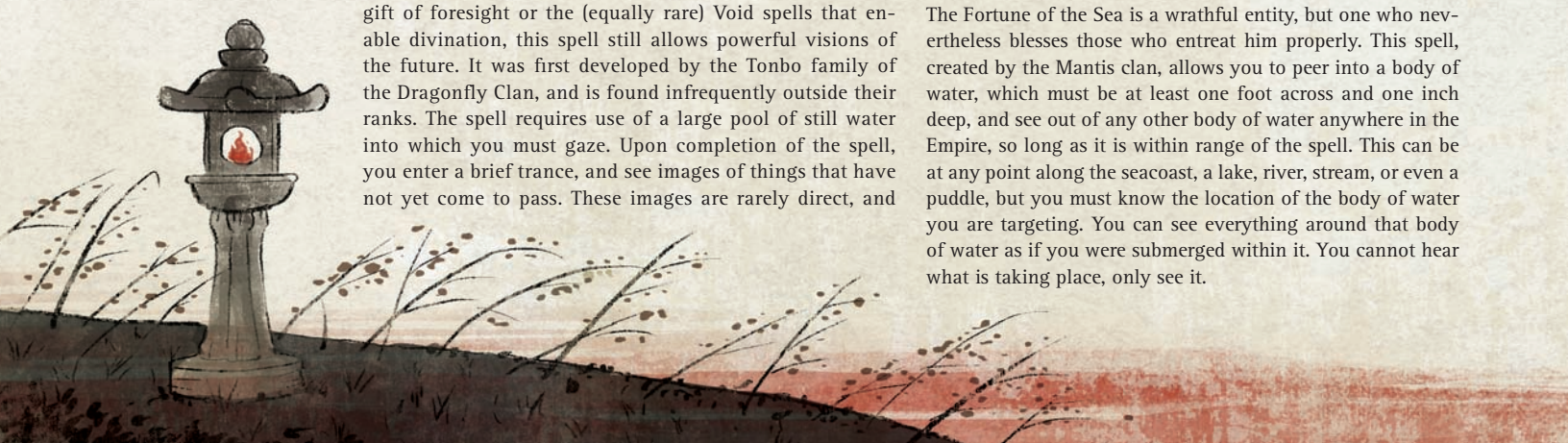
By calling upon the clarity of water, you can receive tremendous insight into the world around you. The target of this spell receives a bonus to all his Perception based rolls, whether Trait Rolls, Skill Rolls, or anything else, consisting of additional rolled dice equal to your Water Ring.

Water Spells, Mastery Level 4

Dominion of Suitengu

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4 (Divination)
- **Range:** 100 miles
- **Area of Effect:** Two bodies of water
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Range (+10 miles)

The Fortune of the Sea is a wrathful entity, but one who nevertheless blesses those who entreat him properly. This spell, created by the Mantis clan, allows you to peer into a body of water, which must be at least one foot across and one inch deep, and see out of any other body of water anywhere in the Empire, so long as it is within range of the spell. This can be at any point along the seacoast, a lake, river, stream, or even a puddle, but you must know the location of the body of water you are targeting. You can see everything around that body of water as if you were submerged within it. You cannot hear what is taking place, only see it.



Ebb & Flow of Battle

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4 (Battle)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** All selected allies within 50' radius of the caster
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round per two Raises)

Mobility is one of the greatest strengths of Water. In a skirmish or a battle, mobility is key to survival. This spell increases the movement speed of all allies within range. You may choose to exclude specific allies from its effects if you choose. All those affected by the spell may move a distance equal to their Water Ring x 10 in feet as a Free Action (this is normally a Simple Action).

Heart of the Water Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** Target individuals equal to caster's School Rank (may include the caster)
- **Duration:** 1 round per School Rank
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Special (+1k0 healed per two Raises)

The Water Dragon is a benevolent entity, and his blessings are powerful. Any time that a target of this spell suffers damage during the duration, he instantly regains 1k1 Wounds.

The Path Not Taken

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 day
- **Raises:** Special (gain one bonus spell slot per five Raises)

No element can match the sheer versatility and adaptability of Water. Prior to casting this spell, you must select one Ring in which you will be temporarily weakened, and one in which you will be temporarily strengthened. Upon the successful conclusion of this spell, you may transfer a number of unused daily spell slots from the weakened Ring to the strengthened Ring. This spell lasts exactly one day, and then the effects are lost.

Strike of the Flowing Waters

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** 1 round
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

Water flows over and through obstacles, and so too can those infused with its energy. The target of this spell may ignore bonuses to his opponents' Armor TN conferred by worn armor, spell effects of Mastery Level 3 and below, and other non-Technique mechanical effects. Against non-human creatures who do not wear armor, this allows the target to treat their Armor TN as 5 lower. This spell does not negate the Reduction awarded by armor, nor does it ignore the increase to Armor TN conferred as a result of an individual adopting the Defense or Full Defense Stances.

Symbol of Water

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4 (Ward)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Special
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** None

Priests of the kami are capable of inscribing powerful wards that invoke the power of the elements against all who attempt to pass them. A symbol of water can be inscribed on a solid object, most often a door, window, gate, or any other passageway. Anyone attempting to pass through this passageway or otherwise pass through the area is affected by the protective ward, and must succeed at a Contested Roll using their Fire against the caster's Water. Those who fail are affected by a crippling terror, and must immediately roll against a Fear 7 effect. You may only have one Symbol of Water in existence at any time, and Symbol spells of different elements may never affect the same area. This spell may be dispelled by another casting of Symbol of Water from any shugenja, or by destroying the surface where the Symbol was etched.

Water Spells, Mastery Level 5

Ever-Changing Waves

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 5 (Illusion)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour)

Ultimate command over Water can allow flesh to flow like liquid. This spell allows you to physically alter your mortal body, changing your shape to match that of another natural creature (see the *Book of the Void* for a list of the more common natural creatures found in Rokugan). While in this form, you keep your Mental Traits. For Physical Traits, you keep whichever is higher, yours or those of the animal into which you have transformed. Other natural abilities are gained as well, including natural weapons or sensory abilities. Some traditionalist shugenja sects look down upon this spell as unclean.

The Final Bond

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 5 (Divination)
- **Range:** Special
- **Area of Effect:** One target object or individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

The greatest bonds can never be broken. This spell allows you to detect the location of one object or individual well known to you, regardless of their location. The object must be one you have spent a tremendous amount of time around, or have handled frequently in the past. If the target of the spell is an individual, it must be someone well known to you, such as a mem-

ber of your immediate family or a close friend. You instantly know their approximate location anywhere in the Empire. This is not an exact location, but sufficient to tremendously narrow any search (for example, "the city of Ryoko Owari Toshi," or "the northern reaches of the Shinomen Mori"). If the target is outside the Empire of Rokugan, the spell automatically fails.

Hands of the Tides

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 5 (Battle, Travel)
- **Range:** 100' radius centered on the caster
- **Area of Effect:** Targets up to caster's Water Ring
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Area (+10'), Targets (+1 per 2 Raises)

The exchange of energy via Water is a simple matter that can ultimately lead to the exchange of flesh as well. Within the area of effect of this spell, you may choose a number of willing targets up to your Water Ring. You may switch the positions among those targets as you see fit, exchanging one for another. At the end of the spell, there must be a person in every position that was occupied when the spell began, but who is located where can vary depending upon the number of people affected.

Power of the Ocean

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 5 (Defense)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** A number of days equal to your School Rank
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day per three Raises)

Perhaps the greatest gift Water can bestow requires a powerful shugenja to impart it to others. This spell is a complex ritual that requires an hour to cast, and can only be cast upon a willing target. For the duration of the spell, the target requires no food, drink, or sleep. A number of times during the duration equal to your School Rank, the target may replenish his Void Points as a Simple Action; this is the equivalent of recovering Void Points via a full night of rest. The target also recovers a number of Wounds per hour equal to twice your Water Ring. If the target of this spell is a shugenja, he regains all expended spell slots at sunrise, regardless of whether he has had any rest.

After the spell expires, the target lapses into a state of complete exhaustion. This lasts for exactly half the duration of the spell effect. During this time, the target cannot take any significant physical action, and can only move about sluggishly. Travel is completely impossible.

Suitengu's Embrace

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 5 (Thunder)
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

The Fortune of the Sea is wrathful, and requires little prompting by his loyal adherents to smite another. By invoking the Water kami, you can fill a target's lungs with seawater, crippling and potentially killing them. If the spell is cast successfully, the target can take no actions other than to attempt to resist the spell. For all intents and purposes, the target is reduced to the Down Wound Level in terms of his ability to take actions. Each round he must make a Stamina Roll (TN 15) to resist. If the target makes three total successes, he spends one additional round vomiting up seawater, and then is fully recovered. However, if the target suffers two consecutive failures, he has fallen unconscious and will die within 1 minute unless some form of magical or medical intervention is made.

Although means of combating drowning are not well known in Rokugan, it is possible to save an individual incapacitated by this spell by making a successful Medicine / Intelligence roll at TN 50.

Water Spells, Mastery Level 6

Peace of the Kami

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 6
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None

The ultimate benevolence of the Water Dragon is without measure. The target is instantly cured of all diseases, his system purged of any and all poisons, and all Wounds are completely healed.

Rise, Water

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 6
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One summoned spirit
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** None

The sea itself will take form to defend you. The ultimate actualization of the Summon spell, this spell summons a massive kami of pure water to serve you. It takes the form of a vaguely humanoid shape, roughly ten feet in height, with an outline that constantly shifts and changes due to its fluid construction. The kami may move up to 15' x your Water per round, and saturates the ground in a 20' radius around it, ensuring that all terrain in that area is at least Moderate Terrain (unless it was already Difficult). The manifest kami is treated as if it has all Physical Traits equal to your Water Ring, and attacks with a Jiujutsu Skill Rank equal to half your Water Rank. Damage from these attacks has a DR equal to your Water Ring. For purposes of taking damage, the spirit is considered to have Wounds as though it were a human with Earth equal to your Water Ring, but suffers no Wound penalties. It is Invulnerable (see the creature rules in the *Book of Void* for details of this ability). If it is successfully reduced to zero Wounds, it is dispelled.

Water's Sweet Clarity

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 6 (Divination)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Target body of water
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** None

The greatest form of augury is one that speaks directly and allows others to witness it. By focusing your energy on a still body of water, you can invoke powerful visions of the future based upon your questions. You may ask one question, and the waters will reveal the answer. The answer takes the form of three separate images, which may be connected in any number of ways, including events occurring over time, or perhaps three facets of a single event. Unlike other forms of augury, others may witness these visions as well.

Void Spells, Mastery Level 1

Boundless Sight

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1
- **Range:** 50 miles
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 4 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5 miles)

The most essential lesson of the ishiken is that all is linked through the Void, and through the Void all can be perceived. By focusing your energy, you can look through the veil and see another location as if you were standing there. This location must be familiar to you, and you must have been there at least once before. For the duration of the spell, you can see and hear all that transpires in the other location, but you may not be detected and you may not interact with things or individuals there in any way. During this spell, your body is in a trance-like state that leaves you highly vulnerable to attack (your Armor TN is reduced to 5).

Drawing the Void

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Special (+1 Void Point gained per three Raises)

The ability to reach into the Void itself and gain strength from it is a vital lesson in the training of all ishiken. Upon completion of this spell, you gain a number of additional Void Points equal to your School Rank plus one. If these Void Points take you above the number you may normally possess, then you lose one of the extra Void Points every Round that you do not spend one.

Flow through the Void

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Up to one cubic foot of pure elemental matter
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Area (+1 cubic foot)

In the Void, all things are equal, all one and none. By tapping into this connection, you may transform a small amount of pure elemental matter – water, fire, air, or earth in the form of dirt or soil – into any one other element.



See Through Lies

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** Target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5'), Special (one additional Advantage/Disadvantage per Raise)

The patterns that comprise all things in the Void exist in individuals as well, and with training, ishiken can recognize them. You learn the highest point Advantage or highest point Disadvantage (your choice) possessed by the target of this spell.

Sense Void

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** 25' radius around the caster
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius)

Life is evident in the Void like the stars in the night sky. This spell causes you to enter a trance during which you become aware of the existence and location of all living creatures within the radius of the spell. Although you are aware of their location, you cannot see them or any details. You would know if there were three humans waiting outside the castle wall, for instance, but you would not recognize them other than to know that they were present. This also gives you information regarding non-sentient, natural living creatures. Spirits and Shadowlands creatures are recognizable as a gap in your awareness, although this spell cannot recognize Tainted humans as anything other than humans.

Touch the Emptiness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

The sensation of experiencing the Void firsthand can be extremely disturbing for those unaccustomed to it. The target of this spell suffers 1k1 damage and is Dazed.

The Void's Caress

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

Although beginning students of ishiken-do cannot affect the pattern of the Void, they can make very short-term alterations to it. You may negate any one Mental or Spiritual Disadvantage the target of this spell possesses, up to a maximum of 5 points in value. The Shadowlands Taint may not be removed via this spell, although the mental disorders that can be caused by it can be temporarily alleviated.

Witness the Untold

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 1 (Divination)
- **Range:** 15'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

It is possible to gain fleeting glimpses of things that have not yet happened by peering through the Void. If you are delaying your action, you may interrupt the target of this spell after he has declared his action but before he has taken his action when his Turn comes up. This may be done during each Round for the duration of the spell. (Normally someone delaying their Action cannot interrupt the Action of another participant.)

Void Spells, Mastery Level 2

Altering the Course

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 2
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

Ishiken have a much greater capacity to draw upon the Void than others, and may do it consciously rather than unconsciously. You may spend multiple Void Points on any roll made within the duration of this spell. It still must be a roll on which the expenditure of Void Points is allowable (no damage rolls may be augmented via this spell, for example).

Drink of Your Essence

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 2
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

As an ishiken grows more powerful, he can gain more information from examining an individual's pattern within the Void. You learn a great deal of information about the target of this spell, including his individual Rings (but not Traits), his current Wound penalties, and a one word summation of his present mood ("hostile," "sorrowful," "confused," etc.).

The Empty Voice

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 2
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** None

Drawing on the essence of everything allows an ishiken to invoke the kami with far greater ease than normal. For the duration of this spell, you may cast spells of other elements without speaking your prayers aloud. This applies only to spells of equal or lower Mastery Level (any spell of Mastery Level 1 or 2).

False Whispers

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 2
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** None

Mingling the Void of two beings, even for just a moment, can lead to one of the two being manipulated if he is not prepared for it. The target of this spell will repeat the next sentence you say, verbatim, without any foreknowledge of what he is doing. They speak the words in their own normal voice, regardless of how you speak it. This effect will not allow others to cast spells, even if you have them recite a portion of a spell. This spell only allows the effect once, the first time you speak a single sentence during the duration of the spell.

Reach Through the Void

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 2
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** Target object, up to five pounds in weight
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Area (+1 pound per two Raises), Range (+5')

All things, both living and unliving, exist within the Void, and can be touched through it. You can manipulate items through the Void, moving them without touching them. These items are small, usually only up to only five pounds, although a powerful shugenja can Raise enough to move somewhat heavier items.

Severed from the Stream

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 2
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round), Range (+5')

Talented ishiken can rob others of their ability to tap into the Void, if only temporarily. If this spell is successful, the target must succeed at a Contested Void Roll against you before they are able to spend any Void Points. This roll does not count as an action for the target, and they must succeed at only one Contested Roll per turn, even if they are spending multiple Void Points per turn as a result of a Technique or other ability.

Void Spells, Mastery Level 3

Echoes in the Void

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

Thoughts are as whispers in the Void, if one knows how to listen. As long as this spell is in effect and you maintain concentration on one target within the area of effect, you can hear what that person is thinking. How this manifests may vary depending upon the individual. Stalwart warriors may have short, curt statements summarizing their thoughts, while artisans may think in terms of poetry.

Kharmic Intent

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute), Range (+5')

Links forged of the Void allow the passage of enormous energy, the substance of the universe itself, between those who share it. You may target any one willing individual with this spell. All remaining Void Points either of you possess are placed in a single pool, which either of you may draw upon as normal. Essentially, this spell allows two individuals to share Void Points back and forth as they see fit. This also allows ishiken to share the additional Void Points they gain from other Void spells. At the end of the spell's Duration, all remaining Void Points are divided between the participants, up to their normal maximum number.

Moment of Clarity

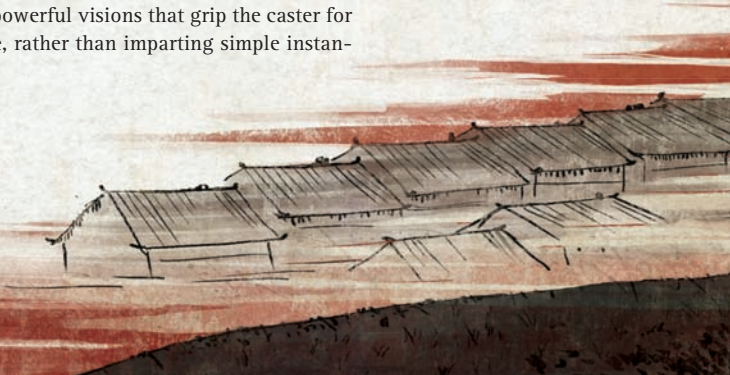
- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 2 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round)

The entirety of human achievement is reflected in the Void. You may select any one Skill. You gain temporary ranks in this Skill equal to your Void Ring. If you already posses ranks in this Skill, the new level of Skill replaces your old one; the two are not cumulative.

Read the Essence

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3 (Divination)
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** One target object
- **Duration:** Instantaneous (but see below)
- **Raises:** None

Even objects have resonance, and retain some memory of those who hold them, and events that take place involving them. By meditating upon an object, you can gain a vision of the individual who held it last, or of a major event that might have involved it in some manner. Using this spell on a calligraphy brush, for example, might show the last person who used it to write a letter. Using it on a weapon might instead show the last death it was used to inflict. The GM has ultimate authority over what vision the spell imparts. Extremely important objects, such as ancestral weapons or standards, may have powerful visions that grip the caster for longer periods of time, rather than imparting simple instantaneous visions.



Void Release

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5')

Most are ignorant of the Void coursing within them, and do not realize that it can be stolen away. You must make a Contested Void Roll against the target of this spell. If successful, the target loses one Void Point, and you gain one Void Point. An additional point is exchanged for every increment of 5 by which you exceed the target's roll. These temporary Void Points may take you above the maximum number of Void Points you may have, but they expire within one hour if not used. This spell cannot be used on a creature who does not have Void Points, or which has some other mechanical effect that substitutes for Void (such as Naga Akasha or Ratling Name).

Void Spells, Mastery Level 4

Balance of Elements

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual (may be the caster)
- **Duration:** 5 rounds / 5 minutes (see below)
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round / +1 minute, see below), Special (+1k1 Wounds per two Raises)

Flaws in the great pattern of the Void can be overcome, no matter how severe. You may negate all Disadvantages of the target for the duration of the spell. Negative effects inflicted from spells (such as TN penalties, Armor TN reduction, or Trait/Ring reduction) are negated as well, as long as the Mastery Level of the spell causing the penalty is 3 or less. If used during the taxing environment of combat, the duration of this spell is extremely limited (5 rounds). In non-combat situations, however, the effects of the spell can last significantly longer (5 minutes). This temporary replenishing of the target's pattern also heals 3k3 Wounds.

Draw Closed the Veil

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target spirit
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5'), Targets (+1 spirit per Raise)

The emptiness that is the Void is part and parcel of what separates the various spirit realms from one another, and it is possible to strengthen it in certain areas. You may target any one spirit not native to the mortal realm of Ningen-do. That spirit is banished to its home realm for a minimum amount of time equal to your Void Ring in months. Spirits that possess a physical body in the mortal realm, such as oni or certain shapeshifter spirits, require a Contested Willpower Roll for this spell to affect them. Spirits that are significantly more powerful than you are (GM's discretion) may prove immune to the effects of this spell.

Fill with Emptiness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (may be increased to 10' with three Raises)

Strengthening an individual's connection to the Void can replenish their reserves of inner energy. The target of this spell regains all lost Void Points, up to their normal maximum number.

Void Strike

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+5'), Special (+1k0 damage per two Raises)

The mortal shell can endure only so much direct contact with the Void; too much, and the flesh can be destroyed by the exposure. This spell inflicts damage with a DR equal to your Void Ring.

Void Spells, Mastery Level 5

Divide the Soul

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 5
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)



The true mysteries of the Void are beyond the comprehension of non-ishiken. Using this spell, you may divide your soul across the Void, and exist in two places in the mortal realm simultaneously. The second "you" appears anywhere you might wish within your sight when you cast the spell. You have full knowledge of all that happens in both locations, and may take any normal actions in either place (both manifestations may take actions simultaneously as if they were two separate individuals). Only one manifestation may make a Spell Casting Roll per round. Any Wounds suffered by either manifestation are combined when the spell ends, and if either of your selves dies, both die.

Reforge

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 5
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One object
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** None

All is one and one is all. You may take any single object and transform it into any other object of comparable size. This will only work on an object that is uniform in its construction, rather than assembled from multiple pieces. This spell will not affect living material. Although the effect of this spell is permanent, it can be reversed by a second casting on the same object, even by a different ishiken.

Unbound Essence

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 5
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour), Range (+5')

Tampering with the pattern of another being's Void can result in catastrophic changes to their abilities. The target's Rings are reordered at random, along with their Traits. For instance, a target might exchange his Air Ring for his Fire Ring, and his Water Ring for his Earth Ring for the duration of this spell. Mental and Physical Traits exchange their values if those values are greater than the Ring. In the above example, if your target has Air 3 and Reflexes 4, he would instead have Fire 3 and Agility 4, with his values for those Traits reassigned to his Air and Reflexes.

Void Spells, Mastery Level 6

Ring of the Void

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 6
- **Range:** Personal
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Concentration (requires one hour to cast)
- **Raises:** Duration (-5 minutes to casting time)

Rare and extraordinarily powerful, even by shugenja standards, this prayer calls on the unique favor of the dragon whose domain the ishiken tread: the Void Dragon. Unlike most spells, this is not something that is taught by others, but rather is simply learned through insight by those capable of casting it (and as such it has no scroll associated with it). This spell, more of a meditation ritual, actually allows you to commune with the Void Dragon itself, a feat few mortals have ever managed to perform successfully. During your brief moments of contact with this divine entity, you may ask it questions as you see fit. The Void Dragon knows all that can be known, although it is under no particular compulsion to answer you directly, or even at all. Respect must be maintained at all times, for those who have attempted this feat in the past and failed to pay homage to their patron have ceased to exist altogether.

Rise from the Ashes

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 6
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target individual
- **Duration:** Instantaneous (requires one hour to cast)
- **Raises:** Special (+1 hour of regression per Raise)

Everything that exists has a pattern in the Void, a thread woven in the tapestry that is existence. By recalling the memory of that pattern, you can reverse recent effects that have happened to a living creature. When you cast this spell on an individual, you are essentially restoring their existence within the Void in accordance with their previous self. Upon completion of the spell, the person is immediately restored to the state they were in eight hours prior to when the spell was begun. Any injuries suffered during this time, the effects of diseases or poisons, even the acquisition of supernatural conditions such as the Shadowlands Taint or corruption by the Lying Darkness, can be undone in this manner. Upon the completion of this spell, you lose all Void Points, and you may not regain Void Points for a period of three days, after which they will begin to recover at one Void Point per day until you have your maximum normal amount again.

This spell cannot be used to restore someone who has died.

Unmake the World

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 6
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature, individual, or object
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+10')

The most powerful and terrifying ability of those who command the Void is the ability to destroy the bonds that exist between the five elements. By eradicating the bonds between existing elements, you can effectively cause one object or creature to cease to exist. When you cast this spell on a living creature, you must succeed at a Contested Roll using your Void against the target's Earth. If you are successful, they are instantly killed, and their remains disappear into the Void. Success is automatic against a non-magical object, but attempting to destroy an awakened object, such as a nemuranai, may have dire ramifications at the GM's discretion (the kami contained within an awakened object frequently respond very poorly to this manner of attack, for instance).

Equipment

All that a samurai requires to fulfill his duties is given to him by his lord, from the weapons he carries, to the armor that protects him, to the traveling pack that he carries as he moves throughout the Empire. Samurai are also given a stipend by their lord, however, and as such they have the money necessary to purchase additional items if they so desire. Any samurai purchasing additional weapons or armor must do so discreetly, however, since it is possible that some lords will take this as a statement that they have failed to equip their vassals properly. Most recognize that samurai are warriors, however, and are content to look the other way as their servants purchase additional weapons with which to enact their will.

Armor

The design of armor varies considerably from Clan to Clan, and even varies from type to type within Clans. For the most part, however, Rokugani armor is comprised of lacquered plates of wood, ceramic, and metal. These suits are assembled with the intention of deflecting incoming weapon blows rather than attempting to stop them outright. Even the lowest quality katana can cut through wood without much difficulty, but purely metal armor is simply too cumbersome and restrictive to be worn for any length of time.

Armor has two primary benefits to those who wear it. First, it increases the Armor TN of the individual wearing it, making them more difficult to hit with attacks. Second, it possesses a quality called Reduction. Reduction decreases the amount of any damage roll made against the person wearing the armor by the amount listed in the description. So an individual wearing Light Armor (which has Reduction 3) who suffers 12 Wounds from an attack would instead only take 9 Wounds. This applies to all damage from attacks unless otherwise specified.

Ashigaru Armor

Much less expensive to produce than either light or heavy samurai armor, ashigaru armor is also lighter, less restrictive, and less protective than traditional light and heavy armor. It consists of plates that protect the head, torso, and upper legs. It is not unheard of for scouts among the samurai caste to wear ashigaru armor in lieu of traditional samurai armor to afford them greater mobility in the execution of their duties. Ronin also wear it because of its affordability.

- **Bonus to Armor TN:** +3
- **Reduction:** 1
- **Price:** 5 koku

Light Armor

Far and away the most common armor worn by samurai in the armies of the Great Clans, light armor is the standard by which other armor is measured. The overlapping plates protect primarily the torso, head, upper arms and upper legs, but the lower arms and legs are left largely uncovered in order to prevent excessive loss of mobility or range of movement. Light armor is generally favored by scouts and infantry, particularly infantry that needs to move quickly on the battlefield.

- **Bonus to Armor TN:** +5
- **Reduction:** 3
- **Special Rules:** Wearing light armor increases the TN of all Athletics and Stealth rolls by 5.
- **Price:** 25 koku

Heavy Armor

While light armor is frequently worn by scouts or rapid infantry, heavy armor is preferred by troops on the front lines or those who are expected to be in the thickest part of the fighting. Heavy armor protects the entire body, including the arms, legs, hands, feet, and face, which is protected by a full helm called a kabuto. While the wearer's mobility is significantly impacted, many consider the increased protection well worth the effort.

- **Bonus to Armor TN:** +10
- **Reduction:** 5
- **Special Rules:** Wearing heavy armor increases the TN of all Skill Rolls using Agility or Reflexes by 5.
- **Price:** 40 koku

Riding Armor

A modified version of light armor, riding armor is designed to be worn by soldiers on horseback, and the plates have been reoriented in order to deflect blows from troops on foot. This customization dramatically increases the effectiveness of the armor, but only so long as the wearer is on horseback.

- **Bonus to Armor TN:** +4, +12 while on horseback
- **Reduction:** 4
- **Special Rules:** Riding armor is considered heavy armor for the purposes of mechanical effects that specify armor type, including Techniques, Advantages, etc. Wearing riding armor increases the TN of all Agility and Reflexes rolls by +5 unless the wearer is on horseback.
- **Price:** 55 koku

Weapons

Weapons are in many ways the defining element of a samurai. In particular, the katana represents the soul of a samurai, and the wakizashi represents his honor. While the daisho, a matched pair of a katana and a wakizashi, is by far the most important and common weapon among samurai, there are a multitude of other options available, all of which have their advocates among the ranks of the Great Clans.

Each weapon entry in this section includes a notation called DR. This is shorthand for "damage rating," and indicates the amount of damage rolled when using the weapon in question. For melee weapons, a character using a weapon adds his Strength to the number of rolled dice in the DR. For a ranged weapon, the bow's Strength is added to the number of rolled dice for an arrow's DR.

Weapons have a size: small, medium, or large. Although the categories have no drawbacks or benefits in and of themselves, they are a matter of consideration for other mechani-

cal effects. Readying a large weapon takes longer than readying a small weapon, for example, and it is easier to conceal a small weapon, but of course large weapons tend to inflict more damage.

Arrows

There are a variety of different arrows used by archers in Rokugan, all with a heavily specialized purpose, and all produced relatively inexpensively. The DR of an individual arrow is added to the Strength of the bow used to fire it to determine the total amount of dice used for the damage roll.

- **Armor Piercing:** These arrows replace the broader head of the Willow Leaf with a narrow spike intended to punch through armored plates. They are effective in penetrating armor, but sacrifice some of the damage inflicted.
- **Flesh Cutter:** These arrows have broader, sometimes barbed, heads intended to inflict tremendous damage on unarmored targets. They are almost useless against armored targets and cannot be fired as far as a standard Willow Leaf arrow, but against unarmored targets they are devastatingly effective.
- **Humming Bulb:** These arrows have a blunt, hollow tip that produces a loud whistling sound when fired. They are used for signaling or sounding alarms, and generally do little damage.
- **Rope Cutter:** Rope Cutters have broad, crescent shaped heads intended to cut rope or other similar items, such as banner strings and the like.
- **Willow Leaf (Ya):** The willow leaf or *ya* arrow is the standard arrow used by archers throughout the Empire. This is the arrow used to teach samurai archery beginning in their childhood, and the type used by the greatest archers in the land. Three quarters of all arrows carried by a typical archer are Willow Leaf arrows.

The Economy of Rokugan

As discussed in the Book of Air, the basic unit of currency in Rokugan is the koku. One koku was originally intended to be the value assigned to the amount of rice necessary to feed one man for an entire year. A koku was broken down further into five bushels, represented by a small silver coin called a bu, and each bu was broken down into ten copper pennies called zeni.

Over the centuries, however, the development of Rokugan's economy has caused the monetary koku to become somewhat devalued. By the year 1170, for example, it would require approximately twelve koku to purchase rice sufficient to feed one man for a year. The prices of weapons and armor reflect this.

Table 3.1: Arrow Types

Arrow Type	DR	Cost	Special Rules
Armor Piercing	1k1	2 bu	Ignores the Armor TN bonus provided by armor
Flesh Cutter	2k3	5 bu	Double the Armor TN bonus provided by armor; ½ range
Humming Bulb	0k1	5 bu	Makes a loud whistling sound
Rope Cutter	1k1	3 bu	2 Free Raises for Called Shots against inanimate objects; ½ range
Willow Leaf	2k2	1 bu	None

Bows

Although they do not have the prestige associated with them that the daisho has, bows are still considered a principal weapon for samurai. They are far less expensive to produce, for one thing, and place the wielder at less risk when facing one's enemies. Bows are traditionally carried unstrung to avoid stretching or breaking the bowstring. A skilled archer has been trained to string a bow extremely quickly, however, and is rarely at a disadvantage unless ambushed.

A bow adds its strength rating to the first number of the DR of the arrow being fired. For example, a character wielding a yumi (Strength 3) firing a Willow Leaf arrow (DR 2k2) would roll a total of 5k2 for damage. However, a character whose Strength is less than that of the bow he is wielding uses his Strength instead of the bow's Strength.

All bows have a range listed. This is the maximum possible range that an arrow can be fired using this bow without incur-

Keywords

Some weapons have special qualities that affect how they are used, or introduce ramifications concerning their use. The most common keywords are:

- Peasant: Weapons with this keyword are adapted from peasant tools or other implements. Using these weapons is usually considered the equivalent of using a Low Skill, and thus typically incurs a loss of Honor for each skirmish in which they are wielded against samurai opponents.
- Samurai: Weapons with this keyword are exclusively the province of the samurai caste. Anyone else in possession of one of these weapons is considered a criminal and subject to immediate execution.
- Size: Identifies whether a weapon is large, medium, or small.

Thrown Weapons

While bows are the most common ranged weapon, they are by no means the only ones employed by samurai. Numerous other weapons can be used at range, although generally their range is significantly less than that of a bow. Knives and wakizashi can be thrown using the Athletics Skill. Various spears can be thrown using the Spears Skill, and the Ninjutsu Skill allows a character to throw shuriken and tsubute as ranged weapons. Unless otherwise specified, thrown weapons add the wielder's Strength to the weapon's DR when determining damage, just as melee weapons do.



ring penalties. A bow can fire an arrow an additional distance up to twice listed range, but suffers a -1k0 penalty to the attack roll for every extra 50' beyond the listed range. Bows fired against opponents currently in melee range with the archer also incur a penalty of -10 to the total of the attack roll.

Dai-kyu

Designed to be fired from horseback, the dai-kyu is composed of multiple pieces of wood, horn, or sinew bound together with glue. These are easily the most powerful of the standard bows used by armed forces in Rokugan, and are considered nearly as valuable by an archer as his katana.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **Strength:** 4 (Minimum Strength 3 required to wield)
- **Range:** 500'
- **Special Rules:** Increase the TN of all attack rolls by +10 if used on foot.
- **Price:** 25 koku

Han-kyu

Smaller than the yumi and generally easier to use and carry, the han-kyu is a popular bow for use by traveling magistrates or scouts who depend upon speed and stealth. A han-kyu is typically crafted from a single piece of wood or horn.

- **Keywords:** Small
- **Strength:** 1
- **Range:** 100'
- **Special Rules:** Increase the TN of all attack rolls by +10 if used from horseback.
- **Price:** 6 koku

Yumi

This is the basic bow carried by infantry archers, and by samurai who travel independently of armies or other large groups. It is a powerful bow, although not quite as powerful as the dai-kyu, but its curvature makes it inconvenient to use on horseback.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **Strength:** 3
- **Range:** 250'
- **Special Rules:** Increase the TN of all attack rolls by +10 if used from horseback.
- **Price:** 20 koku

Chain Weapons

Chain weapons are extremely uncommon, due to the sheer difficulty of their use. There are countless variants of these weapons, but all are comprised of one or two weapons attached by a length of chain. Some are a weapon linked to a weight, while others may have two weapons. They are traditionally wielded by twirling one or both ends and swinging them at one's opponent, either striking them outright or entangling them so that they can be struck with the weapon at the other end.

Kusarigama

The most common chain weapon, the kusarigama is particularly popular with samurai of the Mantis Clan. It is essentially a kama (see Knives) attached at the base of the handle to a length of chain roughly five to six feet long. The other end of the chain is attached to a weight, typically a metal cylinder or sphere.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 0k2 (kama end), 0k1 (weighted end)
- **Price:** 5 koku

Kyoketsu-shogi

The kyoketsu-shogi is more of a tool than a weapon, but can be used to attack an opponent without great difficulty. Popular among ninja and other criminals, this weapon is a metal grappling hook attached to length of chain or, more frequently, a silken rope. The other end of the rope is weighted to hold it steady while someone climbs the rope to whatever target the grappling hook has been secured to.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 0k1
- **Special Rules:** Double an opponent's bonus to Armor TN from armor.
- **Price:** 9 bu

Manrikikusari

This inexpensive weapon is a length of chain with weights on both ends. Traditionally these have been small to medium sized cylindrical weights, although in the Crab lands it has recently become more popular to use large spherical weights instead.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 1k1
- **Price:** 3 koku

Heavy Weapons

The term heavy weapons applies to a number of different weapons that can be grouped together primarily because of their size and increased damage capacity. Heavy weapons require two hands to wield effectively.

Dai Tsuchi

A massive two-handed war hammer popular in the Crab Clan, the dai tsuchi is one of the more effective tools the samurai of Rokugan have against the large, well-armored creatures of the Shadowlands that occasionally threaten the Empire. In trained hands, the dai tsuchi focuses its force in a very small area and can shatter armor or the thick hide of demons without great difficulty.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 5k2
- **Price:** 15 koku

Masakari

The masakari is actually a one-handed ax, a variant of the axes used by woodsmen and lumber harvesters throughout the Empire. It is significantly smaller than the other heavy weapons, but is wielded in much the same manner, hence its inclusion in this category.

- **Keywords:** Medium
- **DR:** 2k3
- **Price:** 8 koku

Ono

The ono is a large two-handed ax that can easily be used to fell trees or to sever limbs. The sheer force that can be channeled by an overhand strike into the thin edge of an axe blade results in perhaps the most devastating personal weapon that a trained warrior can wield.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 0k4
- **Price:** 20 koku

Tetsubo

The tetsubo has been the signature weapon of many great Crab Clan heroes, particularly during the Clan War, and as such has become quite a symbol for many young aspiring Hida warriors. A tetsubo is essentially a metal club with steel (or in rare cases jade) studs embedded along its length. This simple design is unparalleled for shattering armor and other hardened targets.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 3k3
- **Price:** 20 koku

Knives

Knives are small, easily concealed blades that are popular among dishonorable individuals because they can be hidden and taken into places where one is not supposed to have a weapon. More honorable individuals like to keep them on hand for mundane tasks that would bring dishonor to a katana or wakizashi. Knives can be thrown as ranged weapons up to twenty feet.

Aiguchi & Tanto

The aiguchi and tanto are both very simple, basic knives with few differences save that the aiguchi possesses a hilt guard and the tanto does not. Many samurai carry a tanto for grooming purposes.

- **Keywords:** Small
- **DR:** 1k1
- **Price:** 1 koku

Jitte & Sai

The jitte and sai are weapons that were adapted from farming implements during the early days of the Empire, and which have slowly gained acceptance with the samurai caste since that time. The jitte in particular is an accepted symbol of a magisterial position. Both are steel cylinders roughly a foot long that possess a short handle and a blunt tip. Both possess metal prongs that originate from the divide between the handle and the blade; the jitte has one prong while the sai has two symmetrical prongs. The jitte and sai have gradually gained acceptance among samurai primarily because they are ideal weapons to use for disarming someone without inflicting any significant damage.

- **Keywords:** Small
- **DR:** 1k1
- **Price:** 5 bu

Kama

The kama was improvised from a sickle of sorts, and the vast majority of kama in the Empire are still being used in the fields by farmers to harvest crops. However, the kama has also become the signature weapon of a great many Mantis samurai, particularly among the Yoritomo family, so it is generally regarded as a weapon even if it is perfectly acceptable for peasants to possess them.

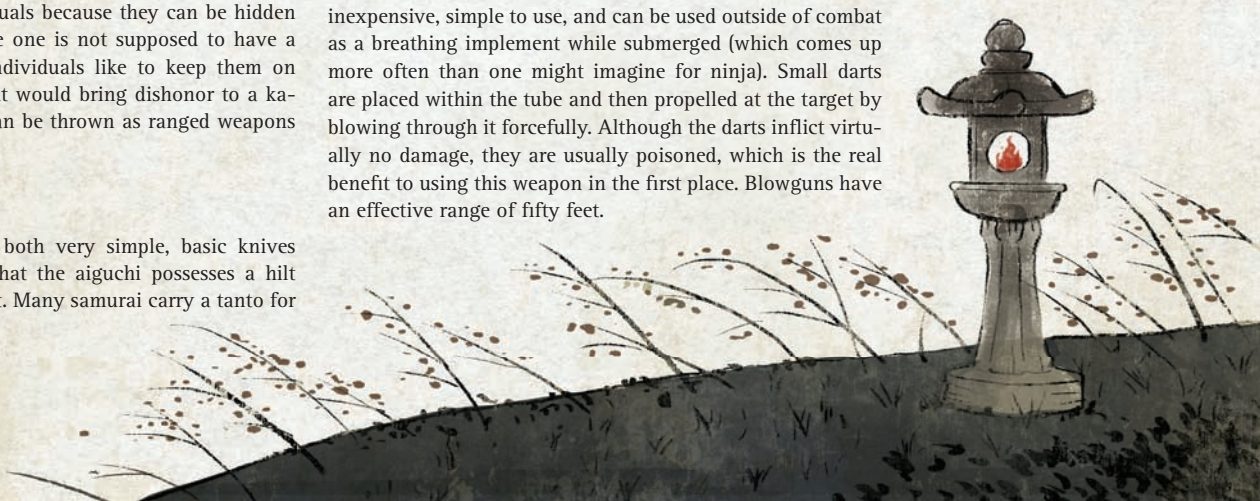
- **Keywords:** Peasant, Small
- **DR:** 0k2
- **Price:** 5 bu

Ninjutsu Weapons

No honorable samurai would ever consider utilizing so disgusting a weapon as those grouped together as ninja weapons. These are filthy, reprehensible tools utilized by honorless cowards who lack the courage and ability to face their foes with a sword in hand. Still, there are definite advantages to such weapons, although most of that comes with extensive training more so than from the weapons themselves. Using a Ninjutsu weapon, like a weapon with the Peasant descriptor, is considered a Low Skill.

Blowgun

The blowgun is a popular weapon among ninja because it is inexpensive, simple to use, and can be used outside of combat as a breathing implement while submerged (which comes up more often than one might imagine for ninja). Small darts are placed within the tube and then propelled at the target by blowing through it forcefully. Although the darts inflict virtually no damage, they are usually poisoned, which is the real benefit to using this weapon in the first place. Blowguns have an effective range of fifty feet.



- **Keywords:** Medium
- **DR:** 1 Wound
- **Special Rules:** Triple an opponent's Armor TN bonus from armor. The damage increase from the Ninjutsu Skill increases the blowgun's damage to 1k1 at Rank 3 and 2k1 at Rank 7. Reloading a blowgun is a Free Action.
- **Price:** 8 zeni

Shuriken

The shuriken is perhaps the definitive tool for ninja, and one that immediately identifies them as a member of their profession. A shuriken is a small metal disk with sharpened edges or flat spikes that protrude out from the center. They are cheaply made, easily concealed or disguised, disposable, and simple to produce in large numbers. Shuriken can be and often are coated with poison. Because of their size, shuriken do not add the wielder's Strength to their DR when used as ranged weapons, and their damage dice do not explode.

- **Keywords:** Small
- **DR:** 1k1
- **Special Rules:** Shuriken may be thrown up to twenty-five feet.
- **Price:** 2 bu

Tsubute

The opposite of shuriken in many ways, tsubute are small, blunt, disc-shaped stones that have been ground down deliberately to be used as thrown weapons. Ninja skilled in the use of the tsubute can easily improvise a substitute if the weapon is not available; any round stone will suffice. Tsubute have very little value as offensive weapons and are used more as a tool for distraction and harassment. Because of their small size, tsubute do not add the wielder's Strength to their DR when used as ranged weapons, and their damage dice do not explode.

- **Keywords:** Small
- **DR:** 1k1
- **Special Rules:** Tsubute may be thrown up to thirty feet.
- **Price:** 1 bu

Weapon Reach

Generally speaking, the matter of whether or not a given weapon can reach an opponent in different combat situations is left up to the GM. For those groups that prefer a more tactical approach, however, we suggest the following rule of thumb with regards to a weapon's reach: small weapons can reach 1 foot, medium and larger weapons 4 feet, and spears and polearms 6 feet.

Polearms

Polearms and their sister weapons, spears, are very similar in many regards. Both are long weapons that can be used to keep an opponent at a distance or to attack opponents on horseback from foot. They have been separated into two groups to prevent any one Weapon Skill from granting proficiency over too wide a range of weapons.

Bisento

A bisento is a wooden shaft with a heavy sword blade at the end. The blade is heavier than that of a katana or nagamaki, and the bisento can be a dangerously top-heavy weapon in the hands of someone not trained in its use. It is a popular weapon among certain sects of sohei, or warrior monks, but beyond that it is not commonly seen.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 3k3
- **Price:** 12 koku

Nagamaki

The nagamaki is basically a sword blade (although not as well-made as that of the katana) attached to a short wooden pole. It is designed to be a lighter weapon, wielded in one hand, and combines the virtues of the sword with the leverage of a hafted weapon.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 2k3
- **Price:** 8 koku

Naginata

The naginata is the most respected hafted weapon used in Rokugan, and is particularly popular among samurai-ko and the warriors of the Phoenix Clan. The naginata is similar to the bisento in that it is a sword blade attached to the end of a spear shaft. It is lighter than the bisento, and longer than the nagamaki.

- **Keywords:** Large, Samurai
- **DR:** 3k2
- **Price:** 10 koku

Sasumata

The sasumata is also known as the "man catcher" due to its original purpose, which was to detain without causing any significant damage. The weapon is a four-foot wooden shaft with a barbed crescent blade at the end. This end was used to trap an opponent against the ground or a wall without inflicting damage, assuming the target does not struggle. Magistrates and their deputies use the sasumata to detain drunken or disorderly samurai.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 0k2
- **Special Rules:** The sasumata may be used to initiate and maintain a grapple.
- **Price:** 6 koku

Sodegarami

While the sasumata is meant to capture via pinning, the sodegarami is meant to detain by entangling the garments of a target. The four-foot wooden shaft has a t-shaped metal head covered in hooks and barbs, making it easy to snag an opponent's clothing and secure it.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 1k1
- **Special Rules:** The sodegarami may be used to initiate and maintain a grapple.
- **Price:** 6 koku

Spears

Spears are similar in almost every respect to polearms, and can generally be described as a steel weapon mounted on a long wooden pole. Several kinds of spears can be used as thrown weapons, and as thrown weapons the wielder adds his Strength to the DR when determining damage in the same manner as melee weapons.

Kumade

Even the Mantis Clan has not truly embraced the use of the kumade as a weapon. It is essentially a rake, consisting of a wooden handle with a sharpened metal tip at one end and a series of metal hooks at the other. The hooked end is used to pull stumps or weeds from the ground, while the spear-like end is used to prod or puncture objects in the way and then move them aside to be collected later. The generally flimsy construction of the kumade is the principal reason it has not been adopted for use as a weapon by the Yoritomo family.

- **Keywords:** Large, Peasant
- **DR:** 1k1
- **Special Rules:** If a kumade inflicts more than 25 Wounds in a single attack, it breaks.
- **Price:** 3 bu

Mai Chong

The mai chong is a curious and unique weapon, developed and used almost exclusively by the samurai of the Boar Clan deep in the Twilight Mountains. A handful of travelers who have visited the Boar lands took to the weapon, and passed the teachings regarding its use on to their children or students. While it is not unheard of to find a samurai wielding the mai chong outside the Boar province, it is extremely rare. The mai chong is an eight foot wooden shaft with a foot long metal tip. The tip has three points, one forward-facing and two at right angles to the first. There are two metal spikes facing outward from the forward point as well, allowing both slashing attacks as well as thrusting.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 0k3
- **Special Rules:** The mai chong can be thrown accurately up to 25'.
- **Price:** 20 koku

Lance

The lance is a weapon adapted from gaijin cultures, and is virtually never seen outside the ranks of Unicorn or Ox samurai. The lance is used only from horseback, where it is braced under the rider's shoulder with the tip pointing outward. The horse is then spurred to a gallop and the sharpened tip of the long, wooden shaft is levied against a target. The effects can be devastating, although most lances shatter upon impact. The lance is very poorly designed for anything other than a charging attack, and is virtually useless under any other combat circumstances.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 3k4
- **Special Rules:** The listed DR only applies if the lance is used from horseback and used to make an attack directly following a Move Action. Under any other circumstances, it possesses DR 1k2. Using the lance in melee combat without a Move Action increases the TN of all attack rolls by +5 on horseback and +10 on foot. A lance shatters if it inflicts more than 30 Wounds in one attack.
- **Price:** 20 koku

Nage-yari

The nage-yari is essentially a javelin, a shorter but slightly heavier version of the yari. It is roughly 3 to 4 feet in length with a metal tip, and can be used effectively in melee combat or thrown short distances.

- **Keywords:** Medium
- **DR:** 1k2
- **Special Rules:** The nage-yari may be thrown accurately up to 50'.
- **Price:** 3 koku

Yari

The yari is a basic spear, six to eight feet in length. It is used two handed when wielded on foot, and one handed when on horseback. Yari are typically given to ashigaru legions and anti-cavalry forces. Like the nage-yari, it can be thrown short distances with limited accuracy.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 2k2
- **Special Rules:** The yari can be thrown a maximum range of 30', and has DR 1k2 when thrown.
- **Price:** 5 koku

Staves

Staves are simple to make and easy to wield. They are popular among the peasant castes because they are not generally regarded as weapons and because they are also popular among the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, whom the peasants greatly revere and admire. Because they are so light and blunt, staves are spectacularly ineffective against most armored targets. Double the Armor TN bonus conferred by an opponent's armor when they are being attacked using a staff or staves.

Bo

The simplest and most common weapon in the Empire, the bo is a simple wooden staff 5 to 6 feet in length. It is used as a walking staff by travelers and monks, and doubles as a weapon for those bold enough to use it. Like most staves, the bo has almost no power to defeat armor.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 1k2
- **Price:** 2 bu

Jo

The jo is essentially half of a bo, and is a short staff roughly 3 feet in length. They are often used in pairs to deliver a rapid series of concussive strikes.

- **Keywords:** Medium
- **DR:** 0k2
- **Price:** 1 bu

Machi-kanshisha

This extremely unconventional weapon is, more or less, a metal smoking pipe. It is an effective weapon because of its size and shape, which is a hollow metal tube roughly three feet in length. In addition to its use as a smoking implement, it can also be used to stun an opponent via a sharp blow to the head. The machi-kanshisha pipe is seen almost exclusively in the hands of the Kaeru family that governs the City of the Rich Frog.

- **Keywords:** Medium
- **DR:** 0k2
- **Price:** 20 koku

Nunchaku

An adapted threshing tool, the nunchaku is simple to build and surprisingly effective. It consists of two foot-long wooden handles connected by a foot-long length of chain. Nunchaku are a very poor weapon unless the wielder is skilled in their use, in which case their use is beautiful to watch and delivers a relentless flurry of bludgeoning strikes.

- **Keywords:** Peasant, Small
- **DR:** 1k2
- **Price:** 3 bu

Sang Kauw

Crescent Blade & Shield: The sang kauw is a peculiar weapon only seen in the hands of those who choose to study exotic fighting styles. It is a three to four foot wooden shaft with a metal spike on each end. The crescent blade sang kauw has a crescent-shaped blade in the center that can be used to fend off attackers, while the shield sang kauw has a metal shield for increased protection.

- **Keywords:** Medium
- **DR:** 1k2 (crescent blade), 2k1 (shield sang kauw)
- **Price:** 10 koku

Tonfa

The tonfa has its origin as the handle of a millstone. It consists of a wooden shaft roughly the length of a man's forearm, with a handle on the side that allows it to be held along the forearm. Held in this manner it is an effective defensive tool, but can also be spun as an offensive weapon.

- **Keywords:** Medium, Peasant
- **DR:** 0k3
- **Price:** 5 bu

Swords

The sword, specifically the katana, is the sacred weapon of the samurai. Other blades are similar to the katana, but none have the sheer symbolic weight that the sacred blade possesses, and thus they are used quite infrequently in comparison.

Katana

The katana is the quintessential weapon of the samurai caste. It represents the soul of the samurai who carries it, and while typically only bushi or those trained in the blade's use carry them with them at all times, all samurai typically have one that they own, even if it remains in their home. Courtiers and shugenja do not usually carry a katana with them because doing so implies they are trained in its use, which would in turn place an expectation upon them to defend themselves. A katana is typically kept within a family and handed down from generation to generation. The eldest child in a generation receives his grandfather's blade. However, it is possible for a samurai who serves his lord well to possess multiple katana, including not only his grandfather's blade, but a blade bestowed for valorous service, another from an appointment to the position of Imperial magistrate, etc.

- **Keywords:** Medium, Samurai
- **DR:** 3k2
- **Special Rules:** A character may spend one Void Point to increase a damage roll made using a katana by 1k1 (Void Points cannot normally be spent to enhance damage rolls). Only one Void Point may be spent in this manner, even if the character has an ability that would allow him to spend more than one Void Point per round.
- **Price:** Because of the symbolic nature of the katana and the difficulty in producing the folded steel that makes up the blade, they are not generally available for sale.

Ninja-to

As reviled as the katana is revered, the ninja-to is the favored weapon of the ninja. Ninja often put their blades to esoteric uses such as climbing in addition to combat. Unlike other swords, ninja-to are crudely made, unattractive, and easily broken. A ninja who loses his weapon can easily replace it without significant expense.

- **Keywords:** Medium, Ninja
- **DR:** 2k2

- **Special Rules:** The ninja-to is a medium weapon, but is considered a small weapon for the purposes of concealment. If a ninja-to inflicts more than 40 Wounds in a single attack, its blade breaks.
- **Price:** 5 koku

No-dachi

The no-dachi is perhaps the largest weapon commonly wielded by samurai. It is similar in most respects to the katana, save that it is 5 to 7 feet in length. It was conceived as primarily an anti-cavalry weapon, at which it excels. Brash or highly-trained bushi also wield it in melee, however, which is difficult but highly effective when mastered.

- **Keywords:** Large
- **DR:** 3k3
- **Price:** 30 koku

Parangu

The parangu is basically a machete, a thin metal blade made of unfolded steel and used in a harsh chopping motion to clear underbrush and other vegetation out of the path for farming or making one's way through the wilderness. The parangu is popular aboard Mantis ships for cutting ropes or cloth without having to worry about protecting one's katana. Parangu are typically made of scrap metal and have a high chance of breaking in combat with a true blade.

- **Keywords:** Medium, Peasant
- **DR:** 2k2
- **Special Rules:** If a parangu inflicts more than 30 Wounds in a single attack, its blade breaks.
- **Price:** 10 bu

Scimitar

A heavy, curved blade that originated far beyond the boundaries of the Emerald Empire, the scimitar was brought back to Rokugan by the Unicorn Clan after their eight centuries of wandering the world at large. It is rarely made of folded steel, and as such has limited durability compared to the katana, and only sees use among Unicorn samurai, primarily the Moto family.

- **Keywords:** Medium
- **DR:** 2k3
- **Price:** 20 koku

Wakizashi

While the katana represents the soul of a samurai, the wakizashi represents his honor. Every member of the samurai caste, even the most pious shugenja or delicate artisan, possesses a wakizashi that signifies his or her station. Wakizashi are not always carried by such individuals, but they are never far away, and are always taken with them even when traveling. Because of its status as a symbol of the bearer's honor, it is the wakizashi with which the ritual of seppuku is performed.

- **Keywords:** Medium, Samurai
- **DR:** 2k2
- **Special Rules:** A wakizashi may be thrown up to 20' as a ranged weapon.
- **Price:** 15 koku

War Fans

There are a variety of war fans, also known as *tessen*, that are popular throughout the Empire. Different styles have varying levels of popularity depending upon the Clan in question, although they are certainly most popular in the Lion and Crane lands. Some are short metal shafts with small circular or shaped metal sheets attached, and bear only a passing resemblance to fans.

- **Keywords:** Small
- **DR:** 0k1
- **Price:** 5 koku

Miscellaneous Equipment

There is a variety of equipment commonly found in the hands of samurai and other castes beyond weapons and armor.

- **Backpack:** Rokugani backpacks are built upon wicker frames, making them fairly rigid. Price: 3 zeni
- **Ball, Kemari:** A leather ball used to play kemari, a popular game. Price: 5 zeni
- **Baskets:** The most common container, crafted from wicker. Sometimes worn as hats. Price: 1 to 5 zeni
- **Blacksmith's Hammer:** Necessary for an armorer or weaponsmith to craft. Price: 3 bu
- **Blanket:** A coarse blanket appropriate for travel, often used stacked for warmth. Price: 1 bu
- **Bottle of Bleach/Dye:** Used primarily for clothes-making and hair coloration. Price: 1 bu
- **Bottle of Sake:** Rice wine, a very popular beverage among bushi. Price: 1 bu
- **Bottle of Shochu:** A very strong, distilled alcoholic beverage. Price: 2 bu
- **Bottle, Empty:** Clay or occasionally imported glass, used for storing liquids for travel. Price: 1 zeni
- **Books and Scrolls:** Sturdy records used for journals and recording new information. Price: 1-10 bu
- **Bowyer's Kit:** Used for maintenance of bow and arrows. Price: 2 bu
- **Brazier:** Vessel for holding burning substances or for heating liquids. Price: 1 bu
- **Bucket:** A metal vessel with a handle, primarily for toting water. Price: 1 zeni
- **Candle:** A simple, hand-dipped candle. Price: 1 bu
- **Chest:** Wooden chest with a lock for storing precious items. Price: 2 bu (wood), 8 bu (metal)
- **Chopsticks:** Eating utensils. Price: 1 zeni
- **Cloth, Silk Bolt:** Used for mending, protective wrapping, etc. Price: 2 koku
- **Coin Purse:** A small, easily concealed bag. Price: 3 zeni
- **Daisho Stand:** Easily disassembled and carried, this is a stand for displaying one's daisho and tanto. Price: 1 koku
- **Dice and Dice Cup:** Used primarily for gambling. Price: 25 zeni

Horses

Horses are an important possession for any samurai, although outside of the Unicorn Clan it is relatively uncommon for most samurai to possess one of their own unless they are particularly wealthy. Rules and abilities for horses are provided in the *Book of Void*. In most cases, a samurai's lord will furnish a horse for him if it is required for the execution of his duties, which includes any significant travel. In the event that a character wishes to purchase a horse for himself, however, the following prices can be considered a starting point (all horses require roughly a koku of upkeep per month in terms of feeding, stabling, etc.):

- Rokugani Pony: 25 koku
- Gaijin Riding Horse: 75 koku
- Utaku War Horse: 250 koku (this is a minimum, and possession of one of these horses by an outsider is usually considered an affront to the honor of the Unicorn Clan, most likely resulting in duels)



- **Divination Kit:** Sets of coins or carved sticks used for divining. Price: 1 bu
- **Finger of Jade:** Rare, and used to ward off the Shadowlands. Price: 1 koku if it can be found at all.
- **Fishing Kit:** Consists of a hook, strong string, a small net, and a cleaning knife. Price: 10 zeni
- **Flint and Steel:** Useful for creating sparks and lighting fires. Price: 1 zeni
- **Furoshiki Sack:** A sturdy silken bag with a drawstring. Price: 1 zeni
- **Games, Traveling:** Small sets of go, shogi, or other games. Price: 1 bu and up
- **Grapple Hook:** An iron hook meant to be attached to a rope for climbing. Price: 1 bu
- **Kiseru:** A simple smoking pipe. Price: 3 zeni
- **Kubi Bukuro:** A net bag for holding and displaying the severed head of an enemy. Price: 2 zeni
- **Lanterns:** Used for decoration and illumination. Price: 1 bu (paper), 4 bu (metal)
- **Lantern Oil:** A flask with two hours of oil. Price: 3 zeni per flask
- **Lucky Cricket:** A small cricket in a cage. Price: 4 bu
- **Medicine Kit:** Needle and thread, cloth bandages, herbal disinfectants (10 uses). Price: 1 bu and up
- **Mirrors:** Glass or metal, polished to a high sheen. Price: 3 bu to 2 koku
- **Mortar & Pestle:** Used to grind and mix ingredients. Price: 2 bu
- **Musical Instruments:** Common samples include the samisen, biwa, flute, and drum. Price: 1 to 5 bu
- **Palanquin:** Elaborate personal carriage, carried by servants. Price: 10 koku
- **Paper:** Ideal for writing for scrolls or "books." Price: 1 bu per 5 sheets
- **Parchment & Charcoal:** Cheaper alternative to brush and ink. 3 zeni for 10 of each
- **Personal Seal or Chop:** Used to sign formal documents and verify identities. Price: 4 bu
- **Pet:** Dog, cat, songbird, monkey, or others. Incapable of combat. Price: 1 koku
- **Pillow Book:** Small, loosely bound book about romance, adventure, or poetry. Price: 3 zeni to 1 koku
- **Pot, Iron:** Used for cooking while traveling. Price: 15 zeni
- **Quiver:** Cloth satchel for arrows (holds up to 60). Price: 20 zeni
- **Rope:** Varying quality made of hemp, hair, or silk. Price: 5 zeni per foot of reasonable quality rope
- **Sake Cup:** Guests often bring their own cup to events. Price: 1 bu
- **Shovel:** A simple digging tool. Price: 5 zeni
- **Small Back Banner:** Identify name, rank, family, and Clan. Price: 1 koku
- **Small Folding Stool:** Carried by soldiers to conserve strength. Price: 3 bu
- **Small Knife:** Used for carving or personal grooming. Price: 5 zeni
- **Small Painting or Sculpture:** Carried for sentiment or gifts. Price: 3 bu
- **Small Statue of Fortune/Ancestor:** Carried for sentimental reasons or luck. Price: 1 koku
- **Spices:** Used to add flavor to food while traveling, or for barter. Price: 1 to 5 bu for small bottle
- **Sweets:** Popular snacks include small cakes, candies, buns, or honeyed rice. Price: 1 bu for 4 servings
- **Tatami Mat:** Used for sitting or sleeping on the ground or floor. Price: 2 zeni
- **Tattoo Needles:** Made of steel or bamboo. Price: 1 bu per set
- **Tea Set:** Necessary to perform the sacred tea ceremony. Price: 1 koku
- **Tent, Chomchog:** A large and elaborate tent favored by the Unicorn. Price: 20 koku
- **Tent, Small:** Suitable for two people. Price: 1 koku
- **Tent, Yurt:** Smaller than the chomchog but still larger than average, favored by the Unicorn. Price: 10 koku
- **Traveling Rations:** Dried rice or fish, wrapped in paper. Price: 5 zeni per meal
- **Umbrella:** Made of wicker and silk to hold off the elements. Price: 2 bu
- **Walking Stick:** A simple cane to aid in walking. Not suitable for a weapon. Price: 1 zeni
- **Whetstone:** Used to sharpen weapons, but not the katana or wakizashi. Price 1 zeni
- **Writing Box:** The sumi-e box, contains brushes, ink stones, a water bowl, and sand. Price: 1 bu

Clothing & Accessories

- **Cap, Courtier's:** Peaked cap popular among courtiers and bureaucrats. Price: 2 bu
- **Fan, Courtier's:** Paper fan with customized patterns. Price: 40 zeni and up
- **Hakama:** Knee-length trousers. Price: 75 zeni
- **Haori:** Jacket-like garment worn over a kimono. Price: 25 zeni
- **Kataginu:** Vest-like garment worn over kimono to emphasize shoulders. Price: 40 zeni
- **Kimono:** The basic robe worn by all samurai. Comes with belt/sash (obi). Price: 1 bu and up
- **Makeup Kit:** Face powders and paints. Price: 1 koku
- **Mask:** Vary from silk to metal (mempo). Often intricately patterned. Price: 3 bu
- **Netsuke:** Jewelry such as earring, ring, bracelet, etc. Price: 1 bu
- **Obi Pouch:** A small pouch that fastens to the belt. Price: 25 zeni
- **Perfume:** Made from various herbs and common substances. Price: 2 bu per small bottle
- **Sandals:** The simplest and most common form of footwear. Price: 50 zeni
- **Snow Shoes:** Wide-framed shoes to prevent sinking in the snow. Price: 2 bu
- **Traveling Cloak:** Thick coat worn over clothes while traveling. Price: 75 zeni
- **Wide-brimmed Straw Hat:** Used for protecting the face from the sun. Price: 1 zeni
- **War Paint, Vial:** Popular among Crab, Unicorn, and Lion warriors. Price: 3 bu
- **Wig:** Used for disguise or to gain attention in court. Price: 1 bu each

The Traveling Pack

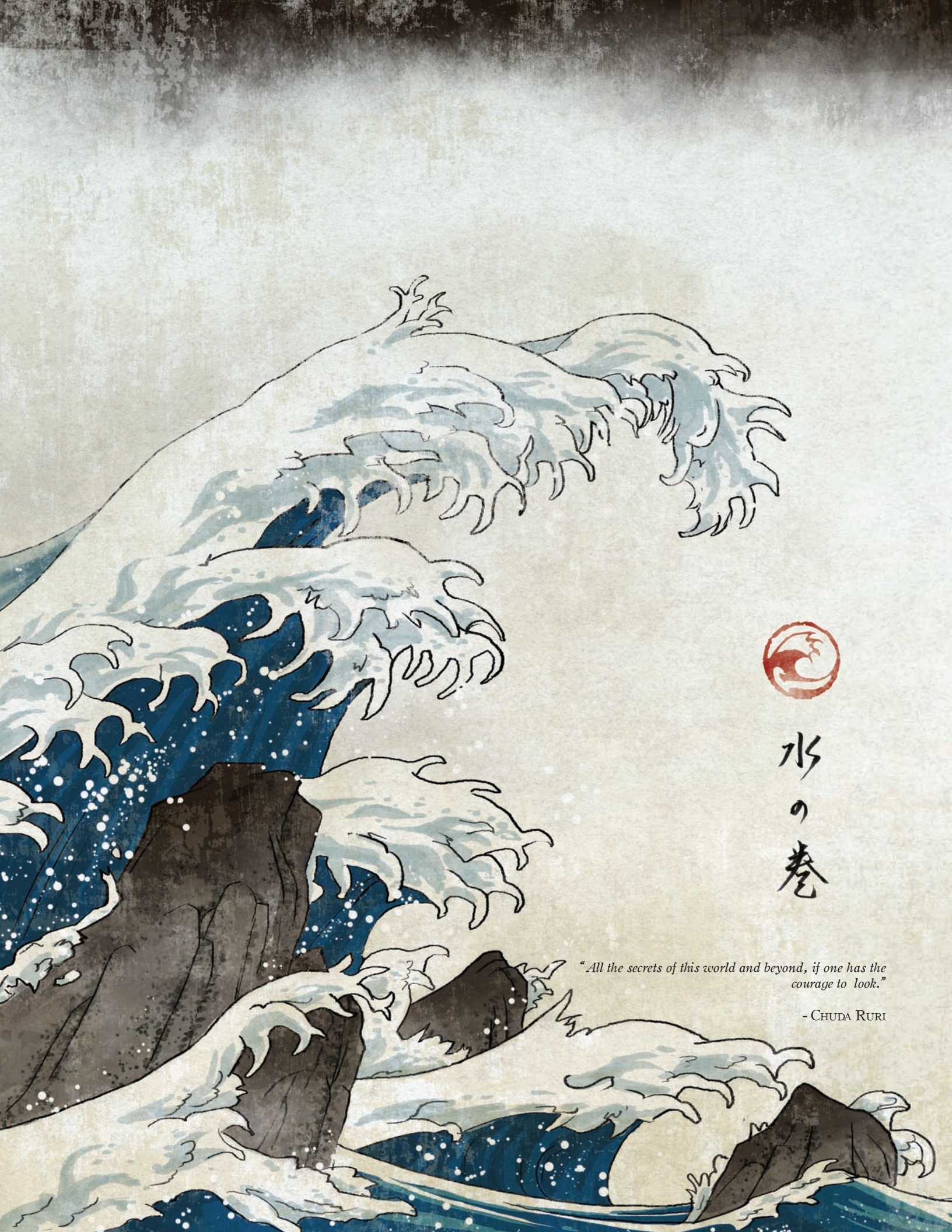
Most if not all Schools include in their starting Outfit a Traveling Pack. What exactly is a Traveling Pack? Well, that depends on the family, the School, and the individual. A Traveling Pack is essentially a traveling bag, often called a *furoshiki*, filled with various items that the individual might be interested in. When creating a character, select any ten of the following items that are found within his Traveling Pack:

- Basket
- Blacksmith's hammer
- Blanket
- Bottle of bleach/dye
- Bottle of sake
- Bottle of shochu
- Bottle of water
- Bucket
- Candles (6)
- Chopsticks
- Coin purse
- Cooking pot
- Daisho stand
- Divination kit (kawaru coins)
- Divination kit (yarrow sticks)
- Fan
- Fishing net or pole
- Flint and tinder
- Grapple hook
- Incense brazier
- Ink brush kit
- Jewelry or accessory
- Lantern
- Lucky cricket (in cage)
- Makeup kit
- Mask
- Miniature go or shogi set
- Mortar and pestle
- Musical instrument
- Parchment and charcoal (10)
- Perfume
- Personal seal or chop
- Pet (dog, cat, monkey, songbird (two items))
- Pillow book
- Rope (50')
- Sake cup
- Set of dice
- Shovel
- Small back banner
- Small folding stool
- Small hand mirror
- Small knife (non-combat)
- Small statue
- Small tent
- Smoking pipe
- Snowshoes
- Spare kimono and sandals
- Spices
- Straw cloak
- Sweets
- Tatami mat
- Tattoo needles
- Tea set
- Vial of paint
- Walking stick
- Week's rations
- Whetstone
- Wicker umbrella
- Wide-brimmed straw hat
- Wig









水の巻

"All the secrets of this world and beyond, if one has the courage to look."

- Chuda Ruri

Book of Water



At its core, the Legend of the Five Rings RPG is a game about samurai. Specifically, it is a game about the samurai who serve the Great Clans of Rokugan. The character creation options presented within the Book of Fire are designed so that Game Masters and players can create their own samurai and engage in role-playing adventures within the Empire of Rokugan. However, Rokugan is a vast and diverse land, and while the Great Clans dominate the political, magical, and military environments, they are by no means the only factions vying for resources and influence. There are a great many individuals and organizations who hope to rival the Great Clans, and, if the Game Master desires, it is possible to use these as foils for the player characters, or even as player character options.

The Spider Clan

Usurpers of a title that is theirs by lineage if not by Imperial law, the Spider Clan claim Great Clan status even though it has not been granted by any Emperor of Rokugan. Just like the other clans, however, they are disciples of a Kami – a fallen Kami, the dark god Fu Leng. The Spider, ever ambitious and secretive, eagerly embrace chaos, cruelty, spiritual corruption, and forms of sorcery that are acknowledged as perversions of the natural order.

The Chuda Family: +1 Intelligence

The spiritual heirs of the first Chuda family, wiped out centuries previously, the Chuda are a collection of ambitious and power-hungry maho-tsukai who delve into the secrets of blood magic. Their loyalties are always suspect, since they have changed masters on more than one occasion in the past.

The Daigotsu Family: +1 Stamina

The lords of the Spider Clan are far and away the most numerous of the families who comprise the Spider. Great numbers of samurai from all walks of life who have fallen to the Shadowlands Taint or succumbed to the worship of Fu Leng have embraced the philosophy and methodology of the Dark Lord Daigotsu, and eagerly enact his sinister will without consideration for their previous families and allies. Not all Daigotsu are Tainted, but a large majority of them have felt Jigoku's sinister touch.

The Goju Family: +1 Agility

In a very real way, those who bear the name Goju are no longer human. Once they served the primordial entity known as the Lying Darkness, and were little more than extensions of its will. Since its destruction, they serve its successor, the Shadow Dragon, and possess somewhat more individuality than before, although as often as not they remain faceless, soulless monstrosities.

The Spider Monks: +1 Reflexes

The strangest agents of the Spider Clan are the monks of the Order of the Spider. Many among the order have not succumbed to the Shadowlands Taint at all, but instead embrace the philosophies of the Spider because they resonate with their own desires for personal power and achievement through strength.

The Daigotsu Bushi School

The legions of warriors loyal to Daigotsu employ a fighting style cobbled together from the various Techniques they possessed in their former lives. As a result, the Daigotsu Techniques are mildly eclectic, but can be brutally effective when used in conjunction with one another. Skilled bushi can use these secrets to devastate their foes and then harness their dying life essence to replenish themselves, an act that forever marks them as traitors and blasphemers in the eyes of the Empire.

The techniques of the Daigotsu bushi clearly indicate the favor in which they are held by their god and master, Fu Leng. Their ability to increase their damage and instill fear in their opponents makes them potent opponents for virtually any enemy, and their power level can increase dramatically if they employ the Shadowlands Taint as well (although this is, of course, not without risk).



Daigotsu Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Hunting, Intimidation, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), Kyujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, any one Bugei or Low Skill
- **Honor:** 1.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Way of the Spider

The Daigotsu Bushi must walk the fine line between using the Taint to power his body and hiding its effects in public. At the beginning of each Round, you may choose to either reduce TN penalties from Wound Ranks by your Strength Trait Rank plus your Taint Rank until the end of the Round, or increase your damage rolls by the same amount. Additionally, the TN on any roll made to detect the presence or effects of the Shadowlands Taint on you is increased by 10.

Rank 2: Aura of Blood

The presence of the Daigotsu Bushi can be unsettling to those who are unprepared to face it. You may spend a Void Point as a Simple Action to activate this Technique. While this Technique is active, you and all of your allies within 30' add +2k0 to the total of all damage rolls. This lasts for a number of Rounds equal to your Taint Rank plus your Strength Trait Rank. This bonus is not cumulative with other applications of Aura of Blood. Using this Technique while under its effects refreshes its duration.

Rank 3: Ashura's Wing

The Daigotsu Bushi moves and strikes as swiftly as ash borne away by the wind. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank 4: Devouring Wrath

By the power of Fu Leng, the Legionnaire feeds on the strength of his enemies. Any time you hit an opponent in melee, you immediately regain 5 Wounds. This can potentially grant additional Wounds beyond your normal maximum, but this bonus will not increase over 20 Wounds. Excess Wounds are lost at the end of the skirmish.

Rank 5: Inhuman Assault

The wrath of a Daigotsu bushi is like that of a rampaging beast. Once per skirmish, you may launch into a series of bone-shattering blows by making a melee attack as a Complex Action. This attack ignores the bonuses and effects of armor (including Reduction from armor) and any Stance the target assumes. If the strike hits, the target cannot gain the bonuses of armor or Stance to his Armor TN for a number of Rounds equal to your Taint Rank plus your Strength Trait. If your opponent is in the Full Attack Posture, he still retains the -10 Armor TN penalty.

The Chuda Shugenja School

The Chuda possess an ancient tradition of maho, passed down from one to another in secret for centuries, ever since their family was eradicated by the Phoenix Clan hundreds of years ago. Within the Spider Clan, the heirs of the Snake have found a new home as the reinvigorated Chuda, and they serve their masters well. The Chuda are among the most powerful and progressive maho-tsukai that have ever existed, always pushing the envelope of what is possible with blood magic, never content to simply accept the power available to them. The atrocities committed in the name of increasing their School's knowledge and power are without limit.

Maho is unquestionably the strength of the Chuda family, but the costs associated with it can make them less prolific spell-casters than other shugenja. Fortunately, their Technique permits them to conceal the corrupted nature of their magic, and to mitigate the rate at which they acquire the Taint.

Chuda Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Hunting, Lore: Maho, Lore: Shadowlands, Spellcraft, Stealth, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 0.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 3 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Chuda shugenja have an Affinity for any non-Void Maho spell. Select one non-Void element. You have a Deficiency for all non-Maho spells of the selected element.
- **Technique:** *Blood Like Water* – The Chuda have existed for centuries, hidden among the people of Rokugan and concealing the true nature of their dark arts. When casting a maho spell, you may declare one Raise to conceal the corrupted nature of the magic. The spell functions exactly as normal, but there will be no outward sign that it is anything other than traditional elemental magic. You may declare a second Raise to reduce all Shadowlands Taint normally acquired by a maho spell to only one Point, regardless of the spell's Mastery level. Alternatively, you may sacrifice one point of Honor to reduce all Taint normally acquired by the spell to one Point.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Maho spells of one element, 2 Maho spells of a second non-Deficient element, and any 1 spell of any non-Deficient element.

The Daigotsu Courtier School

Perhaps the greatest success of the Spider Clan has been the slow and subtle infiltration of many courts of the Great Clans. Disguised as ronin and emissaries of minor branches of other families, the Daigotsu courtiers have used the Spider Clan's network of contacts, blackmail victims, and willing subordinates to assume positions of power in the courts of numerous clans, even one of the Imperial families. From this position of power, they attempt to subtly manipulate others into conflicts that best serve their true clan, keeping their enemies away from them and gradually undermining the notions of honor possessed by many weak-willed samurai.

The greatest strength of the Daigotsu courtiers is not their Techniques, which are admittedly useful, but rather their ability to mask their Taint, should they possess it. Their Techniques focus on the disruption of others, providing an environment on which the Spider can capitalize, and deflecting both attention and blame away from themselves. This is essential both to their survival and to their ability to benefit their clan.

Daigotsu Courtier School

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Acting, Courtier (Manipulation), Etiquette, Meditation, Sincerity (Deceit), Temptation, any one High skill
- **Honor:** 1.0
- **Outfit:** Sensible Clothing, Wakizashi, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Insidious Whispers

Every student of the Daigotsu Courtiers is accomplished at the art of masking his nature, preventing his true intentions and capabilities from being discovered by others. You are skilled at hiding your intentions and the symptoms of Taint. You gain a Free Raise when using Sincerity (Deceit). Any rolls made to detect your Taint (such as the techniques of the Kuni) have their TN increased by an amount equal to 5 x your School Rank. You add your School Rank to your Honor Rank whenever another is attempting to discern your Honor Rank.

Rank Two: Cracks in the Wall

The Daigotsu courtier is taught to drop subtle, seemingly innocuous conversational hints that disrupt the focus and attention of those around him. Any time you are engaged in conversation, you may spend a Void point and make a Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness roll (as a Simple Action) at TN 25 to force everyone within 20 feet of you to suffer a penalty of –1k1 to all their Etiquette and Perform Skill rolls for the next hour. They are not aware of the source for their lack of focus. This effect cannot be stacked.

Rank Three: Darkness Cannot be Trapped

At this rank, the Spider courtier is taught to deflect attention and blame from himself, spreading disharmony among his foes while avoiding the price of his own actions. Any time you are the focus of suspicion or accusation, you may spend a Void point as a Simple Action to try to shift the blame to someone else who is present at the moment of the accusation. You must make a Contested Roll of your Sincerity (Deceit) /

Awareness versus the victim's Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness in order to make the shifting of blame stick. (If your attempt seems weak or poorly justified, the GM can award bonuses to your victim's attempt to defend himself.) With a success, everyone who heard you will believe your target is the real culprit, until presented with evidence to the contrary.

This technique cannot be used to get out of situations in which you are clearly and inescapably guilty (e.g. standing over the dead magistrate with a bloody knife in your hand), nor can it shift blame to someone who is not present.

Rank Four: The Touch of Sin

At this level of training, the Spider's mastery of manipulation and misdirection allows his words to twist the thoughts of others, temporarily leading them into weakness, aggression, and confusion. A number of times per session equal to your School Rank, you may speak with someone for a few minutes and then make a Contested Roll of your Courtier (Manipulation) / Willpower against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. If you succeed, they acquire one of the seven Consumed by Shourido Disadvantages (your choice) for a number of hours equal to your School Rank. By calling two successful Raises on this roll, you can inflict a second Consumed by Shourido Disadvantage of your choice on the same person for the same period of time. (You cannot use this technique on the same person twice in the same day.)

Rank Five: The Embrace of Darkness

The final lesson of the Daigotsu Courtier School teaches its students to lead their enemies into paths of aggression and violence. By speaking with someone for at least fifteen minutes, you may make a Contested Roll of your Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Perception. If your target currently has one of the Consumed by Shourido Disadvantages, you gain a +5k0 bonus to this roll. With a success, you may convince your target to treat some other person, group, institution, or clan as their enemy. This cannot be used to turn someone directly against his lord or the Emperor. Subject to that limitation, the target will continue to believe in this enmity until presented with evidence to the contrary.

This technique cannot be used against the same person more than once per month.



The Order of the Spider Monks

The origins of the enigmatic Order of the Spider are a mystery to many even within the clan that holds their loyalty. The Order began with the teachings of the fallen monk Roshungi, but not until his greatest student Michio began spreading the gospel of finding one's own path, regardless of the consequences to others, did the Order begin to grow in earnest. Brothers of the Spider are merciless opponents with a well-deserved reputation for brutality. Their training includes devastating hand-to-hand styles and many heavy weapon techniques as well. Although some succumb to the Shadowlands Taint, many have remained pure simply because it has not suited their needs to draw upon the power of darkness.

The Spider monks are peerless hand-to-hand combatants who, unlike most monastic fighting styles, cripple foes rather than simply disabling them. Their steely resolve grants them significant bonuses to resist both manipulation and actual magic, as well as resilience and improved capacity to inflict damage.

Order of the Spider Monks

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Athletics, Jiujutsu 2, Lore: Theology, Meditation, Polearms, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 1.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, any Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank 1: The Dark Path

The Order of the Spider teaches strength and mastery of oneself, even the darkness that hides within the soul. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all attack rolls made using unarmed strikes or with polearms. You also add twice your School Rank to your Armor TN against all melee attacks.

Rank 2: Drawing in the Strike

Mastery of the body is a step to the path of power, and this mastery affords tremendous endurance to those who reach it. You may select any non-Void Ring. You gain Reduction equal to this Ring, plus your Rank in the Shadowlands Taint, if you possess any.

Rank 3: Speed of Darkness

The alignment of body and mind allow tremendous speed. When using a polearm or an unarmed attack, you may make melee attacks as Simple Actions rather than Complex Actions.

Rank 4: Guarded by Chi

Following mastery of the body comes mastery of the soul. When you learn this Technique, you may select any one non-Void Ring. You add twice your Rank in this Ring, plus your Shadowlands Taint Rank (if you possess any), to the TN of any spell being cast against you. You may choose to suppress this effect if you wish.

Rank 5: Darkness Unleashed

True mastery of the self requires drawing upon the darkness within. You gain an additional number of Void Points per day equal to your Shadowlands Taint rank or your Earth Ring, whichever is higher. These may be spent exactly like normal Void Points, except they may also be spent to add a bonus of +1k1 to the total of your damage rolls.

The Minor Clans

When a samurai performs a feat of great heroism to Rokugan, the Emperor may reward his service by making him the leader of his own Minor Clan. The leader of the new Minor Clan gathers followers eager to join his cause and serve the Empire in their own unique ways. This great favor has been granted many times during the course of Rokugani history, producing an interesting and diverse group of proud warriors.

Minor Clans generally control a small region of the Empire and their populations are quite low compared to the Great Clans. Most Minor Clans have only a single family name, and the smallest ones may have only a few dozen samurai in their ranks.

The Badger Clan

The founder of the Badger Clan was a powerful Crab warrior who proved his worth in a contest of strength in front of the Emperor. The descendents of the first Badger live on the northern border of Rokugan, and are tasked with guarding the Empire from foreign invasion. The Badger take after their Great Clan cousins, embracing strength at the expense of refinement, and do not accept defeat even in the face of insurmountable odds.

The Ichiro Family: +1 Strength

The Ichiro are rude and coarse in their interactions with the rest of the Empire. They believe in action over words and pragmatics over societal norms. The Ichiro are stocky by nature, and their mountainous lifestyle ensures a heavily muscular frame.

Ichiro Bushi School

The founder of the Ichiro Bushi School was a Hida. It is no surprise, then, that the School remains similar to its Crab roots. The school's philosophy is simple: hit the enemy so hard that he has no time to engage in any fancy tactics.

The Ichiro Bushi School focuses on their love of wrestling and unarmed combat. It emphasizes the power of pure strength in defeating enemies. The Ichiro Bushi uses strength as the answer to almost any problems that may arise. Others may move faster or strike with more precision, but the Ichiro will answer with overwhelming damage.

Ichiro Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Athletics, Commerce, Defense, Heavy Weapons, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), any High or Bugei skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Traveling pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Transcend the Mountain

The bushi of the Badger Clan live and train in the rugged territory of the Great Wall of the North, and revere strength as the ultimate measure of any warrior's capabilities – the power of a warrior's fists can still be relied on when all else fails. You may re-roll any Skill roll or Trait roll which uses Strength, but you must keep the results of the second roll. You suffer no movement or combat penalties for Moderate terrain, and only half the normal penalty for Difficult terrain.

Rank Two: Strength of the Badger

With practice, the Badger learn to call upon their strength to crush their opponents. A number of times per session equal to your Strength Rank, you may re-roll a damage roll, keeping the better of the two results.

Rank Three: Crushing Blow

Experienced Badger learn to deliver blows of truly fearsome power, with weapons or even their bare hands, which can pulverize flesh even through the protection of armor. You may ignore the effects of armor on an opponent's Armor TN. Your unarmed attacks may ignore 1 Rank of your target's Reduction.

Rank Four: Crashing Stones

Ichiro samurai are taught to strike with the speed of the deadly avalanche. Your attacks with Samurai weapons or unarmed strikes are considered Simple Actions.

Rank Five: Return the Strike

The final lesson taught in Badger Clan dojo is that the most effective blows in combat are not the swiftest, but the hardest struck. At the start of a skirmish, before Initiative is rolled, you may choose to lower your Initiative total by 20 for the duration of the skirmish. In exchange, you add your Strength Rank in unkept dice to both your attack and your damage rolls for the first two rounds of that skirmish.

The Bat Clan

The founder of the Bat Clan, Komori, had the blood of bat spirits from Chikushudo flowing within his veins. The Bat Clan is a very young clan, founded during the brief reign of Emperor Toturi III, and has not yet settled into its identity. Bat shugenja are hard at work refining their summoning abilities to provide a new resource to the Empire.

The Komori Family: +1 Intelligence

The Komori is a family of shugenja, gathered under the Bat Clan banner by the founder of the clan himself. They are a unique lot with few characteristics to group them together. The two unifying factors of the Komori family are eagerness to learn and the intelligence to apply their newfound abilities.

Komori Shugenja School

When Yoritomo Komori was granted the honor of forming his own Minor Clan, he quickly gathered the brightest shugenja to his side. He decided he would honor his bat spirit heritage of swift communication and bring that resource to the rest of the Empire. The Komori recognize that one must balance the practical with the theoretical, and strive to hone their messaging abilities for use on the field.

The Komori Shugenja School is unique in the Empire. The koumori are benevolent bat spirits, creatures hailing from Chikushudo who have helped mankind on several occasions. Their powerful magic has never been understood because of the spirits' reclusive nature. The Komori Shugenja have tapped into that resource, giving them strange and wondrous spells that have never been seen before.



Komori Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Lore: Ancestors, Lore: Theology, Meditation, Spellcraft, Tea Ceremony, any one High Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 3 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Air / Earth
- **Technique:** *The Kami's Whispers* – The Komori practice the rituals of the koumori spirits from whom their founder is descended, and ferry messages from one to another via the kami. You may expend one spell slot to send a whispered message to another individual known to you. This message must be no longer in length than thirty seconds per School Rank, and may be delivered a maximum distance equal to your School Rank x 100 miles.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Air, 2 Water, and 1 Fire

The Boar Clan

The Boar Clan was given dominion over the Twilight Mountains on the northern border of the Crab Clan's lands. The Twilight Mountains were rich with both iron and jade and the small Minor Clan's importance grew as its samurai mined the precious materials. The Twilight Mountains proved to be a dangerous home, however, as earthquakes, maddened spirits, insane maho-tsukai, and the malevolent spirit Shakoki Dogu assaulted the Boar Clan at every step.

The Heichi Family: +1 Willpower

Few people could endure the dangers of the Twilight Mountains without breaking, yet the samurai of the Boar thrived on the land for centuries. They are a hard and bitter people who will fight with everything within reach to defend what is theirs. Once a Heichi sets his mind to a goal nothing will stop him from achieving it.

Heichi Bushi School

Shadowy dangers always threatened the Boar lands, and the Heichi Bushi School formed to face them. The Boar were ready to defend themselves and developed techniques that would help them match that fervor. They learned to take the worst attacks their enemies might hold in store and simply keep going. The trained Heichi Bushi maintains a strong defense, but his furious assaults are chilling to see.

The Heichi Bushi School emphasizes a weapon that is rarely seen in the rest of the Empire: the Mai Chong. The uniquely shaped spear has a curved head, and the weapon handles completely differently from other pole weapons. The Heichi Bushi can use the spear to devastate his enemies at range. The longer reach of his weapon perfectly suits his defensive style, where he waits for the perfect moment to break the enemy's momentum.

The Lost Minor Clans

Several of the Minor Clans described in this section meet their end at some point in the official timeline of Rokugan. While individual Game Masters are encouraged to make use of these clans in any way that suits their campaign, those who prefer to adhere to the canon storyline will find that the following clans no longer exist:

- *The Boar Clan* – The Boar are wiped out by actions of a singularly powerful and sinister sorcerer by the name of Agasha Ryuden in the year 501. Their souls are used to create one of the most powerful and evil nemuranai ever to exist, the Anvil of Despair.
- *The Centipede Clan* – The Centipede Clan joins the Mantis Clan as the Moshi family shortly after the conclusion of the Clan War (approximately year 1128). They can be depicted by using the rules for the Moshi family and the Moshi Shugenja School found in the *Book of Fire*.
- *The Falcon Clan* – The Falcon are absorbed into the Crab Clan after a calamity in their lands places the Crab provinces at risk. The Toritaka family bonus is found in the Crab section of the *Book of Fire* (and repeated below), and their family School is included below.
- *The Fox Clan* – The Fox Clan joins the Mantis Clan as the Kitsune family in the year 1170. The Kitsune family bonus is found in the Mantis section of the *Book of Fire* and is repeated in this section for convenience. Their family School is included below as well.
- *The Snake Clan* – The Snake Clan are consumed by maho from within, even though they were founded to combat such evils. They are destroyed by the Phoenix in the year 402, but are resurrected centuries later by a corrupt descendant and serve as the Chuda family of the Spider Clan. The School included below represents the pure techniques once practiced by the Snake, who are completely extinct in the modern Empire.
- *The Wasp Clan* – The Wasp Clan joins the Mantis Clan as the Tsuruchi family shortly after the conclusion of the Clan War (approximately year 1128). They can be depicted by using the rules for the Tsuruchi family and the Tsuruchi Archer School found in the *Book of Fire*.



Heichi Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Intimidation, Kenjutsu, Spears (Mai Chong), any one Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 3.0
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any Spear, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Charge of the Boar

The attack of a boar can come from nowhere, with little warning. If you are in the Full Attack stance, you may ready a medium weapon or a spear as a Free Action. When wielding a spear in combat you gain a damage bonus of +0k1.

Rank Two: The Strength of Opposition

The Boar school specializes in using spears, especially the Mai Chong, to snare an opponent's clothing and armor, rendering them helpless. You may call two Raises to Entangle an opponent with a Mai Chong, or three Raises to Entangle them with another spear-class weapon.

Rank Three: The Speed of the Boar

The Boar bushi learns to strike with the relentless speed of his namesake animal. You may attack as a Simple Action when wielding a spear.

Rank Four: The Anger of the Boar

Much like their namesake, Boar bushi keep fighting even when critically injured. You may spend a Void point during the Reactions segment to reduce your Wound TN penalty by one Wound Rank (the Wounds still exist, you simply feel less pain from them). This effect lasts the remainder of the skirmish.

Rank Five: Beyond the Mountains

At this rank the Boar has learned to control his warrior's fury and unleash it at the most unexpected times, even when he appears to be completely defensive. If you are in the Full Defense Stance, you may make one normal attack with a spear or a Samurai-keyword weapon as a Free Action, ignoring the restriction of the Full Defense Stance. This attack gains a bonus of +2k0 to the attack roll.

The Dragonfly Clan

The founders of the Dragonfly incurred the wrath of the Lion Clan upon inception, and the Minor Clan has suffered greatly for that legacy. Their importance belies their size; everyone who wishes to travel to the Dragon lands must first stop at the home of the Dragonfly to seek permission. Their strong ties with the Dragon Clan and their history of tragedy have forged a serene and resilient people, ready to face the dangers of the future.

The Tonbo Family: +1 Awareness

The Tonbo are humble and plain despite their importance in the Empire. Most of the hard-working Tonbo are shugenja, and the few bushi who come from their lands typically use political favors to train with their Mirumoto allies. They are well suited for life within the mountains and can navigate the Dragon lands as well as any Mirumoto.

Tonbo Shugenja School

The Tonbo are a deeply spiritual people. They have forged a strong connection to the mountains and remain in their lands even though hardship after hardship has fallen upon them. Though the Tonbo Shugenja are no less priests than their counterparts in the other Clans, they are acutely aware of the political responsibilities that rest on their shoulders. As the intermediaries between the Dragon Clan and the rest of Rokugan, the Tonbo are well equipped to survive the perilous courts of the Empire.

The Tonbo Shugenja School uses all the resources at its disposal to prepare its students for the courts. A trained Tonbo can use his connection to the spiritual world to heighten his social graces. This boost is often a necessity with opponents such as the Lion Clan always watching for a social faux pas.

Tonbo Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Courtier, Etiquette, Meditation (Void Recovery), Sincerity, Spellcraft, any one High Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 3 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Water / Fire
- **Technique:** *Guided by Fate* – The Tonbo are adept at court as well as the ways of the shugenja, serving as they have as the Dragon Clan's intermediaries almost since their creation. The kami's whispers can be powerful tools in court. You may expend one spell slot to gain a bonus of +1k0 on one Social Skill Roll. You may never spend more spell slots than your School Rank to augment a single roll. You gain a Free Raise on any spell with the Divination keyword.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Water, 2 Air, and 1 Earth

The Falcon Clan

The Crab stand tall against the Shadowlands hordes, yet other perils menace Rokugan. The warriors of the Falcon Clan stand with their Crab cousins to defeat malevolent ghosts that travel to the mortal realm. Their enemies are not the Shadowlands monsters slavering at the Kaiu Wall but the insidious phantoms that terrorize the heart of the land.

The Toritaka Family: +1 Perception

The Toritaka has always been a small brotherhood living near the Crab lands. Their typical samurai are large and bulky, their muscles are constantly honed by years of constant battle. Despite their brutish appearance, however, the Toritaka are quiet, calm, and distant from the rest of Rokugani society.

Toritaka Bushi School

The Toritaka Bushi School excels at destruction of creatures that come from the other Spirit Realms. Their style is fluid in order to adapt to any surprises that new monsters might spring upon them. Unfortunately this focus on otherworldly foes makes the Toritaka bushi a very specialized warrior, with few techniques that work against human opponents.

The Toritaka Bushi School focuses on striking monsters and bypassing their defenses. They use the daisho or the spear to find the monster's weaknesses and relentlessly attack them until they fall. Over a lifetime of training, the Toritaka learns to see past the tricks a monster may utilize and to efficiently dismantle such enemies.

Toritaka Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Animal Handling (Falcons), Hunting 2, Kenjutsu, Lore: Spirit Realms, Spears, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Falcon's Eyes

A Toritaka must be aware of his surroundings at all times, for his enemies can appear anywhere. You add +1k0 to all Skill and raw Trait rolls involving the Perception Trait. Additionally, when striking a creature from another Spirit Realm (including oni from Jigoku and hungry dead from Gaki-do), you add +1k0 to all damage rolls.

Rank Two: The Falcon Takes Flight

Through his training, the Toritaka can sense the emanations of nearby spirits as they cross over into the mortal realm. You may attempt to detect the presence of any creatures from other Spirit Realms by making a Perception Trait Roll against a TN equal to the creature's Air Ring x 5.

Rank Three: The Falcon's Wings

The Toritaka strikes with precision, constantly keeping his enemies at bay. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while wielding a spear or a weapon with the Samurai keyword.

Rank Four: Vigilant and Strong

Monsters may have tricks to confuse their enemies, but the Toritaka learns to see the truth through the fog. You may spend a Void Point to negate any darkness or blinding penalties. This effect lasts until the Reactions Phase two Rounds later.

Rank Five: Claws of the Falcon

Nothing will stop the Toritaka's attack from hitting its target. Your attacks ignore up to 5 points of your opponent's Reduction (if he has any). Against creatures from other Spirit Realms, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to reduce the creature's Reduction by 10 for one Round.

The Fox Clan

The Fox Clan is the first and perhaps oldest Minor Clan (although the Mantis dispute that), as their origins are found with the Ki-Rin Clan before their great voyage beyond Rokugan's borders. The Fox Clan were driven out of the Ki-Rin lands and eventually found their own identity in the peaceful Kitsune Mori, where they were befriended by fox spirits and developed a powerful love for the beauty of nature. Though the Minor Clan is small and has limited resources, the brave samurai of the Fox never hesitate to fight for virtuous causes.

The Kitsune Family: +1 Willpower

The Kitsune prefer the quiet of the forest to the bustle of civilization. They are a strongly spiritual family, and will fight tooth and nail to protect the natives of Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. The Kitsune are strongly independent, but they are also pragmatic; Kitsune heroes will do whatever they must to accomplish their goals without giving up their souls.

Kitsune Shugenja School

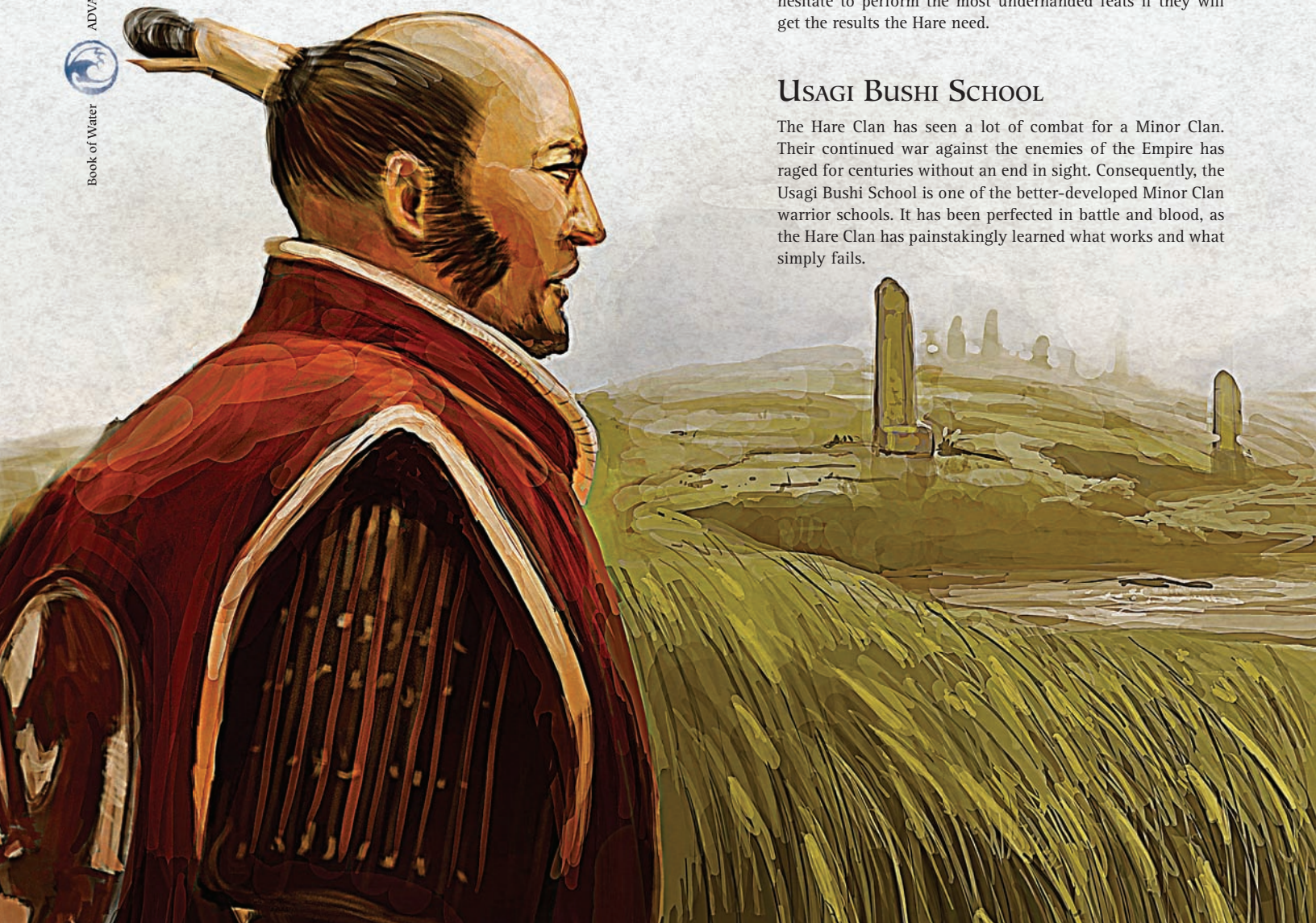
The Fox Clan is located next to one of the largest forests in Rokugan, a fact that has shaped the direction of their lessons. Each Kitsune shugenja gains a love for the spirits and the tranquility of the deep forest after countless hours meditating within its borders. This connection between man and beast is encouraged and strengthened with comprehensive lessons.

The Kitsune's love for nature is evident in the abilities taught at their school. The Kitsune can connect with the wilderness and the animals that inhabit it. It is a versatile technique that can be vital to the Kitsune shugenja's duties, and few from other schools can duplicate the Fox's abilities.



Kitsune Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Defense, Hunting, Medicine (Herbalism), Meditation, Spellcraft, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 3 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Earth / Air
- **Technique:** *Essence of Chikushudo* – None in the Empire are closer to the ways of nature than the simple Kitsune who make the wilderness their home. You may use the Sense, Commune, and Summon basic spells to affect the animal spirits of Chikushudo as well as kami (using Summon results in the appearance of a single animal spirit rather than a set amount of elemental material). Animal spirits tend to be more direct than the kami, and perceive things differently, but have just as little sense of why man does what he does. You gain a Free Raise on any non-damaging spell cast on an animal.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Earth, 2 Water, and 1 Fire



The Hare Clan

The Bloodspeaker Iuchiban was a maho-tsukai of epic power, a terrifying madman who repeatedly threatened the safety of the Empire. The ronin Reichin heroically risked his life to combat Iuchiban's rise and was rewarded for his services with permission to found the Hare Clan. His descendents have continued down the same path, fighting Bloodspeakers at every turn, and later also confronting the insidious secret conspiracy called the Kolat. The clan has tiptoed the edge of extinction several times and only survived through sheer dedication to its cause.

The Usagi Family: +1 Awareness

The Usagi have seen combat for almost their entire history. Because they know hidden threats like the Bloodspeakers and the Kolat exist, they are always alert and ready to spot signs of corruption. Unfortunately many elder members of the Usagi tend toward paranoia and do not trust strangers, although younger family members are usually more confident and optimistic.

The Ujina Family: +1 Agility

Formed during the chaotic times following the Second Day of Thunder, the Ujina family is tiny, usually with less than two dozen members at any one time. Despite their modest numbers, the Ujina are proud to bear a name given by the Emperor. The Ujina are extreme pragmatists, and will not hesitate to perform the most underhanded feats if they will get the results the Hare need.

Usagi Bushi School

The Hare Clan has seen a lot of combat for a Minor Clan. Their continued war against the enemies of the Empire has raged for centuries without an end in sight. Consequently, the Usagi Bushi School is one of the better-developed Minor Clan warrior schools. It has been perfected in battle and blood, as the Hare Clan has painstakingly learned what works and what simply fails.

The Usagi Bushi School takes the athleticism of the Hare Clan and channels it into combat advantage. The Hare learn to move faster than the average samurai, darting in to deliver a punishing blow then dashing out of range of any counterattack. An unprepared opponent is quickly overwhelmed as he is attacked from what seems like all sides.

Usagi Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Reflexes
- **Skills:** Athletics (Running), Defense, Hunting, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Lore: Maho (may replace with Lore: Kolat after the Clan War era), any one High or Bugei skill
- **Honor:** 4.0
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Bow (with 20 Arrows) or Knife, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Speed of the Hare

The Hare are known for fighting with a speed and agility reminiscent of the animal for which their clan is named. In any situation where you have room to dodge, jump, and otherwise maneuver (GM's discretion), you may add your Athletics Skill Rank to your Armor TN except when in the Full Attack or Center stance. Your Water Ring is considered 1 higher for purposes of how far you can move with Move actions.

Rank Two: Leap of the Hare

The Hare bushi has learned to strike with a devastating springing attack that catches many opponents off guard. If you are in the Full Attack stance, you can leap forward and attack an opponent up to 15' away without taking a Move action. All of your attacks on this Turn must target that opponent.

Rank Three: Swift as Lightning

The speed and flexibility of the Hare allows him to strike with fearsome rapidity. Your attacks with unarmed strikes, knives, or Samurai-keyword weapons are considered Simple Actions.

Rank Four: Kick of the Hare

The Hare has learned not only how to strike with speed, but also how to dodge and avoid his foes at the same time. You may now perform your Rank Two Technique while in the Attack stance instead of the Full Attack stance. If you perform the technique in the Full Attack stance, you may make your second attack of the Round against another opponent within 15' of the first opponent.

Rank Five: Reichin's Style

The final lesson of the Hare school is a whirling flurry of leaps, feints, and attacks that come at the opponent from all directions, confusing and disorienting him. You may perform the Feint Maneuver for only 1 Raise, and your damage bonus from a successful Feint is not limited to your Insight Rank x 5.

The Monkey Clan

Toku was a cheerful man who was determined to save the Empire in a time of great crisis. He marched in Toturi's Army with samurai who had been discarded by the Great Clans, and loyally served the Toturi Dynasty for decades, fighting always to restore peace and protect Rokugan from evil. His Minor Clan continues to uphold his vision, working as magistrates in search of a peaceful Rokugan.

The Toku Family: +1 Stamina

The founder of the Toku family, once a mere ronin or less, became the Captain of the Imperial Guard, a hero of the Empire, and ultimately ascended to Tengoku as the Fortune of Virtue. His descendants share that great man's zest for life and compassion for all the people of Rokugan. Toku samurai often become Imperial Magistrates to spread justice and peace across the land. The Toku are known for their cheerful disposition and their strange humor, both of which become apparent within minutes of encountering them.

The Fuzake Family: +1 Perception

The Fuzake were given their family name as a reward for continued service to the Imperial line. The Fuzake are a shugenja family of great intelligence and curiosity about life. Outsiders believe the members of the small family are whimsical and flighty, but the Fuzake have proven themselves stalwart and reliable.

Toku Bushi School

The Monkey Clan has the blessings of the Imperial line and access to skilled experts in the field of war. Hundreds of ronin teachers have stepped through the dojo doors, ready to impart knowledge to an eager audience. These diverse skills were distilled into a single, cohesive fighting style that contains the best aspects of each lesson given in the Monkey dojo.

The Toku Bushi School teaches techniques to help fight against multiple enemies. The Toku learns to keep his head in the face of overwhelming odds and to fight on without hesitation. He sharpens his concentration and resolve to supernatural heights, and his calm on the battlefield becomes one of his greatest weapons.

Toku Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Investigation (Search), Kenjutsu, Lore: History, any 1 High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 3 koku



Techniques

Rank One: Toku's Lesson

A Monkey Bushi will prevail, even in the face of the most difficult odds. You add +1k0 to all Skill Rolls with a TN of 25 or higher. (This includes attack rolls.) Additionally, all your Wound Penalties are reduced by an amount equal to your Willpower plus double your School Rank.

Rank Two: The Strength of One Man

As a member of a very small Minor Clan, the Toku bushi is accustomed to fighting against the odds. While facing multiple opponents or an enemy with a higher Insight Rank, you add +1k1 to your attack and damage rolls.

Rank Three: Courage Above All

The Toku bushi calls on the courage of his Clan's founder to speed his own attacks. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank Four: Forge Your Own Fate

The Toku bushi learns to dodge the worst of any attack. You may spend a Void Point when suffering Wounds to force your opponent to drop the two highest dice from his damage roll, even if this would reduce the total amount of kept dice. This cannot reduce the damage roll to less than 1k1.

Rank Five: Fortune Favors the Mortal Man

The Toku Bushi earns his good blessings with his own sheer tenacity. Once per Round, you may spend a Void Point to reroll any roll. You add +2k1 to the new roll. You may choose to keep the new roll or your original roll.



The Oriole Clan

Emperors often create Minor Clans when they are overwhelmed by a feat of prowess from a single warrior. The Oriole Clan was created because of the Tsi ronin family's constant adherence to their works without recognition. The Tsi family daimyo was finally granted permission to form the Minor Clan when he created the Sword of the Righteous Emperor for the Toturi Dynasty, a blade of unrivaled craftsmanship.

The Tsi Family: +1 Strength

The Tsi family is quite small, and dedicated the art of the smith. Their uninviting demeanor and lack of social graces make the Tsi smiths seem unfriendly, but their skills with the hammer cannot be denied. They rarely travel outside of their lands, and when they do, typically go to Kaiu lands to observe the masters of engineering at work.

Tsi Smith School

Tsi was the name of an ancient gaijin blacksmith who impressed the second emperor, Hantei Genji, with his works. The Emperor declared the man was blessed by the Fortunes and made him a Rokugani on the spot. Centuries later a ronin apprentice took the forgotten name for himself and impressed Emperor Hantei XXX with his style.

Artisans trained in the Tsi Smith School are unique in that everything they learn is to increase their skills crafting weapons and armor. They learn martial styles to know how experts will treat the weapons they create. They have little use for social pleasantries or political maneuvering so their teachings mostly bypass those aspects of a samurai's life.

Tsi Smith School [Artisan]

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Any one Artisan Skill, Commerce, two ranks in any one Craft Skill, Defense, any one Weapon Skill, any one High, Bugei, or Merchant Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Sensible Clothing, Wakizashi, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Tools of the Fortunes

The Tsi Smith dedicates his life to reaching perfection in the heat of the furnace. All Craft Skills are considered School Skills for you for the purposes of effects that target School Skills. Whenever you make a Craft Skill Roll, you gain one point of Glory for succeeding, and one additional point for every increment of 5 by which you exceed the TN. This effect only applies to rolls a made against a TN equal to 10 plus your School Rank x5 or higher.

Rank Two: Tsi Xing Guo's Blessing

The Oriole smith seeks to emulate the works of the Fortune of Steel. When wielding or using one of your own creations (such as a weapon in battle or wearing an elaborate kimono in court), you gain a bonus of +2k1 for Void Points spent on relevant Skill Rolls, rather than the usual +1k1. Additionally, when an item you created is given as a gift among members of the samurai caste, both you and the gift-giver gain Glory equal to your School Rank.

Rank Three: A Crafter's Dedication

A Tsi Smith knows the worth of everything he creates, years after it has left his forge. When crafting, the price of the object you are creating is reduced by half for the purposes of determining how long it takes to create the object in question. When someone in your presence is using an item you created, you may take a Complex Action to grant them a bonus of +Xk1, where X is your School Rank, on the relevant Skill Roll (for example, Kenjutsu for a katana, Defense for armor, or Etiquette for a kimono).

Rank Four: Exhaustive Knowledge

All members of the Tsi Smiths are expected to test their creations for weight, balance, and effectiveness. You may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to allow you to make any attacks with a weapon you created as Simple Actions rather than Complex Actions. This effect lasts for a number of Rounds equal to your School Rank.

Rank Five: Star-filled Steel

Oriole-made items are rivaled only by the masterful items of the Kaiu Forge. Once per day upon the completion of crafting a weapon, you may spend all your Void Points in order to create a Sacred Weapon (as per the Advantage). This weapon is known as a Tsi weapon (e.g., a Tsi Blade, Tsi Tetsubo, etc.), and may possess one of the following qualities: Balanced (the wielder gains a bonus of +1k0 on attack rolls made with the weapon), Swift (the wielder gains a bonus of +5 to his Initiative Score while wielding the weapon), or Unbreakable (the weapon may not be broken). At the GM's option, a truly gifted Tsi smith may also be able to make a weapon Radiant (treat the weapon as jade for the purpose of harming Invulnerable creatures).

Crafting

The Tsi Smith Techniques make use of the Basic Crafting Rules found later in this chapter. GMs who do not wish to allow their players to use those rules should disallow this School.

The Ox Clan

The samurai Morito was cast out of the Unicorn Clan for injuring one of the precious Utaku Steeds. He gathered followers around him and trained them with the same skills he learned from decades of fending for himself on the road. This ragtag band of warriors proved their worth during the War of Spirits and was granted permission to form the Ox Minor Clan as a reward for their services. The insidious Kolat dug its manipulative roots in the Ox from the clan's inception and often used Ox warriors as defenses for the conspiracy's Hidden Temple.

The Morito Family: +1 Stamina

The samurai of the Morito family are determined to make a name for themselves. Their great ambition gained the interest of the Kolat, who accepted them into their ranks as enforcers and warriors. A Morito's skill in the saddle is better than anyone else outside the Unicorn lands. The Morito keep an ear open for the murmurs of the Rokugani underworld, looking for opportunities to increase their power.

Morito Bushi School

The Ox Clan earned its stripes in combat against a spirit army filled with the wisdom of centuries of ancestors. After its debut, the Morito Bushi School garnered respect and a healthy reputation from bushi across the empire. The bulk of the Ox Clan's force is heavy cavalry intended to swiftly crush the core of an infantry army.

The Morito bushi is taught to maximize the benefits of mounted combat. He learns to trample the soldiers standing in front of him and maneuver quickly around the battlefield using his advantage of mounted speed. The Morito most often uses a polearm, though he is trained to adapt to the situation if it requires another style of combat.

Morito Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Defense, Horsemanship, Hunting (Tracking), Kenjutsu, Lore: Kolat, Lore: Underworld, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Horse (Rokugani Pony), Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Legacy of the Four Winds

The Ox warrior fights as one with his horse. At the beginning of combat, you may add +1k0 to your Initiative if you are Mounted. Additionally, you may add +1k0 to attack rolls while Mounted.

Rank Two: The Wind Blows Many Ways

A Morito bushi becomes adept in all facets of war. At the beginning of combat, you may declare a number of Bugei Skills equal to your School Rank. You add +1k0 to all rolls involving the chosen Skills.

Rank Three: Thunder and Fury

The Morito bushi strikes with the speed of his charging horse. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while Mounted.

Rank Four: The Blade Upon the Wind

The Morito bushi can rush forward, moving faster than any of his foes can anticipate. Once per skirmish, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to set your Initiative Score equal to that of another participant in the battle. This may be either ally or opponent. However, after you use this Technique, your Initiative Score is reduced by 5 during the Reactions Stage of each Round until the end of the encounter.

You may only have one Turn per Round, even if your Initiative Score drops below your current Initiative Score.

Rank Five: Fast and Furious

The Morito bushi rides into battle, trampling those who cannot escape his path. While you are attacking an opponent with lower Initiative, you add +2k2 to all attack and damage rolls.

The Snake Clan

The tale of the Snake Clan began with auspicious heroism and ended with tragedy. Isawa Chuda earned the right to his own Minor Clan when he deduced and foiled a maho attack against the Emperor's life. Unfortunately, the malevolent creature Shuten Doji later took hold of the Snake lands and turned all of the Snake into mere puppets for its will. The Phoenix Clan eradicated the Snake Clan in the Five Nights of Shame, and those who survived escaped with knowledge of their dark arts.

The Chuda Family: +1 Strength

Isawa Chuda was a man of conviction and wisdom, and his family reflected that purity for generations. The Chuda were completely loyal to Rokugan and hated the dark forces that menaced its borders. Their hatred of maho-tsukai was well known and the Snake Clan often hunted down illegal cults with vigor.

The Original Chuda Shugenja School

The Chuda Shugenja School was formed with some of the same techniques the Phoenix Inquisitors use to this very day. The founder Isawa Chuda was an Imperial Magistrate, sworn to destroy maho-tsukai. Unfortunately, the descendants of the Chuda have become exactly what Isawa Chuda swore to destroy.

The original Chuda Shugenja School was designed to do one thing: destroy the forces of the Shadowlands. The Chuda would hunt Tainted maho-tsukai and bring down the wrath of the elements on their heads. The Chuda learns to penetrate the substantial defenses of any monsters a maho-tsukai may summon, and his focus on Earth spells allows him to learn the Jade spells required to punish the wicked.

Chuda Shugenja School (Original)

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Etiquette, Lore: Maho, Lore: Shadowlands, Spellcraft, any 2 Skills
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Knife, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 3 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Earth / Air
- **Technique:** *To Punish the Wicked* – Isawa Chuda was a ruthless persecutor of the Shadowlands, and his techniques live on in those who bear his name. You may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to negate an amount of Reduction equal to your School Rank from one targeted opponent. You also add your School Rank to the total of any damage roll made by a spell you cast against a target who possesses the Shadowlands Taint.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Earth, 2 Fire, and 1 Water

The Sparrow Clan

The Sparrow Clan was founded in poverty and continues to make an existence for itself in the barren lands between the Crane and Crab territories. Their founder was a Crane who had a life of luxury before his exile into the Sparrow lands. The hardship forged him into a better man, a lesson taught to every Suzume since. The Sparrow Clan has remained tiny over the years and has made little impact on those outside its borders. Still, they do their best to uphold their principles of compassion and virtue, joining the Three Man Alliance during the Clan War to help protect their people from the ravages of war.

The Suzume Family: +1 Awareness

The Suzume are humble, tenacious, and easy-going. Their interests make them stand out from the rest of the Minor Clans. They appreciate the arts more so than the average samurai, with a particular interest in the art of reciting tales, one of the few forms of entertainment available in their poverty-stricken land. The Suzume feel a stronger connection to the peasantry than most believe a samurai should, some going as far as to work in the fields if extra hands are needed – and they often are.

Suzume Bushi School

The Sparrow Clan has never been a martial power, but Sparrow samurai will march into combat when the call comes. At the foundation of the clan the Suzume were Crane samurai, and their mastery with the katana remains a foundation of the school to this day. Their fighting style displays much about their philosophy on life, as they will take as much time as needed to make a perfect strike.

The Suzume Bushi's love of storytelling gives him an insight into battle. He uses that knowledge to see the ebb and flow of combat, allowing him to strike slower or faster to exploit his opponents' weaknesses. The Suzume Bushi has evolved far from the clan's roots in the Kakita Bushi School, creating abilities that center on Initiative in unique ways.

Suzume Bushi School

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Kenjutsu (Katana), Lore: History, Lore: Theology, Perform: Storytelling, any one Lore Skill, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: All Things in Time

The Suzume watches the flow of combat to discern the perfect time for his assault. At the beginning of the Combat Round, before the first character has taken his Turn, you may reduce your Initiative Score by 5 to add +1k0 to all your attack and damage rolls for the Round.

Rank Two: Purity of Chi

The Suzume's body is filled with disdain for those who indulge in temptations away from the tenets of Bushido. You add +5 to your Armor TN against creatures and against human opponents with lower Honor.

Rank Three: Wisdom is the Greatest Weapon

The Suzume is a masterful storyteller, captivating audiences with his words. You may spend a Void Point to add your Honor Rank to any Perform or Lore Skill Roll.

Rank Four: Quiet Spirit, Steady Blade

The serenity of a Sparrow is often mistaken for complacency, but that is far from the case. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while in the Attack Stance.

Rank Five: Slow and Deadly

The Suzume strikes when his foes least expect it, even if he must weather the worst of the opponents' attacks. During the Round following your adoption of the Center Stance, you add +10 to your attack and damage rolls. You do not gain this benefit during iaijutsu duels.

The Tortoise Clan

Founded after the Empire's first violent encounter with gaijin, the Tortoise Clan is nearly an Imperial family, yet remains distinctly separate from the rest of the families. The Kasuga family has performed crucial feats for the Emperor and is ready to commit all manner of devious acts to maintain the Emperor's power. In many ways, the samurai of the Tortoise Clan serve as the true underhand of the Emperor, with a strong tie to the criminal organizations of the land. They act as the Minor Clans' representation in the Imperial Court, giving voice to those who are too small to attend.

The Kasuga Family: +1 Perception

The Kasuga have little ambition, as the recognition of the Emperor outweighs any need for widespread fame. They are pragmatic and bitter from years of fighting for the cause with the scum of the Empire. They are smugglers, thieves, and often quite brutish, although they are also capable of being smooth diplomats when the clan requires such.

Kasuga Smuggler School

The Kasuga are as true to the Imperial cause as any other clan, though one often wouldn't know this from watching their activities. They perform illegal acts with murderers and thieves and have established a strong connection to criminal cartels across the land. The Tortoise are in fact monitoring these conspiracies in the Emperor's name to make sure the safety of the Empire is not at stake. They also conduct extensive trade in foreign lands in order to ensure that gaijin cannot again threaten Rokugan as they did in the past.

The Kasuga Smugglers must mingle with the dirty criminal riffraff of the Empire, and their abilities reflect that need. They are knowledgeable of the underworld and are ruthless in all of their dealings. In their fight against the worst of Rokugan, the Kasuga Smuggler finds allies wherever he can – a virtuous peasant is a huge asset to a man who is often outnumbered and surrounded on all sides by cutthroats.

Kasuga Smuggler School [Courtier]

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Commerce, Etiquette, Investigation (Notice), Lore: Underworld, Sincerity (Deceit), Stealth, any one High, Merchant, or Low skill
- **Honor:** 2.0
- **Outfit:** Extravagant Clothing, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Calligraphy Set, 5 koku

School Tags, Expanded

In the *Book of Fire*, it explains that School Tags (most commonly Bushi, Courtier, and Shugenja) are principally used to determine a character's ability to take certain Advantages, and specifically to assist GMs in arbitrating the Multiple Schools Advantage (a popular if problematic choice among players!). However, there are additional benefits that Schools can exploit if individual GMs choose to allow the optional systems included in this chapter. For example:

- *Bushi* – Bushi cannot combine ranks with Shugenja Schools. Bushi can use Kata.
- *Courtier* – Courtiers can combine ranks with either Bushi or Shugenja Schools (although never both). To offset their lack of secondary benefits (such as Kata and Kiho), GMs may choose to allow Courtiers to purchase Social Advantages for one point less than normal (to a minimum of 1 point).
- *Shugenja* – Shugenja cannot combine ranks with Bushi Schools. Shugenja can use Kiho (although not as freely as Monk Schools).
- Other, far less common School Tags include:

  Artisan – Artisans are essentially highly specialized Courtiers, although some might object to such a classification. In lieu of the optional Advantage discount mentioned above, GMs may instead wish to offer Artisan characters the ability to increase Artisan and Craft Skills for one Experience Point less than normal.

  Monk – Monks are closest to shugenja in execution, although there are considerable differences. Like shugenja, they can access Kiho, and in fact can access them easier and in greater number than shugenja (see the Brotherhood of Shinsei section later in this chapter for more information).

  Ninja – Ninja are highly specialized bushi who excel in subterfuge, often masquerading as normal bushi to conceal their dishonorable nature. GMs may allow ninja characters to purchase Kata as if they were a member of their clan's principle Bushi School, but using their School Rank instead of their Ring to determine if they meet the Mastery Level. If the GM wishes to play up the mystical nature of ninja, however, he may allow ninja characters to purchase Kiho using their School Rank (as opposed to Monks, who use their School Rank plus Ring, and Shugenja, who use their Ring) compared to the Kiho's Mastery Level. If a GM uses the first option and allows a Ninja character to utilize kata, the Ninja should not be permitted to combine his Ninja ranks with Shugenja schools, but may combine his ranks with Bushi Schools. Conversely if the GM uses the second option and allows a Ninja character access to Kiho, the Ninja should not be allowed to combine his Ninja ranks with Bushi Schools, but may combine his ranks with Shugenja Schools.



Techniques

Rank One: Way of the Tortoise

The Tortoise routinely consort with the lowest elements of Rokugani society, often spend time in foreign ports, dealing with gaijin, pirates, and other villains, and otherwise do things most samurai would find repugnant. They are also skilled merchants, an unavoidable side effect of being smugglers. At character creation, you may learn an additional gaijin language for free with every purchase of the Languages Advantage. You do not lose Honor for using Low skills, or Glory for using the Commerce skill in public, so long as you are doing so as part of your duty to your clan. When dealing with heimin or hinin, such as peasants, merchants, and *eta*, you gain a +2k0 bonus to all Social Skill rolls.

Rank Two: The Shell of the Tortoise

Most samurai in Rokugan revile the Tortoise for their unsavory behavior and their associations with commoners and gaijin, but all samurai know the Tortoise Clan has the special permission and sponsorship of the Emperor. Any clan or Imperial samurai who physically attacks or openly slanders you without provocation on your part (GM's discretion) will immediately lose a number of points of Honor equal to twice your School Rank.

Rank Three: The Eyes of the Emperor

The Tortoise function as spies and agents of the Emperor, and are adept at the lowest of tactics and methods. When acting on behalf of your clan, you may roll additional unkept dice equal to your School Rank on all Low Skills in which you have at least one Skill Rank. This includes any School skills which only function as Low skills when used in certain ways (such as Sincerity with the Deceit Emphasis). This does not work with Advantages and Techniques which simulate Skill Ranks (such as the Crafty Advantage.)

Rank Four: Hand in Hand

The Tortoise work in close cooperation with the common folk of Rokugan, people who other samurai ignore as much as possible. This gives them access to information networks no other samurai can reach. Once per session, if you have access to the local heimin or hinin, you can roll Lore: Underworld / Awareness at TN 25 to learn one useful piece of information (chosen by the GM) that cannot be learned any other way.

Rank Five: The Tortoise Smiles

With his training completed, the Tortoise smuggler can transcend his own limits in the pursuit of his Clan's devious goals, serving the Emperor without constraint. When making a Skill Roll with any of your six specified School Skills, your maximum Raises are not limited by your Void. A number of times per session equal to your Void Ring, you may gain a +5k0 bonus when making a roll with any of your School Skills. This bonus can stack with the bonus from your Rank Three technique.

The Imperial Families

The Imperial Families have sworn fealty directly to the Imperial line, and every action they take is to guarantee a functioning Empire. The Miya travel across the land as the voice of the Emperor, ensuring his decrees are heard by every person in the land. The Seppun are the shields of the Empire, serving as bodyguards and as warriors in the Imperial Legions. The Otomo are the political masterminds of the courts, fiendishly manipulating the Great Clans to serve the higher good. With access to the best teachers, unlimited funding, and higher status, the Imperial Families are truly the elite nobles of Rokugan.

The Miya Family: +1 Reflexes

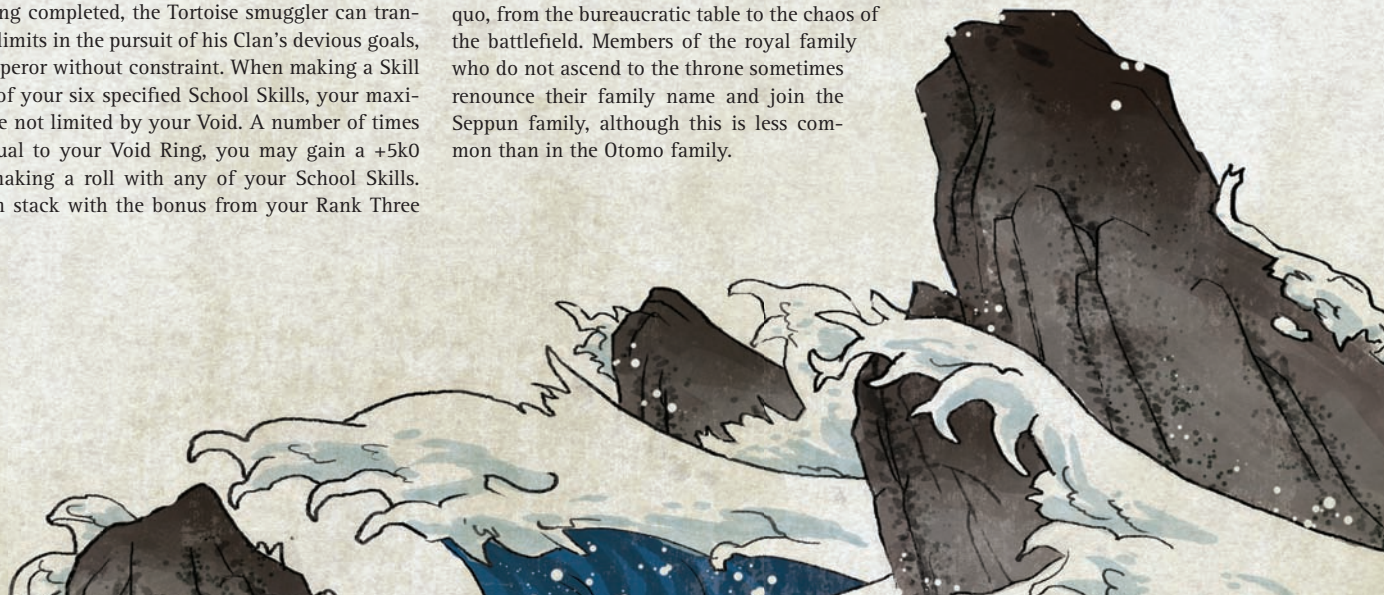
At the dawn of the Empire, Miya was assigned the duty of spreading the news of Fu Leng's defeat across Rokugan. The Miya family has continued to fulfill their duty as heralds and peacemakers with diligence and pride. Miya samurai tend to be solemn, quiet, and focused on upholding their great responsibilities.

The Otomo Family: +1 Intelligence

The Otomo name is often invoked with an undertone of fear, a sentiment easily understood in Rokugan. The Otomo are frightful predators of the Empire's courts, utilizing every advantage of their rank to its utmost potential. The Otomo are manipulative, fiendishly clever, and seem to have no remorse in verbally and politically devastating their foes. It is said that the court is a battlefield deadlier than combat, an adage the Otomo seem to gleefully prove every day. Members of the royal family who do not ascend to the throne often renounce their family name and join the Otomo family.

The Seppun Family: +1 Agility

Seppun was one of Hantei's most loyal followers and the family remains closest to the Imperial line. Seppun samurai are dedicated to the health of the Empire and will perform all duties required to maintain the status quo, from the bureaucratic table to the chaos of the battlefield. Members of the royal family who do not ascend to the throne sometimes renounce their family name and join the Seppun family, although this is less common than in the Otomo family.



Lost Imperial Families

Depending upon the timeline you use in your campaign, the Hantei or Toturi families may be in existence, or may even be upon the throne! If you wish to use these extremely important families in your campaign, they are included here for your use:

The Hantei Family: +1 Void

Descendants of the first Hantei (however far removed), members of the Hantei line tend to have a great destiny, and can excel in nearly any area if they have but the will to focus their efforts.

The Toturi Family: +1 Willpower

The leaders of the Toturi dynasty rewarded their most loyal heroes with the Toturi name. As a result, the Toturi family is formed by those of the greatest bravery and talent. Only a dozen warriors bear the Toturi name at any time, each one with the potential to be one of the leaders of his generation.

Seppun Guardsman School

A Seppun knows from birth that he is born to protect the Emperor from anything that may threaten him. A safe Emperor means a united Rokugan, and Seppun ensure the bright future of the Empire by fulfilling their duty. When chosen for this prestigious service, the Seppun Guardsman, also known as a *Miharu*, sacrifices everything in his life for the job. After all, nothing else is significant when set against the task of protecting the Imperial House.

The Seppun Guardsman School holds defense as its highest priority. The Guardsman learns to put the life of his charge above everything else, including his own survival. The Guardsman becomes stalwart against any sources of corruption that may interfere with his job, and learns to be always aware of his surroundings, ready to identify any threat before it may approach his charge.

Seppun Guardsman School [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Battle, Defense, Etiquette, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), Kyujutsu, any one High skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Never in Darkness

The Seppun are taught to be unswerving in their honor, and nothing can draw them away from their duty. Any time you are rolling to resist a Social Skill roll which could tempt or lead you away from your duty – such as Temptation, Intimidation, or even Courtier – you roll additional unkept dice equal to your School Rank. You gain a +1k1 bonus any time you are making an Investigation roll to detect an ambush or surprise attack.

Rank Two: The Clouds Part

The Seppun's blows are infused with his dedication to the Emperor's cause. At the start of your Turn, you may spend a Void point to add your Honor Rank to the total of your attack and damage rolls until your next Turn.

Rank Three: Sun's Light Reveals

The Seppun's dedication now allows him to see through all manner of deceptions, even magical ones. At any time you may choose to spend a Void point as a Free Action to roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception at TN 25. With a success, you immediately see through all disguises and illusions around you, whether normal or magical in nature. If you are in the presence of the Emperor, his immediate family, or a major Imperial official (Chancellor, Shogun, etc) you do not need to spend a Void point to activate this Technique. Once you have pierced a specific disguise/illusion, it no longer has any effect on you (although a new disguise or illusion you encounter later will function normally).

Rank Four: Speed of Heaven

The power of Heaven infuses the Seppun's arm, allowing him to strike with greater speed. You may now attack as a Simple Action when using weapons with the Samurai keyword.

Rank Five: Heaven Never Falls

The true Seppun bodyguard is never caught off-guard, and can protect his charge even when surprised or disabled. Any time you are within 20' of a person you are guarding, you may spend a Void point to leap in front of a blow or spell which is targeting your charge. The damage is automatically applied to you instead of to your charge. If you are still standing (not Down or Out) after taking this damage, you may immediately take an extra Simple Action, which may be used for any normal purpose, including an attack. This Technique can be used even if your character is Blinded, Prone, Stunned, Dazed, Entangled, or at the Down Wound Rank (but not Grappled or at the Out Wound Rank).

Seppun Shugenja School

The best bushi of Rokugan are granted the privilege of guarding the Emperor. There are threats steel cannot answer, however, and against these the Seppun Shugenja stand ready. As members of the Hidden Guard, the Seppun Shugenja wait and stand vigil at all times of the day for signs of an attack. Their wards are among the best in Rokugan, and the Seppun constantly practice their prayers to the kami in preparation for an assault on their territory. They are the last line of defense for the Emperor and they will not be broken.

The Seppun Shugenja School focuses on defense of the Emperor and his retinue. When danger approaches, the Seppun calls upon the kami with his entire soul, amplifying spell effects and performing magical feats he would not be able to do normally. The Technique is versatile and works with a large variety of offensive and defensive spells, as long as the shugenja is trying to save the life of the Son of Heaven.

Seppun Shugenja School

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Defense, Etiquette, Investigation (Notice), Meditation, Lore: Theology, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Robes, Wakizashi, Bo, Scroll Satchel, Traveling Pack, 10 koku
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Fire / Water
- **Technique:** *In Defense of the Throne* – The Hidden Guard exist only to defend their Emperor, and are terrible opponents for any who might pose a danger to the sanctity of the Son of Heaven. You gain a Free Raise on any spell cast to protect the life, personal belongings, family, or reputation of the Emperor, as long as the action taken would not cause you to lose Honor. This includes members of the Imperial families (though not yourself). You also gain a Free Raise on any spells known only to the Imperial families.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Fire, 2 Earth, and 1 Air

Otomo Courtier School

Like the Seppun, the Otomo are dedicated to the safety of the Emperor. The Otomo simply choose more underhanded methods to prove that devotion. The power of the Emperor must remain strong and unchallenged. This can only happen if no one can gather enough strength to topple the pillars of the Emperor's authority. The Otomo sow suspicion and distrust amongst the Great Clans to prevent any malicious schemes from taking root among them.

The Otomo Courtiers, also known as *Seiyaku*, focus on fully utilizing the tools at their disposal. As an Imperial family, the Otomo automatically garner respect and power from every honorable samurai. The Otomo learns to push this advantage as far as he can to make others cower under the weight of Imperial decree. He uses every underhanded trick in the book, knowing that his blood protects him from the repercussions.

Otomo Courtier School

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Courtier (Manipulation), Defense, Etiquette, Intimidation (Control), Investigation, Sincerity, any one High skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Traditional Clothing, Wakizashi, Knife, Calligraphy Set, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Voice of Heaven

The Otomo believe that nothing done in the name of the Emperor and Imperial authority can ever be truly dishonorable. Their appointed role within the Empire is to spread conflict between the clans so they cannot unite against Imperial power, and the Otomo do this without hesitation. You do not lose Honor for using the Intimidation (Control) Skill. Any time you are in conversation with someone from one of the clans (Great or Minor), you may make a Contested Roll of your Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness to provoke a disagreement or argument between them and someone from another clan or faction of your choice.

Rank Two: Destiny Has No Secrets

The Otomo have information networks that rival those of the Scorpion, and can call on them in almost any part of the Empire. If you have the opportunity to seek out your contacts, you may spend a Void point to roll Courtier/Awareness at TN 25 to learn one piece of critically useful information (chosen by the GM).

Rank Three: My Master's Voice

The Otomo speak with the direct authority of the Emperor, and the more experienced among them have mastered the art known as "*obiesaseru*," using the authority of the Son of Heaven to stun their foes. You may only use this Technique against honorable samurai (Honor Rank 1.0 or better) who revere the Emperor – criminals, bandits, the Lost, and nonhumans are immune to its effects. To use obiesaseru, you must take a Complex Action to pause, gather your willpower, and shout an appropriate command (typically something like, "Stop in the name of the Emperor!"). You make a Contested Social Skill roll of Intimidation (Control) / Willpower against the target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. (If the target sincerely believes he is acting honorably, he gains a Free Raise to his roll.) If you win the roll, on his next Turn the target may not move, attack, cast spells, or perform any other action that would directly obstruct or threaten you or your immediate friends/allies (GM's discretion as to who is considered your ally). He may, however, attack others who are not your allies, and regardless he can always use the Defense and Full Defense Postures.

Rank Four: The Emperor's Protection

As a favored servant of Imperial power, the Otomo is under special protection, and can easily crush those foolish enough to disagree with him in public. Any time you are in an argument or debate with another person, you may spend a Void point to make a Contested Roll of your Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness. If you win the roll, they must either agree with your position or immediately lose 5 points of Honor.

Rank Five: The Virtues of Command

The Otomo is now able to bring the full power of Imperial authority to bear on those who displease him. When making a Contested Social Roll against someone who reveres Imperial authority, you may gain a +5k0 bonus on your roll.

Miya Herald School

The Miya are Imperial messengers, charged with spreading the words of the Emperor and the Imperial Court to even the most remote regions of Rokugan. While they are protected in most areas by their Imperial status, the Miya must often travel to places of great conflict and danger. Occasionally bandits and criminals become unreasonable or desperate and attack the herald. Thankfully, the Miya is well trained for that eventuality.

The Miya Herald School focuses on building trust and cordiality with everyone in the Miya's path. He speaks with confidence and composure to ease tensions and smooth altercations. The Miya learns ways to boost his defenses and spread peace to achieve the dream of a strong, united empire.

Miya Herald School [Courtier]

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Courtier (Rhetoric), Defense, Etiquette (Courtesy), Horsemanship, Lore: Heraldry, Sincerity, any one High or Bugei skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Sensible Clothing, Wakizashi, Calligraphy Set, Horse (Rokugani pony), 10 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Voice of the Emperor

The Miya learn the ways of the Empire, so they can spread the word of the Emperor far and wide, and the art of non-aggression, so their words will be heard by all who respect the Emperor. While inside the borders of the Empire, you may spend a Void point to gain the Way of the Land Advantage for the province you currently occupy – this effect lasts until you next sleep. Also, any Rokugani who reveres the Emperor and who knowingly and deliberately attacks you will automatically lose a number of points of Honor equal to twice your School Rank.

Rank Two: Eyes of the Emperor

The Miya serve as peacekeepers as well as messengers, brokering treaties between warring factions in the Empire, and learn to remain impartial under the most intense pressure. You may add your Honor Rank to all Etiquette (Courtesy) skill rolls made to resist others' attempts to influence you.

Rank Three: Hand of the Emperor

The Miya's aura of peacefulness and non-aggression has now reached the point where it becomes difficult for honorable foes to attack him at all. At the start of a skirmish, or during the Reactions Step of any later round in a skirmish, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to prevent any Rokugani who reveres the Emperor from being able to harm you before the next Reactions step. (They can still attempt to capture or restrain you in a non-damaging way.) This Technique only takes effect as long as the Miya is not participating in the skirmish or in a duel.

Rank Four: Blessings of the Emperor

At this rank, the Miya have developed a personality strong enough to impose their demand for peace on the more violent individuals around them, in what is essentially a more specialized form of the Otomo technique of obiesaseru. This may be done a number of times per session equal to your School Rank, but you may only use this Technique against honorable samurai (Honor Rank 1.0 or better) who revere the Emperor – criminals, bandits, the Lost, and nonhumans are immune to its effects. To use this Technique, you take a Complex Action to step forward and forcefully demand an end to violence. ("This brawling will cease, in the name of the Emperor!") You make a Contested Roll of your Courtier (Rhetoric) / Awareness against the Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower of all affected persons within hearing. All individuals who lose the roll must immediately cease all aggressive action, and cannot attack or cast offensive spells until they take damage or you give them permission to fight. (They can still use defensive abilities and the Defense and Full Defense stances.) The effect lasts for one minute, and the Technique can be used on the same targets again if it is resisted or expires. This Technique affects both enemies and allies.

Rank Five: Glory of the Emperor

The Herald is now a true master of non-aggression and diplomacy. When rolling with the Courtier or Etiquette skills against a target with at least Honor 1.0, you may add a +5k0 bonus to the roll.



The Brotherhood of Shinsei

The Brotherhood of Shinsei is composed of a diverse group of monks and scholars dedicated to rescuing the soul of the Empire. They live their lives in search of the state of enlightenment, a perfect understanding of the world and everything that lives within it. Each sect of the Brotherhood believes its own method of enlightenment is the true path. This has led to hundreds of different techniques dedicated towards calming the spirit and reaching balance. The Brotherhood of Shinsei would have it no other way, since their founder's greatest adage is that each man must follow his own road.

Monk Schools

Monk Schools are like shugenja Schools in that they possess only a single basic Technique they learn at character creation, and never gain others. The other abilities possessed by a monk are represented by the Kiho he knows. Each of the following Monk Schools, also called Temples, represents a network of temples devoted to a particular sect within the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and reflects where the character was trained and indoctrinated into the Order.

The entry noted Devotion on each School describes the primary focus of that particular sect, whether it is on the Tao of Shinsei or the study of the Fortunes' strictures. All monastic sects study both, as dictated by Imperial law, but most study one or the other with greater emphasis.

The Four Temples Monk

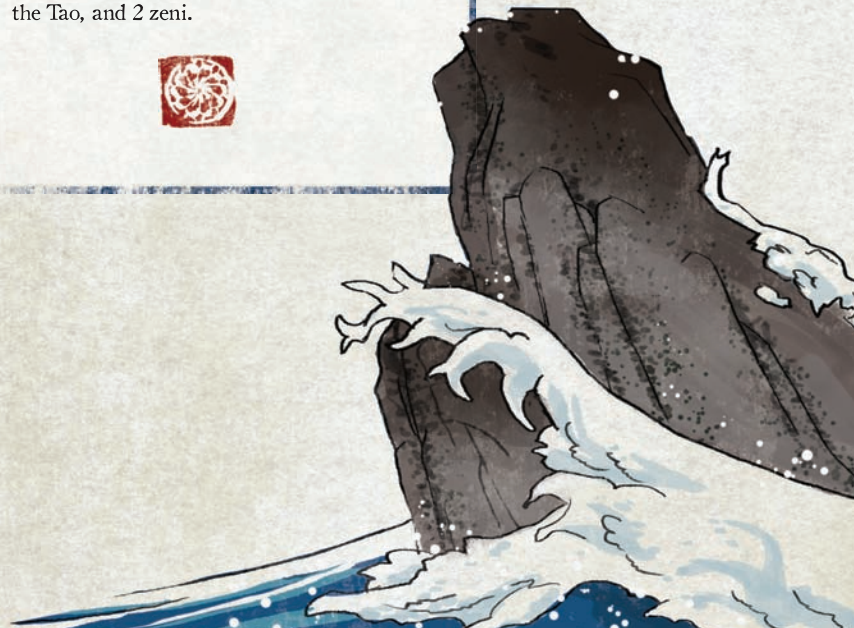
Many sects believe that monks must retreat into seclusion to achieve harmony with the elements. The monks of the Four Temples sect know that man is a social creature and it is in his nature to interact with others. The Four Temples monks believe they must maintain a strong connection with civilization to unravel the mysteries of the world. The Four Temples monks remain in direct contact with the political heart of the Empire – indeed, one of its biggest monasteries lies within the Imperial capital. Four Temple monks may become advisors to major generals or daimyo, or they may travel the road, helping the unfortunate who cross their path.

- **Devotion:** Shintao
- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette, Jiujutsu, Lore: Theology (Shintao), Meditation, any two Skills
- **Technique:** *Soul of Civility* – Brothers of the Four Temples are accustomed to interacting with extremely important visitors and receiving invitations to influential courts. When you spend a Void Point to augment a High Skill Roll or a Social Skill Roll, you gain +2k2 instead of the normal +1k1.

Playing a Monk

The first thing you need to know about playing a monk character is that you may earn the undying hatred of your GM! Monks, while respected and given leeway by the samurai of Rokugan, are nevertheless a complicating factor in a great number of political and social situations, and you should make absolutely sure you have your GM's permission before you even consider attempting to play one. Assuming you have permission, however, keep in mind the following mechanical considerations regarding playing a monk:

- A monk's Traits all begin at 2, just like any other character. Monks begin with a Void of 3, however.
- All monks in the Empire of Rokugan are affiliated to some degree with the Brotherhood of Shinsei. For our purposes, you may select one of the Monk Schools listed on the following pages, or you may choose to be an unaffiliated monk. Choosing the latter puts you at a significant disadvantage, however.
- In addition to the benefits of their School, monk characters begin the game knowing three Kiho. They must meet all prerequisites in order to use these Kiho, however (see the section on Kiho on page 261 of this chapter). Brotherhood monk characters gain 2 new Kiho each time they advance in School Rank.
- In addition to the Kiho listed above, a monk character may purchase additional Kiho by spending a number of Experience Points equal to the Kiho's Mastery Level. These are essentially 'bonus Kiho,' and a character may never know more of these than his cumulative School Rank in all Monk Schools.
- Monks possess Glory 1 and Status 0. A monk's Status may increase normally but gains only half the normal amount of Glory, since they eschew fame.
- All monks begin with the following outfit: Bo (or pair of jo), coarse and plain Traveling Clothing, a Scroll Satchel with passages from the Tao, and 2 zeni.



The Order of Heroes Monk

A small sect that is not well known among those outside the Brotherhood, the monks of the Order of Heroes are among the most proactive sects in Rokugan. Adherents are followers of the Tao, the Thunder Dragon, and the Fortune Goemon (the Fortune of Heroes). They believe the potential for greatness exists within the soul of all men. With the proper encouragement, any samurai can become a hero of legend to inspire and teach others. The Order actively seeks out threats and problems that exist within the Empire, and then seeks out individuals who possess the proper talents to deal with the matter conclusively. In this way the Order has quietly assisted in the births of hundreds of heroes and legends, tales remembered in plays and novels throughout history. The Order remains all but unknown, however, since adherents consider it vital perform their duties without ever drawing attention to themselves.



- **Devotion:** Shintao
- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Jiujutsu, Lore: Theology (pick an Emphasis), Meditation, any two Skills
- **Technique:** *Destiny's Hand* – The Order's esoteric methods allow for the passage of chi from a monk to another without difficulty. You may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to confer a bonus of +1k1 to any one roll this round by an ally who has not yet taken his Turn. You may not enhance a roll that cannot normally benefit from Void Points (such as a damage roll, for instance).

The Shrine of the Seven Thunders Monk

When Rokugan desperately called for heroes to defeat the threat of the dark god Fu Leng, seven mortals sacrificed everything to save their Empire. The monks of the Shrine of the Seven Thunders honor these heroes by dedicating their entire lives to enlightenment through contemplation and tranquility. These monks rarely leave the monastery, choosing instead to become one with their environment.

- **Devotion:** Shintao
- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Skills:** Athletics, Jiujutsu, Lore: Theology (Shintao), Lore (pick one), Meditation, any two Skills
- **Technique:** *Walk with the Prophet* – Brothers of this shrine emphasize training in one element over all others. All three of your initial Kiho must be selected from the same element. Your Insight Rank is considered one higher for the purposes of meeting the Mastery Level of Kiho from this element.

The Temple of Kaimetsu-uo Monk

The adherents of Kaimetsu-uo, the founder of the Mantis Clan, have a considerably different view of that heroic individual than the samurai who belong to the Clan he founded. They believe Kaimetsu-uo performed legendary deeds because he wanted to avoid the destruction that would have come if he had stayed and contested the claim to the Crab Clan's leadership. The monks of the Temple of Kaimetsu-uo believe enlightenment comes from conciliation and peace with others.

- **Devotion:** Fortunist
- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Skills:** Defense, Jiujutsu, Lore: Theology (Fortunes), Meditation, any three Skills
- **Technique:** *The Path of Purity* – Your soul dwells in a place of wisdom and serenity, and your ire is difficult to arouse under any circumstances. When making a Contested Social Skill Roll initiated by your opponent, you may use any Ring in place of the normal Trait used (typically Awareness) for the purposes of that roll.

The Temple of Osano-Wo Monk

Perhaps the most militant of all Brotherhood sects, the Temple of Osano-Wo stands apart from the other Fortunist orders because of its extraordinary focus on physical prowess and martial arts. Adherents believe enlightenment comes with hard work and physical exertion, and a well-trained body leads to a well-trained mind and soul. Monks of this order are notorious for ritually scarring their skin to mark the progress of their training, giving them an alarming appearance.

- **Devotion:** Fortunist
- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Skills:** Battle, Jiujutsu 2, Lore: Theology (Fortunes), Meditation, any two Bugei Skills
- **Technique:** *The Hand of Thunder* – The emphasis of the Thunderer's monks on the purity of unarmed combat is obvious to all who encounter them. You gain a +0k1 bonus to all damage rolls stemming from unarmed attacks. This effect is cumulative with any other effects that allow you to roll or keep additional dice on unarmed damage.

The Temples of the Thousand Fortunes Monk

Rokugan is a devout Empire filled with thousands of shrines and monasteries across the land. The Temples of the Thousand Fortunes are as diverse as the gods they revere. It is almost impossible to categorize all of the monks Temples of the Thousand Fortunes as one group, but most believe they must work diligently to prove worthy of enlightenment.

- **Devotion:** Fortunist
- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Skills:** Jiujutsu, Lore: History, Lore: Theology (Fortunes), any one Lore Skill, Meditation, any two Skills
- **Technique:** *The Thousand Forms* – There is no limit to the variety of blessings bestowed upon the loyal members of the Brotherhood by their divine patrons. You begin the game knowing four Kiho, rather than the normal three possessed by all Brotherhood monk characters. These do not count against the additional Kiho you can purchase with Experience Points (which you may do as normal).

Ronin

As described in the *Book of Air*, ronin often find themselves persecuted due to the circumstances of their existence. Despite what many believe, however, there is great variety among the ranks of wave men in the Empire.

There are two principle types of ronin: clan ronin and true ronin. Clan ronin are samurai who once served a clan but for whatever reason have been cast out and forbidden to use their family name and the mon of the clan they once served. Typically such a punishment is reserved only for the grossest failures of duty. True ronin were born to one or both samurai parents, but were not offered fealty to a clan. This happens most often to children born out of wedlock to a mother who is not of the samurai caste, or when one or both parents were themselves ronin.

Schools are something of a sticky issue with ronin. Those who have been cast out of their clans presumably already know at least one Technique they learned at the dojo, but they have been forbidden from progressing any further in the School. Further, they understand that to teach their clan's secret Techniques to anyone else not only forfeits their lives, but the lives of any immediate family who may still serve the clan. Few ronin are inclined to commit such an atrocity.

True ronin grow up without any opportunity to study at a dojo, and as a result typically have no School Rank or Techniques. However, there are a handful of ronin groups throughout the Empire who have existed long enough, are well enough organized, and have sufficient resources to develop their own Techniques. Such groups often induct other ronin into their ranks, growing in strength and numbers with each new addition. Because of this, a True Ronin character may choose either to begin with no Technique, or he may choose to begin knowing a Rank 1 Ronin Path.

As a ronin advances in Insight Rank, he may only gain additional Techniques by seeking out other ronin groups that have their own unique fighting styles. Due to the nature of ronin and their tendency to move from one place to another, many groups are secretive regarding their Techniques, and applicants must go to great lengths to prove both their worth and their loyalty. Typically, if a ronin progresses to the next Insight Rank before he has a chance to learn a technique at the previous Rank, he has missed the opportunity to learn a Technique and his previous Insight Rank will remain "empty."

Optionally, a more generous GM may opt to let ronin learn simpler Techniques at higher Insight Ranks to simulate the haphazard paths that most wave-men follow in their lives and studies. However, this can sometimes lead to abusive play in which ronin players attempt to pick and choose the best Techniques regardless of Insight Rank. The GM should exercise care and good judgment when allowing such an option.

Several Rank 1 Ronin Paths are detailed in this section. Additional Paths, including some of higher Rank, will be detailed in future supplements. There is the possibility of larger, more complex institutions including Advanced Schools and possibly even Basic Schools appearing in future supplements as well. Of course, such potent accomplishments can only be maintained by the largest and wealthiest of ronin brotherhoods, and as such are generally very rare.

From Specific to Generic

Ronin Paths, which are essentially a specialized form of an Alternate Path, tend to be pretty specific in terms of their name and the history of the organization that created them. This is because these Techniques do not exist in a vacuum, but are born from a specific group, and are rarely in use for more than a few decades before the group that created them fades into obscurity. Just because the organizations listed below may not exist during the time of your campaign, however, does not mean that you cannot make use of the mechanics if they suit your fancy. Each of these groups could easily represent another ronin archetype that may well exist during the era of your campaign. For example:

- *Disciples of Sun Tao* – This Path could represent any organization with an emphasis on dueling.
- *Forest Killers* – Sadly, the Forest Killers have existed almost as long as the Empire, and could be used in almost any era. Failing that, they represent any large, menacing group that can pose a threat even to small cities.
- *Tawagoto's Army* – Tawagoto's Army can represent any band of ronin that works together for mutual assistance or for the common good in order to achieve a specific goal.
- *Tengoku's Justice* – Similar to the Forest Killers, Tengoku's Justice represents smaller, more mobile and faster-attacking bandit groups.
- *The Tessen* – Although not quite as long-lived as the Forrest Killers, the Tessen have been around for centuries and can fit into most campaigns. Otherwise, they can represent any small group of warriors who prefer to fight defensively, typically with an iron fan as their weapon of choice.



Clan Ronin

- Created as normal for a clan-affiliated samurai
- Must purchase the Disadvantage *Social Disadvantage: Ronin*
- May not gain additional ranks in starting School
- Must seek out higher-Rank Ronin Paths when increasing in Insight Rank

True Ronin, Option #1

- Gains no family bonus or School; gains an additional 25 Experience Points during character creation
- Must purchase the Disadvantage *Social Disadvantage: Ronin*
- Starting Honor: 3.5
- Outfit: Ashigaru or Light Armor, Tattered Clothing, Daisho, Traveling Pack
- Must seek out higher-Rank Ronin Paths when increasing in Insight Rank

True Ronin, Option #2

- Gain no family bonus; gains an additional 10 experience points during character creation
- Must purchase the Disadvantage *Social Disadvantage: Ronin*
- Begin with one Rank 1 Ronin Path from this chapter
- Must seek out higher-Rank Ronin Paths when increasing in Insight Rank

Disciples of Sun Tao [Bushi]

The ronin who call themselves the disciples of Sun Tao are a group that have taken the teachings of the legendary ronin tactician Sun Tao, who is said to have studied with each of the Great Clans in turn, and applied his wisdom to the art of the duel. Although they lack the skill and recognition of dueling traditions within the Great Clans, those who follow dueling have, over time, come to grudgingly acknowledge their strength.

Technique Rank: 1

- **Benefit:** +1 Reflexes
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, any 2 Skills
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 1 koku
- **Technique:** *The Gaze of Sun Tao* – Students of Sun Tao understand the relationship between honor and skill. You may add your Honor Rank to the total of all Iaijutsu Skill Rolls.

Forest Killers [Bushi]

The Forest Killers are perhaps the most ruthless and fearsome bandit organization in the history of the Empire. For centuries they exploited the superstitions surrounding the

Shinomen Mori by hiding within its depths. They were eventually eradicated by the Emerald Champion, but their demise proved short-lived, and within a few years a new group of Forest Killers was plaguing the lands around the Shinomen once more.

Technique Rank: 1

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Stealth, any 1 Weapon Skill
- **Honor:** 1.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 2 koku
- **Technique:** *Strength of the Forest* – The Forest Killers are a formidable group who recruit only the toughest and most durable of warriors to join their band. You gain additional Wounds per Wound Rank equal to your Stamina. You may also add your Stamina to the total of all damage rolls resulting from melee attacks.

Tawagoto's Army [Bushi]

Inspired by the young and charismatic ronin Tawagoto, this group of ronin and peasants rallied together to protect the innocent people of Rokugan from the rash of violent peasant revolutions inspired by the mad monk Kokujin while the Great Clans were engaged in another war of succession. Eventually the clans recognized the threat and sanctioned Tawagoto's activities, lending him aid to complete the task of hunting down Kokujin's forces and destroying them.

Technique Rank: 1

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Battle, Defense, Etiquette, Investigation, Kenjutsu, Spears, any 1 Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 1 koku
- **Technique:** *The People's Will* – Those who are guided by honor carry the strength of the Empire's people in their actions. When you spend a Void Point to add a bonus of +1k1 to any Skill or Trait Roll, you may also add your Honor Rank to the total of that roll.

Tengoku's Justice [Bushi]

Ruthless in the extreme, the mountain bandits known as Tengoku's Justice could threaten the reputation of the Forest Killers as the most reviled bandits in the Empire if they survive long enough. Their heretical name, however, gives additional reason to hate them, likely shortening their expected survival. The Tengoku's Justice band makes their home in the Dragon mountains, pillaging and laying waste to entire villages to gather the supplies and wealth they desire. They trust in the traditional inaction of the Dragon to make their apprehension less likely, but have drawn the unwavering attention of the magistrates of the Mantis Clan due to their actions.

Technique Rank: 1

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Horsemanship, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, any 1 Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Bow with 20 Arrows or Knife, Traveling Pack, 1 koku
- **Technique:** *Heaven's Curse* – The sheer ruthless, murderous nature of the Tengoku's Justice fighting style could rival even that of the Forest Killers. Whenever you surprise an opponent in a skirmish, you may double your Strength for the purposes of determining how many damage dice you roll on that attack.

The Tessen [Bushi]

Composed primarily of former Crane and Lion, the Tessen came together to attempt to protect the people of Toshi Ranbo, centuries before it became the new Imperial City. The constant changing of hands between the two clans left the city in a terrible state, often plagued by criminals who knew the clans were too busy with one another to bother hunting them. Because the Crane forbade any save themselves to carry a blade within the city, these ronin took up the tessen as their weapon of choice, and continue to patrol the streets of the Imperial City today, albeit with only grudging acknowledgement from the city's Imperial protectors.

Technique Rank: 1

- **Benefit:** +1 Stamina
- **Skills:** Battle, Defense, Investigation, Jiujutsu, War Fans, any 2 Skills
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, War Fan, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 2 koku
- **Technique:** *Folds of the Iron Fan* – Few in Rokugan have mastered the facets of the iron fan with the same fluency as the Tessen. When wielding a war fan in your off hand, you suffer no penalties for attacks made with that hand. You also add your rank in War Fans to the total of your Armor TN at all times while wielding a war fan.



Optional Systems

The basic mechanical system described in the *Book of Earth* is sufficient for almost any campaign. For players experienced with previous editions of the Legend of the Five Rings RPG, however, there are many additional systems that have been introduced in the past. In order to offer as much customization and as many campaign options as possible, we have included a number of these systems here. Beginning Game Masters and players may wish to introduce such things gradually, or restrict them to non-player characters.

The Mass Battle System

The most sacred duty of any samurai is to make war upon the enemies of his lord. For many, that duty takes its most literal form as massive combats on the field of battle, with hundreds or even thousands of samurai on either side. For obvious reasons, conflicts of this magnitude cannot be resolved using the normal combat system, which is designed for small skirmishes. While some GMs may prefer to simply dictate the outcome of a given battle, others may prefer a dice-based method of resolving such instances. In these cases, the Mass Battle system is used.

The Mass Battle system allows characters to determine how involved in the fighting they are, and then uses the characters' capabilities to determine how well they are faring at that level. Conflicts of this scale are measured in Battle Turns, which consist of thirty minutes each. Every character participating in the battle must determine the results of their involvement once per Battle Turn. The length of a battle can vary wildly, but a good rule of thumb is that one Battle Turn takes place per 250 troops on each side. So a battle between two forces of 500 men each would take two Battle Turns to resolve.

Each Battle Turn takes place in the following stages:

- **Stage 1: Declaration** – During the Declaration Stage, all characters participating in the battle should determine their level of involvement. These range from Reserves, where a character is positioned well behind the front lines and relatively safe from the vast majority of his enemies, to Heavily Engaged, in which the character is positioned on the very front lines and as such is situated right in the middle of his foes. Each character may choose to be in one of the following four levels: Reserves, Disengaged, Engaged, or Heavily Engaged.
- As the rules are written, characters may switch to any level of engagement during any Battle Turn. However, GMs seeking a grittier and more realistic depiction of battle may wish to place some restrictions on a character's ability to move swiftly from one level of engagement to another. A character in the Reserves



could have difficulty getting himself into the thick of battle on the very next Battle Turn, for example. If this option is used, a character cannot change his level of engagement by more than one (from Reserves to Disengaged, for example) unless special circumstances or a Heroic Opportunity intervene.

- Once a character's level of involvement has been determined, the GM should make a Contested Battle (Mass Combat) / Perception Roll between the generals in command of the rival armies. If one of the generals wins the roll by 5 or more, that general's army is considered to be winning while the other side is losing. If the difference is less than 5, the battle is considered even. GMs may modify the results of this roll based on numerical advantage, terrain, weather conditions, successful Heroic Opportunities in previous Battle Turns, or any of a litany of other factors as they see fit.
- **Stage 2: Determination** – With the characters' involvement and the current status of the battle determined, each player rolls one die and adds to it his character's Water Ring and his Battle Skill, if any. The total of this roll is compared to the Battle Table to determine how much Glory the character has accumulated, how many Wounds he has suffered, and whether or not he encounters a Duel or Heroic Opportunity. If he does encounter a Duel or Heroic Opportunity, the character proceeds to Resolution (below). If a character does not encounter a Duel or Heroic Opportunity, then after he rolls to see how much Glory and/or Wounds he has accrued, the Battle Turn ends for him.
- **Stage 3: Resolution** – Characters who encounter a Duel or Heroic Opportunity have a special opportunity to take a more dramatic role in the battle. A result of Duel on the Battle Table indicates the character has come across an opponent of roughly equivalent skill, and the two have engaged in a private duel. Such events are generally allowed to play out by other samurai on the battlefield, because interfering suggests the samurai being aided is incapable of dealing with the matter, a grievous insult. These duels may be traditional iaijutsu duels, or they can simply be one-on-one skirmishes with whichever weapons are available, depending upon the combatants.
- Heroic Opportunities are somewhat more elaborate skirmish situations that arise depending upon where a character is situated in the battle. They generally involve an opportunity for greater glory on the battlefield, although they can easily lead to a character's death if he oversteps his abilities. A character does not have to accept a Heroic Opportunity – he can decline, taking the better part of valor, although this will often have a negative impact on the course of the battle.



Surrender?

The Code of Bushido demands no weakness in the face of one's enemies, and generally surrender is not looked upon favorably. For those who are not trained exclusively in the art of war, however, it is considered wasteful to give up one's life and deprive one's lord of your talents. Shugenja in particular are expected to be afforded this chance, because of their relative scarcity compared to their bushi brothers.



Heroic Opportunities

Each Heroic Opportunity is unique, and when a character's roll on the Mass Battle Table results in a Heroic Opportunity, the GM should select one appropriate to the character. A sample list is presented below, and GMs should feel free to create more. Some of them will be applicable only under certain circumstances, such as occuring during a naval battle or requiring a shugenja.

A Clear Shot

The front lines break, and you have a clear shot at the leader of the opposing army with a ranged attack!

The TN of the shot depends upon the commander and his Armor TN, although given the chaotic nature of the conflict it should not be less than 30. A successful hit is worth 4 Glory, even though a killing shot is highly unlikely. If the shot is successful, the enemy general suffers a penalty of -5 to his next Battle Roll.

Attack the Archers

Suddenly, your character sees a path that leads directly to the reserves of the opposing army. You have an opportunity to attack their archers, thus making an opportunity for the reinforcements to charge.

If the attack against the archers (which is a skirmish) is successful, the opposing general has a penalty of -5 to his next Battle Turn, and the character conducting the attack gains 2 Glory.

Attack the Shugenja

A break opens in the battle and you have the opportunity to attack the reserves. The enemy shugenja suddenly stop their battle rituals as you charge into their ranks!

A successful attack on an opposing shugenja, while exceedingly dangerous, can be the key to victory. The loss of such a vital resource results in the opposing general suffering a penalty of -5 to his next Battle Roll. The attacking character gains 3 Glory. Because of the relative scarcity of shugenja, it is considered honorable to offer them a chance to surrender. Doing so gains you 2 Honor, whether they choose to accept your offer or not.

Be Prepared to Dig Two Graves

You see a samurai from the enemy's army cut down one of your kinsmen. You may spend the rest of this battle seeking that samurai.

If the character chooses to pursue his enemy, he must enter the enemy's level of engagement and succeed at a Contested Battle/Perception Roll to locate him. If the character fails, his enemy eludes him. If he succeeds, he may immediately initiate the Show Me Your Stance opportunity. If the opponent wishes to confront the character, the GM may choose to ignore the Contested Roll.

Break the Line

You receive the command to charge the enemy's front line!

The character must face 2 to 4 Rank 2 samurai to successfully attack the front line. The character is immediately moved to the Heavily Engaged level. During the next Battle Turn, reduce the character's roll by 2, but add 3 to his general's Battle Roll. The character gains 3 Glory.

Few Against Many

You watch as an ally charges into the midst of battle. His fate is sealed as enemies surround him, unless someone comes to his aid.

Treat this opportunity as a skirmish against 3-6 samurai of one rank lower than the character (to a minimum of Rank 1). If the character's ally survives, the character gains 3 Glory and may be awarded the Allies Advantage at the GM's discretion.

Fire the Sails

One certain way to attack an enemy ship is to burn its sails and render it immobile. You may accomplish this with a well-placed flaming arrow.

The TN of this shot depends upon the distance between the ships. A successful shot renders the ship immobile until a new sail can be hung, and reduces the opposing general's next Battle Roll by 3.

For the Empire

The hideous creatures you face seem unfazed by the deaths of so many among their ranks, pressing forward despite heavy losses. Suddenly you notice a Shadowlands warrior shouting commands to the foul creatures. Perhaps the death of their leader will have more impact.

The samurai may fight a Lost samurai of one Rank higher than the character, a minor oni of some sort, or any other corrupted foe the GM prefers. If the battle is successful, the character gains 3 Glory. The opposing general suffers a penalty of -5 to his next Battle Roll.

Hold This Ground!

Your commander tells you to hold the line! If you and your troops can hold your ground, you will bring great glory and honor to your Clan.

The character and the unit he is with must hold the line against opposing forces. If they are Engaged, they must face a number of opponents equal to their number plus 2, and gain 2 Glory if successful. If Heavily Engaged, an additional +2 opponents are present, and the Glory gain is increased to 4.

Join the Battle

In your position at the army's reserves, you see a hole in the enemy general's strategy. Perhaps now is the time to bring your strength into the battle!

The character can choose to move his position to Disengaged. If he chooses to do so, he immediately rolls again on the Battle Table with no modifiers to the roll.

Overwhelm

You and the troops in your unit see an enemy commander in the midst of battle with no guardians, separated in the chaos of battle. Though it may not be the most honorable thing to do, overwhelming him might give your army a deciding advantage.

The character and any others in his unit may decide to attack a single samurai of Rank 3 or 4. If this Opportunity is successful, the opposing general suffers a –5 penalty to his next Battle Roll.

Pick Up the Banner

You see the banner carrier fall to arrows. You have the opportunity to carry the army's banner, boosting your army's morale. However, the banner carrier is a choice target for enemy soldiers.

The character that accepts the burden of the army's banner will be attacked by many samurai and archers every Battle Turn until he abandons the banner. During every Battle Turn the character holds the banner, his general gains a +3 bonus to his Battle Roll.

Protect the General

You suddenly come across the army's general, who has lost his personal guard. The general commands you to stand at his side and protect him from attack. You must follow him wherever he goes (some generals are more courageous than others).

Direct this character's level of engagement for the rest of the battle. The character gains one extra point of Glory every Battle Turn.

Rally the Archers

Your army's archers are in disarray. You must regroup your ranged troops and ready them to fight once more.

The PC must use inspirational words and a roll of Perform: Oratory / Awareness at a TN of 20 to succeed. If successful, his general gains +5 to his next roll, and the PC gains 1 point of Glory. If this Battle Opportunity fails or is refused, his general suffers –5 to his next roll

Ramming Speed

The captain of your boat calls out, "ramming speed!" You must brace yourself to board an enemy ship as your boat enters the thick of battle.

If the character accepts this Opportunity, he must place himself in the Heavily Engaged level. He must fight 1 to 4 samurai of one lower Rank than the character. The character gains 1 point of Glory.

Save a Wounded Comrade

In the midst of battle, you notice a kinsman has fallen! You have the opportunity to save him.

While saving his comrade, the character cannot undergo any other Heroic Opportunities. Each Battle Turn, the character faces two or three Rank 1 or 2 opponents. If the character successfully defends the fallen comrade, he gains an additional point of Glory for each Battle Turn (and the ally may wish to bestow gifts in return for his life).

Save a Wounded Opponent

Between breaths you notice a wounded enemy. He calls out for you to help him. You may ignore him without penalty (he is acting cowardly, after all), but if you aid him, he will be morally obliged to you. The opponent could also become a valuable hostage to be used in negotiations with the enemy...

The character must move to the Reserves level of activity as soon as he can. The character gains no bonuses for completing this Opportunity.

Save Our Ship

Your ship has been the target of heavy fire throughout the entire battle, and you find out it has suffered structural damage. In a few moments it will sink, and without warning your crewmates will all die. You must warn the others and help them off the ship.

If the character successfully saves the lives of his crewmates, he gains 3 Glory.

Shadowlands Madness

The curse of the Shadowlands Taint falls upon those fighting by your side and they fall to the ground, screaming. A few moments later they rise again — with an unholy gleam in their eyes.

The character must fight against 1 to 4 Tainted samurai either equal to the PC's Rank (in Heavily Engaged) or one lower (in Engaged). The character gains 1 Glory for succeeding. If the character fails this Opportunity, his general has a –3 penalty to his next Battle Roll.

Show Me Your Stance

An enemy commander notices you and loudly challenges you to a duel.

If the character accepts, initiate a duel against a samurai of Rank 2 or 3. If the character wins, he gains one point of Glory for each Glory Rank of his opponent; additionally, his general gains a +2 bonus to his next Battle Roll.

Battle Table

Your Army Is:	Level of Engagement:					
Winning	Reserves	Disengaged	Engaged	Heavily Engaged		
Stalemate		Reserves	Disengaged	Engaged	Heavily Engaged	
Losing			Reserves	Disengaged	Engaged	Heavily Engaged
1-3	1 die of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds	4 dice of Wounds	5 dice of Wounds	6 dice of Wounds
	0 Glory	0 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	3 Glory
					Duel	*Heroic Opportunity*
4-6	1 die of Wounds	1 die of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds	4 dice of Wounds	5 dice of Wounds	5 dice of Wounds
	0 Glory	0 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	2 Glory
					Duel	*Heroic Opportunity*
7-9	1 die of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds	4 dice of Wounds	5 dice of Wounds
	0 Glory	0 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory
				Duel	*Heroic Opportunity*	*Duel*
10-12	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds	4 dice of Wounds	4 dice of Wounds
	0 Glory	0 Glory	0 Glory	0 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory
			Duel	*Heroic Opportunity*	*Heroic Opportunity*	*Duel*
13-15	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	1 die of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds	4 dice of Wounds
	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory
				Duel		*Heroic Opportunity*
16-18	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	1 die of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds
	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	1 Glory	2 Glory	2 Glory
		Duel		*Duel*		*Heroic Opportunity*
19-21	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	1 die of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds
	2 Glory	2 Glory	2 Glory	2 Glory	2 Glory	2 Glory
			Heroic Opportunity		*Heroic Opportunity*	*Duel*
22-24	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	1 die of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds
	2 Glory	2 Glory	2 Glory	2 Glory	3 Glory	3 Glory
		Heroic Opportunity		*Heroic Opportunity*		*Duel*
25-27	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	1 die of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds
	2 Glory	2 Glory	3 Glory	3 Glory	4 Glory	4 Glory
			Duel		*Heroic Opportunity*	*Heroic Opportunity*
28-30	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	0 dice of Wounds	1 dice of Wounds	2 dice of Wounds	3 dice of Wounds
	3 Glory	3 Glory	4 Glory	4 Glory	5 Glory	5 Glory
			Heroic Opportunity	*Duel*	*Duel*	*Heroic Opportunity*

Be More Heroic!

The default system for mass battles reflects the chaotic and damaging nature of war. Although Heroic Opportunities are scattered rather liberally throughout the table, GMs who desire a more cinematic style of battle should feel free to include them on virtually any result if they so wish.



Shugenja's Gift

One of the shugenja of your army has targeted you with a spell.

The GM may decide what spell it is; alternatively, just consider one of the character's Traits or Skills to be one Rank higher until the end of the battle.

Skirmish

This Opportunity gives a character the opportunity to fight a number of enemies determined by the GM. A character needs only to force his enemies out of the fight to succeed at this Opportunity; he does not need to kill them. If the character is successful in this Opportunity, add +1 to his general's next Battle Roll.

Stand Against the Darkness

The ashigaru troops and some craven samurai in your army are unused to fighting undead abominations and the stuff of nightmares. They break and run at the sight of a huge Oni slowly marching on their position. If you can defeat the beast, perhaps your example will raise the morale of your army.

The character may fight a minor oni or other similar opponent. If he succeeds, the character gains 4 Glory and his general gains a +3 bonus to his next Battle Roll. If he fails, or if this Opportunity is refused, the general suffers –5 to his next Battle Roll.

Take the Enemy Banner

Between the blood and carnage you spot the standard bearer of the opposing army. You have the opportunity to take the enemy's banner! You must kill the bearer in combat to take it. If you take it, you must try to get it back to your Reserves.

Without the help of the character's army, this Opportunity is nigh impossible to complete. While the character holds the enemy banner, he cannot undergo any other Heroic Opportunity. Each Battle Turn, the character is assaulted by a number of enemy samurai (chosen by the GM) of equal Rank. On each Battle Turn the enemy banner is in the character's possession, impose a –5 penalty to the enemy general's Battle Roll. When this Opportunity is completed, the character gains a Rank of Glory.

Ancestors

Ancestors are a special form of Spiritual Advantage, and are purchased with Character Points in the same manner as other Advantages. They represent guidance and advice from great heroes of Rokugan's past who now dwell in Yomi. Only a rare and exceptional character should receive an ancestor's guidance, and players who choose this option will be subjecting their characters to significant role-playing restrictions. The GM should consider carefully whether to allow Ancestors in the game, and discuss the options with the players. Ancestors are powerful, but the constraints they place on characters may be frustrating to many players, especially given their high point cost.

All ancestors are governed by the following restrictions:

- ***Loyalty:*** An Ancestor will only advise someone from the same clan/faction. They will not aid those who are not part of the clan they served (and in some cases, founded) in life, even if that person can claim a direct blood descent from them.
- ***Piety:*** A character who has an Ancestor is expected to offer veneration and devotion on a daily basis. In general, any character with an Ancestor Advantage should expect to spend at least one hour a day in prayer and devotions. The GM can allow this requirement to be set aside when unusual circumstances dictate (character is in the Shadowlands, on a ship in a storm, etc), but the character must make amends with renewed prayers as soon as he is able. If a character consistently fails to offer veneration, the Ancestor will abandon him – the character will have to spend at least a month in devout prayers and atonement in order for the Ancestor to return.
- ***Jealousy:*** Only one Ancestor will ever advise a character. Further, if the favor of that Ancestor is ever lost, no other Ancestor can be purchased to replace it – the character's failing will be known in Yomi, and other Ancestors will disdain to approach him, no matter how noble his later deeds.
- ***Demands:*** All Ancestors place specific demands on the characters they help. In return for the Ancestor's potent aid, the character must live a life which accords with the Ancestor's beliefs and principles. If a character fails to meet these demands, the Ancestor leaves, perhaps forever. At the GM's option, a character that shows sincere repentance and devotion – typically at least a month of devotions, as under "Piety" above – can regain his Ancestor's favor. However, a character who fails to follow the Ancestor's demands a second time will be allowed no further chance to atone.

Crab Ancestors

Hida [14 points]

Hida was a warrior of unmatched strength and endurance, who relied on that to defeat all foes, never backing down from any of them, even his own Taint-corrupted son. With Hida watching over you, your blows strike hard and true – you gain +1k0 to all damage rolls and may ignore 4 points of an enemy's Reduction, regardless of what weapon you are using. Further, any Crab who fight alongside you in a skirmish are inspired by the spirit of Hida which infuses your frame, and gain +1 bonus Void point (if they do not use this Void point by the end of the skirmish, it is lost).

Demands: Any Round that at least one fellow Crab is wounded within your sight, you must suffer 1 Wound in sympathy. (This does not increase if multiple Crab are wounded in the same Round.) This Wound ignores Reduction and any other effects which would otherwise negate damage. However, you can voluntarily choose not to suffer the Wound. If you ever refuse to suffer these Wounds, or if you ever voluntarily retreat from a fight with a creature of the Shadowlands, Hida will abandon you.

Kuni [8 points]

The founder of the Crab shugenja school was a capable shugenja and a man who knew more about the creatures of the Shadowlands than any other. Once per session, you may spend a Void point to gain a bonus to your spellcasting roll equal to your Earth Rank in kept dice. Also, when rolling to resist gaining the Shadowlands Taint, you may roll twice and keep the better result.

Demands: Kuni's demand to his descendents is a simple one – stay pure. If you ever gain so much as a single point of the Shadowlands Taint, Kuni will abandon you.

Crane Ancestors

Doji [8 points]

The Lady Doji created most of the rules and concepts of Rokugani civilization, and her influence is still felt throughout the Empire's courts in the present day. Those who receive Doji's advice gain a +1k0 bonus to all of their Courtier, Etiquette, Perform, and Sincerity rolls.

Demands: Doji requires those who have her guidance to live in a manner both honorable and civilized. If you ever commit a Major Breach of Etiquette (as per the Honor table in the *Book of Earth*), or you ever lose more than 3 points of Honor or Glory from a single breach of etiquette, Doji will abandon you.

Kakita [12 points]

Doji's husband was both a duelist and an artisan of renown, author of *The Sword*, and served as the first Emerald Champion in Rokugan's history. However, he also started the Crane Clan's long and bitter feud with the Lion Clan. Those who have Kakita's guidance may spend a Void point to re-roll any Iaijutsu or Artisan Skill roll with a +1k1 bonus to the second roll. They keep the better result. However, all those who are watched over by Kakita earn the automatic enmity of Matsu samurai, who sense their own ancestor's anger – all members of the Matsu family are effectively Sworn Enemies to you.

Demands: Kakita was an honorable man who sought perfection in both the sword and with the artist's brush, and he expects the same of you. If you ever lose a duel or an artistic competition, Kakita forsakes you. He also abandons you if your Honor ever drops below 4.0.

Dragon Ancestors

Agasha Kitsuki [11 points]

The founder of the Kitsuki family originated the concept of the controversial "Kitsuki Method," which uses logical deduction and inference to solve crimes. Those who have his guidance gain the ability to "read" others and to pick up on subtle, hidden clues in an uncanny, almost supernatural manner that many samurai fine disturbing. When you have Kitsuki's guidance, you may use your Perception Trait for any Skill or Trait roll that would normally require you to use your Awareness Trait. Furthermore, if you spend a Void point on any Skill or Trait roll to tell whether someone is lying to you, you gain +2k2 instead of the normal +1k1.

Demands: Kitsuki requires you to always pursue the truth. If you ever accept a solution to a problem, crime, or puzzle that you know or sincerely believe to be false, Kitsuki will abandon you.

Mirumoto [9 points]

The founder of the Dragon Clan's warrior family was one of the greatest swordsmen of his age, a pragmatic and cunning warrior and brilliant duelist, and a deep rival to Kakita in the pursuit of swordsmanship. He created the Niten style, a method of fighting with both the katana and wakizashi. He also wrote one of the Empire's greatest works on swordsmanship, and died fighting Fu Leng on the first Day of Thunder. If you have gained Mirumoto's attention, he grants you +1k1 to all Agility-based Skill rolls. If the Skill roll is made using a Mirumoto Bushi School Skill, the bonus is +3k1 instead.

Demands: Mirumoto expects his descendents to follow his tradition of victory, and to carry on his rivalry with his ancient nemesis Kakita. If you ever issue a challenge and then lose the subsequent duel, Mirumoto will abandon you. He will also leave you if you ever refuse a duel with someone trained in the Kakita Bushi school. He will not abandon you if you lose a duel that was forced on you... unless that duel was against a Kakita.

Lion Ancestors

Akodo [12 points]

The founder of the Lion Clan was a general beyond compare, one of the greatest tacticians ever to walk the face of the Empire. He was also a supreme soldier, a man who gained strength not just from his own ability but also from the support of all those around him. He forged the Lion into a clan where every soldier was part of a greater whole, made strong by their brothers in arms. While you have Akodo's guidance, you gain a +1k0 bonus to all Bugei skill rolls (except Iaijutsu rolls) and

a +1k1 bonus to any rolls made on the Mass Battle Table. Further, whenever you fight alongside your fellow Lion, you draw strength from their presence, just as Akodo taught. Any time you enter a skirmish with at least one other Lion bushi fighting alongside you, you gain +1 extra Void point (this bonus Void must be spent by the end of the skirmish, or it is lost).

Demands: Akodo requires all his followers to be soldiers of both steadfast courage and unimpeachable honor. If your Honor ever drops below 5.0, Akodo will abandon you. He will also abandon you if you ever voluntarily leave a battle or skirmish where other Lion are still fighting.

Ikoma [9 points]

The founder of the Lion Clan's family of storytellers and historians was a capable spinner of tales himself, but he was also a cheerful rogue who chased women and brawled without hesitation or fear. Those who are watched over by Ikoma's boisterous spirit are expected to emulate him in all ways. In return, he infuses them with both his toughness and his rough-and-ready wisdom. You gain +1k0 to all rolls you make with the Intelligence Trait, and +2k0 to your damage when fighting unarmed (with the Jiujutsu skill).

Demands: Ikoma expects you to live as he did – drink hard, fight hard, tell fine tales, and welcome the company of beautiful and interesting women. If you ever choose to refuse a drink, run from a fight, or insult an attractive or compelling woman, Ikoma will forsake you.

Mantis Ancestors

Kaimetsu-Uo [9 points]

The original founder of the Mantis Clan was the son of Hida Osano-Wo and his Matsu bride, and one of the most formidable warriors of his day. Preferring action to words, he carved a clan's founding out of a dangerous tropical island, and stormed Kyuden Isawa to avenge his father's death. Those who gain Kaimetsu-Uo's favor are expected to live as he did, carving their way through life with action and sheer determination, using whatever weapon comes to hand, and countenancing no insult from anyone. You gain a +1k1 bonus to all Willpower Trait and Skill rolls except those made to avoid being provoked. You gain a +3k0 bonus when using the Improvised Weapon emphasis of the Jiujutsu skill, and also gain +1k1 damage to all damage rolls made with improvised weapons.

Demands: Kaimetsu-Uo requires you to take on all challenges, no matter how strange or embarrassing. If you ever back down from a physical competition or challenge, even a trivial one such as a foot race, he will forsake you.

Gusai [5 points]

One of the most notorious of Mantis ancestors, Gusai proved the power of a single individual by successfully carrying a knife into the presence of the Emperor – only to see the Emperor prove the limitations of such power when he signed the order for Gusai's execution. When Gusai guides you, you gain +3k3 to any Stealth or Sleight-of-Hand roll made to conceal a weapon on your person.

Demands: Gusai will abandon you if you ever voluntarily go unarmed into the presence of a rival or enemy.

Phoenix Ancestors

Asako [5 points]

Shiba's favored follower, Asako, learned the secrets of humanity's limitless potential from her lord, and founded the mystic order known as the *henshin*. She treasured friendship above all things, but for this very reason felt the pain of betrayal more deeply and keenly than any other. While Asako guides your steps, others find you a charming ally and a true friend. Any of your Ally Advantages gain a free +1 increase to their level of Devotion, and you gain +1k0 to all Social Skill rolls made against someone with whom you are an Ally. However, if an Ally ever betrays you, you automatically gain Driven: Destroy the Betrayer for no points.

Demands: Asako requires you to treat your friends with the same devotion you expect of them. If you ever betray or abandon a friend, Asako will forsake you.

Shiba [9 points]

Known for his wisdom, perception, and foresight, Shiba served the Isawa faithfully in life, and wrote down the Tao, which became the foundation of the Empire's religion. When he perished in the Shadowlands, he found a way to pass on his knowledge to his descendents, ensuring the Phoenix would always be well-led by the Soul of Shiba. However, he also sometimes chooses individual Phoenix samurai to benefit from his guidance. Those who are watched over by Shiba gain +1k1 to all Intelligence Rolls and Intelligence-based Skill Rolls, and may add their Intelligence Rank to their Armor TN at all times. If you enter a skirmish alongside a member of the Isawa family, you gain +1 Void point (this Void point must be used by the end of the skirmish or it is lost).

Demands: Shiba requires that you maintain both a high honor and an absolute, unswerving dedication to fulfilling his oath to the Isawa. If your Honor Rank ever drops below 4.0, he will abandon you. He will also abandon you if you ever willingly disobey a higher-ranking Isawa, or if you ever voluntarily leave a skirmish while an Isawa ally remains behind.

Scorpion Ancestors

Bayushi [12 points]

The founder of the Scorpion Clan was known for his subtle cunning and trickery, as well as a sort of cruel honesty that he employed most famously at his brother Hantei's deathbed. Although his skills and ruthlessness in both battle and politics were legendary, he also carried a life-long devotion to his follower Shosuro, and her corruption by the Lying Darkness led him to his own death. If you are trained in one of the Bayushi schools (such as the Bayushi Bushi or Bayushi Courtier schools, for example), you gain a +1k0 bonus to all your School Skills, and any time you spend a Void point on a School Skill, you gain +2k2 instead of +1k1. If you have a Kharmic Tie with another character, both of you may use each others' Void Points, but if one of you dies, the other immediately gains the Momoku Disadvantage for no points.

Demands: Bayushi made only one demand of his followers – loyalty. He expects the same of you. If you ever voluntarily and knowingly betray the Scorpion Clan, he will abandon you. He will also abandon you if your Honor ever climbs to 5.0 or better – such pure souls have no place in the ranks of Rokugan's designated villains.

Shosuro [8 points]

Bayushi's most beloved follower was consumed by the Lying Darkness, and spent centuries imprisoned by the kami Togashi before finally escaping during the Hidden Emperor era. At the end of that era, Bayushi carried her soul into Yomi, and since that time she has begun to show her favor to those of her descendents she finds worthy. If Shosuro's whispers guide your actions, you gain a +3k1 bonus to all Stealth, Acting, and Sincerity (Deceit) skill rolls.

Demands: Having been forced to betray her lord Bayushi once, Shosuro is determined that her descendents will never make the same mistake. If you ever betray the Scorpion Clan, disobey your superiors in the clan, or become corrupted by the Lying Darkness or the Shadow Dragon, Shosuro will immediately abandon you.

Spider/Shadowlands Ancestors

Hida Atarasi [7 points]

The first son of Hida, and the original Crab Thunder, also became one of the first samurai to be Lost to the Shadowlands Taint. So great was his power that those who encountered him (and were fortunate enough to survive) called him an *akuten-shi,* or "evil angel." Atarasi's own father Hida eventually hunted him down and destroyed him in single combat. Atarasi's twisted warrior spirit infuses those he guides, allowing them to call on their corruption to deliver terrible blows to their enemies. While Atarasi watches over you, during each round of a skirmish you may choose to spend a Void Point or gain a point of Shadowlands Taint (your choice) in order to add either your Taint Rank or your Earth in unkept dice to your attack and damage rolls for that round.

Demands: Atarasi is a fallen soul, and he reviles purity and virtue. If your Honor Rank ever reaches 3.0 or higher, or you ever lose any of your Taint, Atarasi forsakes you.

Kuni Yori [5 points]

Kuni Yori was once a loyal Crab, a servant of his lord Hida Kisada, but he was seduced by the Shadowlands and betrayed the Crab Clan. Transformed by the power of maho, Yori became an undead abomination, leading the forces of the Shadowlands against his former clan. Yori's guidance teaches both deceit and greater mastery of the forces of maho. You gain +1k0 to all Sincerity (Deceit) rolls and all maho spellcasting rolls. However, Yori's malign influence draws the Taint to you even faster than otherwise. Any time you cast a Maho spell, you gain 1 extra point of Taint.

Demands: Yori makes no demands – he is confident that his guidance will inevitably lead to complete corruption by the Taint.

Unicorn Ancestors

Moto [10 points]

A formidable desert warrior who swore allegiance to Shinjo and brought his tribe into the Ki-Rin Clan, Moto was known for his incredible speed and refusal to be bound by anything but his own choice. He imbues the same spirit and determination in those of his descendents who win his favor. Any time you roll to resist an attempt to physically restrain you (such as a Grappling attack) or to mentally influence you (such as a Temptation Skill roll), you gain a +2k2 bonus to the roll. Likewise, any spell which would restrain your physical movement has its Spellcasting TN increased by an amount equal to 5 x your Willpower.

Demands: Moto expects you to live by the same standard of freedom as he did, offering obedience only to your lord and clan. If you ever knowingly and voluntarily allow yourself to be controlled by another who is not your rightful superior in the Unicorn Clan (such as letting yourself be blackmailed by a courtier), Moto will abandon you.

Shinjo [8 points]

The founder of the Unicorn was known for her boundless curiosity about the world, which caused her to lead her Ki-Rin Clan out into the Burning Sands, and for her deep compassion, which allowed her to retain sympathy even for her fallen brother Fu Leng. After her long imprisonment and sleep in the Burning Sands, she returned to Rokugan to purge the Kolat from her beloved clan. You gain a +1k1 bonus to any Investigation roll made to understand something new, strange, or enigmatic, as Shinjo's spirit guides you to seek deeper understanding of the world around you. You also gain +1k1 to all Awareness rolls made with the Etiquette or Sincerity (Honesty) skills, as Shinjo's compassion infuses you with empathy and grace.

Demands: Shinjo requires you to always act with compassion, even when facing bitter enemies. If you ever fail to show mercy and compassion to a rival or enemy, Shinjo will abandon you. (This does not apply to members of the Kolat or minions of the Lying Darkness or the Shadow Dragon.)

Ancestors from Jigoku

The "Spider ancestors" depicted here actually represent the spirits of corrupted souls, condemned to Jigoku, who return to Ningen-do to offer their "guidance" to the living. Such malign spirits are not governed by the normal rules for ancestors. Instead, they bestow their attentions on those they consider useful converts to Jigoku's cause. This obviously includes any member of the Spider Clan, since such persons are serving the goals of the Realm of Evil, but these ancestors may also bestow their favor on others who seem suitable, especially anyone who has felt the touch of the Taint. The GM has the final say, of course, on whether a Spider ancestor will show favor to one not of the Spider Clan.

Alternate Means of Rank Progression

The Schools described under the individual Great Clan sections of the *Book of Fire* are the largest, most prevalent Schools maintained by the Great Clans. Each one is taught to thousands of students every year, in dozens or even hundreds of dojo scattered throughout the clan holdings, all working in concert to produce the finest young samurai possible in order to better serve the clan's agenda. Even taking into account the options presented by Skills, Advantages, and the various advanced options included in this chapter, however, there is a finite amount of difference between two students of, for example, the Akodo Bushi School. For Game Masters who desire more diversity and complexity in their characters, there are Advanced Schools and Alternate Paths.

Advanced Schools

Advanced Schools represent elite dojo within the Great Clans that are not accessible by all young samurai. Whereas basic Schools teach thousands every year, an Advanced School might accept only a few dozen students per year, each one hand-selected by the master sensei of that dojo. These groups are extremely prestigious, and to have a student selected to attend such a dojo is a great honor for his family, as well as for the sensei who prepared him so well for such a task.

Advanced Schools consist of three Techniques, which are generally more specialized and more powerful than traditional School Techniques, albeit more narrow in focus. Advanced Schools possess requirements for entry, and any character who wishes to take ranks in that Advanced School must meet all pre-requisites before he or she will be allowed to enter the dojo. Because of the prestigious and exclusive nature of these groups in the setting, Game Masters may wish to make gaining entry into an Advanced School part of the campaign, as a character must demonstrate incredible prowess and impress not only his own sensei but also the master sensei of the elite dojo in order to gain entry. It is no easy task, and virtually no character will be capable of entering an Advanced School until they reach Rank 4.

> Example: *Isawa Rokku is a student of the Isawa Shugenja School who wishes to become a member of the legendary Elemental Guard. The requirements for entry are steep. First, Rokku's player Chris must choose one Ring as Rokku's focus. Rokku must have that Ring at 6, and be able to cast spells of Mastery Level 4 in that Ring. Right away it is obvious Rokku will be unable to become an Elemental Guard for some time, because Chris is interested in focusing on Fire. Even with Rokku's Affinity for Fire he will be unable to cast Mastery Level 4 spells until Rank 3, so he cannot enter the Advanced School until Rank 4, assuming he gets Fire 6 by then. The other requirements include Spellcraft 6 and Lore: Theology 6, so Chris has his work cut out for him!*

Once a character enters an Advanced School, his progression in the basic School he attended previously stops. His sensei there has sent him on to another dojo, a more prestigious one, and his duty now is to honor them with his progress. For him to return to his basic dojo would shame him, his family, and his sensei, so that option is no longer available.

At the GM's discretion, however, a character who has completed his advanced schooling may petition to re-enter his original school having honored both his senseis by fully completing his training.

> Example: *After finally reaching his goal, Rokku has become an Elemental Guard! He is now a Rank 3 Isawa Shugenja and a Rank 1 Elemental Guard. He cannot return to his dojo at Kyuden Isawa, however, for his duty now is greater. As he continues to advance, he will eventually become a Rank 3 Isawa Shugenja and a Rank 3 Elemental Guard. At that point, having completed his duties, he may petition his lord for permission to enter another basic School maintained by his clan, as a character might normally do after achieving Rank 5 in their basic School.*

A character may only ever take ranks in one Advanced School. The groups that maintain the organizations each have their own duty for the clan, and they do not overlap one another. To do so would be disrespectful both to one another and to the lords whom they serve.

Alternate Paths

Like Advanced Schools, Alternate Paths are lesser training tracks within a clan's program of study for its samurai. Although not as prestigious or as secretive as Advanced Schools, they are still looked upon with great favor by the sensei of basic Schools, and selection for a student to attend a dojo where an Alternate Path is taught is an honor for the student's family and teachers. Unlike Advanced Schools, Al-



ternate Paths teach a single Technique that replaces one in the normal progression of the character's School. When that Technique is learned, and the character advances to the next Insight Rank, he returns to his original School and resumes his course of study, bypassing the Technique the Alternate Path replaces and learning the next one in sequence.

> Example: *Matthew's character, Daidoji Toharu, has been selected by the sensei at an illustrious Crane dojo to study with the Empress Guard, a group of samurai often called upon to protect the family of the Emperor himself. This Alternate Path Technique replaces Daidoji Iron Warrior 4, which is the next Technique Toharu would normally learn. When he gains enough Insight to advance to Rank 4, instead of returning to his normal dojo, he goes to the sacred dojo of the Empress Guard. He now possesses Ranks 1 through 3 of the Daidoji Iron Warriors, and the Empress Guard Technique. When he next advances in rank, he will return home and learn Daidoji Iron Warrior 5.*

Because Alternate Paths are not as restrictive in what students they accept, and because they are generally more flexible in the execution of their duties, it is possible for a samurai to study multiple Alternate Paths. Each rank in a character's basic School can only be replaced once, however, so there is a limit to how many can be combined. A single character could not take two different Alternate Paths that both replaced Bayushi Bushi School Rank 3, for instance. Additionally, there are some restrictions on how many Paths can be combined based upon a character's profession.

Bushi/Courtiers

Bushi and courtier characters join Alternate Paths exactly as described above. The first Alternate Path learned by such characters counts as a rank of their basic School. The second and subsequent Paths, however, do not count as ranks of their basic School. This is generally only a concern for characters with techniques that scale based on school rank.

> Example: *: Lucas's character Mirumoto Zosan is a Rank 1 Mirumoto Bushi. When he gains enough Insight to achieve rank 2, Lucas chooses to have Zosan join the Mirumoto Mountaineer Alternate Path. As this is the first Path Zosan has taken, it is considered a rank of his basic School, and Zosan is considered a Rank 2 Mirumoto Bushi for all purposes that require School Rank. Much later, Zosan is ready to advance to Rank 4, having already learned the Mirumoto Bushi Rank 3 Technique. Instead of learning Mirumoto Bushi Rank 4, however, Lucas is interested in the Northern Tower Sentry Alternate Path, which replaces Mirumoto Bushi Rank 4. Zosan becomes a Northern Tower Sentry. Because this is his second Path, however, it does not count as a rank of his basic School. Zosan is only considered a Rank 3 Mirumoto Bushi for the purposes of effects that are based upon School Rank and his Rank 1 technique would only give him an additional +3 Armor TN.*

Shugenja/Monk

The first Alternate Path taken by a shugenja or monk character works exactly as described above, replacing the rank listed in its description. This first Path that a shugenja or monk character takes is considered a rank of their basic School for the purposes of determining what spells or Kiho they may learn, and in their ability to use them. Any subsequent Paths do not count as ranks of the character's basic School, however. The first Path such characters take grants exactly one additional spell (for shugenja) or Kiho (for monks), rather than the number normally gained when advancing in rank. Subsequent Paths confer no spells or Kiho.

> Example: *Laura's character Kitsu Shimiko is a Rank 2 Kitsu Shugenja. When Shimiko is ready to advance to Rank 3, Laura chooses to have her enter the Bishamon's Chosen Alternate Path. Instead of learning three spells as is normal for a shugenja character advancing in rank, Shimiko learns only one. She now has the basic Technique of her School, as well as the additional Technique from the Bishamon's Chosen Path. She is considered a Rank 3 Kitsu Shugenja for the purposes of learning and casting spells. Much later, Shimiko is ready to advance to Rank 5, and Laura chooses to have her learn the Kitsu Master of the Spirit Realms Alternate Path. Because this is Shimiko's second Path, she does not gain any new spells upon advancing in rank, and she is still considered a Rank 4 Kitsu Shugenja for the purposes of learning and casting spells. She does learn a third Technique, however.*



Great Clan Advanced Schools

Each of the Great Clans has developed abilities that are difficult to master for the average samurai. Those who excel above their peers are granted the invitation to hone their skills with the brightest in their clan. The Advanced Schools are often extensions of the clan's original basic School, meshing well with the themes and combat styles of the lessons learned from childhood. Those who attend these Advanced Schools are highly skilled and very deadly, and opponents approach these samurai with wary respect.

Crab Advanced School: Defender of the Wall [Bushi]

The Crab Clan is the first line of defense against the ravenous creatures of the Shadowlands, so that protective nature has seeped into many of their martial styles. The Defender of the Wall stands firm against the enemies he may face and weathers all the assaults focused in his direction. The Defender of the Wall is the perfect guardian, as he will let the world end before he lets an attacker pass him.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Earth 4, Strength 5
- **Skills:** Defense 4, Heavy Weapons 4, Lore: Shadowlands 5

Techniques

Rank 1: The Flames of Purity

The Defender of the Wall is ready to repel any unnatural assaults with the conviction of a pure soul. Creatures with the Shadowlands Taint may not reroll 10's on attack or damage rolls against you.

Rank 2: Hida's Strength

The Defender of the Wall is an impregnable fortress, even without wearing his armor. You gain Reduction 8. This stacks with any other Techniques or armor which grant you Reduction.

Rank 3: The Crab Are the Wall

The Defender of the Wall will let nothing stop him short of death. Once per round, you may immediately negate one Condition on yourself (other than Mounted or Grappled).

Crane Advanced School: Kenshinzen [Bushi]

The iaijutsu duel has always been the domain of the Crane Clan, and the Crane Clan's Kenshinzen are the epitome of the iaijutsu master. They are monsters of single combat, dominating their opponents with both impeccable technique and lethal aura. These warriors put their entire consciousness behind the fast draw and seek perfection of the single strike.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Fire 4, Void 4
- **Skills:** Iaijutsu 5, Lore: Bushido 4, Meditation 5
- **Other:** To become a member of the Kenshinzen, you must defeat a current member of the Kenshinzen in a legal iaijutsu duel. The duel need not necessarily be to the death (and most often are not), but the candidate must win fairly.

Techniques:

Rank 1: Drawing the Void

The Kenshinzen remains still on the battlefield while the chaos of battle rages around him. If you are in the Center Stance, you add an additional +10 to your Armor TN.

Rank 2: Kakita's Strength

The Kenshinzen can sense the moments between heartbeats, allowing him to strike at the exact moment needed. When making an Assessment or Focus roll as part of an Iaijutsu duel, your dice explode on a 9 as well as a 10.

Rank 3: A Single Moment

The Kenshinzen's will to defeat his enemy exudes out of him, paralyzing his enemies. If you make only one attack this Turn, any opponent you hit is Stunned until the beginning of your next Turn.

Dragon Advanced School: Swordmasters [Bushi]

The two-sword style of Niten was founded within the Dragon Clan's borders and the evolution of that martial art remains the heart of the Dragon Swordmaster school. The Swordmasters attempt to learn every aspect of this fighting style so they may adapt to any situation they can face on the battlefield. While the Crane Clan's Kenshinzen focus on the art of the iaijutsu duel, the Swordmasters focus on the pragmatic use of swords in the thick of combat.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Fire 4, Void 4
- **Skills:** Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Theology 4

Techniques:

Rank 1: The Silence of Two Strikes

The Swordmaster's connection to his blades is nearly supernatural, allowing him to tune out the rest of the world. While wielding a katana in your main hand and a wakizashi in your off hand, you may spend Void Points twice per Turn.

Rank 2: Mirumoto's Strength

The Swordmaster feels the calm of the world when he stands before his opponent. In an iaijutsu duel, you always gain a +1k1 bonus to your Focus roll as though you had beaten your opponent with the Assessment roll, regardless of the roll's actual result. (Your opponent can still gain the +1k1 bonus for having a higher Assessment roll, but this does not impact your bonus.)

Rank 3: Harmony and Precision

The Swordmaster fells an opponent with each swing of the blade, striking exactly where he needs to devastate his enemies. While wielding a katana in your main hand and a wakizashi in your off hand, you may ignore your opponents' Reduction (if any).

Lion Advanced School: The Lion's Pride [Bushi]

The Lion's Pride is one of the most respected military units in the empire, feared for its prowess on the battlefield and its long list of successes. Only female Matsu samurai-ko can join the Lion's Pride to uphold their high standards. They live, train, and fight together as a unit at all times. On the battlefield, the Lion's Pride tries to seek out the enemy generals and kill them, destroying the enemy's battlefield efficiency.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Agility 5, Strength 5
- **Skills:** Battle 5, four Weapon Skills at Rank 3
- **Other:** Honor Rank 6. Additionally, you must be a female from the Matsu Family.

Techniques:

Rank 1: The Fury of Matsu

The Lion's Pride bushi's attacks leave no room for counterattack, serving as the perfect defense. You may add +10 to your Armor TN while in the Full Attack Stance.

Rank 2: Paragon of Honor

The Lion's Pride warrior knows that her devotion to her personal honor is its own reward. Opponents with lower Honor Rank within 30' may not reroll 10's. Opponents may ignore this effect for the encounter by spending two Void Points during the Reactions Stage of any Combat Round.

Rank 3: Matsu's Technique

Even in the middle of her attacks, the Lion's Pride bushi is ready to counter any feeble attempts to strike her. When an opponent declares a melee attack against you, if you have not taken your Turn this Round, you may immediately spend a Void Point to take a Simple Action to make an attack against that opponent. This attack resolves before your opponent's attack. If you use this Technique, you may only perform one Simple Action during your Turn this Round. (You may take Free Actions as normal.) You may use this Technique while in the Full Attack Stance.

Mantis Advanced School: Storm Riders [Shugenja]

The Storm Riders are the elite shugenja unit at the heart of the Mantis Clan's armadas. They devote all of their studies to the ocean and the water kami that flow around the Mantis islands. The Storm Riders are the undisputed masters of the sea, and they strive to maintain their connection to the waves at all times. The Storm Riders' value in naval combat is fearsome, a deadly threat to any who might challenge the Mantis Clan's dominance of the waters.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Air 3, Fire 3, Water 5
- **Skills:** Lore: the Sea 5, Sailing 3, Spellcraft 3, Lore: Theology 3
- **Other:** Elemental Blessing (Water) Advantage



Techniques:

Rank One: Strength of Suitengu

The Storm Riders are at home on the seas, navigating with an ease envied by all who see them. Your Shugenja School Rank is considered one higher for the purpose of casting Water spells. You may spend a Void Point to release a lightning bolt from your hands as a Complex Action. This bolt strikes one target within a range of 10' x your Water Ring. It rolls and keeps a number of damage dice equal to your Air Ring. You may expend spell slots to increase the damage of this bolt by +1k0 per spell slot expended, up to a maximum of your Storm Rider Rank.

Rank Two: The Raging Ocean

The Storm Rider's connection to the ocean allows him to extend beyond his limits. Your Shugenja School Rank increases by one. Your Water Ring is considered two ranks higher for the purposes of determining the number of spells you may cast per day.

Rank Three: Child of Osano-Wo

The Storm Riders are the descendents of the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, and his blessings protect them from his domain. Your Shugenja School Rank is considered one higher for the purpose of casting Water spells. You may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to gain immunity to all spells possessing the Thunder keyword for three rounds. This ability only affects spells of Mastery Level 3 and lower.

Phoenix Advanced School: Elemental Guard [Shugenja]

The Elements that form the world are as different and unique as the people who inhabit the Empire. It is inevitable that shugenja feel a closer kinship to the personality of the kami of one aspect of nature. These priests join one of the units of the Elemental Guard, four separate schools that focus on each of the four main Elements.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** One chosen Ring at 6
- **Skills:** Spellcraft 6, Lore: Theology 6
- **Other:** Must be able to cast spells of the chosen Element (see above) of Mastery Level 4

Techniques:

Rank One: Name of the Elements

The Elemental Guard hones his entire soul to his chosen Element until he is completely at harmony with its kami. Your Shugenja School Rank is considered one higher for the purposes of casting spells of your chosen Element. You may also spend a Void Point as a Free Action to add twice your Rank in your chosen Ring to your Armor TN. This effect lasts a number of minutes equal to your Shugenja School Rank, and has a very visible effect (you are surrounded by flames or by swirling water, your skin becomes rocklike, etc.).

Rank Two: Touch of the Elements

The link between the kami and the Elemental Guard deepens further. Your Shugenja School Rank increases by one. Your chosen Ring is considered two ranks higher for the purposes of determining the number of spell slots you have in that Element per day.

Rank Three: Shape of the Elements

The Elemental Guard can wield the power of the kami with a single whisper. Your Shugenja School Rank is considered one higher for the purposes of casting spells of your chosen Element. You may select one spell of your chosen Element of Mastery Level 3 or greater. A number of times per day equal to your Void Ring, you may cast that spell with a single Simple Action.

Scorpion Advanced School: Scorpion Instigator [Courtier]

The Scorpion Clan is the Clan of Secrets, and the Scorpion Instigator strives to maintain mastery over that domain. These courtiers are given access to rigorous training designed to exploit their own weaknesses until they become strengths. The Instigator learns to control the flow of conversation so that his falsehoods can pass undetected even against the most trained investigators. His ability to mask the truth keeps his opponents unsettled and unable to perform at their best.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Awareness 5, Intelligence 5, Perception 3
- **Skills:** Courtier 6, Etiquette 5, Sincerity 5, Stealth 4
- **Advantages:** Blackmail (on at least four different individuals)
- **Other:** All members of the Instigators must possess at least one Dark Secret and must divulge this secret to their sensei upon joining.

Gender Equality!

There is only one Advanced School per clan in this book, so limiting the Lion's choice to one gender may seem unnecessarily restrictive. However, the Lion's Pride is one of the clan's most distinguished and iconic units, and it seems a natural choice for inclusion. There is no reason the same Techniques could not be used in a different unit, however. If your players are frustrated at the absence of a Lion advanced school for male characters, we suggest the existence of a less-well-known but equally ferocious unit known as the Sons of the Pride, who accept male students of equal promise who are excluded from the Lion's Pride.



Techniques:

Rank One: The Depths of Dishonor

The Instigator learns to turn his own dishonor into a weapon and to use his opponents' Honor against them, subverting their beliefs. When making any Contested Social Skill roll, you gain a bonus of +Xk0, where X is the difference between your Honor Rank and that of your opponent.

Rank Two: Sheath Your Lies in Truth

An Instigator is taught to constantly reassure himself the lies he speaks are actually the truth. This causes some mild psychological discomfort, but is extremely effective on others trying to see through his lies. If anyone is trying to tell whether you are lying, you may spend a Void Point to gain a bonus of +3k3 to the Contested Social Skill roll to conceal your falsehood (instead of the normal +1k1). Note that if you use this Technique to make statements that are blatantly and obviously false ("The sky is red"), you will quickly become known as a madman.

Rank Three: Pull the String

Those who are weak and unworthy are nothing more than pawns to the Instigator. If you possess Blackmail on someone, you may spend 10 minutes conversing with them and then spend a Void point as a Complex Action to suggest an action they should take. This also requires you to win a Contested Social Skill roll of your Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness against their Etiquette (Courtesy) / Willpower. If you win the roll, so long as the action is not life-threatening and its consequences will not be worse than revealing the Blackmail, the target must either take the action or lose 4 points of Honor.

Spider Advanced School: Obsidian Warrior [Bushi]

This terrifying school was created by a deadly Lost bushi, but has since been taught to many Spider warriors with little or no Taint, for its methods of raw power and force of will can be used by anyone ruthless and cruel enough to master its techniques. Reputedly, most of the students at this school's handful of dojo never survive their training, but the minority who make it through are among the Spider Clan's most formidable warriors, able to match or defeat the mightiest of Rokugan's bushi.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Traits:** Earth 4, Agility 5, Reflexes 5
- **Skills:** Iaijutsu 5, Intimidation 5, Lore: Shourido 4
- **Other:** Must survive a skirmish with an Obsidian Warrior sensei.

Techniques:

Rank 1: Darkness is My Light

The Obsidian Warrior's devotion to Shourido frees him from the constraints which bind and restrict lesser mortals. Your maximum Raises are no longer limited in any way.

Rank 2: The Power of Impurity

The power of the Shadowlands courses through the Obsidian Warrior, disorienting nearby foes. All your opponents within 30' are affected by this Technique. The total of their Bugei and Damage rolls are reduced by your Strength Rank plus your Taint Rank. Opponents may ignore this Technique for their Turn by spending a Void Point.

Rank 3: My Strength Has No Limits

The Obsidian Warrior's complete devotion to the ways of Shourido allows him to shrug off anything that might deter him, and to funnel his power into devastating blows. You roll extra unkept dice equal to your Strength Rank plus your Taint Rank when resisting an Intimidation attempt or a Fear effect. You gain the same bonus in unkept dice to any Damage rolls you make with melee weapons.

Unicorn Advanced School: The White Guard [Bushi]

The White Guard are an elite heavy cavalry force that often serves as the center of the Unicorn army. They represent the best warriors of the Moto family, upholding the causes the Moto hold close to their hearts. They fight against gaijin forces that may threaten the safety of Rokugan and fight anything that might tarnish the Moto family legacy. Their extreme pious dedication to the gaijin gods known as the Lords of Death is notable, as are their merciless tactics.

Requirements:

- **Rings/Trait:** Earth 5, Agility 5, Strength 4
- **Skills:** Horsemanship 5, Lore: Theology 5
- **Other:** You must be a devout follower of the Lords of Death. This requirement is waived if the setting is before the year 1160.

Techniques

Rank 1: Pale Face of Death

The White Guard marches into battle in ceremonial white face paint, striking fear into the hearts of his enemies. At the start of your Turn, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action and choose an opponent within 30'. He suffers TN penalties to all actions equal to your Lore: Theology Skill Rank. This penalty lasts until the end of the encounter. You may only affect one target in this manner at any one time.

Rank 2: Moto's Strength

The White Guard stays true to the teachings and abilities that are the core of his soul. You ignore TN penalties from Wound Levels equal to double your Lore: Theology Skill Rank.

Rank 3: Fury of Heaven

The White Guard attacks with vigor and intensity, repeatedly striking his enemies without abandon. Whenever you make an attack, you may spend a Void Point to add five times your Lore: Theology Skill Rank to the total of your roll.

Great Clan Alternate Paths

Rokugan is based on a system of respect for the knowledge handed down by one's ancestors. The fighting styles of each of the Great Clan's schools remain constant through many centuries. However, this does not mean that warfare in Rokugan is stagnant. Clever warriors often develop methods of combat that are new and unique. If the fighting style shows promise, the Clan Champion often grants that person permission to found a dojo dedicated to teaching others that new ability. In this way, Alternate Paths are formed and maintained through Rokugan's history, sometimes even growing into new Schools of their own.

Path: Crab Berserker [Bushi]

When faced with insurmountable odds, a warrior often retreats to fight again another day. To the Crab Berserker, this is not an option. The Berserker will fight wherever his lord directs him, and focuses his entire being into that fight. The Berserker fights with no limits and continues to ferociously attack until either he or his enemy is bloodied and dead on the ground. The Berserkers often fight against the ravaging Shadowlands Horde and are said to match those beasts in rage and viciousness.

- Technique Rank: 2
- **Replaces:** Any Crab Bushi school Rank 2
- Requirements: Earth 4
- **Technique:** *Berserker's Rage* – The Crab berserkers manifest their unique and dangerous gifts after spending some time – often months, sometimes even years – on the Kaiu Wall. Some berserkers call on maniacal fury to power their rages, while others enter the notorious "dead eye" trance, but the result is the same: superhuman strength and a near-immunity to pain. Once per skirmish, you may enter your rage during the Reactions Stage. Once begun, the rage lasts for a number of Combat Rounds equal to double your Earth Ring. (You may end it during an earlier round by spending a Void point during the Reactions Stage.) While in your rage, you cannot take the Center, Defense, or Full Defense stances, and cannot use any non-Bugei skills. While in the raging state, you ignore all penalties and effects of Wound Ranks. You also gain a +2k1 bonus to all attack and damage rolls. If you are killed while raging, you remain alive and can continue to attack until the rage ends, but you cannot be healed (unless you are first targeted with the Force of Will spell) – you are dead, your body simply does not know it yet. The rage ends if you sustain Wounds equal to twice the amount that would normally kill you.

Path: Oni Slayer [Shugenja]

Kuni shugenja dedicate their lives to eradicating the Shadowlands threat from the world. The Oni Slayers are an elite sect of the Kuni family that focuses strictly on dealing with monsters that are too strong to fight on an equal footing. Their rituals and wards are essential in sapping the strength of these unnatural beasts. Oni Slayers see things no man ever should, yet their dedication to their duties remains unshaken.

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Kuni Shugenja 3
- **Requirements:** Lore: Shadowlands 3
- **Technique:** *Bound by the World* – The Kuni study the poorly understood art of binding, of using ritual circles and symbols to trap demons so they can be destroyed forever. You may expend an Earth spell slot and make a Spell Casting roll (without TN, see below) in order to ritually prepare a binding circle, a process which takes one hour. This circle may encompass a maximum area equal to your School Rank x 5 in square feet, although you may combine efforts with other Kuni to encompass larger areas by adding your School Ranks together (only one of you may make the Spell Casting Roll). Once an oni enters the circle, it becomes active. The oni may not leave the circle without first succeeding at a Willpower Trait Roll against a TN equal to the total of your Spell Casting roll. While the circle is active, you gain one less Earth spell slot per day.



Fetishes and Options

The rules for Asahina fetishes are designed to be simple and clear, allowing them to be incorporated into the game with a minimum of effort. However, the more powerful and learned among the Asahina are known to have created fetishes of significantly greater power and diversity than depicted here. In the past, fetishes have appeared in the Legend of the Five Rings RPG which enhanced meditation, healed injuries, or created food or water, for example. Bold GMs may wish to experiment with allowing their players to create more powerful or unusual fetishes, or perhaps grant such ability to high-ranking NPCs. Ultimately, the creativity of the GM and the players are the only limitations.

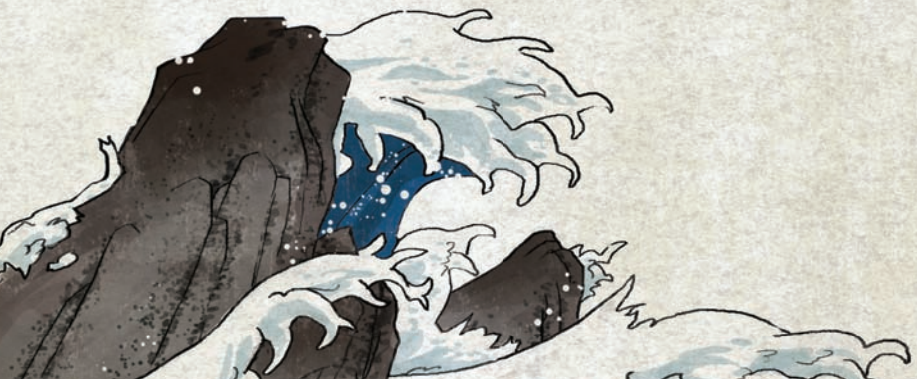
Path: Empress Guard [Bushi]

The Doji family has been intertwined with the Imperial dynasty from the dawn of the Empire. Over the years this connection has garnered them great favors and great responsibilities. The Empress Guard is a unit with some of the greatest warriors of the Crane Clan. They train to protect the Empress herself and spare no expense in their training. Only a handful of the Empress Guard are on duty at any given time, while the rest train intensively, dedicated to maintaining their abilities.

- **Technique Rank:** 3 or 4
- **Replaces:** Kakita Bushi 3 or Daidoji Iron Warrior 4
- **Requirements:** Perception 3
- **Technique:** *To Defend Unto Death* – The Empress Guard hold the honor of their duties seriously. Only the pure of soul and sharp of eye meet the Crane Clan's exacting standards. You may add half your Honor Rank to all attack and Perception rolls. Also, while defending the Imperial family, you may add +10 to your Armor TN.

Path: Asahina Fetishist [Shugenja]

The Asahina shugenja follow the path of peace and beauty, finding harmony in the tranquility of nature. Over the years they have become masters of a secret art of creation that allows them to imbue magical power into small objects. These items, called *tsangusuri*, temporarily give their bearers the ability to ask for the blessings of the kami. Each item is painstakingly made to honor the Elements and to reflect the Crane vision of a beautiful world.



- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Asahina Shugenja 2
- **Requirements:** One Craft or Artisan Skill at rank 3
- **Technique:** *The World in the Palm of the Hand* – The Asahina are the finest crafters of *tsangusuri* (fetishes) in the whole of Rokugan, and their treasures are highly prized. When using an Artisan Skill or a Craft Skill to create a small token of some kind, you may spend a Void Point to confer a one-time blessing into the token. Whoever is in possession of the token may activate this blessing at any time. When activated, the token grants a bonus of +2k0 to one High Skill Roll. No more than one token may be used per day per individual.

Path: Mirumoto Mountaineer [Bushi]

The mountains of the Dragon Clan have served the clan for thousands of years as a natural defense against invasion. However, the warriors of the Dragon must face the same difficulties the mountains pose for an attacking army. The Mirumoto Mountaineers are hardened warriors, born from the treacherous cliffs, fickle weather, and dangerous predators that menace their home. The Mountaineer has found his balance with the elements, a skill that proves useful in the middle of combat.

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Mirumoto Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Athletics (Climbing) 3
- **Technique:** *Heart of the Mountain* – The Mountaineer is a rugged warrior whose constant dealings with the unpredictability of nature makes him ready for anything that may await him in battle. When you are surprised during a skirmish due to failing your Investigation (Notice) / Perception Contested Roll, you may immediately make a second roll using Athletics / Agility. If you are successful, you are not surprised. You may also add half your Athletics Skill Rank (rounded up) to the total of all your ranged attack rolls.

Path: Tamori Warrior Priest [Shugenja]

The Tamori family has been brave and combative ever since its inception. Tamori shugenja often train alongside their Mirumoto brothers to improve their coordination. The *yamabushi* (Warrior Priest) considers his martial training equally as important as his connection to the kami. The Warrior Priest can use his bond with the elements to increase his observation of the field of war, allowing him to perform awe-inspiring feats of prowess.

- **Technique Rank:** 4
- **Replaces:** Tamori Shugenja 4
- **Requirements:** One Weapon Skill at rank 3
- **Technique:** *Strength of the Soul* – The Tamori are the most martially inclined of all Rokugan's shugenja families, often training alongside their clan's bushi. You can expend a spell slot as a Free Action to gain a bonus of +1k0 on any Bugei Skill roll. You may not expend more spell slots per round in this manner than your School Rank. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action when using a weapon created by one of the following spells: Bo of Water, Tetsubo of Earth, Katana of Fire, or Yari of Air.

Path: Deathseeker [Bushi]

A Lion bushi holds Bushido and his ancestors above all else. When he shames his ancestors by dishonoring his name, he has lost the center of his soul. He must cleanse the dishonor, typically by committing seppuku. However, the Lion also offer another choice: fighting with the Deathseekers, a unit of lightly armored warriors who seek death at the front lines of battle. They charge in without abandon and cut down their foes with no hesitation. Most Deathseekers do not survive even one year of duty.

- **Technique Rank:** 1
- **Replaces:** Any Lion Bushi School 1
- **Requirements:** Honor Rank 5, Dishonored Disadvantage
- **Technique:** *Honor of the Lion* – Deathseekers redeem their dishonored names by falling in the thick of battle. You gain the Benefit, Skills, Honor, and Outfit of a Rank 1 Lion bushi (any Lion bushi school). You may add your Honor Rank to the total of one damage roll during your Turn. If you do, your Armor TN is reduced by 5 until the Reactions Stage of the following Combat Round. Additionally, you add +1k0 to attack rolls while in the Full Attack Stance.

Path: Bishamon's Chosen [Shugenja]

The Lion Clan is home to the greatest armies and generals of the Empire. The martial tradition is the center of every Lion samurai, be he a priest or a warrior. The Kitsu family largely favors the traditional paths of priesthood, but the Kitsu shugenja do not shirk their duties to the clan. Bishamon's Chosen learn to wield weapons and march into battle beside their bushi brethren. Their fervor and dedication to the Celestial Order remains pure, however, whether in the sanctity of the temple on in the chaos of the battlefield.

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Kitsu Shugenja 3
- **Requirements:** Battle 3
- **Technique:** *Scion of Strength* – The Fortune of Strength shows obvious favor to those who follow his teachings without question or reservation. You may expend a spell slot as a Free Action to gain a bonus of +1k0 to any Strength-based roll, including the damage roll of a melee weapon. You may also expend a spell slot in this manner to gain a bonus of +1k0 to the Spell Casting roll made for any spell with the Battle descriptor.

Path: Yoritomo Scoundrel [Bushi]

The Mantis Clan was once a Minor Clan, and the Yoritomo have never shied away from performing questionable activities to make a name for themselves. Over the years they have been smugglers, pirates, and mercenaries. The Mantis have gained legitimacy with time, but old habits are hard to break – especially when those habits are quite effective in fulfilling the Yoritomo's wishes. The Scoundrel may perform feats that are considered beneath a samurai, but he knows what he does is for the good of his clan.

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Yoritomo Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Commerce 2, Sailing 2
- **Technique:** *Revel in Villainy* – The Scoundrel will do what he must, despite what society may say about his activities. Whenever you spent a Void Point to enhance an Athletics, Commerce, Sailing, Sincerity, or Low Skill Roll, you gain an additional bonus to the total of the roll equal to twice your School Rank.

Path: Mantis Navigator [Shugenja]

The Mantis Clan is the undisputed master of the seas. Each captain of their ships is trained to handle the worst the waters can throw at him. The Mantis Navigator, meanwhile, can solve any problems beyond the abilities of a normal man. His mastery of the seas is unparalleled; his whispered prayers can calm the roughest seas and clear the darkest skies. The crew can rest easy, knowing the Navigator will get them back to land without fail.

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Any Mantis Shugenja School, Rank 3
- **Requirements:** Sailing (Navigation) 3
- **Technique:** *The Fortunes' Guidance* – The shugenja who serve the Mantis are taught many techniques that allow them to placate the elements, even under extreme circumstances. When confronted with difficult weather conditions, you may negate them by spending a Void Point as a Simple Action. This affects an area equal to your School Rank x 20 feet in all directions from you. In a skirmish, this effect lasts a number of Rounds equal to your School Rank. Outside of combat, this effect lasts a number of hours equal to your School Rank. If the weather effect being negated is the result of a spell, you may only negate spells with a Mastery Level equal or less than your School Rank, and then only by spending a number of spell slots equal to the Mastery Level in addition to the Void Point.



Path: Shiba Yojimbo [Bushi]

Shiba bent the knee to man and swore to follow the Isawa family at the inception of the Phoenix Clan. Throughout Rokugan's history, the Shiba family has acted as the defenders of the Isawa shugenja against anything that may stand against them. The Shiba take this duty seriously and many have devoted their entire lives to this goal. The Shiba Yojimbo is the epitome of the family's ideal; he will die before he allows harm to his charge.

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Shiba Bushi 3
- **Requirements:** Honor Rank 5.0+
- **Technique:** *Shiba's Sacrifice* – The Shiba yojimbo are an elite cadre of personal guards, trained to give their lives for their charges at a moment's notice. Only the most honorable and selfless of the Shiba are selected for this training, since it requires a willingness to throw one's life away without hesitation. At the start of any skirmish, you may designate one ally as your charge for that skirmish. Any time your charge is hit by a physical attack or a targeted (non-area-affect) damage-causing spell, if you are within 10', you may make a Defense / Reflexes roll at TN 25. With a success, you take the damage instead of your charge. If you spend a Void Point to reduce this damage, it is reduced by 20 instead of the normal 10.

Path: Isawa Tensai [Shugenja]

The Isawa are the undisputed masters of elemental magic among the Great Clans. This prestigious family produces the most shugenja by far, and puts them through rigorous training to maintain high standards. The Tensai stand out as exceptional prodigies even among the Isawa. Instead of a general study of the kami, the Tensai focuses his attentions on a single Element. His command of the kami grows to an astounding level, as the kami seem to sing and dance at his call. Unfortunately, this single-mindedness comes at a high cost. It seems to be one the Tensai are only too eager to bear.

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Isawa Shugenja 2
- **Requirements:** Lore: Elements 3, Spellcraft 3
- **Technique:** *Embrace the Elements* – There are those among the Phoenix whose chi is so strongly attuned to the essence of a single Element that they are able to accomplish incredible things by studying that Element to the exclusion of others. You gain an additional Affinity in any one Element for which you already possess an Affinity. You gain a Deficiency in all other Elements. For example, if you are a Rank 1 Isawa Shugenja with an Affinity for Fire, when you advance to this Technique, you will be a Rank 2 shugenja capable of casting Mastery Level 4 Fire spells, but only Mastery Level 1 spells of all other Elements.

Path: Bitter Lies Swordsman [Bushi]

The fact that the Bitter Lies technique works at all is astounding. The founder of the Bitter Lies style, Bayushi Tangen, was a man who capitalized on chance and reached success through sheer force of will. He refused to accept anything as out of his reach and would take insane risks to accomplish his tasks. He passed this style of no-holds-barred adventurous fighting to a single student, who later found several students of his own. The Bitter Lies Swordsmen carry on this legacy with their own reckless antics. The Swordsman's natural fortune helps him survive situations where logic says he could not.

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Bayushi Bushi 3
- **Requirements:** Kenjutsu 3
- **Technique:** *The Dark Sword of Bitter Lies* – The Bitter Lies Swordsman charges into battle with no regard for his own safety. You may spend a Void Point to immediately re-roll any one roll. This re-roll suffers no penalty to the TN, even if you failed the original roll. You may keep either result that you prefer. However, you may not re-roll the same roll another time through any means.

Path: Shadow Hunter [Shugenja]

The Scorpion Clan never publicly acknowledges the existence of many of their elite forces. Their assassins and ninja can slip past powerful defenses to reach their targets. However, these ninja are only human and have limits to their abilities. The Soshi's Shadow Hunters are adept in speaking with the kami, bypassing normal thresholds of power. The Shadow Hunters can alter the world with the help of their spells. These elite assassins meld with the darkness, revealing themselves only to devastate their foes.



- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Any Scorpion Shugenja School, Rank 3
- **Requirements:** Stealth 3
- **Technique:** *Scourge in Shadow* – There are some targets the Shosuro ninja are unable to eliminate, either because of their protection or simply because they are too difficult to kill. For such targets, the Soshi send in their Shadow Hunters. When casting a damaging spell targeting an opponent who is unaware of your presence, you gain a bonus of +2k0 on the Spell Casting Roll. You may also expend a single spell slot as a Free Action to gain a bonus of +1k1 on a Knives or Stealth Skill Roll.

Path: Obsidian Magistrate [Bushi]

When the Spider Clan was formed out of the Lost, its founder Daigotsu decided to organize his forces as a subversion of the values Rokugan holds dear. He created an ideology and a set of laws with which to rule his own empire. The Obsidian Magistrate acts as the dark mirror of the Emerald Magistrate. He imposes the law of the Spider on everyone he meets, and his fanaticism fuels ferocious charges against his foes on the battlefield.

- **Technique Rank:** 1
- **Replaces:** Daigotsu Bushi 1
- **Requirements:** Investigation 2
- **Technique:** *Strength in Terror* – The Obsidian Magistrate is the bastion of Shourido and enforcer of Daigotsu's will. You gain the Benefit, Skills, Honor, and Outfit of a Rank 1 Daigotsu Bushi. You may add your Perception Trait plus your Taint Rank to the total of all High and Bugei Skill Rolls. This bonus does not apply to Weapon Skills. You may also add the difference between your Honor and that of your opponent to the total of attack rolls made against that opponent.

Path: Chuda Subversive [Shugenja]

The Shadowlands Taint offers great power to those who would listen to the seductive beckoning of the dark realm. This comes with certain drawbacks, often including grotesque disfigurations. Witch Hunters and Jade Magistrates learn to spot these changes and kill these blasphemers on sight. Those who use these profane rituals must find ways to lessen the consequences of their actions if they wish to live within the Empire. The Chuda Subversives are well versed in masking the effects of the Shadowlands Taint and passing as normal citizens of the Empire. Their abilities have grown so great that they may even fool the kami.

- **Technique Rank:** 4
- **Replaces:** Chuda Shugenja 4
- **Requirements:** Lore: Shadowlands 4
- **Technique:** *The Dark Kami's Discretion* – Certain sects of the Chuda have extensively studied means by which the influence of Jigoku in the mortal realm can be concealed from others. By expending three spell slots, you may completely suppress your own Taint, or that of a willing target you touch, for a number of hours equal to your School Rank. In the case of a human who possesses the Taint, this will render them temporarily immune to damage from jade or other effects that target the Taint, but will deny them access to any Taint-based abilities, such as maho or Shadowlands powers. In the case of inherently Tainted creatures targeted by this effect, such as oni or goblins, the effect only renders them immune to Taint-detection abilities. They gain no immunities and lose no abilities. This Technique in no way disguises physical mutations.

Path: Shinjo Scout [Bushi]

The Unicorn Clan traveled through the dangerous lands outside Rokugan's borders and uncovered threats on every horizon. It soon became apparent that the band of heroes needed an advanced unit traveling before them to skirt the most dangerous enemies. The Shinjo family accepted this duty. The Shinjo Scouts soon became adept in quietly stalking through foreign lands, comfortable as if they were in their own homes. Upon the Unicorn Clan's return to Rokugan the Shinjo Scouts traded knowledge with the Hiruma Scouts of the Crab Clan and grew even more formidable.

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Moto Bushi 2 or Shinjo Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Stealth 3
- **Technique:** *The Swift Soul* – The Shinjo Scout learns to slip by unnoticed, even deep in enemy territory. You may use the Stealth Skill while on horseback. You are considered to have the Way of the Land Advantage no matter where you are. Finally, you gain +1k0 to all attack rolls while Mounted.

Path: Iuchi Traveler [Shugenja]

The people of the Unicorn are the children of the Four Winds and their wanderlust is legendary. The Iuchi Traveler spends his life on the road from birth, moving from one place to the next in an attempt to see all the wonders of the Empire. The Travelers have developed secret rituals to traverse the land in mere moments, allowing them to come back from their journeys whenever the Unicorn Clan needed their powers. These rituals were later adapted for many uses, including war. Despite this change in responsibilities, the typical Traveler remains optimistic and cheerful at heart. Multiple spell slots may be expended in this manner to move across greater distances.

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Iuchi Shugenja 3 or Horiuchi Shugenja 3
- **Requirements:** Athletics 2, Horsemanship 2
- **Technique:** *Where the Wind Wills* – You possess knowledge of the most sacred Unicorn magic: the art of moving from one point to another without crossing the space in between. You may spend one Void Point and expend one spell slot of either Air or Water (Void may not be used) as a Simple Action to instantly teleport a maximum distance equal to your School Rank x 100 feet. This affects only you and the material you are carrying, but by expending a second Void Point you may also teleport any horse-sized mount on which you are sitting at the time of the effect.

Miscellaneous Alternate Paths

Some Paths were not created by ingenuity but by necessity. Rokugan rewards capable people with titles and responsibilities that may overwhelm any person who ascends to the position. Past Champions have left sage advice and secrets to those who might be flustered at the changes in their lives, and a few elite dojo teach secret techniques to those who have won appointments as Imperial functionaries.

The Champion Paths may replace any level Technique, and can be voluntarily taken upon advancing in Rank by any individual who is appointed to such a position (i.e., a Rank 3 Shiba Bushi who won the Emerald Championship could take the Emerald Champion Path upon achieving Rank 4, or wait until a later Rank, if he chose to take the Path at all).

Some of the following paths are available to different types of Schools. When one of these type of Paths is chosen to replace a Technique in your basic School, it inherits the School Tag associated with your basic School for mechanical purposes.

Path: The Amethyst Champion

The Crown of the Amethyst Champion is a mysterious artifact capable of granting wealth and power to its bearer, as long as he remains pure of soul. The Amethyst Champion holds this nemuranai with him and must prove his strength of will over all temptations. The Amethyst Champion holds the welfare of the people at heart and speaks as the representative of their desires.

- **Replaces:** Special (see above)
- **Requirements:** Courtier only
- **Technique:** *The Emperor's Voice* – The Amethyst Champion brings the voice of the Emperor and the Imperial Court to those who cannot attend the Imperial Court. As such, the Champion is a master at dealing with any threats to the sanctity of the Emperor's court. As a Free Action, you may spend a Void Point to temporarily gain the ability to use any courtier Technique that has been used against you in the past seven days' time.

Path: The Emerald Champion

The Emperor cannot travel to the far reaches of Rokugan, so the Emerald Champion serves as his proxy in all ways. The Emerald Champion personally guards the Emperor and holds authority even over the Great Clan Champions. He leads the Emerald Magistrates and must often command the armies of the Emperor when threats arise.

- **Replaces:** Special (see above)
- **Requirements:** Bushi only
- **Technique:** *The Emperor's Hand* – The Emerald Champion is the hand of the Emperor, and the champion of his laws. You gain a bonus of +1k1 on all High and Bugei Skill Rolls, and an additional +1k0 on all your School Skills. You also gain a number of bonus Void Points per day equal to your highest Ring. These Void Points may be granted to any one subordinate or ally in your line of sight for use on any appropriate roll. Granting these bonus Void Points in this manner is a Free Action, but may only be done once per Round. You may not use these bonus Void Points yourself.

Path: Emerald Magistrate

The Emerald Magistrates directly impose Imperial Law upon the land. Their jurisdiction has no boundaries and their actions are reversed only by the Emperor and the Emerald Champion. Appointments to the Emerald Magistrates are sometimes handled through politics and bribes, as the prestige of an Emerald Magistrate can elevate his entire family.

- **Replaces:** Any Bushi, Courtier, or Shugenja School, Rank 4
- **Requirements:** Investigation 3, Lore: Law 3, and must receive an appointment as an Emerald Magistrate before this Path can be entered
- **Special:** Members of the Imperial families may ignore one Skill Rank requirement
- **Technique:** *Honor Is My Shield* – Those who enforce the Emperor's laws are among the most virtuous souls, and that is their protection. You gain Reduction equal to half your Honor Rank, rounded up. This effect is cumulative with Reduction you may have from other sources, including armor.
- Note: This Path will frequently be taken by bushi characters. If the character is from a School that makes attacks Simple Actions at Rank 4, a generous GM may opt to let the character select this Path at Rank 3 or Rank 5 instead.

Path: Imperial Legionnaire

The Imperial Legions are filled with the brightest and bravest samurai from all the Clans, chosen to directly serve the Emperor's will. The Imperial Legionnaire trains with the most prestigious sensei of the land and sees service against those who threaten the safety of the Empire (such as foreign invasions or mighty maho-tsukai). An appointment to the Imperial Legions nearly guarantees a bright and celebrated future for any samurai.

- **Replaces:** Any Bushi School, Rank 2
- **Requirements:** Glory 2+, must receive an appointment to the Imperial Legions before this Path can be entered
- **Technique:** *Strength of the Empire* – The strength of the Emperor is exerted via the actions of his loyal legions. When fighting alongside other members of the Imperial legions, or alongside Emerald or Jade Magistrates, when you spend a Void Point to enhance a roll you also gain a bonus to the roll equal to the number of allied legionnaires and/or magistrates within 25 feet.

Path: The Jade Champion

When the Empire is in need, it calls the greatest shugenja to serve as the Jade Champion. This guardian scours the land of magical corruption and demonic forces to keep Rokugan pure. While each Jade Champion has personally chosen the focus of his duties, most consider the eradication of maho their greatest responsibility.

- **Replaces:** Special (see above)
- **Requirements:** Shugenja only
- **Technique:** *The Emperor's Will* – The Jade Champion is the enforcer of the Emperor's laws related to magic and religion. You gain a Free Raise on all Spell Casting Rolls. When confronting an opponent who practices any form of outlawed magic (maho, yobanjin shamanism, any form of gaijin sorcery, etc.) or who possesses corrupt supernatural abilities (the Shadowlands Taint or corruption by the Lying Darkness), you gain an additional Free Raise on your Spell Casting Roll.

Path: Jade Legionnaire

The Jade Champion has access to many resources within Rokugan, but the Jade Legion is his personal, highly trained force. This force does whatever the Jade Champion requires and their exploits against the Empire's enemies often go unsung. Legionnaires are trained to fight alongside shugenja and to armor their pure souls against the dank corruption of their enemies.

- **Replaces:** Any Bushi or Shugenja School, Rank 2
- **Requirements:** Glory 2+, must receive an appointment to the Jade Legion before this Path can be taken
- **Technique:** *Purity in Purpose & Deed* – The Jade Legionnaires accompany the Jade Magistrates against the most dangerous, most insidious, and most numerous of the Empire's magical threats. If your Honor Rank is higher than that of your opponent, you may add the difference between the two to the total of all your attack and damage rolls made against that opponent. For the purposes of this Technique, all creatures and other opponents who do not possess an Honor Rank are assumed to have an Honor Rank of 0.

Path: Jade Magistrate

The Jade Champion combats criminals who abuse the arcane, and his magistrates enforce his will. The Jade Magistrates are trained to recognize these crimes and quickly dispense justice. These warriors mainly hunt maho-tsukai and Bloodspeakers, all those who perform profane magic within the Empire's borders.

- **Replaces:** Any Bushi, Courtier, or Shugenja School, Rank 4
- **Requirements:** Lore: Law 3, Spellcraft 3, must receive an appointment as Jade Magistrate before this Path can be entered
- **Special:** Members of the Imperial families may ignore one Skill Rank requirement
- **Technique:** *Scent of the Kami* – A servant of the Jade Champion is a master at deciphering the mysteries of the kami. You may make a Perception / Spellcraft Skill Roll to identify any spells cast in an area during the past forty-eight hours. The TN for this roll is equal to the basic TN to cast the spell in question (which is to say its Mastery Level x 5, plus 5).

Path: The Ruby Champion

The Emerald Magistrates function as servants of Imperial law and their teacher must prepare them for work in the field. The Ruby Champion is the sensei of the Emerald Magistrates and is an authority on law and kenjutsu. The Ruby Champion's students march into battle fully confident of their abilities.

- **Replaces:** Special (see above)
- **Requirements:** Bushi only
- **Technique:** *Master of the Dojo* – The Ruby Champion is among the greatest sensei in the Empire, and can inspire those under his command to almost unparalleled heights. When fighting alongside allies under your command, you may spend a Void Point as a Complex Action to allow any one ally within line of sight to use one of your Techniques as if that ally were a member of your School of equivalent rank. This effect lasts until the start of your next Turn.

Path: The Topaz Champion

Every year, the village of Tsuma in the Crane lands is host to the greatest gempukku ceremony in Rokugan. The person who proves himself or herself the worthiest samurai becomes the Topaz Champion for that year. Since the contest is heavily weighted toward martial competitions (especially iaijutsu), bushi tend to dominate the Topaz Championship.

- **Replaces:** Special (see above)
- **Technique:** *Soul of Promise* – The Topaz Champion is among the best and brightest of each generation. When you advance in Insight Rank and into this Path, you gain the Technique it would normally replace. You also gain a number of bonus Void Points per day equal to your highest Ring. You may spend these just like normal Void Points (with all the normal restrictions), but they may only be used to enhance your School Skill Rolls.

Basic Crafting Rules

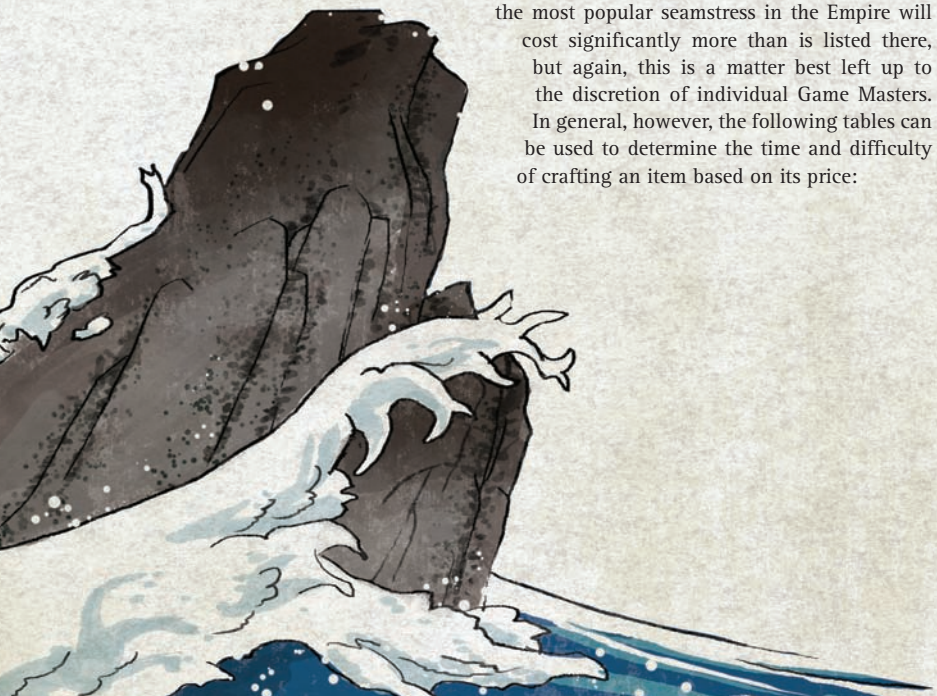
Craftsmanship and artistic pursuits are considered an honorable path for samurai in most Clans. All governors and daimyo have need of supplies for their vassals, and to provide such materials is a respectable duty for most. In the more refined circles of the courts, the production of artwork is considered an essential aspect of maintaining the Empire's civilization.

Mechanically speaking, the rules for crafting vary slightly depending upon the material being produced. The products of crafting endeavors fall into five broad categories:

- **Armor** – Using Craft: Armorsmithing to produce ashigaru armor, light armor, heavy armor, riding armor, or any other less common version of armor used by the military forces of Rokugan.
- **Artwork** – Creating artwork requires use of one of the Artisan Skills to produce a physical product, such as a painting or sculpture.
- **Engineering** – Using the Engineering Skill to design structures or large-scale devices such as siege engines.
- **Equipment** – Using a variety of Craft Skills to produce any material not covered by one of the other entries on this list.
- **Weapons** – Considered the most sacred crafting pursuit, this is the use of Craft: Weaponsmithing to make weapons for the samurai caste of Rokugan. Craft: Bowyer is used to make bows and arrows.

To craft an object, a character requires time and materials. Since samurai are not concerned with matters of economy, it is assumed that materials are provided and that the person crafting the item in question does not benefit from selling the item. If individual Game Masters do decide to take their game into the arena of commerce, they should consider the ramifications of crafting costs versus the amount of profit that should be returned to a craftsman's patron.

The time required to craft any given item, and the difficulty of the Skill Roll required to create it, are based roughly on the cost of the item in question. The final pages of the *Book of Fire* contain an extensive list of the most common items found in Rokugan, all of which are assumed to be of typical quality. Obviously, purchasing a kimono from the most popular seamstress in the Empire will cost significantly more than is listed there, but again, this is a matter best left up to the discretion of individual Game Masters. In general, however, the following tables can be used to determine the time and difficulty of crafting an item based on its price:



Units of Time Required for Crafting

Material:		*Steel*	*Metal/Glass*	*Other*
Cost:	Zeni	-	Days	Hours
	Bu	Days	Days	Days
	Koku	Weeks	Days	Days

Time Units Needed Based on Price

Zeni	Price divided by 10 in units (minimum 1)
Bu	Price divided by 5 in units (minimum 1)
Koku	Price divided by 3 in units (minimum 1)

Difficulty of Crafting Roll

Zeni	*Bu*	*Koku*
Costs 1-10 zeni: TN 10	Costs 1-10 bu: TN 15	Costs 1-10 koku: TN 20
Costs 11-25 zeni: TN 15	Costs 11-20 bu: TN 20	Costs 11-20 koku: TN 25
Costs 26-50 zeni: TN 20	Costs 21-50 bu: TN 25	Costs 21-25 koku: TN 30
Costs 50+ zeni: TN 25+	Costs 50+ bu: TN 30+	Costs 25+ koku: TN 35

Note: *For each increment of 5 above the final listed cost, increase the TN by 5 as well.*

Example: *Shobu the peasant wishes to craft some kemari balls to sell in the marketplace. There is a famous Mantis samurai in town with an affinity for the game, and as a result everyone seems to be playing. A kemari ball normally costs 5 zeni. Since it is made of simple cloth and some small stones to stuff it with, it will take a matter of hours to produce one (according to the first table). Because it is fairly simple, the time required to make such a ball, locating the materials and stitching the cloth together, is 1 hour (according to the second table). The difficulty for the Craft: Toys Skill Roll is 10 (according to the third table).*

Example: *Tishi the scribe is preparing a series of blank scrolls for his master, an Isawa scholar. These are particularly high quality scrolls, using paper made from trees in the Isawa Mori, and their cost would normally be 10 bu each. Because of the difficulty in creating paper, it will take Tishi two days to complete each scroll from beginning to end (according to the first and second tables). The difficulty for the Skill Roll in question will be 15 (according to the third table).*

Example: *Kaiu Setso is crafting a tetsubo. He has no particular reason, he just likes them. A tetsubo normally costs 20 koku, and is made of lower-grade steel, meaning that from beginning to end the process will require six weeks (according to the first two tables). The Skill Roll Setso will have to make to create the tetsubo will be 25 (according to the third table).*

Kata

Kata are fighting postures and movements that have evolved over the centuries, and are reinforced through constant repetition during training. Individual kata styles mesh well with particular Schools, and while individual clans develop some kata as a means of diversifying the Techniques of their ancestral Schools, most are developed independently by talented samurai and taught to others without concern for family or clan. For example, the Nightingale Style was developed by a sub-group within the Mirumoto family and carefully protected from outsiders, and eventually evolved into a Technique centuries later. By comparison, the Wind in Darkened Skies Style is an athletic attack style known to virtually every clan, whose creator has been long since forgotten over the years.

Kata are a means to differentiate between bushi characters without mechanics that are as significant as Techniques, but more specific and martial than Skills or Advantages. A bushi character can purchase a Kata if the character's School is listed as one of those that can utilize the Kata, and if the character's relevant Ring is equal to or higher than the listed Mastery Level. Purchasing a Kata costs a number of Experience Points equal to its Mastery Level. For example, the Breath of Wind Style Kata is available only to students of the Bayushi Bushi School and the Kakita Bushi School, who may purchase it for 3 Experience Points if they have an Air Ring of 3 or higher (because the Kata's Mastery Level is Air 3).

Once a character is familiar with a Kata, he can execute it at any time. Executing a Kata is a Simple Action. Once a character has executed a Kata, he gains the listed benefit of the Kata until the effect expires (if a duration is listed) or he chooses to drop out of it (which is a Free Action). A character may only have one Kata active at a given time.

Striking as Air

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Schools:** Any
- **Effect:** When in the Defense Stance your Armor TN is increased by your Air Ring.

Striking as Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Schools:** Any
- **Effect:** When in the Full Defense Stance you gain Reduction equal to your Earth Ring. This is cumulative with other forms of Reduction.

Striking as Fire

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Schools:** Any
- **Effect:** When in the Full Attack Stance you may add your Fire Ring to the total of one attack roll made per round.

Striking as Void

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Schools:** Any
- **Effect:** When in the Center Stance your Armor TN is increased by your Void Ring.

Striking as Water

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4
- **Schools:** Any
- **Effect:** When in the Attack Stance you may move 5 additional feet as a Free Action.

Balance the Elements Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Schools:** Mirumoto Bushi, Shiba Bushi
- **Effect:** You may use your Void Ring in place of your Reflexes for your Initiative Roll.

Breath of Wind Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Schools:** Kakita Bushi, Bayushi Bushi
- **Effect:** Your Initiative Score increases by 2 during the Reactions Stage of each Combat Round. This effect stacks but disappears immediately if the kata is no longer in effect.

Disappearing World Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4
- **Schools:** Akodo Bushi, Kakita Bushi
- **Effect:** Choose one opponent. Once per turn against that opponent, you may use your Agility Trait instead of your Strength Trait for damage rolls.

Hidden Blade Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Schools:** Bayushi Bushi, Yoritomo Bushi
- **Effect:** Your Disarm attacks deal normal damage rather than 2k1. You may not increase your damage on these attacks via Raises (including from use of the Feint Maneuver).

Other Schools

The Kata listed here deal mostly with the clans' primary bushi Schools, as well as a few others found within this book. Most clans have additional bushi Schools, however, and those Schools typically have access to Kata as well. For the purposes of these Kata, assume that other bushi Schools affiliated with the specified clan (such as those Schools found in upcoming Fourth-edition compatible sourcebooks) can purchase these Kata, but the character's Rings are considered one rank lower for the purposes of meeting Mastery Levels.



Indomitable Warrior Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4
- **Schools:** Daigotsu Bushi, Hida Bushi, Ichiro Bushi, Moto Bushi
- **Effect:** Reduce your TN penalties from Wound Ranks by your Earth Ring.

Iron Forest Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Schools:** Daidoji Iron Warrior, Heichi Bushi, Shiba Bushi
- **Effect:** **While using a spear or polearm, you may use your Air Ring instead of Agility for attack rolls.**

Iron in the Mountains Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Schools:** Daidoji Iron Warrior, Hida Bushi
- **Effect:** You may use your Earth Ring in place of your Air Ring for the Defense Stance.

Reckless Abandon Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4
- **Schools:** Daigotsu Bushi, Matsu Berserker, Usagi Bushi
- **Effect:** You may add your Fire Ring to your Armor TN while in the Full Attack Stance.

Strength in Arms Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4
- **Schools:** Hida Bushi, Ichiro Bushi, Moto Bushi
- **Effect:** Once per Turn while wielding a Heavy Weapon, you may use your Strength Trait instead of your Agility for an attack roll.

Strength of Purity Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4
- **Schools:** Akodo Bushi, Kakita Bushi, Matsu Berserker, Utaku Battle Maiden
- **Effect:** Once per turn while rolling damage, you may roll your Honor Rank instead of the normal Strength + DR of the weapon. You keep dice equal to the DR of the weapon as usual.

Spinning Blades Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5
- **Schools:** Mirumoto Bushi, Yoritomo Bushi
- **Effect:** Once per turn while wielding a weapon in each hand, you may make the Extra Attack Maneuver for 3 Raises instead of 5. The second attack comes from your off-hand weapon, dealing weapon damage as appropriate. You may not increase your damage on either attack via Raises.

Veiled Menace Style

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Schools:** Bayushi Bushi, Hiruma Bushi, Tsuruchi Archer, Yoritomo Bushi
- **Effect:** Once per turn, you may add your Stealth Skill Rank to your Armor TN for a single attack.



Kiho

Somewhere between the spells of shugenja and the martial techniques practiced by bushi, the strange elemental abilities known as Kiho are almost exclusively the province of Rokugan's monastic orders, and are poorly understood by virtually everyone else. While many Kiho represent what an individual is capable of doing when the body and mind exist in a state of spiritual harmony, some represent feats that can only be described as superhuman. Some among the Brotherhood of Shinsei have described Kiho as "stepping stones to enlightenment," and there may be some truth to that; if they are secrets of the universe that are opened up as one approaches the state of enlightenment, then it could explain why so many seek that near-mythical state with such fervor and devotion.

Typically a member of the Brotherhood discovers several key truths about himself during the grueling physical and mental trials set before him as part of his training and education. This process serves a three-part purpose: it discourages those who are not yet ready to accept the life of a monk, it purges the mind and body of impurities through physical and mental trials, and it helps a new initiate find the first step to one of the paths to enlightenment (the Brotherhood believes there are many such paths).

Kiho are similar to spells and Kata in that they are aligned with a particular Element. By focusing on the essence of that Element within themselves, monks are capable of truly impressive feats. Although Kihos by their very nature are difficult to quantify, they fall into four broad categories.

Internal Kiho represent a monk's ability to align his chi with one of the Elements and in doing so increase his own abilities. They rarely have any visible, external effect other than a sudden increase in the monk's speed, strength, or other attributes.

Kharmic Kiho are external in nature, but almost exclusively non-offensive in their effect on others. They are named after the kharmic intertwining of fates that the Rokugani believe many people share.

Martial Kiho are the most overt, and typically are delivered via an unarmed attack. These are powerful abilities that can easily level the playing field between a monk and an armored samurai, particularly if the samurai foolishly dismisses the monk as a non-threat. A number of Martial Kiho are delivered by precise fingertip attacks that inflict little or no damage. These attacks are known as *atemi* or nerve-cluster attacks (see the Atemi Attacks sidebar).

Mystical Kiho are the rarest and most inexplicable of all. There can be no reasonable explanation for the things accomplished by the monks who exhibit these abilities. They are, quite frankly and obviously, supernatural in nature. There can be no disguising the nature of these abilities.

Regardless of type, all Kiho possess a Mastery Level, which determines how difficult it is to master that particular sliver of enlightenment. A monk character adds his School Rank plus the relevant Ring and compares the result to the Mastery Level. If it meets or exceeds the Mastery Level, he may learn that Kiho. Non-Brotherhood characters who may be eligible to purchase Kiho (see the sidebar **Kiho and Non-Brotherhood Kiho**) use only their Ring to determine if they may purchase a Kiho.

Utilizing Kiho

Kiho have an incredible variety of effects, some of which may seem to overlap even between the different classifications. In many ways, they are as inscrutable and mysterious as the monks who utilize them! There are some broad rules that govern Kiho use, however, and make utilizing them a bit simpler in practice.

- A monk character may only have one each of Internal, Kharmic, and Mystical Kiho active at any one time. A monk may have multiple Martial Kiho active at one time, but may only ever deliver a single Kiho effect via an unarmed strike per Turn. For example, a monk might have Air Fist (Internal), Embrace the Stone (Mystical), and Fire's Fleeting Speed (Kharmic) active at one time. A monk could not, however, deliver both Stain Upon the Soul (Martial) and The Great Silence (Martial) with a single blow, since only one Kiho effect can be delivered per strike. If a monk has multiple unarmed attacks, however, such as by using Dance of the Flames, then he could deliver a separate Kiho effect via each attack made during the same Turn.
- Unless otherwise specified in their description (or if they are *atemi* strikes, see below), all Kiho require activation. A Kiho may be activated either by spending a Void Point (as a Free Action), by making a Meditation / Void Skill Roll against TN 15 (counts as a Complex Action), or by making a Meditation / Void Skill Roll against TN 30 (counts as a Simple Action). Spending Void Points to activate Kiho in this manner is considered a School Technique for Brotherhood Schools, and thus does not count against the once-per-round restriction governing Void Points.
- A number of Kiho require successful atemi attacks as part of their activation (see the sidebar for information on *atemi* attacks). This is referred to in the text as the "activating attack." When making the *atemi* attack, the monk may either spend a Void Point or make a TN 15 Meditation / Void roll at described above. For *atemi* attacks, however, these are all considered Free Actions.

Atemi Attacks

A number of Kiho, primarily Martial but including some of other types, require precise nerve attacks in order to be executed successfully. Because of the exacting precision necessary to execute these attacks, they do not inflict normal unarmed damage; they inflict no damage other than to allow the effects of the Kiho in question to take place. If the optional rules for monks are being used in a campaign, the Game Master may require atemi attacks to use the Atemi Emphasis of the Jiujutsu Skill. All atemi attacks must touch bare skin in order to be effective. Because of this, all forms of armor double the normal bonus they confer to an individual's Armor TN against these attacks. Kiho that require an atemi attack have the (Atemi) notation following their Ring/Mastery entry.



Air Kiho

Air Fist

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Type:** Internal

Perhaps the most basic of all Kiho, Air Fist allows a monk to channel the energy of the wind and lend its speed to his strikes. While this Kiho is active, as long as the only attacks you make are unarmed attacks, your Initiative Score is increased by +5. If you make any other type of attack, the effect is immediately canceled. The damage of all unarmed strikes made while this Kiho is active is reduced by an amount equal to your Air Ring. This effect ends after a maximum of one day.

Flee the Darkness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 6
- **Type:** Kharmic

A member of the Brotherhood is taught the fundamental lesson of keeping his spirit free from the darkness that can envelop all men. When this Kiho is activated, you become immune to the influence of the Shadowlands Taint (or other supernatural ailments, such as the influence of the Lying Darkness) for a number of round equal to your Air Ring. This immunity both prevents you from acquiring the Taint while the Kiho is active, and allows you to ignore all penalties (and benefits) associated with any Taint you already possess while the Kiho is active. If you take any deliberate action that would normally result in the acquisition of the Taint, such as casting a maho spell, the effect ends immediately and you gain the Taint as normal.

The Great Silence

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Mystical

This peculiar technique allows a monk to use a precise attack to disrupt the flow of an individual's chi in such a way that they are unable to speak. This Kiho must be delivered by an *atemi* attack. If successful, the target of this attack is unable to speak for a number of rounds equal to your Air Ring.

Harmony of the Mind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5
- **Type:** Mystical

A gift often possessed by members of the Brotherhood is the ability to quickly and accurately gauge the strength of others, a useful ability both in assessing new applicants to the order and in determining how best to overcome obstacles. By making a Contested Air Roll against a target within your line of sight, you may learn one of the following pieces of information: their highest or lowest Ring, their highest Skill Rank, or their highest cost Spiritual Advantage or Disadvantage. For every successful Raise made on this roll, you can gain one additional piece of information. You may use this Kiho a number of times per day equal to your Air Ring.

Riding the Clouds

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Type:** Mystical

By aligning his chi with that of the wind, a monk can make his body light and buoyant, dramatically increasing the distance he can leap. While this Kiho is active, you may make a Simple Move Action to leap a maximum distance equal to your Air Ring x10. This effect lasts until you have made such a leap once, and then is expended.

Soul of the Four Winds

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Type:** Internal

By bringing their chi in alignment with that of the wind, monks may dramatically increase their reaction time and ability to evade the blows of others. While this Kiho is active, your Armor TN is increased by an amount equal to your Insight Rank plus your Air Ring.

Stain Upon the Soul

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Martial

This is a basic martial technique known to many sects of the Brotherhood, but one that is decried by several orders as impure and wicked. Its ease of use and its terrible effect on others are the reasons most often cited for this. You must make a successful *atemi* attack against a target. This disrupts the flow of the target's chi and causes crippling pain throughout the body, distracting them from everything else. The target suffers a penalty to all TNs as if he suffered from a number of Wound Ranks equal to your Air Ring. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Insight Rank plus your Air Ring. This effect cannot afflict a target multiple times, and is superceded by actual Wounds, not cumulative with them.

Steal the Air Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 7
- **Type:** Kharmic

This Kiho borders upon the Mystical, but is not quite as overt as those slivers of enlightenment. By drawing his chi inward, a monk can make himself less noticeable and more prone to being easily overlooked. While this Kiho is active, you gain additional rolled and kept dice equal to your Air Ring on all Stealth Skill Rolls. This effect lasts a number of minutes equal to your Insight Rank.

Way of the Willow

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5
- **Type:** Internal

The wind is all around us, and by focusing his chi, a monk may see as the wind does, dramatically increasing his ability to perceive threats and preemptively counteract them. While this Kiho is active, if you have not yet taken your Turn during the current combat Round, you may spend a Void Point to immediately interrupt any opponent who declares a melee attack against you. As part of this interruption, you may either make a Move Action away from the opponent, or you may instead make an unarmed attack against them. Once you have done so, the effect of this Kiho ends. This Kiho is rendered inactive if not used within one day of its activation.

Earth Kiho

Cleansing Spirit

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4
- **Type:** Internal

Rain and time wash the mountain, leaving it free from impurities. While this Kiho is active, you roll a number of additional dice equal to half your Earth Ring (rounded down) on any roll made to resist the effects of poison or disease.

Earthen Fist

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Type:** Internal

Although part of the elemental fist set of Kiho, this particular technique is more defensive than offensive. While Earthen Fist is active, you may only adopt the Defense or Full Defense Stances. If an opponent makes a melee attack against you and misses, on your next Turn you may attempt the Disarm Maneuver against that opponent (assuming they are within range) for no Raises and regardless of the normal restrictions of your stance, ending the Kiho's effect. This Kiho is rendered inactive if not used within one day of its activation.

Earth Needs No Eyes

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Type:** Internal

You can attune yourself to minute vibrations in the earth and use them to detect the movement of others. While this Kiho is active you can detect the approach of any creature or individual that moves across the ground within a distance equal to your Insight Rank x50 in feet. You only know the location of moving things in contact with the ground. If this Kiho is active when a skirmish begins, you cannot be ambushed or surprised by any land-bound opponent. This effect lasts a number of minutes equal to your Earth Ring.

Embrace the Stone

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5
- **Type:** Mystical

By focusing their chi like that of the mountain, monks may become like stone themselves, turning aside blows and ignoring damage. When you activate this Kiho, you gain a Reduction Rating equal to twice your Earth Ring. This stacks with any other Reduction you have from other sources (such as spells or armor). This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Earth Ring.

Grasp the Earth Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5
- **Type:** Internal

Embracing the essence of stone grants a monk incredible powers of resilience. When this Kiho is active, your TN penalties at all Wound Ranks are reduced by an amount equal to your Earth Ring. You may also continue to take Simple Actions when at the Down Wound Rank. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to your Earth Ring.

Rest, My Brother

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Martial

Easily among the most difficult and most sacred of all Kiho, this technique is restricted to a handful of orders within the Brotherhood. It functions by reversing the chi flow of a Tainted individual, causing them excruciating pain and temporarily restoring clarity of thought. This Kiho requires an *atemi* attack to be activated. The attack deals normal unarmed damage (despite being an *atemi* attack), plus an additional number of unkept damage dice equal to the opponent's Shadowlands Taint Rank. If the target is a human or other formerly uncorrupted creature (as opposed to an oni or other inherently Tainted creature), he loses all benefits of the Shadowlands Taint for a number of Rounds equal to your Earth Ring. During this time, he is free from the madness and mental instability normally brought on by the Taint.

Root the Mountain

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5
- **Type:** Internal

As the Crab say, the mountain does not move, and neither does one who shares its strength. While this Kiho is active, attempts to use the Knockdown Maneuver against you require two extra Raises to be successful. Any attempt to force you to move against your will, including Knockdown Maneuvers, requires a Contested Earth Roll in addition to any other costs or Contested Rolls. You may not make Move Actions without dispelling this effect.

Speed of the Mountains

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Kharmic

Earth is many things, but fleet is not among them. By delivering an *atemi* attack against an opponent and activating this Kiho, you cause their earthen chi to become ascendant. The opponent's Water Ring is considered to be two ranks lower for the purposes of determining how far they can move as part of a Move Action. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to twice your Earth Ring.

Way of the Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4
- **Type:** Martial

The grip of a monk can be like stone, crushing those who find themselves trapped in his grasp. Opponents engaged in a Grapple with you while this Kiho is active suffer a number of additional Wounds per Round equal to your Earth Ring, regardless of who is winning the Grapple. This damage is inflicted during the Reactions Stage. This effect lasts a number of minutes equal to your Earth Ring.

Fire Kiho

The Body is an Anvil

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4
- **Type:** Mystical

A master of the ways of Fire can channel his chi outward, granting him a measure of protection and repelling attackers. While this Kiho is active, your skin becomes extremely hot to the touch, and anyone who touches you, including those who target you with unarmed attacks or those you strike with an unarmed attack, suffer Wounds equal to your Fire Ring. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to twice your Fire Ring.

Breaking Blow

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Type:** Martial

Fire destroys all it touches, and a monk harnessing his Fire chi can achieve similar effects. While this Kiho is active, your unarmed strikes inflict full damage to all non-metal substances, including wood and stone, without inflicting any ill effects on you as a result of punching such objects. This effect lasts a number of minutes equal to your Fire Ring. The Game Master is the ultimate judge of how much damage a particular inanimate object can withstand before being destroyed.

Channel the Fire Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 6
- **Type:** Internal

Fire cannot be extinguished by more fire, nor can it be quelled with cold. While this Kiho is active, any damage you suffer as a result of heat or cold is reduced by -2k2. This includes effects that generate fire, such as spells and other Kiho. This effect lasts for one day.

Dance of the Flames

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 6
- **Type:** Martial

Filling one's chi with the power of Fire has considerable effects on one's speed as well as one's temperament. While this Kiho is in effect, you may make unarmed attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action. You must make an unarmed attack against an opponent (rather than an ally or inanimate object) every Round while this Kiho is active, or its effects end immediately.

Destiny's Strike

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4
- **Type:** Martial

The force of destiny is powerful, and can be harnessed by those who truly understand their place in the universe. While this Kiho is active, whenever you are struck by a melee attack from an opponent, you may immediately make a counterattack in the form of a single unarmed attack. If you have not taken your Turn yet this round, this counts as your Turn. If you have taken your Turn, this is a Free Action instead. This counterattack ignores any Wound Penalties suffered as a result of the attack to which it is responding. This Kiho lasts until the end of the skirmish.

Falling Star Strike

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 7 *(Atemi)*
- **Type:** Martial

One of the most blatant and powerful of all Kiho, the Falling Star Strike is a devastating martial attack that can cripple opponents permanently if not used with restraint. When employed, the fists of the monk using it are wreathed in flame, and his eyes burn like fiery embers. This Kiho may only be activated by spending a Void Point, and may not be activated by making a Void / Meditation Skill Roll. It also requires two Raises on an unarmed attack to activate. The unarmed attack inflicts normal damage, plus an additional amount of damage with a DR equal to your Fire Ring in rolled and kept dice. Additionally, you and the target must make a Contested Fire Roll. If you are successful, the target is struck Blind for a number of hours equal to your Fire Ring.

Fire's Fleeting Speed

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4
- **Type:** Kharmic

Fire darts and surges, as do those who carry it in their souls. While this Kiho is active, increase the distance you may move when using any Move Action by +5'. This effect lasts a number of Rounds equal to your Fire Ring.

Flame Fist

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Martial

By mingling your chi with another's while Fire is ascendant within your body, you can disorient and confuse an opponent, inhibiting their actions. An opponent struck by this Kiho's ac-

tivating *atemi* strike suffers a TN penalty to all actions equal to three times your Fire Ring. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to your Fire Ring.

Unbalance the Mind

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Mystical

A momentary disruption of the Fire chi within a target can leave them addled and confused. The target of this Kiho's activating *atemi* strike is Dazed.

Water Kiho

As the Breakers

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 5 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Kharmic

By disrupting the flow of chi through others, you can inhibit them without harm. With a successful *atemi* strike, the target of your strike loses one Simple Action this Round. You may only target opponents who have not yet acted in the present Round, and an opponent may not be affected by this Kiho more than once per skirmish.

Buoyed by the Kami

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Type:** Mystical

A monk whose Water chi is ascendant can resist the siren call of the depths. While this Kiho is active, you may move across the surface of water as if it were basic terrain. This effect only continues as long as you are taking Simple Move Actions each round, and lasts for a maximum of five minutes, at which time you may reactivate this Kiho if necessary.

Chi Protection

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Martial

Perhaps the strangest application of the *atemi* technique, this Kiho permits a monk to restore or enhance the flow of chi through another's body, hastening the healing of wounds or other ailments. You must spend a Void Point to activate this Kiho (as opposed to the normal allowance to activate by a Void / Meditation Skill Roll), which is done immediately after successfully striking a target (either an opponent or a willing ally) with an *atemi* strike. The individual targeted by the strike regains a number of Wounds equal to your Water Ring, immediately and then at the start of your Turn every subsequent Round for a number of Rounds equal to your Insight Rank. You may not use this Kiho on yourself.

Freezing the Lifeblood

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 7 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Martial

This attack disrupts the flow of chi through an opponent's body, paralyzing them for a short time. The individual struck by the *atemi* attack is paralyzed, effectively Stunned and unable to take Move Actions, and may not move under his own power for a number of Rounds equal to your Insight Rank.

Partaking the Waves

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 6
- **Type:** Internal

Certain monks may channel the power of the ocean into their bodies, moving and flowing away from attacks like the sea itself. While this Kiho is active, you gain Reduction equal to your Water Ring. This stacks with Reduction from other sources such as spells and armor. This effect lasts a number of Rounds equal to twice your Water Ring.

Ride the Water Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 3
- **Type:** Kharmic

To walk with the Water Dragon's power is to harness the incredible restorative abilities of the ocean. While this Kiho is active, for a number of Rounds equal to your Insight Rank, you recover Wounds equal to your Water Ring during the Reactions Stage of the Round.

Slap the Wave

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 7
- **Type:** Mystical

A powerful expression of inner strength, this Kiho channels the monk's chi outward in an explosive wave that carries the power of a tsunami. You must spend a Void Point to activate this Kiho (Void / Meditation Skill Rolls are not possible). You must strike your hands together and release a powerful *kiai* shout. Everyone in your forward facing arc and within a distance of your Water Ring x5 feet must succeed at a Contested Water Roll against you, or become Dazed.

Waves in All Things

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4
- **Type:** Mystical

Water flows through all things, including the earth. You may make an unarmed attack by striking a body of standing water or the earth. The effects of this strike are felt by one opponent who is in contact with either the water or earth (whichever one was struck) and who is within a number of feet equal to your Water Ring x10. The effect of the strike is quite obvious, and may not be performed discreetly. If you are concealed at the time this Kiho is activated, your position is immediately revealed to the target and those in his immediate vicinity.

Void Kiho

Banish All Shadows

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Kharmic

Non-Brotherhood Kiho

Kiho are largely the province of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and the default rule for the L5R RPG is that other characters cannot possess them. Even Schools that possess the Monk descriptor are restricted, as these generally describe sects that are not part of the Brotherhood (such as the Togashi Tattooed Men of the Dragon Clan and the Asako Henshin of the Phoenix Clan) and subscribe to their own ideology radically different than that of the Brotherhood. However, GMs who wish to make Kiho (or perhaps just mystical martial arts) more prevalent in their games may utilize the following optional rules:

- Brotherhood monk characters may acquire Kiho normally as described in the section detailing Monk Schools
- Characters affiliated with other Monk Schools may purchase Kiho at one and one half times the normal cost, using the same rules for Mastery Level
- Shugenja characters may purchase Kiho at twice the normal cost, and they use only their Ring to determine if they meet the Mastery Level (rather than their Ring plus their School Rank).
- Ninja who are being depicted in a mystical or supernatural fashion may purchase Kiho at twice the normal cost, and they use only their School Rank to determine if they meet the Mastery Level (rather than their Ring plus their School Rank).
- Non-Brotherhood characters may never know more Kiho than their total Monk or Shugenja School Rank (or Ninja School Rank if you are running a game in which Ninja can use Kiho).



One of the most powerful effects of one's chi upon another is the clarity it brings, which can allow one to overcome shortcomings for a short time. The target of this Kiho's activating strike may, for a number of Rounds equal to your Void Ring, ignore the effects of his highest-point Disadvantage. This effect does not target Spiritual or Social Disadvantages.

Death Touch

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 7 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Mystical

The death touch, also known as *dim mak*, is perhaps the rarest and most reviled use of a monk's understanding of the flow of chi. It involves a series of *atemi* strikes that disrupt and corrupt the flow of chi through an opponent's body, leading to debilitating pain and possibly death. You must successfully strike an opponent with three *atemi* strikes on three consecutive Rounds immediately after activating this Kiho, and you must spend an additional Void Point after the third and final strike (in addition to any Void Points spent to activate the Kiho). Your opponent suffers increasing weakness broken up by bouts of agonizing pain. All of the target's Rings are reduced by 1 each hour. The maximum penalty is an amount equal to your Insight Rank. If any Ring reaches 0 due to these penalties, the target falls into a catatonic state and must make three Contested Void Rolls against you (these rolls use the target's full Void, without penalties). If the target loses all three rolls by at least 5 or more, he dies. (This Kiho does not automatically kill the victim if his Earth is reduced to 0.) Use of this technique can be grounds for excommunication from the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

Eight Directions Awareness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 5
- **Type:** Mystical

Some monks are at a state of harmony with the world to such extent that they are aware of everything around them. While this Kiho is active, you become aware of all living things within a distance equal to your Void Ring x10 feet. You are also aware of any object or individual within that range that has been deliberately concealed, including secret doors, hidden compartments, buried objects, etc.

Silent Solace

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 5 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Kharmic

Proper use of nerve strikes can impede not only the physical, but the spiritual as well. An opponent struck by this Kiho's activating strike must expend two spell slots to cast a single spell. This effect lasts a number of Rounds equal to your Void Ring.

Song of the World

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Type:** Kharmic

By listening to the song of the elements around him, a monk may perceive the universe slightly ahead of all others. You must target an opponent within fifty feet when activating this Kiho, and succeed at a Contested Void Roll against him. If successful, his Initiative Score is reduced by 5 and yours is increased by the same amount.

Spin the Kharmic Wheel

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 8
- **Type:** Kharmic (Atemi)

Theoretically one of the most powerful Kiho known to exist, Spin the Kharmic Wheel is known only to a handful of reclusive masters within the Brotherhood, and discovered by a new soul perhaps once in a generation. You must deliver this Kiho via an unarmed attack in order to properly harness the forces of destiny that it unleashes. You expend all remaining Void Points when this Kiho is activated. The target of your attack loses one randomly determined Social, Spiritual, or Mental Disadvantage and gains a new randomly determined

Social, Spiritual, or Mental Disadvantage of equal value. The GM may opt to choose the Disadvantages instead of selecting randomly, if that seems to produce a more interesting (or believeable) result.

Touch the Void Dragon

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4
- **Type:** Internal

Certain orders of the Brotherhood are adept at aligning their chi with the dominant Element in the environment around them, drawing strength from the world. While this Kiho is active, one of your Rings and its associated Traits are considered one Rank higher. Which Ring is affected depends upon the environment. Mountains increase Earth, the seashore increases Water, the plains increase Air, the desert or volcanic areas increase Fire, etc.

To the Last Breath

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 3
- **Type:** Kharmic

With a simple exhalation, a monk can expend his energy into the universe around him, allowing others to partake of it as they wish. Any one selected individual within twenty feet when this Kiho is activated gains a Void Point on their next Turn. No target may benefit from this Kiho more than twice per day.

Void Fist

- **Ring/Mastery:** Void 4 (Atemi)
- **Type:** Martial

Unlike other *atemi* attacks, the Void Fist is a normal unarmed strike that would appear, if observed, to be damaging to its target. This is an illusion, however, as its true purpose is to use the target as a conduit with the great Void. You must make a successful Raise to strike an opponent with Void Fist. A successful strike inflicts no damage, but you immediately regain two Void Points. This Kiho can only be used on enemies, and has no effect on allies. It has no effect on targets who do not have Void Points.

Maho

Maho (blood magic) is a dark and sinister form of magic which calls on the corrupt power of *kansen*, evil elemental spirits born from the power of Jigoku. Unlike normal Rokugani magic, which requires one to be born with the ability to speak with the elemental spirits, maho can be cast by anyone who can learn the incantations – indeed, the kansen themselves are known to whisper their spells into the ears of those willing to listen. This dark magic is widely employed by the Spider Clan, the Lost, and the creatures of the Shadowlands, as well as by the infamous Bloodspeaker Cult and by numerous individual *maho-tsukai* (blood sorcerers) in Rokugan who stumble across its secrets. Because it represents "easy power" that lies outside the bounds of the Celestial Order, maho tends to be especially alluring to the ambitious and the downtrodden – samurai who forsake Bushido for personal gain, and embittered peasants whose dreams of a better life drive them to darkness.

Balancing Maho

Maho spells, and the rules for casting them, are deliberately designed to be "over-powered," luring characters into Taint and damnation by offering them potent magic which other shugenja cannot match. Normally, this is not an issue in play, since the GM controls when or if a player can learn a maho spell, ensuring that such dark wisdom does not unbalance the game. Ultimately, the price maho extracts – an ever-climbing level of Taint, eventually leading to a character becoming Lost – balances it far more effectively than anything else.

In the case of a campaign which uses Spider Clan player characters, however, issues of play-balance may become more significant. The GM may wish to apply some tighter controls on access to maho spells in order to maintain an overall sense of equity between Chuda characters and the rest of the group. In this case, we recommend the GM restrict Chuda characters to learning maho spells whose Mastery Level does not exceed the character's current School Rank, taking Affinities into account as normal.

Learning Maho

Maho is forbidden in Rokugan, and learning or using it is an Imperial crime. Of course, given the lure it represents, this is a crime that is frequently committed. There are a number of ways in which characters may learn maho spells. They may discover an ancient scroll, hidden in a library or a cultist stronghold. They may encounter a corrupted sensei who tempts them with the secrets of blood magic. A "helpful" kansen may sense their desire for power and whisper the spells into their ears. A band of Bloodspeakers or other maho cultists may try to recruit them. All of these methods of learning maho represent specific events which can happen in play – in other words, events which the GM may present to the characters, as a test of their will and purity.

Spider Clan characters are a different case. The Chuda school actively studies maho, and characters who belong to that school can learn maho spells in the same way as they learn any other spells, acquiring more of them as they go up in School Rank.

Using Maho

Like normal spells, maho spells have a TN equal to 5 plus (5 x Mastery Rank of the spell). However, the basic Spell Casting Roll for maho spells is Insight Rank/Element, instead of Shugenja School Rank/Element. This means anyone who can learn the incantations can cast a maho spell. Likewise, there is no Insight Rank restriction on which maho spells one can cast – a brand-new maho-tsukai can cast even the dreaded "Touch of Death" if he can learn what words to chant.

Spilling Others' Blood

When a maho-tsukai spills blood to cast a maho spell, he has the ability to take that blood from another person rather than himself. Naturally, most maho-tsukai are quite ruthless and will not hesitate to wound someone else to power their sinister magic.

Wounding someone else to cast a spell can only be done if the target is cooperating (a cultist or other minion) or helpless. Examples of helpless targets would include someone who is tied up, unconscious or sleeping, or Stunned. Actually attacking someone to power a maho spell is impossible, since casting the spell is already a Complex Action.

Maho spells, like other spells, are cast by spending a number of Complex Actions equal to the Mastery Rank of the spell. Just as with other spells, Raises may be taken to reduce that casting time, down to a minimum of one Complex Action.



However, maho has its own costs which it extracts from those who practice it:

- Blood, the blood of a living and intelligent creature, must be spilled to appease the kansen who are invoked by a maho spell. The caster must spill blood (in Wounds) equal to twice the Mastery Rank of the spell he is casting. Thus, a Mastery 1 maho spell requires 2 Wounds of blood. Note that the caster need not spill his own blood! Many experienced maho-tsukai make a point of surrounding themselves with servants, gullible cultists, or other "allies" who can be wounded or killed to power spells as needed.
- The blood must be spilled whether or not the Spell Casting Roll succeeds. However, the flip side of this requirement for blood is that spilling more blood will please the kansen and produce a better effect. A maho-tsukai gains a Free Raise on his Spell Casting Roll for every additional amount of blood, equal to the required amount, which he spills. Thus, for a Mastery 1 spell, the caster gets a Free Raise for every additional 2 Wounds of blood he spills.

Worse than the blood which maho extracts, however, is the Taint that it inflicts. Although many maho-tsukai refuse to believe they are dabbling in the powers of Jigoku, in fact that is exactly what they are doing, and every time a maho-tsukai calls on the kansen, he opens himself to the Taint. Each time a maho-tsukai successfully casts a maho spell, he gains a number of points of Taint equal to one less than the Mastery Rank of the spell, to a minimum of 1 point.

Maho Spells, Mastery Rank 1

Bleeding

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person/creature
- **Duration:** Indefinite
- **Raises:** Damage (+1 Wound of bleeding per Raise), Targets (+1 target per Raise)

This spell inflicts a malignant kansen on a wounded person. The target of the spell must be already injured (suffering from at least 1 Wound) in order for this spell to be effective. The spell causes the injury to begin bleeding, inflicting 1 Wound per Round at the start of the victim's Turn. This effect continues every Round, indefinitely, unless the injury is bandaged with a successful Medicine (Wound Treatment) / Intelligence roll at TN 20. Magically healing the target to full Wounds will also end the bleeding.

Blood Rite

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target person/creature
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 minutes per Raise), Special (heals an extra +1k0 per Raise)

A deceptive spell which allows many maho-tsukai to masquerade as noble priests, healing the injured. This spell convinces the kansen to flow into the target, stimulating his flesh to heal and knit itself closed, and stimulating his body to feats of physical prowess. The target immediately heals 1k1 Wounds, and for the duration of the spell one of his physical Traits (chosen by the caster) is treated as one Rank higher. (This can award a temporary increase in Wounds if it causes the target's Earth Ring to increase, but the Wounds will drop back to normal when the spell expires, and this may result in the death of the target if he has taken sufficient injury.) However, there is a cruel price for this assistance from the kansen: the target of the spell immediately gains 1k1 points of Shadowlands Taint.

Blood and Darkness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1
- **Range:** Centered on caster . .
- **Area of Effect:** 30' radius
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Area (5' additional radius per Raise), Duration (+2 rounds per Raise)

This spell plunges the air around the caster into an unnatural visual obscurement, either pitch black or dark blood red as the caster desires, as the kansen literally block the vision of everyone in the area of effect. Everyone who enters or remains within the spell's area of effect, except for the caster, is considered to be Blind until they move out of the area of effect. The caster can see normally – the kansen recognize their master and do not block his vision. The zone of obscurement does not move once it is created.

Magical effects or Shadowlands powers that overcome blindness can see through the obfuscation, but otherwise there is no way to overcome the effect until the spell expires.

Disrupt the Limb

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person's limb
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 rounds per Raise), Range (+10' per Raise)

This curse causes the muscles of a target limb – an arm or leg of the caster's choice – to be afflicted with pain, weakness, and tremors for the duration of the spell. All rolls for physical actions taken with that limb for the duration of the spell suffer a +15 TN penalty. In addition, if the target limb is a leg, the victim is considered to be under the effects of the Lame Disadvantage for the duration of the spell.

Inspire Fear

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+10 minutes per Raise), Range (+10' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per Raise)

This maho spell causes the target person to gain a Phobia of the caster's choice. For the duration of the spell, the victim is considered to have a 3-Point Phobia (as per the Disadvantage in the *Book of Fire*) of a nature chosen by the caster. Maho-tsukai frequently use this spell to make their victims afraid of their weapons or allies, to make shugenja afraid of their spell-scrolls, and other cruel tricks.

Legacy of the Dark One

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person/creature
- **Duration:** 5 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round per Raise), Targets (+1 target per Raise), Special (1 additional Void point per 2 Raises)

This subtle maho spell causes distracting kansen to cluster around the target, disrupting his connection to the true Void. The target immediately loses one Void point, and cannot regain it for the duration of the spell.

Sinful Dreams

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1
- **Range:** 300'
- **Area of Effect:** One target intelligent creature
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Range (+50' per Raise), Special (1 additional Free Raise awarded per 2 Raises)

This subtle and sinister spell causes the target to experience dreams of committing dark, sinful, and dishonorable acts. It can only be cast on a person who is either sleeping or in a situation where they could easily fall asleep (resting, meditating, etc). The caster need not know exactly where the target is located. So long as the target is within the spell's range, the spell will succeed.

Due to the impact of these disturbing and distracting dreams, the victim of this spell becomes vulnerable to future manipulation by the caster. For the next 24 hours after the spell concludes, the caster gains a Free Raise on all Temptation and Intimidation rolls against the victim. The caster may Raise on the spell to increase the number of Free Raises awarded.

Summon Undead Champion

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One humanoid corpse
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour per two Raises), Range (+20' per Raise), Targets (+1 corpse per Raise)

This spell is used by maho-tsukai to quickly bring forth undead warriors to protect themselves or slaughter their enemies. It must be cast on a corpse which is within the spell's range – it cannot target a living creature. The corpse will be animated by a kansen, rising up and serving the caster as best it can. Mechanically, the animated corpse is considered a zombie (as per the *Book of Void*, page 331). It obeys any simple commands (such as "kill them" or "wait here") from the maho-tsukai who summoned it. Complex or conditional orders cannot be understood, and the zombie will simply stand and wait until it is given an order simple enough to understand. Once created, it can move freely beyond the spell's initial range.

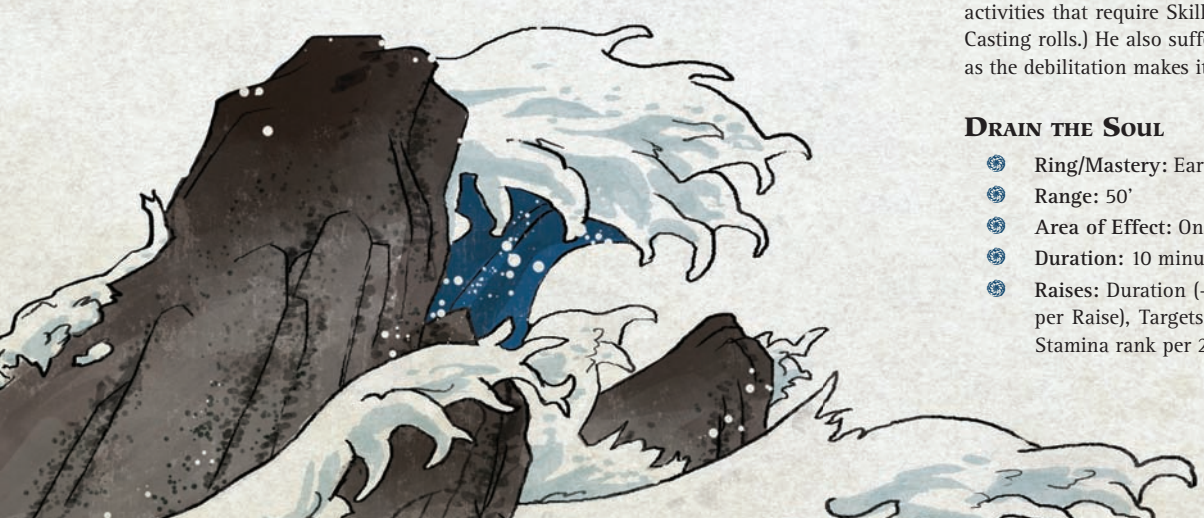
If the zombie is beheaded or destroyed, it will not re-animate unless the spell is cast again. At the end of the spell's duration, the kansen will depart and the undead creature will collapse to the ground, becoming nothing more than a corpse.

Written in Blood

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One message (up to ten words)
- **Duration:** 1 week
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day per Raise), Special (+3 words per Raise)

Maho-tsukai use this spell to leave hidden messages, either to communicate with each other or to intimidate others. The message is written in blood onto any flat surface, and may be up to ten words long (Raises can be taken to lengthen the message). When the message is completed, the blood will sink into the surface and disappear, reappearing later when a condition set by the caster is fulfilled. Conditions for the message's reappearance can be as simple or as complex as the caster might desire, so long as they are conditions the kansen can reasonably perceive (GM's judgment). Until the message reappears, it is physically undetectable, although spells such as Sense or By the Light of the Moon will detect something magically concealed in the surface.

If the spell's duration expires without the trigger-event taking place, the hidden blood will reappear without forming the message.



Maho Spells, Mastery Rank 2

Caress of Fu Leng

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target object
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+10' per Raise)

This spell summons dark kansen to consume and destroy the substance most inimical to them – jade. The caster may target any one jade item, weapon, or object within the spell's range (he must be able to see it). The jade is instantly corrupted, its blessed properties annihilated by an overwhelming saturation of Taint. Only a foul black slime is left behind.

This spell cannot affect an awakened *nemuranai* (magical relic) that contains jade.

Curse of the Unblinking Eye

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 2 days
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day per 2 Raises, maximum of 7 days duration), Targets (+1 target per 2 Raises)

This spell curses the target with the attentions of malignant Air kansen who prevent him from sleeping. For the duration of the spell, the victim cannot sleep, and thus cannot recover Void points or spell slots from rest. Further, for each day the victim goes without sleep, he must make a Raw Stamina roll at a TN equal to 5 + (5x number of nights without sleep) or suffer the effects of being Fatigued.

Curse of Weakness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person or creature
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 rounds per Raise), Range (+10' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per 2 Raises)

A more powerful form of the spell Disrupt Limb, this spell inflicts an overwhelming barrage of angry Water kansen on the target. The kansen flow through his body, inflicting headache, weakness, fatigue, and muscle tremors. For the duration of the spell, he is at a +10 TN penalty to all physical and mental activities that require Skill or Trait rolls. (This includes Spell Casting rolls.) He also suffers a –10 penalty to his Armor TN, as the debilitation makes it difficult for him to dodge blows.

Drain the Soul

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person/creature
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 minutes per Raise), Range (+10' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per Raise), Special (+1 Stamina rank per 2 Raises)

This spell causes malignant Earth kansen to afflict the target, draining away his natural Earth and leaving him weak and sickly. For the duration of the spell, the victim's Stamina rank is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1). This can cause the victim's Earth Ring to temporarily drop, reducing his Wound Ranks and making him more vulnerable to injury.

Pain

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 1 round
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round per Raises), Range (+5' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per 2 Raises)

This spell wracks the target with intense physical pain, shooting up and down the limbs and through the torso. The target falls Prone, helpless with pain, and cannot act on his next Turn. In addition, the target must make a Willpower Trait Roll at TN 20 to avoid crying aloud in pain, which could cause a loss of Honor and/or Glory.

Puppet Master

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target undead creature
- **Duration:** 4 hours
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 hours per Raise), Range (+20' per Raise), Targets (+1 undead creature per Raise)

This spell allows a maho-tsukai to exert his will against any undead creatures in the area, taking control of them and forcing them to obey his will. If the spell targets a mindless uncontrolled creature such as a zombie, the caster takes control of it automatically. If the spell targets a free-willed undead creature such as a pennaggalon, the caster must succeed in a Contested Willpower roll against the creature. Likewise, if the spell targets an undead creature controlled by someone else (another maho-tsukai, Oni lord, etc), the caster must succeed in a Contested Willpower roll against the controller.

Once controlled, the undead will obey the caster's commands for the duration of the spell, subject to the limits of the creature's intelligence. Zombies will typically only be able to comprehend the most basic of orders ("kill him," etc). At the end of the spell's duration, the undead either revert to the control of their previous master (if they had one) or become free-willed once more.

Spreading the Darkness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** Two target persons
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Range (+10' per Raise)

This sinister curse is employed by maho-tsukai both to control their own Taint and to spread the gift of Jigoku to others. The spell targets two people, at least one of which must have the Shadowlands Taint. The spell causes some of this Taint to leave that creature and transfer to the other, the kansen gleefully carrying the gift of Jigoku from one creature to the other. The maximum number of Taint points which can be moved in this manner is equal to the caster's Earth + Insight Rank – however, it can never remove the last point of Taint from the target. (Once the Taint has its grip on someone, it is supremely unwilling to let go.)

If the person receiving the Taint is an unwilling target, the caster must succeed in a Contested Willpower roll against the target, or the spell fails.

Maho Spells, Mastery Rank 3

Armor of Obsidian

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target person or creature (can be caster)
- **Duration:** 10 minutes or until used
- **Raises:** Duration (+5 minutes per Raise), Special (absorb one additional spell per 2 Raises)

This spell wreaths the target in an invisible shield of kansen. If the target is struck or affected by a spell with the Jade keyword, the kansen intercede and negate the spell's effect. This is quite spectacular, as the target is briefly wreathed in a cloud of black, soundless fire which visibly absorbs and consumes the spell. The magical armor normally only works once, although a skilled maho-tsukai can make it strong enough to withstand multiple spells.

Death Beyond Life

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 24 hours
- **Raises:** Duration (+24 hours per Raise)

This spell is among the most secret spells employed by the leaders of the Bloodspeaker cult, and is quite rare among maho-tsukai outside of that elite group. It allows the caster to literally cheat death, for himself or another person. The spell must be cast on its target while still alive, and its protective effect normally lasts 24 hours, although skilled spellcasters can extend it. If the target dies within the duration of the spell, powerful kansen will carry his soul away, preventing it from passing on to Meido for judgment. Exactly eight hours after death, they will bring back the soul and re-infuse it into the body, and the target rises from the dead at the Down Wound Rank. Returning from the dead in this way inflicts a full Rank of Taint on the target, due to his soul having been in the care of kansen for eight hours.

This blasphemous resurrection will work as long as the target's corpse is still intact – even if limbs have been lost or the head severed, the body will reassemble itself when the kansen return. The only way to prevent the resurrection is to scatter the body parts or burn the corpse to ashes.

The Dangers of Oni

Dealing with Summoned Oni

GMs and players alike who read the "Summon Oni" spell will realize that summoning up an oni to destroy one's foes is an extremely hazardous venture. Why bring forth an oni that might steal your name, turn you into its slave, and become an immensely powerful scourge on the world? The most typical answer is arrogance and lust for power. An oni is an immensely powerful servitor, and a skilled maho-tsukai can maintain control for a considerable length of time. Many maho-tsukai are also over-confident in their ability to control an oni, or ignorant of the full consequences of invoking such a creature.

If an oni is physically killed, it is banished back to Jigoku, freeing the person who bears its Mark. Truly powerful maho-tsukai who are strong enough to defeat an oni on their own will often deliberately summon oni in order to bestow Oni Marks on others, using this as a means of control and blackmail. Conversely, a desperate maho-tsukai may well summon oni in order to unleash them in suicidal attacks, counting on the oni's eventual destruction to free him from its Mark.

Ritual Oni-Summoning

"Summon Oni" may be cast as a ritual, with several maho-tsukai working together to invoke and control very powerful oni. In order for this to be effective all of the maho-tsukai participating will have to successfully cast the spell – including spilling blood and gaining Taint. All of the maho-tsukai who successfully cast the spell can make a single combined Willpower roll to control the oni once it appears. (It must still be named, of course.)

Essence of Undeath

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One humanoid corpse
- **Duration:** Indefinite
- **Raises:** Range (+20' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per 3 Raises)

A more powerful form of undead summoning, this spell animates a dead corpse into an undead warrior. Unlike the minor, temporary zombies created by "Summon Undead Champion," this spell binds a kansen into a dead body, creating a powerful Tainted revenant which serves the caster to the best of its ability. The resulting creature is described (as "Undead Revenant") in the *Book of Void*, page 330. The revenant will last indefinitely (until destroyed), and the Taint infusing its body prevents it from decaying further. It cannot speak, but can understand and obey any verbal command. It will serve the maho-tsukai who summoned it until it is physically destroyed.

Hate's Heart

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 3 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 round per 2 Raises), Range (+10' per Raise)

The target of this spell is infused with Air kansen which cause him to suffer a sudden, violent, murderous rage against whoever he is looking at or speaking with when the spell takes effect. (Cunning maho-tsukai usually cast this spell from concealment, to avoid the risk that the rage might be directed against them.) For the duration of the spell, the victim will be consumed with murderous, uncontrollable rage, unable to think of anything but killing this person. He will immediately attack the object of his hatred to the very best of his ability.

At the start of each Turn, the victim may roll his Honor at TN 30 to control the rage for that Round. The victim will only be able to take Free and Simple Actions during that Round, since so much of his energy is dedicated to controlling the anger.

Summon Oni

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 3
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One summoned oni
- **Duration:** Indefinite
- **Raises:** Special (+1k0 per Raise to the Willpower roll to control the oni), Special (more powerful oni, GM's discretion)

Among the most hazardous spells in the maho-tsukai's repertoire, this spell summons forth an oni from Jigoku. The oni appears anywhere the caster desires within the range of the spell, and must immediately be given a name – either the caster's own name or the name of another person closely connected to the caster (a close friend, immediate blood relative, or someone who owes the caster their life) – or it will simply depart back to Jigoku. A name, however, anchors the oni into Ningen-do and allows it to remain within the mortal realm.

Once the caster has given the oni a name he must engage in a Contested Willpower roll against it. If the caster gave the oni his own name, he gains a +3k2 bonus to this roll. The caster may also Raise when casting Summon Oni to gain additional unkept dice on this roll. The GM should determine the Willpower of the oni – the more powerful the oni, the higher its Willpower. If the caster wins the roll, the oni will obey his commands (at least for now). If the oni wins the roll, however, it is free of control and typically runs amok until it is destroyed.

Naming an oni is a perilous business, for the oni will try to steal the name away and thereby gain full autonomy and the ability to remain in the mortal realm. Such creatures become Oni Lords, monstrously powerful, able to spawn lesser but still potent copies of themselves. Thus summoned oni will typically not immediately attack the persons who gave them names, seeking instead to leave them alive until they can steal the names completely.

Any person who shares their name with an oni will acquire an Oni Mark, a small discoloration on the skin. Every day the bearer of an Oni Mark must make an Earth roll to resist gaining the Shadowlands Taint as the connection to the oni corrupts them (see the Taint rules for more details). Each week they must make another Contested Willpower Roll, similar to the first, against the oni in order to avoid surrendering their name to it. The oni gains +1k1 to this roll for each Rank of Shadowlands Taint the Mark has inflicted on its bearer. If the name-bearer is the same person who summoned the oni, he continues to gain the +3k2 bonus to the roll, plus any bonuses from Raises on the original spell.

If the oni ever wins this roll it steals the victim's name and becomes an Oni Lord, freeing itself from any control by its summoner (even if that person is different from the one with the Oni Mark). The now-nameless victim of the Oni Mark becomes a slave of the oni and must obey its commands.

If the oni is destroyed or otherwise banished back to Jigoku, it loses its connection to the person with its name and the Oni Mark disappears.

Maho Spells, Mastery Level 4

Chains of Jigoku

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One creature or person
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+5 minutes per Raise), Range (+10' per Raise), Special (+1k0 per Raise to caster's roll to contain the prisoner)

A dark counterpoint to the binding spells practiced by Earth shugenja, this spell summons the kansen to bind and trap living creatures (it cannot affect the undead). When the spell is cast, manacles of dark, rusty iron burst from the ground and ensnare the target, trapping him and holding him in place. The target is rendered immobile and helpless, unable to take any physical actions other than to try to break free (although he can still speak). The victim can only break free by making a Contested Roll of his Strength against the Earth of the maho-tsukai who cast the spell. (The caster may take Raises to gain additional unkept dice on this roll.) When the spell expires, the manacles melt away into a disgusting black ooze.

No Pure Breaths

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous (but see below)
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 per Raise), Range (+20' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per 2 Raises)

One of the more fearsome maho spells, No Pure Breaths instantly turns the air inside the target's lungs to Tainted kansen which violently erupt out of the body, ravaging the lungs and airways, leaving the victim bleeding from the nose, mouth, and ears. The spell has a DR equal to the victim's Air Ring in kept dice, but in addition, the effects of the spell leave the lungs and throat so ravaged that breathing itself becomes intensely painful. The victim suffers a continuous +10 TN penalty to all actions. This effect cannot be ended naturally, even if the damage is healed – however, any kind of magical healing spell, Kiho, or other supernatural healing effect will restore the lungs and end the TN penalty.

Stealing the Soul

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4
- **Range:** 1 mile
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 1 day
- **Raises:** Special (+1 additional Rank of Trait drain per 2 Raises)

Unlike most maho spells, this one can be cast as a ritual, allowing multiple casters to participate. The Bloodspeaker Cult is especially infamous for using this spell to weaken and cripple their enemies. In order to cast this spell, the maho-tsukai must possess some kind of fetish or token of the intended target – a lock of hair, drop of blood, a personal item, etc.

The spell inflicts a hostile and predatory kansen on the target, forcibly draining away his mental or physical abilities. The victim loses 1 Rank from a Trait of the caster's choice. Additional Ranks may be drained by taking Raises, but the Trait cannot be reduced below Rank 1. For each additional maho-tsukai participating in the spell, an additional Trait can be drained by the same amount.

If this spell reduces the target's Earth Ring, it will also lower his Wounds at each Rank, possibly resulting in death if he has already suffered damage.

Truth is a Scourge

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 minutes per Raise), Range (+10' per Raise), Targets (+1 per Raise)

One of the more subtle and psychologically destructive spells in the maho-tsukai's arsenal, this spell causes a kansen to distort the target's thoughts, making it impossible for him to lie.

Regardless of what he might intend to say, the target of this spell will find himself telling the truth, no matter how damaging that truth might be to himself, his family and lord, or his Clan. In fact, he will find himself blurting out any dangerous or damaging secrets he possesses. In order to conceal the truth while under the effects of this spell, the target must make a Willpower roll at TN 30.

Maho Spells, Mastery Rank 5

Strength of Darkness

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 5
- **Range:** Personal / Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 10 rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round per Raise), Special (+1 Rank to one physical Trait for every 2 Raises)

This spell infuses the body of the target with the power of the Taint, unnaturally enhancing his physical prowess for a short time, allowing him to perform superhuman feats of speed, strength, and stamina. The recipient of the spell gains +1 Rank to his Earth Ring and his other three physical Traits for the duration of the spell. (The caster may Raise to increase the Traits, but the Earth Ring cannot be increased further.) He also gains the ability to see through any sort of visual impairment – fog, smoke, or even complete darkness. The physical evidence of this magical enhancement is obvious and grotesque – the target's flesh swells and bulges unnaturally and his eyes turn blood-red.

This spell increases the target's Wounds per Rank to match his enhanced Earth Rank. When the spell expires and the Earth Ring drops back to normal, the target's Wounds also return to normal levels. This can result in death if he has suffered serious damage while under the spell's effects.

Possession

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 5
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 1 day
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day per 2 Raises), Range (+25' per Raise), Special (+1k0 on Contested Willpower Roll per Raise)

This fearsome spell allows the maho-tsukai to take direct possession of another person, forcing his soul into the victim's body and controlling it like a puppet. The caster must know the name of his chosen victim and must also have either a drop of blood or a piece of hair from the target. Once the spell is cast, the maho-tsukai must make a Contested Willpower Roll against the target. (The caster may take Raises to gain unkept dice on this roll.) If the target wins the roll, the possession fails, and the caster suffers 2k1 Wounds as the angry kansen lash back at the one who summoned them. If the caster wins the roll, he takes complete possession of the victim's body and may use it as he sees fit. He does not, however, gain any of the possessed body's memories, knowledge, or instincts. In mechanical terms, the possessed body has its own physical Traits and Advantages but has the mental Traits, mental/spiritual Advantages, School Techniques, and Skills of the possessing maho-tsukai.

The spell's victim experiences what is happening to him in an eerie, dream-like manner. When the spell's duration ends, the caster's soul returns to his own body, and the victim regains control of himself – and must face the consequences of what he did while possessed.

While the possession lasts, the caster's body is in a comatose state. He can end the possession early and return to his own body at will. If the possessed body is killed, he will immediately return to his own body. If his own body is killed while he possesses another, he will have no place to return when the spell expires and will thus die the moment the spell's duration ends.

Touch of Death

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Range (+10' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per 2 Raises)

The most dreaded of all maho spells, the Touch of Death ages, blackens, and blights the target. Skin and flesh shrivel and blacken, hair turns gray and falls out, and shattering pains wrack the body. The victim physically ages by 10 years, and suffers 7k7 Wounds. The wounds can be healed normally, but the aging cannot be reversed. A character unfortunate enough to be hit by this spell multiple times (and survive) will be left elderly and decrepit.

The Shadowlands Taint

The Shadowlands Taint is the corruptive influence of Jigoku on the mortal world. It seeps into the world through various spirit gateways – most notably and fearsomely, the Festering Pit in the center of the Shadowlands – and spreads relentlessly through Ningen-do, infecting the living, re-animating the dead, perverting and distorting plants and animals, even the very soil and water. Rokugan first encountered the terrible power of the Taint during the First War, when Fu Leng's legions of oni, goblins, and other horrors spread it into the Empire. In the countless centuries since then, the Rokugani – especially the Crab, who face its power every day – have come to know the Taint far better than they would ever have wished.

Early generations of Rokugani shugenja and scholars speculated that the Taint was a "sixth element" in the world – the element of Corruption – and that it sought to consume the other five. In more recent years they have come to a somewhat more sophisticated understanding, recognizing the Taint as the contamination of Jigoku, the Realm of Evil.

The Taint behaves much like an infection or disease, spreading through contact and infestation, but it possesses a will and purpose that no real illness can match. As the direct manifestation of Jigoku, its goal is to corrupt everything it touches, and it subverts the mind and soul just as readily as the body. And unlike a normal disease, the Taint is almost impossible to get rid of – once its touch has corrupted something, it remains forever after, growing steadily and eating

away at the purity of its victims. Living creatures infected by the Taint succumb to strange mutations, exhibit unnatural strength and eerie powers, and become violent and malicious as the Taint subverts their thoughts and dreams. Corpses suffused with the Taint re-animate as undead abominations, seeking to destroy everything around them.

Nor is the natural world safe from the Taint. As it spreads, Jigoku's contamination replaces the natural kami, the innate spirits of the material world, with twisted and malignant kansen, evil and Tainted spirits. Plants become swollen, distorted, and malignant, the air fills with foul odors and poisonous fumes, the soil itself ceases to support normal life and sprouts only strange and unnatural things. In heavily Tainted areas like the Shadowlands, it actually becomes difficult for shugenja to cast their normal spells, as the kami who answer their prayers become sparse and unresponsive.

The Taint can spread in a variety of ways. The simplest is through passive contact. Anything in close proximity to a strong source of Taint will be in danger of acquiring the Taint. The Festering Pit, a gate directly into Jigoku, is the most powerful source of Taint in the world, and the continual spread of its power has created the dreaded Shadowlands, the realm of evil that lies to the southwest of Rokugan. The Shadowlands is vast, but its power is diffuse, and its spread can be resisted fairly easily. Since the construction of the Kaiu Wall in the eighth century, the Shadowlands' border has not expanded. The Taint is spread more easily and readily by Tainted creatures, and eruptions of Shadowlands monsters into the Empire can often leave Taint behind. Using forbidden maho spells also causes and spreads Taint, and free-roaming kansen spirits slip through the Empire, trying to find souls who will listen to the Taint's siren song.

Simple contact with a Tainted object or person can be enough to spread contamination, although the native Earth of living things can resist this infection with some success. Closer contact is more dangerous – actions such as eating or drinking Tainted food and water, getting bitten by a Shadowlands creature or wounded with a Tainted weapon, being splashed with the Tainted blood and ichor of such a creature, or being kissed by a bog hag.

Mechanically, Taint infection is represented by Ranks and Points, similar to the way in which Glory and Honor are tracked, with each Rank divided into 10 Points. When a character accumulates 10 points of Taint, he gains one Rank and his points reset to zero. However, whereas Honor, Glory, and even Status can go up or down as events dictate, Taint generally only goes in one direction: up.

Jade Petal Tea

Notwithstanding its evocative name, Jade Petal Tea does not actually contain jade. Rather, it is an herbal concoction created from a rare type of blossom, cultivated by the Brotherhood of Shinsei in a handful of monasteries. Drinking Jade Petal Tea causes most of the physical and mental symptoms of the Taint (such as discolored skin, bad odor, nightmares, etc) to go into remission, and also temporarily deactivates any Shadowlands Powers the character may have acquired. It does not, however, reverse serious mutations.

So long as a Tainted character faithfully drinks his tea every day these protections will remain in effect. In addition, the character will be much more resistant to any further growth of his Taint.

Due to the well-known effects of Jade Petal Tea, those who wish to keep their Taint secret will often go to great lengths to procure it. The Kuni Witch-Hunters coordinate with the Brotherhood of Shinsei to keep track of who is receiving the tea and ruthlessly hunt down those who smuggle it. In fact, unauthorized possession of Jade Petal Tea is often considered to be proof of Taint.



Living with the Taint

Oddly enough, it is not illegal in Rokugan to be Tainted. It is, however, illegal to conceal it. This is known as "harboring the Taint" and is considered a very serious crime, since anyone with the Taint has the potential to spread it, endangering the rest of the Empire. An individual who is found to be Tainted, or who admits to it, is placed under severe social restrictions, and many such persons commit seppuku immediately to purge the shame of their state from their family line. Those who do not commit seppuku must endure a life of constraint and self-discipline. They are forbidden from marrying or bearing children (lest they spread the Taint), and are generally excluded from visiting court, attending festivals, or otherwise participating in public life. The Crab Clan's Kuni Witch-Hunters are notified of their condition and visit them regularly to check on their status and make sure their Taint does not grow. In return for all these restrictions, they are permitted to drink Jade Petal Tea – a special herbal infusion that enhances the body's ability to resist the Taint's growth.

If a person is found to be severely Tainted – Level 4, or even Lost – they are not allowed to live. Those of the samurai caste will sometimes be offered the chance for seppuku, especially if they still seem to be in control of their own mind, but if they refuse, they are immediately executed, without exception.

Concealing the Taint is difficult. The more Taint someone has, the more physical mutations and odd behavioral tics they will display. Kuni Witch-Hunters are trained to watch for these symptoms and behaviors, and some of the other Clans also have internal organizations which hunt for evidence of maho and Taint, notably the Phoenix Inquisitors and the Scorpion *Kuroiban* (Black Watch). Keeping one's Taint hidden from such observers and avoiding the sort of public breaches of etiquette that can expose the Taint can be quite challenging. Of course, the Taint itself sometimes offers subtle assistance to those who are trying to conceal their secret, granting powers that make contamination easier to hide.

Gaining the Taint – Active Infection

The Taint is infectious and malignant, always watching for a chance to spread. Any time a character is exposed to the Taint, however briefly, he must make an Earth roll to resist it. The TN of this roll depends on the severity of the exposure. Passive exposure to a Tainted environment (such as traveling through the Shadowlands without jade) is much less dangerous than direct contact with a Tainted creature, for example. In situations where multiple conditions apply at the same time (such as being bitten by a Tainted creature while within the Shadowlands), roll once using the highest applicable TN.

Each time a character fails one of these rolls, he immediately gains 1 point of Taint.

Table 4.1: Taint Exposure Rolls

Source of Exposure	TN
Traveling in the Shadowlands without jade (per day)	10
Injured while in the Shadowlands	10
Exposed to Tainted blood/ichor	10
Physical proximity/contact with a heavily Tainted creature	10
Using a Minor Shadowlands Power (where applicable)	15
Injured (bitten/stung/clawed) by a Tainted creature	15
Struck with a Tainted weapon	15
Bearing an Oni Mark (per week)	15
Submerged in Tainted liquid (water or otherwise)	15
Using a Greater Shadowlands Power (where applicable)	20
Eating/drinking Tainted food or water	20
Swallowed alive by an Oni	30

Gaining the Taint – Growth of Infection

Once a character has the Taint, it will attempt to grow, slowly eating away at his body, mind, and soul. Minor infection can be resisted fairly easily, but the Taint is persistent and never tires, and will seize on any moment of weakness. A character who is Tainted must make periodic Earth rolls to see whether his Taint has managed to grow. The frequency of these rolls, and the TN required, goes up as the Taint becomes stronger, as shown below on table 4.2. Each time such a roll is failed, the character gains 1 additional point of Taint.

Table 4.2: Taint Growth

Taint Level	Check Interval	Check TN
Seeds of Darkness	Once/month	5
Level 1	Once/month	10
Level 2	Once/two weeks	15
Level 3	Once/week	20
Level 4	Once/day	25

A character who is drinking Jade Petal Tea on a daily basis gains a +2k2 bonus to these Earth rolls. Living a life of strict piety, meditation, and moral and physical purity can also make it easier to resist the Taint's growth, awarding anywhere from a +1k0 to a +3k0 bonus to the Earth rolls, at the GM's discretion. Many individuals who learn they possess Taint choose to retire to special monasteries, administered by the Brotherhood of Shinsei and regularly visited by the Kuni Witch-Hunters, where they can live pure and simple lives, drink their Jade Petal Tea, and hopefully die without becoming Lost.

Protection From the Taint

The chief protection against the Taint is the sacred substance known as jade. Formed from the tears of Lady Sun at the dawn of creation, jade possesses intrinsic powers of purity that resist the influence of Jigoku. A character who carries a piece of jade on his person gains a +10 bonus to all rolls to resist gaining the Taint. Likewise, touching jade to a potentially Tainted wound within a minute of the injury will award a +10 bonus to a roll made to resist being Tainted.

Jade does not protect against growth of Taint which the character already has. Furthermore, over time as jade absorbs more and more of the Taint, its protective qualities fade. It turns soft and brittle, discolors, and finally becomes corrupt and foul, eventually dissolving into black sludge.

Crab bushi who go into the Shadowlands normally carry small pieces of jade to protect themselves and their food and drink from the realm's background Taint. These are referred to colloquially as "fingers of jade" and are considered standard issue equipment for anyone venturing into the Shadowlands. A finger of jade will normally last for one week, and the Crab seldom venture into Fu Leng's realm for longer than that. Multiple fingers of jade can extend the time, but since both are absorbing the Taint at the same time, they do not extend the duration by a full week each. Ultimately, there is an upper limit on how long jade can protect someone from the Shadowlands, as shown on Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Jade Fingers in the Shadowlands

Number of Fingers	Length of Protection
1	7 days
2	13 days
3	16 days
4	19 days
5	21 days
6 or more	22 days

Effects of the Taint

The Taint is the manifestation of Jigoku's power, and as such, it seeks always to spread the nature of the Realm of Evil – to spread violence, hate, terror, pain, and destruction. It twists and mutates everything it touches, perverts every urge and desire into the worst imaginable outcome, destroys life and empowers death. Living creatures who are badly Tainted begin to exhibit unpleasant mutations – skin turns pale, hair falls out or becomes coarse or greasy – and as the Taint grows these mutations become more and more grotesque. Even worse are the mental and spiritual symptoms. Those who are Tainted begin to feel violent and sickening urges, hearing voices in their minds that urge them to evil and destruction. Eventually, if left unchecked the Taint will wholly consume its victims, turning them into terrible monsters

Those who have studied the Taint, chiefly the Kuni family of the Crab Clan, have learned to recognize its symptoms and effects. They describe six levels of Taint infection, ranging from minor passive infection – almost undetectable – to the final dissolution that they refer to as being "Lost."

Tainted Characters

The Taint rules presented here represent the "default" vision of Rokugan, in which the Taint is a deadly and all-consuming force which soon overwhelms and devours those who fall under its power. However, some GMs may wish to run a campaign in which characters do not succumb to the Taint so swiftly, especially if they are using the Spider Clan as a playable faction for PCs. In this case, we recommend the GM slow the pace of Taint growth, either by lowering the frequency of rolls for Taint growth, or dropping the TNs by 5. The GM can also choose to add another Taint Rank to each level of infection (see below), thus allowing characters to hold off longer before becoming Lost.

Truly ambitious or unconventional GMs can choose to allow players to run Lost characters, subject to appropriate restrictions on their role-playing choices. Be warned that this profoundly alters the nature and role of the Taint in Rokugan, and is thus not a step to be taken lightly!

Levels of Taint Infection

Level 0: Seeds of Darkness

A character who has less than one full Rank of Taint is not actually considered to be Tainted. Such minor levels of infection show no symptoms, and cannot be detected by any known means – even spells like Jade Strike that specifically target Tainted individuals will not harm a person at this minor level of infection. At worst, the victim might experience a few bad dreams.

Level 1: Passive Infection

Any character who has at least one full Rank of Taint, but whose Taint has not reached Rank 2 or higher, is considered to be at Level 1 infection. At this level, actual symptoms are still minimal – the character will experience occasional nightmares, for example, and will sometimes feel sickly or tired. However, jade will now burn the character's skin, and Taint-targeting spells such as Jade Strike and Ward of Purity will now affect him.

Level 2: Active Infection

Once a character's Taint Rank reaches Rank 2 or higher, he is considered to be actively manifesting the Taint. He will begin to experience a variety of unsettling physical and mental symptoms, such as nightmares, nausea and vomiting, muscle tremors, and mild hallucinations. His skin may become pale, he may experience sudden sweats or chills, or he may develop excessive body odor. He gains one Shadowlands Power of the GM's choice (typically Minor, but can be Major if the GM prefers).

Level 3: Consuming

When a character's Taint Rank reaches Rank 3 or higher, the Taint begins to consume and transform his identity and nature. The character becomes increasingly paranoid and angry, seeing enemies everywhere. He will begin to hear whispering voices, urging him to unnatural or violent acts. Physical symptoms can include infected gums, bad vision, hair turning coarse or starting to fall out, thick horny fingernails, and so forth. He now suffers a –1k0 penalty to all social Skill rolls, and gains a Shadowlands mutation, along with an additional Shadowlands Power (Minor or Major). Mutations and powers are the GM's choice in all cases.

Level 4: Deadly

When a character's Taint Rank reaches Rank 4 or higher, the Taint has nearly claimed him. At this point, he is an active focus of infection, capable of spreading the Taint to others through contact or sustained proximity. He may develop unnatural and blasphemous tastes, such as a desire for raw meat or a fascination with dead bodies, and begins to feel a powerful urge to travel to the Shadowlands. Physical symptoms become worse and worse, and can include blackened gums, deeply sunken eyes, coughing blood, and worse. The maddening voices of kansen fill his mind night and day. In any confrontation or stressful situation, he must make a Willpower roll at TN 15 or react with violence.

By contrast, the call of Honor and proper behavior becomes increasingly hard to answer – he suffers a –2k0 penalty to all social Skill rolls. (If the GM is using the optional "Honor Rolls" rule, he also suffers a -2k2 penalty to all Honor rolls.) His connection with the Elements also falters, and his maximum Void Points are reduced by 1, although his Void Ring does not change. The character gains one additional Shadowlands mutation and two more Shadowlands powers, chosen by the GM.

At this level, concealing the Taint becomes extremely difficult, and if it is discovered, the character will typically be forced to commit seppuku, or else simply executed as a lethal threat to the Empire. Some Kuni have been known to dissect commoners who are discovered at this level of corruption in order to learn more about the Taint's effects.

Level 5: Lost

Typically, as soon as a character's Taint Rank reaches Rank 5 or higher he is considered Lost, completely consumed by the Taint. However, characters of exceptional strength may be able to hold out slightly longer. If the character has at least one Ring at Rank 6 or higher, he is not Lost until he reaches Taint Rank 7.

Regardless, once a character becomes Lost he is the property of Jigoku, and if he dies his soul will be sent to the Realm of Evil to be tortured and probably devoured by oni. While he still lives, his mind and body are utterly suffused with Jigoku's malignant power and will.

Several things, none of them good, can happen when a character becomes Lost. Sometimes the Taint completely overwhelms the body, which proceeds to mutate out of control. This is especially likely to happen to someone who becomes Lost while in the Shadowlands or close to another major source of Taint, as the continual flow of Taint into the body completely destroys it. In such cases the body gruesomely and agonizingly disintegrates, turning into a mass of twitching distorting flesh, finally ending as a puddle of lifeless sludge.

If the victim is spared this grisly fate he may simply go utterly and permanently mad, becoming an uncontrolled, bestial predator who attacks everything nearby – the so-called "screaming madmen" of the Shadowlands. Such fallen men and women lose their Void Ring completely. All their mental Traits are reduced to 1. Their Taint is permanently set at their highest Trait. Mechanically they are now considered Shadowlands creatures, and are governed by the Creature rules from the *Book of Void*.



On somewhat rarer occasions, however, Jigoku may find use (or amusement) in allowing its victims to retain their memories and knowledge even as it subverts the remnants of their personality to the cause of evil. It is these latter beings, capable of subtle planning and organization in the cause of evil, which Rokugani typically refer to as "the Lost" (or sometimes as *Akutsukai,* servants of evil). Those who become Lost retain their Void Ring but no longer possess any Void Points. Their Taint continues to grow normally (until it reaches the ultimate maximum of Rank 10) but they no longer have the ability to "embrace the Taint" to enhance their physical rolls (see below). Instead, they now continuously add their Taint Rank to the total of all their rolls that use physical Traits. They gain 0-3 additional mutations, 0-5 additional Minor Shadowlands Powers, and 0-3 Greater Shadowlands Powers, at the discretion of the GM. They can gain additional mutations and powers later if the GM thinks it appropriate.

The Lost are often mistakenly perceived as being self-willed. In fact, although they retain intelligence and self-awareness, their desires, beliefs, and intentions have been completely transformed by Jigoku. Thus even though they may seemingly retain the same personality they possessed before they became Lost, they are completely evil entities, incapable of doing or thinking anything that goes against Jigoku's quest for corruption, cruelty, and death. In game terms the Lost are NPCs, since they no longer have true volition or self-will. Encountering one of these Lost who was once a friend or family member is a deeply horrifying experience, and most Rokugani attempt to destroy such blasphemies immediately.

Calling on the Power of Jigoku

Part of what makes the Taint so sinister and seductive is that it can seem to offer benefits to those who have it. The most obvious of these is the unnatural physical strength, speed, and endurance which the Taint grants to those who embrace its power. Anyone with at least Level 1 infection will be able to sense a new power within themselves, a strength begging to be used.

A Tainted character may call on Jigoku's power at any time. He will not necessarily realize what he is doing, or where this unexpected strength is coming from – he simply reaches for this new power instinctively. Wise samurai are cautious of such gifts, but even the noblest warrior may succumb to temptation in moments of desperation. The ever-pragmatic Crab have been known to actively take advantage of this gift, forming special carefully-supervised assault units from their Tainted bushi, turning the very power of the Taint against the Shadowlands.

A character may "embrace the Taint" on any die-roll that uses a physical Trait (that is, any roll that uses Strength, Agility, Reflexes, or Stamina, but not damage rolls). Any time he does this, he immediately gains 1 point of Taint, but in return, he gains a +1k1 bonus to the roll. A character may, if he wishes, spend a Void point on the same roll (if otherwise legal).

Those who have become Lost are no longer capable of gaining this bonus, but instead continuously add their Taint Rank to the total of all rolls they make using physical Traits. Of course, the formidable array of Shadowlands Powers they can access also make them far more powerful than those who have not yet succumbed to the Taint.

Shadowlands Powers and Mutations

Those who succumb to the Taint begin to exhibit both physical mutations – often quite grotesque ones – and to display strange and terrifying powers. Shadowlands powers and mutations manifest as a character's Taint level increases. The GM should typically choose appropriate ones according to the nature and desires of the character, since the Taint always seeks to offer the temptation of power to its victims.

Employing the powers granted by the Shadowlands usually results in gaining more Taint. Any Shadowlands power that has a incident-specific or activated effect (such as gaining a bonus to resist magic with Above the Elements, or moving farther than normally possible with Uncanny Speed) requires the user to make an Earth roll to avoid gaining another point of Taint. Powers that create a continuous effect, such as Blessing of the Dark One, do not require such rolls. In cases of ambiguity, the GM has final discretion on whether using a particular Shadowlands power requires a Taint roll.

It should be noted that the list of powers and mutations here is by no means exhaustive. The GM should feel free to create additional mutations and powers according to the needs of the game. Examples of additional mutations could include foul breath, hairlessness, premature aging, or discolored/unnatural fingernails.

Mutations

- *Albinism*: Your skin and hair become deathly pale, perhaps even stark white. This is very unsettling in appearance, but can be concealed with cosmetics. You suffer a –1k0 penalty to social rolls if your true appearance is known.
- *Beast of Fu Leng*: The most terrible of mutations, this causes you to completely lose human form, distorting into a bestial or monstrous body – typically a quadruped or a bloated, ogre-ish humanoid. This severe deformity cannot be hidden, and causes a Fear 3 effect in anyone who sees it.
- *Demonic Eyes:* Any time you are in darkness or shadow, your eyes glow with an unnatural blue light. This allows you to see through darkness or other visual impairment (such as smoke or fog).
- *Discolored Skin:* Your skin turns an unnaturally pale or dark shade. This can be explained away as the result of an indoor or outdoor life, but regardless, it inflicts a +5 TN penalty to all Social rolls.
- *Distorted Limbs:* One of your arms or legs, randomly chosen, becomes misshapen or twisted, rendering it useless. This is an obvious deformity that is extremely difficult to conceal, although it can probably be explained away as the result of an injury. If the deformed limb is a leg, you gain the Lame disadvantage. If it is an arm, you suffer a –3k0 penalty to any rolls made with that arm.
- *Extra Digit:* You sprout an additional finger or toe. This is an obvious but minor deformity. It does not automatically suggest the presence of Taint, but it does make those who notice it uneasy, causing you to suffer a –1k0 penalty to all social skill rolls. If the digit is cut off, it will re-grow within 48 hours.

- *Extra Eye:* An additional eye sprouts somewhere on your body. This grants you +1k0 to Perception rolls and Perception-based Skill rolls, but the eye must be uncovered (and thus possibly noticeable to others) to gain this benefit.
- *Extra Limb:* Your character sprouts an additional arm or leg. This limb is obviously Tainted, with discolored skin, claw-like nails, etc. It is 50% likely to be non-functional, hanging limp from the body, in which case the resulting obstruction and clumsiness causes you to suffer a –1k0 to all Agility-based and Reflexes-based rolls.
- *Forked Tongue:* Your tongue becomes long and forked, like a snake's tongue. Concealing this mutation while speaking or eating requires a roll of Acting / Awareness at TN 20.
- *Foul Odor:* You manifest an exceptionally putrid and disgusting body odor, impossible to ignore. No amount of bathing or perfume can suppress it. You suffer a –1k0 penalty to all Social rolls.
- *Jigoku's Blood:* Your blood becomes black and foul-smelling. Anyone who sees you injured will recognize this as an obvious symptom of the Taint.
- *Tentacles:* You sprout one or more tentacles, which you are able to partially control. You can use them to pick up small objects, to make attacks with Small weapons, or to initiate a Grapple. Anyone seeing these tentacles will immediately recognize you as Tainted.
- *Tough Hide*: Your skin becomes rough and leathery. This causes you to appear unnatural or diseased, inflicting a –2k0 penalty to all Social rolls. However, your unnatural skin does provide some resistance to harm, granting you Reduction 5.
- *Undead Visage:* You gain the outward appearance of being undead, with deathly gray skin, visible skin decay, and deeply sunken eyes. This deformity cannot be concealed, and causes a Fear 3 effect on anyone who sees it.
- *Vile Teeth:* Your teeth become distorted and/or discolored, to the point of appearing inhuman. They might become pointed or jagged, sprout animal-like fangs, turn a deep brown or sickly yellow color, etc. Concealing your grotesque teeth while talking or eating is difficult, requiring a roll of Acting / Awareness at TN 20.

Minor Shadowlands Powers

- *Above the Elements*: The power of Jigoku renders you resistant to normal (non-maho) magic. All normal elemental spells that could affect you suffer a +10 TN penalty to their Spell Casting Rolls. However, you are more vulnerable to the power of the kansen, and any maho spell that targets you gains a Free Raise. Any shugenja who casts Sense within range of you will notice a distinct absence of kami around you.
- *Blackened Claws:* You have claws of obsidian, concealed within your fingertips, which you can extend as a Free Action. The claws grant you a DR of 2k3 with unarmed attacks (in place of the normal 0k1) and are considered obsidian for the purpose of bypassing Reduction and Invulnerability. However, you feel the urge to use these claws every time you fight – you must make a Willpower Roll at TN 10 any time you enter a fight with a weapon other than the claws.
- *Blessing of the Dark One*: You have an unnatural resistance to pain and physical harm. Your Wounds at each Wound Rank are increased by 3.
- *Blood Knows Blood*: You may continually sense the location of any portion of your blood or flesh (anything but hair and fingernails), no matter where they may be. If you also possess the Blood Domination power (see below), you can track the location of any creature that has consumed your blood.
- *Child of Darkness*: The power of the Taint protects you from other servants of Jigoku. Shadowlands creatures will not attack unless you threaten them first. If you can communicate with them, they might obey your commands, especially if you seem powerful or persuasive.
- *Jade Sense:* You have an innate sense for the presence of sacred substances such as jade. You can detect the presence of all jade, crystal, and obsidian near you, out to a maximum distance equal to Earth x10 in feet. Concealing magic can obstruct this sense. You cannot detect Jade Petal Tea.
- *Master of Blood*: The kansen are your friends, and you have an innate talent for casting maho spells. You may cast maho for one less Wound than normally required, and the amount of Taint you gain from casting maho spells is reduced by your Earth (to a minimum of 1 point of Taint). All non-maho spells you cast, however, are at a +10 TN penalty.
- *Master of Shadows*: You have an unnatural affinity for darkness and shadows. You may add your Taint Rank in unkept dice to all Stealth Skill rolls you make. You gain the Discolored Skin mutation if you do not already have it, as your skin develops a dark and shadowy tone.
- *Mind of Darkness:* You may embrace the Taint to enhance your rolls with mental Traits (Intelligence, Willpower, Awareness, and Perception) in the same manner as you would normally enhance rolls with physical Traits. If you become Lost, you may add your Taint Rank to the total of all rolls made with mental Traits as well as all rolls with physical Traits.
- *Monstrous Strength:* The Taint suffuses your muscles, giving you a swollen, unnatural build that unsettles those who meet you. You suffer –1k0 to all Social rolls. In return, you add your Taint Rank in unkept dice to all Strength rolls, Strength-based Skill rolls, and Damage rolls you make.
- *Uncanny Speed*: The Taint grants you speed greater than should be possible for someone of your size and strength. Your Water Ring is considered to be two Ranks higher for the purpose of how far you can move with a Simple or Complex Move Action. In return, you are fidgety and nervous, unable to sit still for more than a few minutes.
- *Unholy Stamina*: You may go without rest or sleep for up to three days with no penalties of any kind. This power must be reactivated after three days, requiring another roll to resist gaining Taint.

Greater Shadowlands Powers

- *Beside the Darkness*: You have the ability to temporarily suppress your Taint, making it impossible for others to detect. If you meditate uninterrupted for a period of 2 hours and make a Meditation/Willpower roll at TN 20, you can "metabolize" your Taint for a period of 8 hours. During that time, you are not considered Tainted for mechanical purposes, and spells and Techniques which target Tainted creatures will not affect you. Physical mutations (such as extra limbs) will remain in place, however. This power cannot be ended before its duration expires. While it is in effect, you cannot use any of your other Shadowlands powers, cannot cast maho, and cannot embrace the Taint to enhance your rolls.
- *Blood Domination*: Your blood carries your will, and any creature who drinks or otherwise ingests so much as a spoonful of your blood (equal to 1 Wound) will be subject to your demands. You may make a Contested Willpower roll against such a target to force them to obey your commands for a number of hours equal to your Taint Rank. You cannot force them to directly kill themselves, but all other commands – including potentially lethal orders like, "Fight that oni" – must be obeyed. If you fail the Contested Willpower Roll, the target will be aware of your attempt, and you may not try to command that target again for one full day.
- *Chosen of Fu Leng*: The Taint grants you an unnatural strength of will, allowing you to shrug off any attempt to influence your mind or opinions. Any attempt to influence you with Social skills or Techniques, or to control your mind through spells, will automatically fail.
- *Drawing Out the Darkness:* The Taint has the power to evoke Taint in others, spreading corruption far and wide. If you can maintain physical contact with another creature for at least 1 minute, you may make a Contested Willpower roll. If you win the roll, the victim gains a number of points of Taint equal to your current Taint Rank. If you fail the roll, nothing happens, although the victim will feel a sense of unease and perhaps a physical chill.
- *Father of Lies*: The Taint thrives on deception, and strengthens your own efforts to trick, deceive, and manipulate others. You may add your Taint Rank in kept dice to any rolls made with the Temptation or Intimidation skills or with the Deceit emphasis of the Sincerity skill.
- *Feeding on Flesh*: The Taint draws strength from unnatural acts, especially the taste of blood and raw meat. You may take a Simple Action to feed on the flesh of a person or creature who is either dead or helpless to resist you (e.g. Down or Out, bound securely, etc). This inflicts 1k1 Wounds on the target (if they are still alive) and heals you a number of Wounds equal to 5 x your Taint Rank.
- *Protection of the Dark:* You are considered to be Invulnerable, in the same manner as some creatures. Whenever you ignore damage due to this Power, your skin glows with a throbbing black energy that is impossible to hide.
- *Strength of Madness*: You can draw on your own physical essence to enhance your actions, much in the way that normal humans draw on the Void. A number of times per day equal to your Earth Ring, you may suffer Wounds equal to your Earth to replicate the effect of spending a Void Point. This power cannot be used to reduce damage, but any other normal effect of Void Points – including activating School techniques or awarding a +1k1 bonus to rolls – can be duplicated.
- *Thy Master's Will*: The Taint will not allow you to truly die – you are too useful to Jigoku's purposes. If you are killed, you will return from the dead at some later time, as an intelligent undead creature. You retain all Rings, Traits, abilities, School techniques, and Skills, but no longer have a Void Ring. Your body is undead, and will begin to rot and decay over time.
- *Undead Strength*: Your body does not feel pain, and continues to function normally even after suffering devastating injuries. You do not suffer Wound penalties – no matter how many Wounds you suffer, you continue to operate at full effect until you are actually killed.
- *Unearthly Regeneration*: The Taint infuses your body with a horrible vitality, healing injuries within minutes. Each Round at the start of your Turn, you heal a number of Wounds equal to your Taint Rank. Healed injuries leave no scars behind, and while you do not regrow lost limbs, such limbs will reattach if held in place for a few minutes.
- *Unholy Beauty*: Jigoku considers you to have use as an infiltrator within the Empire. You do not suffer any outward, visible effects of the Taint, and any physical mutations you already possess will fade away. You may still gain Shadowlands Powers normally but they do not exhibit any perceptible physical symptoms. However, your body will mutate internally to compensate for the lack of external change, exhibiting redundant or distorted organs, cancerous tumors, and other distortions.









"We are all legends.
Our only choice is how to end the tale."

- Mirumoto Kyuzo

Book of Void

Running an L5R Campaign

Running a campaign for Legend of the Five Rings can present some unusual challenges. Rokugan is a complex society with a rich history, elaborate codes of social behavior, and moral expectations foreign to Westerners. Action and combat are important aspects of the game world, to be sure, but it is also suffused with secrecy and subterfuge, intrigue and mystery, and painful clashes of duty and honor. Thus, the first question any GM should consider when starting an L5R campaign is what sort of campaign he wants to run. There is no right or wrong answer here, and a mixture of elements is certainly necessary for any good game. Choosing to play a campaign that is strictly combat, or one that is completely devoid of combat, is not out of the question. In fact, such campaigns can be quite normal in L5R. After all, not everyone sees Rokugan in the same light and no two campaigns should be the same.

The problem is making such a one-sided campaign work for all of the players. How does a campaign set entirely in winter court appeal to players who prefer to play Crab or Mantis warriors? All GMs of L5R have wrestled with these sorts of questions. In this section we propose to offer some possible answers.

Playing a Samurai

In any properly-running role-playing game, there is a sort of non-verbal social contract which everyone shares when sitting down to play. These are simple rules that keep a role-playing game running properly: Don't talk when someone else is talking. Don't monopolize attention. Don't be rude to others. Don't show up two hours late. Don't take phone calls at the table. Most players already know these rules without needing to be told – after all, they are not that different from the rules of normal social life.

L5R, however, requires one additional commitment – to respect what has come before. Rokugan is a world of tradition, and the game imparts those traditions through its intricate details and narrative. A player with a Phoenix shugenja is not merely playing a spellcaster character – he is playing the descendent of a thousand Phoenix shugenja who came before him, upholders of traditions that date back to the dawn of the Emerald Empire. A Crab samurai is not merely a tough warrior, but heir to an ancient legacy of protecting the Empire against unimaginable evil. A Unicorn scout is the eyes and ears of the clan which survived eight hundred years in the hostile wilderness of the Burning Sands. A samurai is not just a character, but a living embodiment of ancient tradition, who honors the past and protects the future. The more effectively the GM can imbue these attitudes and perceptions into the minds of the players, the better the game will run, and the more rewarding an experience it offers.

Most role-playing games present an individualistic world, a reflection of modern Western morals. Work hard and you will be rewarded, achievement equates to merit, might makes right, and so on. Rokugan, however, is not a world of individuals, but a world of clans and ideals. The individual does not come first – family and clan do. Honor and Bushido set the tone for one's behavior. A reckless samurai does his clan disservice by wasting his life on foolish errands. A cowardly or cautious samurai spoils the good name of his forefathers.

Further discussion of these concepts can be found later in this chapter. For now, the key thing to remember is that playing L5R usually means taking on a non-Western persona and mores. Problems are rarely solved purely through violence or intimidation. Subtlety in Rokugan can be a simple change of facial expression. Rokugan is not the fantasy game of knights and dragons. It is much more than that.

Of course, everyone can also play dirty ronin, who care little about the traditions of Rokugan and prey upon the subjugated peasant class... but that's an unusual type of campaign, to say the least.

Types of Campaigns

The single most important question in any role-playing game is, "What do you do?" This can be an especially troublesome question for L5R because the different clans have such diverse roles within the Empire. How does the GM create a campaign in which these differing characters can operate together? How do a Crab bushi, a Scorpion courtier, a Togashi tattooed monk, and a drunken ronin manage to wind up together and share adventures?

This section offers several possible suggestions for different types of campaigns which can accommodate a full range of character types, as well as discussion of how to run more limited campaigns that will still satisfy players with diverse tastes.

Magistrates

In the past, L5R has often used this campaign structure as a default, assuming the player characters to be Emerald Magistrates, serving the Emperor and the Emerald Champion in the protection of the Empire. Although this is an old and much-used campaign structure, it can also be an effective one. Appointing all the characters as Emerald Magistrates gives them an automatic reason to work and travel together, no matter how diverse their nature or backgrounds – even ronin or monks can be shoehorned into such a campaign with relatively little effort. Since the characters are all under the same authority – the Emerald Champion – the GM can easily assign them wherever they are needed. The GM can also add some variety to the group by combining a party of Emerald Magistrates with the somewhat rarer Jade Magistrates, who report to the Jade Champion and are specifically tasked with protecting the Empire from the scourges of *maho* and the Shadowlands.

Magistrate adventures cover a wide gamut of material. Emerald Magistrates are responsible for dealing with many types of crimes, as well as for collecting Imperial taxes, and are well suited for adventures built around mystery, investigation, and intrigue. However, they also deal with bandits, lawlessness, blasphemy, and Shadowlands incursions, allowing for a variety of action-oriented adventures.

A sample adventure for a magistrate campaign could be the murder of a Crane dignitary in a Crab castle. Emerald Magistrates have authority over crimes that involve multiple clans, especially since such incidents could easily lead to war. The magistrates must try to solve the crime, while dealing with Crab and Crane courtiers who are eager to assign the blame where it will do the most damage to their enemies.

Imperial Legionnaires

Rather than taking on the role of magistrates, investigating crimes and solving problems, the characters could be members of one of the Imperial Legions, performing more military tasks than their police-like brethren. The Legions are made up of military personnel from all the clans, often specialists in their chosen profession (Archers, Intelligence, Scouts, Siege, Tacticians, and so on). Teams of Legionnaires usually include one or two specialists, providing a perfect justification to include unusual characters such as shugenja or tattooed men.

Imperial Legionnaires go wherever they like in the Empire. While they lack the specific jurisdiction of the Emerald Magistrates, they have a general role of dispensing justice and quashing rebellion and dissent. The Empire would rather have its citizens think such things do not happen, but the truth is more prosaic, and it is the task of the Imperial Legionnaires to make sure unrest and rebellion does not spread. Much like the Emerald Magistrates, their duty extends across clan borders.

Where Magistrate campaigns tend to focus on mysteries and intrigue, Legionnaire campaigns involve counter-insurgency and combat tactics, dealing with bandit gangs, militant cults, peasant uprisings, inter-clan wars, and similar problems. They seldom deal directly with the Shadowlands, however, and typically leave the heroism of battling Jigoku's armies to the Crab.

Both Legionnaire and Magistrate campaigns are best suited for games where the GM doles out assignments from superiors, while the players take on a reactive role. A sample adventure of this type might involve the PCs dealing with a border skirmish between two neighboring clans. While the fight hasn't been publicized or even approved by the Emperor, word has reached the capital and now the Legion must put down the rebellious acts of these two bitter rivals before a full-scale war develops. If this means bloodshed, so be it.

The Shadowlands Campaign

A Shadowlands campaign is an exercise in action and horror, throwing the PCs into the struggle against the forces of Jigoku. Most likely the characters have all been assigned to the Kaiu Wall, either to make penance for mistakes or to demonstrate solidarity with the Crab Clan. Tainted characters can fit into this sort of campaign especially well, since such men and women are often enrolled in the special Crab unit known as The Damned, to live out their short lives battling against the Shadowlands.

This sort of campaign offers a very different sort of challenge than those listed before, as it throws the characters into a relentless struggle against the most foul and terrifying enemies of the Empire. That's not to say that every day should be a desperate battle – a Shadowlands campaign can and should address themes of horror, mystery, and (often doomed)

romance as well. Nor need the campaign be confined to the Kaiu Wall – during eras of strife or severe danger to the Empire, such as the Clan War or the Kali-Ma Invasion, the forces of evil can threaten anywhere within Rokugan.

Although a Shadowlands campaign might seem to be a very action-oriented type of game, this is not necessarily the case. The Shadowlands is indeed a terrifying enemy, not least because it is capable of being insidious, infiltrating the Empire in all manner of ways and slowly leaching away the identity of those suffering from the Taint. A Shadowlands campaign can easily be a dark, unsettling exercise in horror and paranoia, if the GM and players are up for that sort of thing. Evoking horror for a group of players running samurai can be difficult, since the fear of death – the standard means of creating fear – is not very effective with characters who are taught from childhood to accept death without hesitation. The GM must find other avenues of attack, such as the characters' emotions, phobias, and psychological pressure-points.

A sample adventure of an action-oriented Shadowlands game might involve samurai entering the Shadowlands to rescue a stranded Crab unit, or hunting down oni which have breached a portion of the Wall and entered the Empire. In times of crisis, the PCs might be dispatched anywhere in the Empire in response to rumors of Shadowlands monsters or outbreaks of *maho*. A more psychologically-oriented Shadowlands campaign could put the PCs into a remote Crab outpost whose commander begins acting strangely, growing erratic and confrontational. Is he cracking under the strain of duty, or has he been possessed or replaced by a shapeshifter? A Shadowlands-related campaign within the Empire could involve children of a village talking of a strange pale old woman living in a hut in the woods outside of town. Of course no one knows of the woman or the hut, but the children insist she's there, but only at night...

Arbiters/Regents (Shikken)

If the GM and players are looking for a more social and courtly oriented campaign, the PCs could be assigned as *shikken,* agents of the Imperial Herald who work to keep the Empire at peace. In a shikken campaign, the PCs become diplomatic arbiters, negotiating truces between warring factions, families, and clans. Shikken are almost ambassadors in the Emperor's stead, charged with solving problems before they escalate into something the Emperor himself must deal with. Effectively, if a shikken is doing his or her job, no one will ever hear about it.

A shikken campaign is especially suitable to groups where several of the players want to run courtiers or duelists, since these two sorts of samurai will be most useful in such duties. Shugenja can find roles as well, supporting diplomacy with the power of the kami, and conventional bushi can serve as bodyguards and escorts, protecting the diplomats when things go awry.

GMs can create a host of adventures and issues for shikken to resolve, ranging from something as small as a perceived slight of honor to more important events like overseeing an important gempukku ceremony or even ensuring the execution of a dangerous criminal. Certain clans fit these sorts of arbiter roles better than others, obviously, but something can be said for a Crab or Lion samurai looking to ease tensions between two neighbors on the verge of war. It might also be noted that a shikken campaign is especially well-suited to Imperial characters and Minor Clan characters, as they have fewer prior allegiances that would hinder their judgment. In general, samurai in this setting will need to put their familial and clan ties aside for the greater good of the Empire, which can make for interesting role-play and character development.

A specific sub-variant of this campaign, one suitable for experienced players who want to play on a larger stage, would be to have the players run shikken who serve a young Emperor before he comes of age. Such arbiters are known as *sessho*, and serve both as regents and as advisers and personal assistants to the young Emperor until his adulthood (at which time they become known as *kampaku*). This sort of campaign would be mainly about making sure the clans are not taking advantage of the young Emperor, rather than cooling tension between the clans. Such a game would keep the PCs close to the Imperial court until the Emperor can rule without constant advice and counseling.

A sample adventure might involve an experienced Crane governor who insists on seeing the Emperor, but whose formidable prestige might be intimidating to a young monarch. The PCs, respecting the station of the governor while honoring the needs to the Empire, must navigate around whatever personal agenda the Crane might have. This could lead to larger issues for the sessho to deal with – disgrace, loss of political support, personal threats – as the campaign unfolds.

Imperial Cartographers/Scouts

A thinly veiled excuse to have the PCs exploring the Empire of Rokugan without jurisdictional duties is to make them all Imperial mapmakers or scouts. In such a campaign, low-level samurai can be traveling in any corner of the Empire for a particular game session while dealing with the "adventure du jour." While this campaign might lack the logical coherence of one involving magistrates or shikken, it also removes any needs to clearly adhere to Imperial duties or mandates from the Emerald Champion.

Such a campaign is more relaxed and casual in its structure, allowing the PCs to focus on their exploration of every corner of the Empire. A truly challenging campaign for an ambitious GM would be to allow the PCs to go anywhere they want in any given session of play, with the GM developing plots on a semi-improvisational basis as the characters explore different parts of the Empire.

A sample adventure of this type might involve the PCs stumbling upon a forgotten shrine or lost relic. Without the means at hand to appraise it in detail, the scouts must determine its relevance to the Empire and decide what must be done with this ominous or possibly dangerous new power.



Otokodate (Band of Brothers)

Among the easiest campaigns to start, with proper preparations, this style has the PCs forming a small cadre of samurai who do not belong to the same clan, but instead adhere to the same ideology. The PCs might all be ronin who have banded together for mutual support (the typical usage of the term "otokodate," which translates literally as "manly fellows.") In a more sinister light, they could be members of a cult or secret society set on changing the world. Perhaps they are all members of the Gozoku conspiracy, trying to undermine the Emperor's authority. At the farthest extreme, the PCs could all belong to a death cult like the Bloodspeakers, pursuing an unholy destiny.

An exhaustive list of such conspiratorial groups could fill another book, and there really are no limits to what can be done with this campaign model. The PCs merely need to agree on the ideals of their group. If they want to belong to a larger organization, the Bloodspeakers, the Gozoku, the Kolat, and the various ronin bands are all potential choices.

A campaign built on this structure could lead to interesting and powerful moral conundrums for the PCs, as they confront the conflict between Rokugan's standards of Bushido and their private loyalty to their own group. Depending on the approach taken by the GM and the players, this sort of campaign could become a story of redemption or a grim tale of moral corruption and failure.

The groups need not always be subversive. The PCs could all belong to a group of samurai sternly dedicated to the eradication of the taint or in fact opposed to the above-mentioned groups. However, this would still run into tension with their expected service to their clan and generate a great deal of complications.

The Restricted Campaign

Most GMs and players tend to assume their campaign will allow any sort of character from any clan or faction. However, this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, if the GM has a specific storyline concept in mind, allowing the players free reign with their choice of character may actually be impossible.

A good example of this approach would be a campaign set within a Crane lord's courts, with the players taking on the roles of friends, allies, and vassals of the daimyo, dealing with a variety of threats to his rule. The GM can present a full gamut of threats and challenges to the players in such a campaign, ranging from court intrigue to bandit attacks. Where would a Crab or Scorpion character fit into such a campaign? The answer, of course, is that they don't, and the GM should make this clear up front.

This sort of campaign can be very rewarding, since it allows the GM and players to become deeply invested in a single place and its inhabitants. Some players dislike restricted campaigns, however, because of the constraint on their character options. If the GM and players approach this sort of campaign from a cooperative standpoint, discussing their concepts and the sorts of characters they like to play, many of these objections can be overcome, resulting in a superior game. In particular, the GM should encourage the players to view restrictions as a spur to creativity, rather than a constraint on it. Taking the example campaign above, suppose one player normally likes to run big bruiser Crab warriors. After discussion with the GM, this player might decide to portray a Daidoji who trained at the Kaiu Wall – a Crab-trained warrior but still a Crane, able to take on a meaningful role within the campaign while running the type of character he likes. This sort of collaborative approach can yield a far more enjoyable game experience, as both the players and the GM are invested in the choice of characters and the campaign's structure.



The Rank 0 Campaign

The gempukku ceremony means that a samurai has come of age, may wear a daisho, and is ready to accept the responsibility of being part of the most important caste in Rokugan. Before a samurai's graduation, he is a Rank 0 character, a youth learning about the world and how the Empire works. Such youths are still being taught everything they need to know before embarking on their life-journey for the next 25 years. They are naïve, however, and the world around them is vast. No samurai can fully comprehend all of its contents without the proper tools.

This being the case, samurai of such low station are sometimes sent out to experience first-hand what their sensei cannot teach them, in an environment that suits their future lot in life (i.e. their School profession). A Lion bushi will most likely be prepared for the life of a soldier, by serving as a courier or in a similar supporting role that does not require great skill. A Hida bushi, on the other hand, is typically charged with taking the head of an enemy in the Shadowlands. An Isawa will travel to other libraries to learn new magic or study arcane scripts. A Crane visits relatives, learns new arts, and attends various courts, learning the basics of politics. A Togashi might spend months in isolated meditation, or travel wherever his feet take him. The Rank 0 goal for samurai of each clan is different, and each family or school may require something of importance from their young samurai as well. The most rewarding thing is that once the character has proven himself, he is ready to complete his gempukku ceremony – the greatest honor of a young samurai's life.

A GM and group who wish to run a campaign of Rank 0 characters should come to an agreement as to the best goal for their characters before the game begins. What is most important is that the players create characters from clans that work well together. Also, a character's impending gempukku is a time for gifts, any one of which may come in handy during tight squeezes they will encounter while striving for their Rank 0 goal.

Rank 0 samurai are allowed somewhat more social leeway than their Rank 1 brothers. After all, they are still learning the code of Bushido, and adults are expected to offer them guidance and instruction in the ways of the samurai rather than taking offense at their inexperience. It is a matter of duty to help young samurai learn their way through the world. This can make a Rank 0 campaign very suitable for new players, who can learn the ways of Rokugan along with their characters. On the other hand, Rank 0 samurai are a favorite target of Scorpion and Crane manipulators, and GMs can challenge young characters with such adversaries.

Rules for Rank 0 Samurai

A Rank 0 Samurai starts with a Rank of 1 in each Trait (not counting Family and School bonuses, which still apply), plus School and Family bonuses. The character begins with 4 of the Skills that a starting samurai receives from their School training, and 25 starting Experience Points to build their character. They are allowed only five points worth of Disadvantages, and they cannot take Advantages or Disadvantages based around social promotion or demotion (such as Social Position). They do not have a Rank 1 School Technique (shugenja get no Affinity or Deficiency), and are given only the most basic outfit. Rank 0 characters cannot carry a katana, although they are allowed to carry other weapons (including a wakizashi) as a mark of their samurai station.

Two-Player Games

Most RPG campaigns thrive by having a large playing group. Three, four, or more characters can cover all of the essential parts of the team, and – with so many clans and professions to choose from – no two groups of characters should ever look the same. In fact, many gamers believe that without a large team at your disposal, variety and depth of character may be lacking.

However, two-player groups can provide GMs and players with an entirely new play experience. The GM can keep the action moving smoothly while allowing players and GM alike more time to focus on interpersonal subplots. This will not work well with every type of campaign, of course. A game focused on war or which confronts the PCs with hazards like oni will quickly come to a screeching halt if additional PCs are not there to stave off the body count. However, a game focused on intrigue, subtlety, and cunning can and should have fewer players to increase the time each is in the spotlight.

The following two-player campaign suggestions present several options for those who wish to try this sort of game. In each option, players can choose characters from the same clan, or from different clans, and still justify their relationship. Any of these campaigns could be restructured as a one-player game as well, should the GM wish.

Note that many of the teams listed here require that one of the PCs be of higher social station than the other – players who find this unbalanced or frustrating can try taking turns in these sorts of campaigns.

- Magistrate or Kuni Shugenja + Eta Assistant: A magistrate, especially one of the Kitsuki notorious for their obsession with evidence, often requires an *eta* to do the work samurai consider "unclean" (see the *Book of Air*) – lifting bodies, carrying and storing certain kinds of evidence, and performing other such disagreeable tasks. A magistrate who is well aware of the frailty or imperfections of Bushido may even treat the *eta* well, especially considering how much he must depend on him. A more investigative campaign with many detailed mysteries is perfect for this style of play.

  An *eta* character should have no Techniques, 1 in each Trait, and 8 Experience Points to spend on Merchant and Low Skills, and perhaps one or two Bugei skills. PCs interested in playing this sort of game should be reminded that a samurai is much more powerful and important than an *eta*, so the players will need to trust

one another and have a good rapport both in and out of the game to prevent hard feelings emerging from play. An *eta*'s life is not an easy one – he can be killed at any time, by any samurai, regardless of clan. An *eta* is not even allowed inside most buildings except at the express permission of a samurai, and will certainly be treated poorly almost everywhere. If you're an *eta*, even the horses are treated better than you – and you can't touch them, either.

- Magistrate + Scribe: In this situation, the scribe is there to document and verify all claims the magistrate makes. Although this may seem superficially similar to the *eta* option shown above, scribes can read and write and are members of the samurai caste. In addition, this union allows an inductive player and a deductive player to fully utilize their talents together. In Rokugan, there is rarely any room for deductive reasoning, but with enough evidence the Scribe can verify many claims the Magistrate makes.
- Shugenja + Apprentice: One player can play a Rank 1 or 2 shugenja, while the other is a Rank 0 apprentice just before his gempukku. In this campaign, the lower-Rank shugenja would be secondary to the first in terms of skill, but not necessarily in terms of story. A good GM can provide more interaction for the apprentice, perhaps by focusing the story on a young samurai with too much power.
- Bushi + Shugenja: A classic pairing, and there are countless campaign ideas that combine these character roles: two friends who have known each other since childhood and spend much time together, a yojimbo assigned to protect his shugenja, magistrates (Clan or Imperial) who serve the will of the Empire, or emissaries sent to investigate – or keep an eye on – events in another domain. Campaigns of this type benefit from having two characters from the same clan who can complement each other's talents. Just remember – avoid getting locked into stereotypes.
- Bushi + Ashigaru or Budoka: The samurai leads a common person who yearns to be more than common. He (or she) seeks to learn more of the code of Bushido and emulate the ways of samurai. The budoka or ashigaru could eventually swear fealty to the clan as a climax to the story, but in the meantime, he must serve his bushi lord as best he can.
- Noble + Yojimbo or Personal Champion: Although few bushi would be caught with an entourage of soldiers accepting challenges for them, a well-known nobleman, courtier, or shugenja is likely to have at least one if not many yojimbo. In fact, the GM could assign the samurai PC with several yojimbo, making them either the most or least important of the group. A fair degree of role-playing could be drawn from such an arrangement. In a larger group, all of the PCs could be yojimbo, while an NPC takes the role of their noble.
- Courtier + Ambassador: If a second player is lacking for the game, the ambassador can easily become an NPC. In this campaign, the ambassador is from another clan or even from another nation (from the Burning Sands, the overseas realms of the Thrane and Meranae, or some other foreign kingdom created by the GM). The courtier and his entourage are expected to guide the ambassador through the capital city, to each of the clan strongholds, and to as many of Rokugan's important locations as possible, while remaining honorable and respectful along the way. Foreigners add the unpredictable element of their strange cultural norms, as well as possible unperceived slights in the territories visited, which the PC would have to smooth over.
- Guide + Cartographer: Players who enjoy the frontier feel of other fantasy role-playing games may find this sort of campaign very interesting. The guide and cartographer could be mapping out an uncivilized portion of Rokugan, or traveling beyond the horizon to find new lands to settle. The Unicorn crossed the great mountains, but never conquered the seas. Perhaps a Shinjo and Utaku are making their way to someplace new, or maybe their quest has been stymied by events beyond their control.
- Dishonored Samurai: Two (or more) samurai from the same clan or family have been ordered to commit seppuku and have refused. Their lord has ordered them banished from the family, and now they must walk Rokugan as dishonored ronin. This could be a favorite with PCs who hate taking orders, although they will have to watch themselves if they are to avoid being cut down by higher-ranking clan samurai.
- Master + Student: The old man and the young man are a time-honored combination, in both Asian and Western storytelling. In Rokugan, this story theme produces masters and students who must behave in accordance with their respective stations. The student is expected to ask senseless questions so that the master may direct him toward the truth. The master, in turn, is expected to have an answer, no matter how cryptic, to every question asked. The GM should give the *sensei* (master) character more points for Skills, though less for Traits, while the student should be conversely limited on Skills.
- Spouses: Players who know each other well may feel comfortable enough to play characters who are spouses. Almost any of the above combinations could be integrated with this campaign. Another idea is to play a very subtle city or stronghold game, where one of the characters simply takes care of the house, and many of the story angles involve rivalries and disputes between neighbors, other families, etc.

The Sun and Moon:
Balancing Characters and Campaigns

One of the key problems facing every GM in a role-playing game is game balance, the need to keep the power level of the game from spinning out of control. There is little to limit players in L5R from buying up their pertinent stats and skills – Agility, Reflexes, Kenjutsu, and so forth. Some players may choose to never raise their Willpower or their Strength, or purchase a host of Skills at Rank 1 during character creation for a better Experience Point cost break later in the game. Similarly, some players may deliberately try to pick Disadvantages that are easier to "fake" (i.e. the ones that only require you to role-play them), seeing the points gained as "free." A wise GM will find ways to steer the players away from these sorts of temptations.

Character creation is one point where game balance can be ensured from the beginning. Aside from placing limits on which clans or families are available (as discussed earlier in the chapter), the GM can also impose limits on what the players can and cannot purchase, thereby helping define the PCs' place in their universe. It is worth remembering that many of the great NPC samurai of Rokugan's history have few if any Disadvantages, and a GM should feel free to veto the one-armed epileptic ronin bushi trying to become the next Phoenix Clan Champion.

One option available to GMs in this regard is to limit the amount of Disadvantages available. The default rule in L5R is a maximum of 10 Experience Points of Disadvantages, but in a game with several players, these points can build up quickly. The GM may soon find himself trying not only to maintain a detailed story but also to make sure every Disadvantage is utilized each session (or at least as often as they are worth). This edition of the Legend of the Five Rings RPG seeks to reduce this burden by awarding extra Experience Points to a player who remembers to utilize his own Disadvantages, thereby taking the burden off the GM and sharing it equally through the group. Even so, some GMs may prefer to place stricter limits on Disadvantages. For example, the GM can rule that each character can have only one significant Disadvantage, one flaw that defines them. The GM should also feel free to disallow any specific Disadvantages that seem counterproductive to the group's current story or style of play.

Character balance is also encouraged when a GM runs a campaign that covers the full gamut of samurai life, a campaign where each samurai is expected to write poetry, paint, hunt, visit shrines, and generally uphold both the virtues of Bushido and the social niceties and expectations of the samurai caste. In this sort of campaign, the GM can legitimately require a certain percentage of the players' starting Experience Points to be devoted to High Skills alone.

This sort of well-rounded campaign also has the advantage that it actively discourages players from trying to build one-dimensional characters. A player who continually puts all his Experience Points into combat Traits and Skills will soon find his potent warrior is little more than a disaster waiting to happen in court. The ability to crush your opponents with a single blow from a tetsubo is of little use when a Scorpion challenges you to a game of Sadane. Of course, the GM should make sure this lesson goes both ways – the courtier with a full gamut of social and artistic skills will find himself helpless when a skirmish does happen, thereby encouraging him to pick up a few ranks of Kenjutsu or Staves.

Adventures and Structure

A role-playing game campaign is comprised of a series of adventures which the GM writes and presents to the players. Different GMs take different approaches to how detailed they make their adventures – some prefer to create a loose outline and improvise as they go, while others choose to build more intricate adventures with careful plots and detailed descriptions. Neither approach is "better" than the other – a GM should use the method which works best for his imagination, skills, and playing style.

Regardless of whether you as a GM write your adventures as loose outlines or detailed narratives, in order to create an effective adventure, you must understand story structure. A good structure is built out of the vital components for a good role-playing session – settings, characters, hooks, choices,



challenges, twists, causality, climaxes, repercussions, theme, and tone. Each of these components serves a vital role, and if you aspire to be a good GM, you must know about them (even tacitly) and sometimes delineate them before a game.

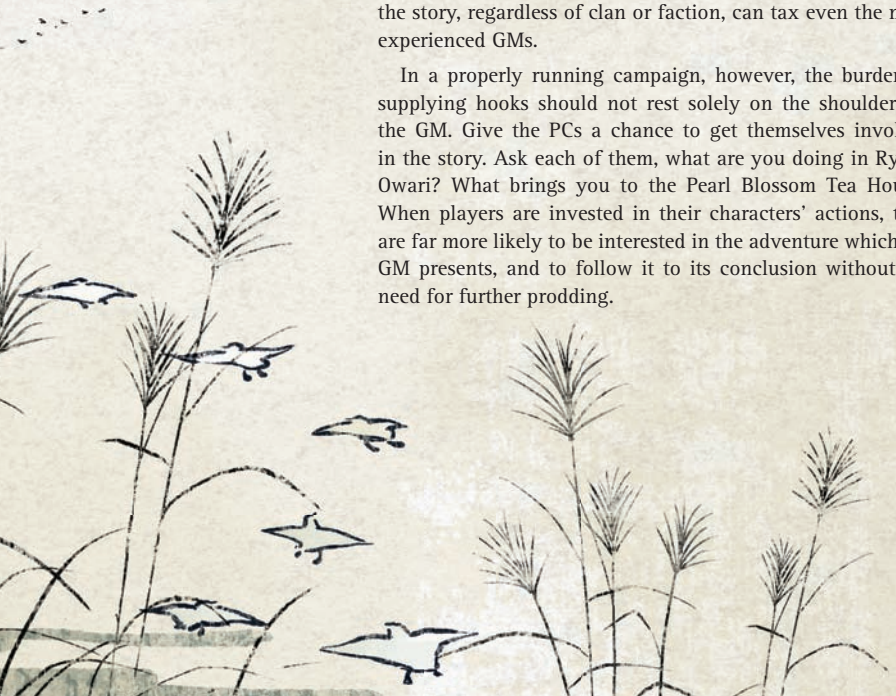
Setting is simple but vital. Where does the adventure take place, and where does it take the PCs? Without setting, your players will wander across an empty canvas, aimless. While this might work for an experimental game, in a normal role-playing campaign setting cannot be avoided. It should have something to do with the tone and theme of your game. A courtly game is most likely urban-based and indoors. There is little cause to travel outdoors when arguing with a Crane, unless it's to beat some sense into him. Conversely, the closest thing to a ceiling in a military campaign is the one over the general's tent. The Location Guide later in this chapter provides many potential setting possibilities.

Characters are essential to any story. Unless you're making a post-modern German film about machinery replacing humanity, you can't tell a story without characters. Both the player characters and your NPCs (Non-Player Characters) add vital elements to your campaign. How much *character* the PCs bring to the game is essentially up to the players, but regardless, the GM should make sure that NPCs are vivid and memorable personalities, three-dimensional people rather than cardboard placeholders. The GM should not confuse quirkiness with character. Not every NPC need have a limp, an odd voice, and mismatched eyes. Characters can be distinguished and made memorable in far subtler ways, and especially in how they respond to the PCs.

The most vital components to good character are complexity (not to be confused with convolution), flexibility, ingenuity, and goals – both personal and global. NPCs should have their own goals and their own capabilities, which may or may not conflict with those of the players.

Hooks is a term used to describe a bevy of tricks and tools GMs can use to get the PCs involved in the adventure. "Hooking" the PCs is traditionally a one-sided affair, with the GM guessing what will get each PC involved. In L5R, this problem is compounded by the elimination of greed as an option. While many traditional fantasy games use gold and magic to reinforce specific behavior, samurai are seldom motivated by such things, at least in theory. Instead, they are called to action by duty and honor. Thus, trying to involve every PC in the story, regardless of clan or faction, can tax even the most experienced GMs.

In a properly running campaign, however, the burden of supplying hooks should not rest solely on the shoulders of the GM. Give the PCs a chance to get themselves involved in the story. Ask each of them, what are you doing in Ryoko Owari? What brings you to the Pearl Blossom Tea House? When players are invested in their characters' actions, they are far more likely to be interested in the adventure which the GM presents, and to follow it to its conclusion without the need for further prodding.



Choices – specifically, relevant choices – are the flip side of hooks. Players like making decisions, especially meaningful decisions that affect the fate of their characters. No one wants to go through an entire adventure listening to the GM read programmed events triggered by other events. Enough of those in a row and the players realize they are inside someone else's novel they can't get out of. Almost as bad is an adventure where choices are limited to the most simplistic options – left/right, north/south, or yes/no. Choices should always be plentiful, and whenever possible they should have meaning and value, to the players and to their characters. Indeed, difficult and painful choices are one of the hallmarks of role-playing in a samurai world, and the GM should strive to offer these sorts of situations to the players.

Challenges are a key ingredient to gaming – all gaming, not just role-playing games. Without challenges, the PCs succeed at everything, there is nothing to risk, and conflict lacks any kind of tension. Challenges define the limits of characters. This may vex those players who want to "win" at everything, but it also helps provide more fulfilling finishes to your stories. PCs who have to work hard to defeat the villain are rewarded emotionally and personally, rather than just with Experience Points.

Finding the proper level of challenge can be something of a tightrope. Too many challenges and the players will become frustrated and annoyed. Too few and the adventure degenerates into a meaningless cake-walk. The GM must examine the tone of the game and the level of fun the players are having. Here, as in many other places, good role-playing gaming is revealed as a collaboration between GM and players. A skilled GM takes note of feedback from the players, both tangible and intangible – levels of annoyance, boredom, fun, etc. Watching these signals tells a GM when to apply the brakes and when to ratchet up the tension. The challenges of the story should match the needs of the players as well as fitting the overall tone and theme of the game.

It should be noted, in passing, that in an Asian-style game like L5R there is not an automatic requirement for the players to "win" and overcome all challenges in order to have a satisfying gaming experience. The importance of tragedy in L5R is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Plot twists keep the players on their toes. How many times have you read a book or seen a movie, knowing exactly what was coming once a plot point was revealed? If the PCs always complete their missions without any hiccups or complications, their strategist side may feel rewarded by such quick and easy paths to victory, but they will soon grow jaded and bored. A predictable story is an unmemorable story, lacking impact and flavor. How many episodes of a TV show like that could you watch?

However, a good plot twist is not just a sudden bizarre turn of events. Finding out their daimyo was the villain all along is almost as clichéd as a story without a twist at all. Finding out he has a secret alliance with a Yogo shugenja is better. Finding out the Yogo is also a Bloodspeaker cultist ramps up the tension. Finding out a pair of Kuni Witch Hunters were aware of the whole thing adds yet another layer to the story. And the final twist is that the PCs have to murder the Yogo and the Kuni to hide their own daimyo's shame. *That's* a good set of plot twists.

An important aspect of plot twists is that they should never come out of thin air. Otherwise the players will feel cheated. There should be subtle clues along the way – nothing too obvious, but enough that at least one player can see it coming.

(Another clever maneuver is to plant clues that the players can understand but their characters cannot – adding a whole additional layer of tension to the game.) At the very least, the GM should make sure the clues add up enough, so when the plot twist comes along, the players can retrace the clues they missed and say, "Of course."

Causality is not a crucial ingredient to a good adventure, but an enriching one nonetheless. If a story presents repercussions to the actions of the PCs (and for that matter the NPCs), it adds a number of additional benefits to the game. The game world becomes more realistic and compelling. When events within the story are more believable, the PCs will think more clearly and carefully about their actions for fear of debilitating repercussions. Indeed, mature gamers expect this to be a part of role-playing, and the GM should encourage them to see the game world as a living environment that reacts to their decisions.

Climaxes are an important part of any story, whether short or long. The traditional three-act story has a single climax, but a longer tale can easily have numerous peaks and valleys throughout. The main point of a story's climax is to resolve everything you've been moving toward with some kind of emotional finish. Indeed, the emotional aspect of a climax is often far more important than the physical one. A finale of nonstop action will have little impact if the PCs do not "feel something" as a result of their travails.

The climax need not resolve everything, nor need it put the PCs on the side of victory, especially in an L5R game where tragedy and loss are important thematic elements. A single adventure may end on a downer if the PCs die or walk away in shame, but a longer campaign can have numerous points in which the PCs "lose." The key for the GM is to recognize when it's fun to beat down the goblins and when it's more interesting to the story for the goblins to overrun the Crab encampment. However, it should be noted that keeping the PCs "down" to satisfy a story goal is less important than the players enjoying the game. If the point of the story is for the PCs to be shamed and then to redeem themselves, the GM needs to make sure the players can handle being "down" for an extended length of time. There is no hard and fast rule on how to do this. The GM needs to have an intuitive sense of timing and tone, something that comes with experience.

Theme is often the hardest thing to pinpoint about a story. Essentially, it is the invisible cogs driving the plot. Any Hollywood scriptwriter will tell you that if he doesn't know the theme of his story going in, he's going to have a lot of rewriting later. If the GM knows the theme of an adventure is courage or jealousy before he starts planning, it helps to focus design and plot choices later. It is much easier to design the voice and mannerisms of a vindictive Phoenix shugenja in a story about betrayal than it would be to design one for a Unicorn bushi in a theme-deficient "fighting game."

If theme is the underlying point of an adventure or campaign, **Tone** is how that adventure is presented. Tone can be light or dark, humorous or deadly serious as the needs of the adventure dictate. One thing to keep in mind when considering the tone of an adventure is not to make things bleak or dark purely for the sake of being dark. A world torn apart by war is one thing. A daimyo who nonsensically kills peasants for his own enjoyment is another. What possible emotion is such a tone trying to evoke?

A wise GM allows the players to help set the tone of the world they live in. A fantasy role-playing game needs to have a tone that matches the expectations of everyone involved. Are the PCs just victims of their environment, or heroes of the Empire? Let them decide.

Writing Your Own Adventure

We expect that a prospective GM or player of L5R is already full of ideas for stories set in the Emerald Empire... or even outside Rokugan's borders. And since there is ultimately no right or wrong way to create an adventure, you can really do whatever you like. If you choose to plot an adventure that opens with a lot of action, followed by days of investigation and intrigue, this is your choice. Pacing, dramatic elements, and action are all yours for the taking. Seriously, we give you permission. Photocopy that sentence and give it to all your friends.

But if you want some help organizing your adventures, this section is for you.

Types of Adventures

Location-Based

Traditional dungeon-crawl and wilderness-exploring adventures are one of the oldest forms of role-playing adventure, and one which many players automatically bring to mind when they think of gaming. In these sorts of adventures, the PCs explore a specific and limited area, such as a sprawling tomb or crypt, a cave complex, or a small valley. The adventurers go from place to place, triggering encounters or events when they enter a specific room or area. Often, each location has text in the adventure which is supposed to be read aloud, furthering the "programmed" feel of things.

Such gaming has its place, of course. Clearing a dungeon of monsters or evil cultists has a visceral appeal which most role-playing gamers understand in their bones. But in L5R, this sort of adventure should be the exception rather than the rule. Imagine trying to visit your daimyo by going through a series of numbered rooms, or traveling down the streets of Toshi Ranbo and stopping every 10 minutes to hear another description of a rice-paper building and its wooden frame, with merchants outside selling their wares.



That's not to say that L5R cannot have location-based adventures. The original *Tomb of Iuchiban*, one of the most memorable adventures in L5R's early history, climaxed with the PCs exploring a tomb full of traps and supernatural threats. But in a good L5R game such adventures should be used sparingly, and only when they actually make sense for the plot.

Open World

In an open game world approach, the GM seeds a city, region, or nation with locations, NPCs, plots, and similar material, waiting for the players to discover them and make use of them. This open world can be as detailed or as loose as the GM needs it to be. Not every single thing needs to be identified, but a system should exist for letting the PCs walk into nearly any village, city, or structure with a reasonable expectation to know what is in there and what is going on.

The GM should beware, since an open game world can become mired in the minutiae of naming every family member and every merchant in every backwater town in Rokugan. Instead, the GM should be prepared to make things up quickly, or know where to find quick answers. A chart filled with NPC names, building types, crafts, attitudes, conditions, and everything else that might come up can certainly help facilitate game play.

The benefit of the open-world environment is that the players' destiny is their own. They can choose to go and do what they want, taking on minor tasks, forging alliances with various NPCs, planning for the future, and trying to make a better Empire. The fate of the game rests on the creativity of the PCs, not the GM, who is essentially a facilitator (and perhaps, when things get slow, an instigator). In the open-world environment, the traditional gaming roles are almost reversed.

The open-world adventure format does not work for every GM. A lot of mental gymnastics and record keeping can go into a single game session, as the GM improvises and reacts to the players' actions and questions. And a GM who prefers to tell big epic stories is liable to find this format too loose and unfocused. Planning and preparation go a long way in the open-world format, however, and this sort of adventure style does free up the GM from the burden of always having something for the PCs to do.

Character-Driven

Character-driven adventures are almost the exact opposite of a traditional location-based role-playing scenario. Instead of the GM at the forefront of the story, pulling the players by the nose through the "mission," the PCs are responsible for their own plot, directing themselves through the story or, at the very least, deciding what they want to do rather than simply accepting the latest mission from their daimyo.

Character-driven games present the GM with unusual challenges, for this sort of game does not conform at all to the accepted norm. Such games can be very different indeed from other role-playing games, and also challenge the ways in which GMs choose to structure their stories. But there are substantial rewards for this alternative method.

One of the keys to creating a successful character-driven story is doing away with the idea that the GM is there to entertain, instead of to facilitate. Placing the responsibility for the adventure goals on the shoulders of the PCs makes for a very different style of play. While this may confuse GMs who are used to writing a story for the PCs to "interact" with, it can be worth the extra effort.



To start such an adventure, the GM need only provide the setting and tone for each of the PCs. Each should know how it is that his character has come to this place and what goals he has within it. For example, the GM might set the adventure in a remote Scorpion village, close to the Crane and Lion borders. The village is known for its rice and tea production, but is usually ignored by the neighboring clans. However, recent rumors of criminal activity have put it in the forefront of political gossip, and this gossip is rooted in truth.

The village has many "storylines" for the PCs to explore, all of them pre-planned by the GM. But instead of a three-act scenario where the PCs encounter everything at predetermined intervals, the PCs learn about the plight of the villagers at their own pace, and react as they see fit. The GM handles how the village and its inhabitants react to the players, and the story is created through those interactions.

This style of play is not for everyone. GMs who want to tell a more epic, world-shaking story may find this style of adventure unsuitable, since it places too much of the story out of their control. And players who prefer a more passive, reactive gaming style may be frustrated by a game setting that waits for them to do something.

Episodic

In an episodic campaign, each adventure is self-contained. In each game session, the GM runs the PCs through the paces of the classic three-act story. There's a quick set-up, some complications, and then a resolution, all in one night of play. The episode itself is one of many, the total of them comprising a "series," if you will. The GM's goal in each episode is to get the story to completion before the game session ends. These adventures do not need to follow the three-act structure completely rigidly, but the individual play sessions should try to have more focus than in an open-ended character-driven game. This basic concept contains many options of play.

One method to episodic play is to write the campaign like a TV show. By giving the PCs roles on a "show," you give the campaign a direction and focus. Perhaps the PCs investigate murders and/or ghostly rumors throughout the Empire; or maybe they are diplomats of the Emerald Throne, sent to every corner of the Empire to secure alliances and solve problems. Either show has a theme and focus, giving the GM a place to start each session. Without such a focus, the campaign is little more than a tale of samurai who roam the land "looking for adventure," and it can run aground in just a few sessions.

The GM can devise the reason the PCs adventure together, or, more preferably, sit down and work it out with them during the first session. This "pilot" episode can be a more casual occasion as everyone gets into character and figures out what they're doing.

An alternative to this "TV show" model might be thought of as being more like a pay-cable television show, where the characters all live in the same town and go about their varying personal machinations. This sort of game would be a combination of the episodic and character-driven game styles.

Since the PCs are the "stars of the show," as it were, in this sort of game it can be important to let them "win" more often than not, eschewing the more tragic themes of other campaigns. In fact, a 100% success rate isn't out of the question. One of the easiest ways to do this is for the GM to do as little prep work as possible and let the story unfold at the table. For example, the GM selects a location (Unicorn village), a plot (dead samurai), the first clue (a missing katana), and a villain (Moto Xiong). From there, the PCs are left to "pathfind" their way through the plot. On TV, nearly every first lead takes the characters down the right path. Why not in a role-playing game? If a PC intuits (with enough logic) that the killer must have been someone the victim knew, then let it become true. If a PC asserts the locals must have seen something, this too becomes true – and perhaps after a few interrogations, the PCs find a peasant who actually knows something. This style of episodic play should not replace the GM's creativity, but rather inspire it. Giving the PCs a foothold in the story tends to add to the adventure instead of detracting from it.

If the GM wants to take the TV-show model to its ultimate expression, let the players choose actors to portray their characters in the campaign. This, too, gives the players another stake in the game. The list of options is wide, especially if the players consider all Asian actors and not just Japanese ones. (If everyone wants to play Ken Watanabe, make them bid for it.)

The Epic

The world of Rokugan lends itself to epic storytelling – it is a vast, sprawling Empire, driven by war and political conflict, confronting equally vast threats such as the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness. Many of the most popular and famous periods in Rokugan's history depict desperate struggles to save the Empire from terrible world-ending evils – Fu Leng's return in the Clan War arc, or the invasion by the legions of the foreign goddess Kali-Ma. More generally, fantasy literature and film is replete with epic tales of good against evil, and the continuing popularity of these stories shows their appeal. Players and GMs alike can find much enjoyment in recreating one of Rokugan's epic tales or creating a new one of their own.

An epic story lies in many ways at the opposite end of the adventure spectrum from the character-driven adventure, since the GM is unleashing huge events that will march forward regardless of player actions. This makes it dangerously easy for an epic to drift into the trap discussed earlier in this section: a programmed narrative in which the players are unable to control their fate. One good method to avoid this trap is to make the players key participants in the unfolding tale. Place the fate of vital NPCs and major battles squarely in the players' hands and make them live with the consequences, whether those be good or bad. Another method is to avoid trying to force the plot down a particular path if the PCs are going in another direction. Even in an epic, the GM should always be ready and willing to change where his plot is going in response to the players. In an epic the GM may know where the story will end, but the players should decide how they get there – and if need be, the GM can change the ending!

Unlike episodic gaming, an epic will maintain a strong continuity of plot from one play session to the next, and the GM can end sessions on a cliffhanger. This can place stronger demands on the GM, since he must keep track of large-scale interweaving plots and correspondingly large casts of NPCs. The reward is a deep, compelling game experience that keeps the players coming back for more.

One potential problem with an epic story is that the players may feel themselves overshadowed by the prominent and often incredibly capable NPCs who inhabit their world. A campaign set during the Clan War era, for example, puts the players in the same time as the Reborn Thunders, legendary figures like Akodo Toturi and Hida Yakamo. How can the players' actions and choices matter when these mighty heroes are standing in the wings ready to swoop in and save the day? Indeed, this is not a problem limited to L5R. Any role-playing game set in a "canon" fantasy or science-fiction world, such as *Star Wars* or *Lord of the Rings*, faces the same conundrum. If the heroes of the story already exist, the player characters cannot take on anything more than bit parts.

The solution to this problem is a simple one: take off the safeties. Just because the GM is running a game set in a "canon" era does not mean he is a slave to the specific details of that timeline. Kill off those big NPC heroes, or even better, Taint them and turn them into villains. If Akodo Toturi is now a Shadowlands warlord the future of the Empire really is in doubt, and the player characters can and must step in as Rokugan's only hope. George R. R. Martin, author of the *Song of Ice and Fire* fantasy series, deliberately killed off one of his most prominent characters at the end of the series' first volume in order to show the readers he meant business. A skilled GM can do the same, and the rewards will be similar: suddenly the players know their characters are on their own and the Empire is depending solely on them.



Relationship Mapping

An alternative to plotting out an adventure or a full campaign is the relationship map method. Basically, relationship mapping is built on the idea that the game world is a fluid, living thing that exists with or without the PCs' interference, but once they begin interacting with that environment and the things in it, the world changes in response. An extremely simple example of this is a fantasy computer RPG where the NPCs sit and wait for the PC to come along and trigger events. A more complex version can be found in TV shows like *Brotherhood* or *Deadwood*.

A relationship-mapping campaign is similar to the open-world campaign, but worries less about the world and more about the characters in it. A GM who relationship maps paints the canvas of his game world with a finer brush, detailing the important NPCs and determining their value and association to one another.

Before an adventure or campaign begins, the GM should devise a significant number of NPCs – no fewer than seven, but no more than fifty – with each NPC setting his own goals, agendas, and aspirations, not unlike a PC. They are, in effect, real characters competing with the other characters in the world. They are not a static set of numbers waiting to be encountered by the PCs. They do not exist merely to be foiled by (or to foil) the PCs. Instead, they exist to make the game environment *real*.

A good mental exercise here is to imagine your own neighborhood. There are people living there you know, and others you do not. Each is an NPC in the story of your life. One day, you learn that a neighbor intends to run for mayor, but wants to keep it quiet, intending to reveal his candidacy at the right moment. You have an opportunity to do something with this information, but chances are, you don't... you're not a jerk, after all. Maybe the neighbor is though, and you know he'd make a horrible mayor. Now you have a conundrum. Extrapolate this problem into the Emerald Empire, with characters who can operate in the world of political subterfuge better than you, and now you have a story where there wasn't one before.

When you relationship map, you allow the PCs to cherry-pick the stories that directly affect their personal ambitions. How you build your relationship map is up to you. The key here is to build a working society that PCs can interact with, without the overriding structure of a plot that can potentially devalue individual choices. Each thread or step in the map should be something the PCs have a chance to encounter... even if it's just a simple goal like "meet with the daimyo," the PCs should have an opportunity to overhear or learn of this plan, if they go looking for it.

A relationship map campaign is not suited to epic play, obviously, although elements of it can be incorporated into such a campaign. But it works extremely well in a smaller-scale campaign built on an episodic or open world structure.



Starting the Adventure

An Invitation

Once the GM has decided what sort of campaign to run, there is still the question of how to get the PCs together and involve them in the story. The opening session of a campaign can be vital to setting to the tone and forging a disparate group of characters into a cohesive group.

The simplest method of starting off a campaign is to have each player character's daimyo invite them to a celebration, event, holiday, or vacation. Ego-driven lords are more than pleased to attend the event, to show off their glorious positions and attendants – the PCs among them. The details of the event are not really important – what matters is getting everyone in one place, where the "real" story can begin.

A sample adventure of this type might involve a murder or other criminal act the PCs must solve, thus assuring themselves of glory or other personal gain. The sample adventure at the end of this chapter is an example of such a scenario. From there, plot threads can spread out into the rest of the campaign.

Defeat

One of the most effective ways of motivating characters – especially a diverse or disharmonious group of characters – is to provide them with a shared enemy. A clever GM can launch an entire campaign by starting out with the PCs suffering a humiliating defeat. What if the first session begins with an Imperial dignitary killed by an arrogant bandit chief while the PCs are helpless to save him? All of the PCs will be left with their reputation in tatters; perhaps they will even be made ronin. At that point, prior clan loyalties and backgrounds hardly matter – all of the PCs have a shared interest in hunting down and defeating the bandit who ruined their lives.

Starting a game with a cruel defeat may seem counterintuitive, but it can work extremely well if the GM is having difficulty forming the PCs into a cohesive group. And it can very easily be expanded into a larger story if the GM and players desire. Perhaps that brutal bandit was actually hired by a political rival, the true mastermind behind the PCs' defeat. Perhaps the PCs have stumbled into a plot by the Kolat, the Gozoku, or the Bloodspeakers. The possibilities are endless.

In Media Res

In media res (Latin for "into the middle of things") is a literary technique where the narrative opens in the middle of a story instead of beginning with the traditional exposition of a plot. Often the components of the story (characters, conflict, and setting) are introduced later through various techniques, including flashbacks – but sometimes they are ignored altogether. While this concept of starting a story in the middle began centuries ago, modern storytelling still finds many uses for it. Role-playing games have mostly ignored this method of storytelling, but it can have its place.

Imagine an adventure that opens with the PCs standing over the dead bodies of their enemies. Each player is asked to explain, from his or her point of view, how or what led to this. Each player must work within certain parameters, respecting the social contract of the game, but otherwise is allowed to explain in any way how his or her character arrived at this moment. How is it that a Crab, Crane, Phoenix, and Scorpion all happened to be in the same place, at the same time, to take down 30 bandit raiders before they could fire a single flaming arrow into the nearby village?

Or in the previous example, imagine the PCs not caring at all, and instead picking up the one remaining clue from the massacre and starting the adventure from there.

Imagine an adventure that opens with the PCs standing before their daimyo, ready to perform seppuku, only to have the entire adventure take place in a flashback leading up to this inevitable point.

Or imagine that same scenario, where the PCs spend the last hours of their lives trying to explain what happened to an unflinching and unsympathetic lord.

Imagine an adventure that opens with the PCs stepping through the gates of the Kaiu Wall and into the Shadowlands. What then? Does it matter what fate brought them here? Are they being banished? Does anything matter when the only thing that stands before the characters is literal hell on earth?

Or imagine the PCs ushered into the Shadowlands in chains, their freedom only given when the gates close behind them and a single key drops from the top of the Wall. Perhaps the PCs do not even know each other.

Imagine an adventure that opens with the PCs poisoned.

Imagine an adventure that opens with the PCs arriving for winter court, invitations in hand.

Imagine an adventure that opens with the PCs waking on an uncharted island in the Amaterasu Umi.

Imagine an adventure that opens with the PCs devoid of their memories...

The list goes on.

Adventure Structure: Act Two

The so-called "second act" of a story is usually defined as the "rising action" part of the tale, where events build up and characters reveal their true colors, both good and bad. Traditional Western-style role-playing games often lack this piece of story. In a scenario structure that amounts to "here's what you need to kill, here's where it is, now go kill it," the only rising action that takes place is the fight scenes en route to the final villain's lair. But in Legend of the Five Rings, a game based on Asian storytelling, the heroes are rarely on a quest to "go kill it." More often, the PCs have an obligation to someone or something larger than themselves. This alone changes the story to one built more around character development and rising conflict.

Some players and GMs might ask, isn't that journey to the villain's lair the second act of the story? Isn't that called the *Hero's Journey?* On the surface it might appear to be. But the huge difference between *The Odyssey* and *Fractured Halls of the Goblin King* is that Odysseus' journey revealed a great deal about Odysseus' character, much more than his stats and powers. The journey to the Fractured Halls provides the PCs with practice at character sheet acrobatics and not much else.

The second act of an adventure is an opportunity to explore the characters' personalities, determine why people are on the journey, and what possible reason they have for fighting the villain. It offers a host of other personal "adventures" that embellish and flesh out what could otherwise be a rote story structure. To consider an example from Shakespeare: we know Hamlet is going to get his revenge (in one way or another) at the end of the story, but what we don't know is why he's such a coward and so tormented. His inner turmoil makes up the bulk of the story. Without it, all you've got is a dead king and a whiney son who wants to punch someone in the eye.

Role-playing games are not Shakespeare. But they have a much larger pool of inspiration to draw on for great stories than old Will did. Collect enough creative minds at the gaming table, eager to play out an intricate three (or five) act story, and even the Bard can't compete with what they can all build together.

Use Act Two of a role-playing campaign to explore what can't be explored during the beginning and end of the story. Show what the daimyo is truly up to, or why the Emperor wants him dead so badly. Allow the PCs to explore their own reasons for joining the adventure beyond Experience Points and Glory. Reward those PCs who reveal hidden agendas or personal information in measure with the tone of the journey. The GM's design efforts will be more richly rewarded, because the group spends more time exploring what the GM has built. And how can that be bad?



Plot Constraints

GMs use constraints to keep characters on the track of the story, forcing them to deal with limits on their actions. Of course, the GM must be cautious about over-using constraints, since players will resent it if they feel they are being "railroaded" through the plot. However, one of the strengths of L5R is that the game world itself presents a whole host of constraints which the GM can use while remaining completely authentic to the setting. Samurai are ensnared from birth in the elaborate social and moral rules of Bushido and the Rokugani social order. The following section lists several constraints that work exceptionally well in L5R.

- **Ancestor Guidance:** Samurai know their ancestors are watching them from Yomi. Every step of the way, the spirit of a great-grandmother continues to remind them of the expectations placed on them. Perhaps an Utaku PC is seeking vengeance in the name of her ancestor, or a Lion ancestor has sent all the PCs to find a long-lost sword. Ancestor guidance can work especially well in a campaign where the players and GM work in tandem to develop the plot, since players who choose to have their characters Haunted will often have specific ideas of what their ancestor expects of them, ideas which the GM can spin into a full plotline.
- **Curse/Disease:** A curse haunts the PCs – not an infrequent event in the world of Rokugan. Take care not to make such a constraint too powerful; anything that causes limbs to fall off is probably too much, while a curse that slowly eats away at the samurai over 20 years would be appropriate. In order for the curse to be effective it must hinder the PCs constantly, but not cause the players to grow frustrated and stop playing altogether. The goal of the adventure might be to find a cure for the curse, or the curse could provide an obstacle for the PCs to overcome on the way to some other goal.

  A disease constraint is similar to a curse, but the character may die if it is not cured. Alternately, the samurai might be required to obtain a cure for an entire village, town, or stronghold stricken by a plague.
- **Diplomacy:** With this constraint, the PCs have been ordered to treat someone (or everyone) kindly despite any pre-existing rivalry or enmity. The adventure the constraint is applied to should be sensitive; samurai who dishonor their clan with mischief should be threatened with open war or equally disastrous results if they fail. This is a relatively simple constraint that simply forces the PCs to behave, and GMs are encouraged to try using it during their first few sessions. It works well for all character types, and forces the players to actively role-play the Rokugani principles of etiquette and courtesy – things which should become second nature for experienced samurai.

- **No Magic:** The kami will not answer shugenja for some reason, or magic is forbidden for social reasons during the adventure. Shugenja must find another way to be useful to the group. Perhaps all of their scrolls have been stolen, or the adventure takes place in a zone of the Shadowlands where magic is countered by evil kansen. This is a very severe constraint, but works to promote creative problem-solving and character interaction.
- **No Harm May Befall the Guilty:** The PCs are expected to treat a bitter antagonist with care, perhaps even to serve as his guards or protectors. For example, if they are summoning a noblewoman to justice they will be expected to keep her alive until judgment. If they are fighting against another clan, perhaps they must make sure to take the enemy shugenja prisoner. This sort of constraint is especially useful for games in which pivotal NPCs must be kept alive for future plot purposes. It also can be used as a test of the characters' moral fiber – can they bring themselves to follow the rules of the Empire and spare their bitter enemy?
- **No Weapons:** A more extreme version of No Harm, this adventure constraint prevents the PCs from drawing their weapons, or perhaps even from carrying them. They must think rather than act through every situation. This is especially useful and appropriate in court situations, since samurai are usually expected to disarm when in the presence of significant social superiors. GMs can also use this constraint to force the characters to fight creatively instead of automatically relying on their katana. For example, samurai staying at inns or teahouses are often expected to leave their weapons in their rooms or in the care of a ronin bouncer to prevent violence among drunken guests. What happens when the inn gets attacked by ninja?
- **Poison:** Similar to a Curse, the PCs are poisoned at the outset of the adventure. Perhaps the poison is a ruse to cloud their mind, keeping them away from the true objective of the adventure, or perhaps it is meant to toy with them for the deranged pleasure of a particularly vindictive enemy. Is there an antidote? A catalyst? Before trying this constraint, GMs should carefully consider who poisoned the characters and whether or not the PCs will have the chance to find this person. This can easily become a subplot adventure between larger stories.
- **Red Herrings:** GMs who decide the players are moving too quickly toward the climax or conclusion of their adventure often incorporate red herrings to distract and divert them. Rokugan offers ample opportunity to keep the PCs guessing about their fate, and rumors and gossip that continue to lead the players to dead ends will certainly keep the GM who likes to play "cat and mouse" very happy. Of course, good judgment must be employed – over-using red herrings can become abusive, violating the trust between GMs and players.

Buying Off Disadvantages

The Book of Fire discusses the purchase of Advantages after character creation, something which should always be done with the consultation and permission of the GM. However, another possible way to spend Experience Points is to get rid of a Disadvantage. This is done by spending Experience Points equal to the Disadvantage's original cost.

"Buying off" a Disadvantage is something which should only be done with the GM's permission. You should consider carefully whether the Disadvantage is actually something that can be removed (one cannot really buy off a Missing Limb, for example). You should also consider the character's actions up to this point, and whether those actions justify removing the Disadvantage. For example, a Brash character who has been striving to control his anger and behave in a more honorable fashion is a character who can justify spending the points to be rid of Brash.



- **Secrecy:** A very popular and effective constraint in Rokugan. The PCs are asked to do something privately. Perhaps their lord demands they murder a rival. He will never admit having given them the order to kill the man; they have no official sanction to perform the act, and no traveling papers will be issued. The honor of the samurai should come into question if they are caught, and if the act is extreme they may even be ordered to commit seppuku.
- **Shame:** The PCs are somehow shamed or dishonored, yet must still serve their lord. Perhaps the story opens with an explanation of their shame and the adventure is spent trying to prove their worth or find the culprit responsible. In the end, they may be exonerated or permitted to commit seppuku. Either way, they have succeeded.
- **Time-Limit:** The adventure has a built-in countdown. As the PCs race to achieve their goal, other factors conspire to come crashing down around them. Perhaps they have been given a matter of hours to locate an abducted Seppun noble or they will be found guilty of his kidnapping. Another possibility has the players discovering a hidden army approaching their home. They must make it back to their daimyo in time to warn him or lose their ancestral lands to the enemy. Be sure to keep careful track of time in this type of adventure, since the players will want to use every moment to their advantage.



Rewards for Success:
Experience Points

Characters in L5R are able to improve themselves through the expenditure of Experience Points. These points are awarded by the GM, in quantities based on how well the PCs do and how fast he wants them to advance.

Typically, Experience Points are awarded at the end of each playing session. However, some GMs may prefer to award Experience at the conclusion of each story or plotline, especially in campaigns where stories last two to four sessions.

There is no set formula for awarding Experience Points. Each GM decides how fast the player characters should advance to fit the themes and style of the campaign. A GM who wants a gritty low-power campaign in which character advancement is a hard-won prize will give out a modest amount of Experience Points, while a GM who is running a heroic over-the-top type of campaign will give out more generous Experience awards. Some GMs may wish to link Experience awards closely to player accomplishments or good role-play, while others may simply make a flat award per playing session.

As an example, the "classic" model of Experience Point awards gives out 1 XP for playing the game session, 1 XP for role-playing well, and 1 or 2 XP for in-game accomplishments. We also offer the suggestion from the *Book of Fire* that players be awarded 1 XP in each session where they effectively role-play their character's Disadvantages, thereby rewarding them for keeping track of their characters' weaknesses and bringing them out in play.

The most important factor to consider in awarding Experience Points is how fast the GM wants the player characters to advance in Insight Rank. The following may be taken as guidelines:

- Awards of 3 to 4 Experience Points per session will cause characters to advance to Rank 2 in about 10 to 12 playing sessions and gain an additional Insight Rank every 8 to 10 sessions thereafter.
- Awards of 5 to 6 Experience Points per session will get characters to Rank 2 in about 8 to 10 sessions and to higher Insight Ranks every 6 to 7 sessions.
- Awards of 7 to 8 Experience Points per session will get characters to Rank 2 in about 5 to 7 sessions and to higher Insight Ranks every 3 to 5 sessions.

Awarding more than 8 Experience Points per session is not recommended, unless the GM is running a game that is deliberately built around the characters vaulting to a high power-level very rapidly.



Building Stories:
The 36 Writer Plots

Georges Polti wrote a book (based on the work of Carlo Gozzi) in which he claimed there were only *Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations* and that all plots stem from one of these 36. The authors of this book have no interest in contesting or researching this proposition. However, this list of basic plots can be very useful to the aspiring GM, so we have reprinted it below (in alphabetical order and not Polti's original order).

Along with each dramatic situation are the key elements required for each plot. For instance, in order to run an abduction scenario, at the very least an abductor NPC, an abducted NPC (alive or otherwise), and a guardian NPC are required. Beyond that any additional NPCs are the whim of the GM.

Chart

- **Abduction**
  Abductor, Abducted, Guardian
- Adultery
  Deceived Spouse, Two Adulterers
- All Sacrificed for Passion
  Lover, Object of Passion, Person or Thing Sacrificed
- Ambition
  An Ambitious Person, Coveted Thing, Adversary
- Conflict with a God
  Mortal, Immortal
- Crimes of Love
  Lover, Beloved, Theme of Dissolution
- Daring Enterprise
  Bold Leader, Goal, Adversary
- Deliverance
  Unfortunates, Threatener, Rescuer
- Disaster
  Vanquished Power, Victorious Power or Messenger
- Discovery of Dishonor of a Loved One
  Discoverer, Guilty One
- An Enemy Loved
  Beloved Enemy, Lover, Hater
- Enigma
  Interrogator, Seeker, Problem
- Familial Hatred
  Two Family Members who hate each other
- Familial Rivalry
  Preferred Kinsman, Rejected Kinsman, Object
- Fatal Imprudence
  Imprudent person, Victim or Lost object
- Faulty Judgement
  Mistaken One, Victim of Mistake, Author of Mistake, Guilty Person
- Involuntary Crimes of Love
  Lover, Beloved, Revealer
- Loss of Loved Ones
  Kinsman Slain, Kinsman Witness, Executioner
- Kinsman Kills Unrecognised Kinsman
  Killer, Unrecognised Victim, Revealer
- Madness
  Madman, Victim
- Mistaken Jealousy
  Jealous One, Object of Jealousy, Supposed Accomplice, Author of Mistake
- Murderous Adultery
  Two Adulterers, the Betrayed
- Obstacles to Love
  Two Lovers, Obstacle
- Obtaining
  Two or more Opposing Parties, Object, Arbitrator
- Pursuit
  Fugitive from Punishment, Pursuer
- Recovery of a Lost One
  Seeker, One Found
- Remorse
  Culprit, Victim, Interrogator
- Revenge
  Avenger, Criminal
- Revolt
  Tyrant, Conspirator(s)
- Rivalry Between Superior and Inferior
  Superior, Inferior, Object
- Sacrifice of Loved Ones
  Hero, Beloved Victim, Need for Sacrifice
- Self Sacrifice for an Ideal
  Hero, Ideal, Person or Thing Sacrificed
- Self Sacrifice for Kindred
  Hero, Kinsman, Person or Thing Sacrificed
- Supplication
  Persecutor, Supplicant, a Power in Authority
- Vengeance by Family upon Family
  Avenging Kinsman, Guilty Kinsman, Relative
- Victim of Cruelty or Misfortune
  Unfortunates, Master or Unlucky Person

Chances are you are familiar with the thirty-six plots, or at the very least have read through some of the plot concepts. But now what? There are nearly unlimited ways to interpret each of the plots and a myriad of options for the structure of the plots themselves. It would take a lifetime to explore them all... and this book has less than 100 pages left... so, we can't do that. Instead, let's look at one of the plots and devise as many "options" as possible for it, then look at several of the others in a more general way.

Picking one plot at random, we select *Revolt*. This is not a typical adventure plot, but it will allow us to build an adventure around the entire party, not just a single character. This plot requires two major players – a tyrant, and any number of conspirators. Adding a few henchmen to the tyrant won't hurt, either, but isn't necessary to the drama. Spending just a few minutes brainstorming, we have the following plot possibilities.

- The clan hatamoto determine the daimyo has become corrupt and needs to be put down, and enlist the aid of the PCs in their gambit.
- One of the PCs has gone too far in his dealings with others and once-loyal servants now seek to overthrow his position.
- The PCs' own daimyo has become dictatorial, losing sight of the code of Bushido. If the PCs do not intervene and depose him, someone else will...
- The Unicorn Clan Champion takes matters into his own hands, leading a rebellion against the Emerald Throne.
- One of the PCs instigates a revolt against his own daimyo as cover for a power grab. Does anyone know he is behind it?
- An entire region of the Crane lands is engulfed in civil war. How is this possible? Who started this? Do other clans have a stake in the war's continuation or its quick end? What role do the PCs play and which side do they take?

As you can see, many of these plots play with the traditional notion of PCs as protagonists and switch up their roles – and by extension, the structure of the story. The fifth plot can open with the PCs in the midst of a riot, not aware that one of their own has started this. This works especially well in a group where private note-passing is common, or one in which players can meet early (even on a different day) to work out covert details.

The first plot, by contrast, is a stereotypical, mission-based adventure, and the fourth and sixth are most likely combat-intensive, perhaps requiring the use of the Mass Combat rules. Thus, a good GM can come up with many different types of campaigns just from one basic plot thread.

Using the thirty-six plots means more than just handing the PCs a mission and telling them "fetch." It's about cultivating stories you normally couldn't tell in other mediums, and prompting the PCs to take a more *personal* stake in the events of their characters' lives. The adventurer who sits in a tavern waiting for a wizard to hand him something to do is less likely to be moved by the events of his life than the adventurer who strikes out to right the wrongs going on in his own backyard. In that light, we invite you to consider the following additional suggestions and potential adventures.

Abduction

(Abductor, Abducted, Guardian)

A note arrives notifying a samurai woman that her son is "visiting" someone else after his disappearance so many evenings ago. What should she do? It is extortion, but if she goes to her lord she is admitting she cannot handle the situation herself. In Rokugan, kidnapping is considered highly dishonorable. PCs caught in the web of an abduction will no doubt find it distasteful. But since abductions can include rescues as well as captures, the samurai may think they are doing a great deed instead of causing harm – when in fact, their behavior is being guided by someone with an agenda.

GMs need to answer important questions about an abduction before writing the adventure. How was the hostage taken? Why? What do the kidnappers expect in return? Is the hostage dead? Can the PCs successfully return the hostage? (If not, this may be a revenge plot.) How can the hostage be rescued? Will any plan of action work? Or is it a waiting game? Children and innocents are normally the focus of abduction stories, and PCs with dependents are perfect targets for a kidnapping. Be aware that the plot rarely involves a plea for help (i.e. the PCs must decide for themselves what is necessary without being told).

All Sacrificed for a Passion

(Lover, Object of Passion, Person or Thing Sacrificed)

Samurai should know reason and passion in balance. The code of Bushido requires samurai to think with their mind, spirit, and soul, but also – and in equal measure – with their compassion for life. In theory, no samurai should place any one virtue before another, but in Rokugan this is a near impossibility. Few samurai attain a level of honor that frees them from their personal passions, and the PCs are no exception. Vows, duty, ideals, and health can be sacrificed in the name of passion. Samurai with a weakness, vice, or compulsion are easy to tempt and therefore easy to exploit. In these scenarios a third party can be involved in the downward spiral of the hero, but this is not always necessary. Nature has a way of culling the weak.

A dishonored samurai could seek to prove his worth with a selfless act after such an ordeal, or merely live with the weight of his shame. Seppuku is a common escape from such a situation. A samurai looking to regain his honor and prove his family's worth, however, could go to almost any extreme to be pardoned for his shame. This can be an excellent plot hook to begin a campaign.

Ambition

(Ambitious Person, Coveted Thing, Adversary)

Ambitious lords will do almost anything to secure their own station, and even further to secure a better station. A lord who seeks for himself before seeking for the Empire is both dishonorable and treacherous. Rokugani plots involving ambition should address this issue thoroughly. Ambition can drive a samurai to murder, betrayal, and lies. Once a samurai has tasted power, he may never wish to drink anything else again.

Typically, these stories involve the main character covering his tracks and committing more crimes to keep himself alive and untarnished. Films such as *Fargo*, *Quicksand*, *Ghost*, and a host of others have detailed this type of story. In Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*, the wife of the eldest brother is driven to any act to see her family thrive, even sending thousands of men to



their death for the sake of her vanity. In almost every case, the ambition that drove the villains becomes the source of their demise. However, in Rokugan if the players find information implicating another samurai, they might be hard-pressed to do anything about it; the word of a noble is liable to be stronger than the "evidence" against him, and PCs may not have the option of pointing fingers at an NPC with a Status of 7.

Conflict With a God

(Mortal, Immortal)

This plot has in fact played out in Rokugan's history more than once, such as with the battles against Fu Leng, Kali-Ma, and the Lying Darkness. The Fortunes, the kami, and Jigoku are all powerful forces in L5R; stories that follow this thread are certain to evolve into high fantasy epics. A race to destroy or protect a shrine can be the device in an adventure that takes PCs from this world to another less rooted in reality. The other side of these adventures, and one that might impact the PCs more often, could involve an ancestor who is punishing them or a haunting that seems to drag them into despair. Persecution for beliefs, or religious sects that differ on the importance of values in a religion, may be the focus of an adventure as well. Bear in mind that even shugenja will grow tired with this theme if it is used too often.

Crimes of Love

(Lover, Beloved, Theme of Dissolution)

The Crime of Love plot may be invoked in any situation where an unapproved or dishonorable affair is transpiring. GMs should look at this as yet another opportunity to explore the problem of love in a world where it cannot be openly expressed (see "Asian Versus Western Storytelling" later in this chapter for more discussion of the problems of love in Rokugan).

This sort of adventure should have some history behind it. If NPCs are the only ones involved the players should receive the information through rumors, gossip, and hearsay. The news of a forbidden love could reach the PCs through anonymous sources, or they could witness it themselves after listening to testimonies. Once the players have learned of the affair they must determine what is important. Is either offender a member of their family? Their clan? Or are they from a clan which the PCs would like to see discredited? Be prepared to respond to the player's actions throughout.

If a PC is involved in romance with another (either PC or NPC), this subplot can build over many sessions before requiring a specific resolution. GMs may wish to invoke this storyline several times during the campaign for PCs who have taken the True Love Disadvantage. Be aware, though, that romance-based story threads are emotionally intense and not always easy to run.

Deliverance

(Unfortunates, Threatener, Rescuer)

Deliverance is recovery or restoration of balance. A story where a wrong is righted is an example of this style. All deliverance scenarios need not be rescues. A samurai aiding the land by slaying a corrupt daimyo and placing himself upon the throne is just as much a Deliverance plot as a lone ronin saving a kidnapped child. Whereas a Supplication plot is mostly reactive (i.e. the players are offered an opportunity to do right), a Deliverance plot requires the PCs to actively make a moral choice. It is entirely at the players' discretion whether they take action, and whole adventures can revolve around the samurai enlisting the advice of relatives, sensei, or lords.

Deliverance adventures may start in a number of ways. A monk's disappearance or a lord's transgressions can be hinted at in a prologue; this helps to get the players right into the action. A clever samurai interested in uncovering more information may decide to take action. In Rokugan, a single quandary often has many ramifications, and no samurai should run headlong into such situations without proper context.

Disaster

(Vanquished Power, Victorious Power or Messenger)

Disasters encompass any large-scale change or upheaval that affects more than just one hero. Often the story involves many facets of the culture, and the PCs may be expected to survive or to lead people to safety, in some cases even freeing them from the catastrophe. The event need not be an act of nature to be included as a Disaster scenario. The fall of Troy is a disaster, for instance – or in a Rokugani context, the destruction of Otosan Uchi by the Dark Lord Daigotsu.

A Disaster scenario could start with anything from an earthquake or typhoon to a catastrophic military defeat or the overthrow of a lord. On a smaller and more intimate scale, the GM could instead build a Disaster scenario around a bitter insult or the loss of a loved one. The key to a Disaster scenario is how it is portrayed. If the story fixates on revenge, it is not a Disaster tale. But if the tragedy of the disaster carries the PCs through the story as victims sifting through the debris of their lives, or propels them to take action against evil for the sake of good and not for the sake of personal vengeance, the sanctity of Disaster remains intact.

The GM should be aware that Disaster stories involve pain, despair, anguish, and suffering. Some players may not want to game in a Rokugan where the populace is marred by natural or human transgressions, so be careful about utilizing this plot.

Enemy Loved

(Beloved Enemy, Lover, Hater)

In this scenario, the PC or an NPC is involved in a relationship with someone forbidden to them. This is in some ways one of the most basic romance scenarios in Rokugan, for in a world of feudal loyalties it is very easy for the urges of the heart to clash with the demands of duty. Similar to Obstacles to Love, this plot typically involves a romance that continues to exist even without the approval or against the warnings of the powers that be. Alternatively, the GM can make the situation more personal. Perhaps the PC falls in love with someone who is a personal rival, or the loved one becomes an enemy due to the PC committing an atrocity against the other family. This story should be revealed slowly over time, or interspersed with other situations.



The Enigma

(Interrogator, Seeker, Problem)

An Enigma story confronts the central character with a situation where his own intelligence is at odds with a riddle or in opposition to a powerful will. Possible enigma stories can revolve around a search, mystery, or temptation. A seductress or powerful individual might offer an opportunity for power, or demand it under penalty of death.

This sort of scenario can be very taxing on PCs and GMs alike. Since it is rare to fill in every detail of a game world, a missed clue can easily result in the inability to solve the riddle or problem. GMs should create an Enigma in the flavor and style of Rokugan but which can also be solved by a Western mind to avoid robbing the adventure of its tense atmosphere. This is not an easy task. If your group role-plays in the context of the game world, but solve problems with their own modern Western mindset, you should probably either forego the idea of remaining true to the genre, or give up this scenario altogether.

Enmity of Kinsman

(Two Family Members Who Hate Each Other)

This scenario focuses on the unquenchable hate that a samurai may feel toward a family member, whether or not the hatred is reciprocal. The hate may be focused against the PC, or perhaps the PC is the one hating. In the latter case, this becomes a true player-driven plot, and the GM can and must allow the PC to plot each move, reacting to everything he does. In the former case, where the PC is the victim of a relative's dislike, the GM will initiate the plots and the PC will be expected to respond to their maliciousness. PCs with Disadvantages like Black Sheep are prime candidates for this sort of plot.

This is not an easy scenario to run, and requires extensive collaboration with at least one player. It is also much slower and more perplexing than most other stories. However, GMs looking for an adventure with subtlety, complexity, and drama should definitely consider running this scenario, especially with a small group of two players. Alternatively, Enmity can serve as a constant subplot behind the scenes of a bigger story, building and building until the targeted PC finds himself lost amidst a sea of hostility and death threats.

Erroneous Judgment

(Mistaken One, Victim of Mistake, Author of Mistake, Guilty Person)

Samurai who wish to discredit another speak out in court. Their words fall upon the ears of those who can cause harm, and no one is there to defend the honor of the individual being accused. The story begins when the court's judgment arrives and the samurai is dishonored. Thereafter he bears the shame of an act he has not committed.

An Erroneous Judgment can cause great dishonor to a samurai, and may spark a powerful epic. Perhaps the player has created a ronin character and this is his opening story. Through a few sessions of play, the GM puts together a plot to exile the samurai from his clan. An adventure that starts with a PC discredited for crimes against the Empire forces the group to become problem-solvers and vindicators of the samurai's fouled honor. A story of this magnitude can be used as background to a much bigger tale, or it can simply involve the PCs taking steps to clear their names and expose the guilty parties.

Erroneous Judgment is the foundation of so many Rokugani stories that GMs can run this adventure over and over without fear of actual repetition. A courtier who speaks out against a lord or a samurai who is asked to bear the shame of another's action are both examples of this story and of the manipulative nature of Rokugani society. Here are some specific examples of Erroneous Judgment in action:

- Testimony has been gathered to dishonor a samurai, but many of the conclusions are false.
- A judgment has been made against an enemy and the PCs must help to avoid impending war.
- Evidence has been gathered and a lord has incorrectly concluded its meaning.
- There is no real villain; rather, the narrator is merely piecing together unrelated drama and making the PCs' lives miserable.

Falling Prey to Cruelty or Misfortune

(Unfortunates, Master or Unlucky Person)

This scenario is similar to Disaster, but is even more sorrowful. The hero/victim has fallen prey to those bent on taking advantage of him – no matter the cost. A PC can be made a victim by many situations, ranging from ambitious intrigue to the destruction of hope. Greedy nobles or sinister villains bent on gaining power or protecting their schemes can rob a naïve samurai of hope by seeing him dishonored, unseating him from his station, or making him a ronin.

The death of hope can be more supernatural than natural. PCs can be mysteriously struck blind or mute, their families can be blighted with pox or randomly destroyed by the Shadowlands. The culprit can even be Rokugani society itself, grinding down the will and strength of the hero.

Much as with Disaster, GMs set on running this sort of adventure should be prepared to present the worst, and make sure their players are braced for heartbreak and hopelessness.

Fatal Imprudence

(Imprudent Person, Victim or Lost Object)

This is a story where the protagonist continues to act against common sense and good will – the hero is his own worst enemy. A classic example of this is *Othello*, although his tale features the villain Iago, who continues to plague the hero with maddening details of Desdemona's alleged affair. Here the villain goes to great lengths to destroy and discredit the hero, but not all Fatal Imprudence plots require the hero to be opposed by someone with an agenda. Self-destruction is a potent story theme, and one that can be used effectively in Rokugan. Several of Akira Kurosawa's films, such as *Kagemusha* and *Throne of Blood*, deal powerfully with this concept.

Imprudence can drive a doomed samurai hero to murder his own loved ones to satisfy an oath, or to violate a trust and earn the disfavor of the family. A weak samurai can be the focus of a story or the final link in a long epic. PCs with suitable Disadvantages can easily be exploited, and a GM set on destroying the honor of the PC's family can use this scenario to bend him against himself. This story is also flexible. When used against player characters, it is a tragedy, but when used on NPCs that the PCs can later rescue and vindicate, it can become quite heroic.

Involuntary Crimes of Love

(Lover, Beloved, Revealer)

A samurai can easily be tricked into committing adultery without knowing it. A male samurai seduced by a married NPC, or a married female PC who is visited by someone she thinks is her spouse (e.g. actors, shapeshifting, trickery) are both plots that fall into this category. Usually in these sorts of stories, a revealer (sometimes knowing, sometimes ignorant of the facts) brings forth evidence of the crimes to the characters involved. In Rokugan, a secret affair is no great matter but an exposed affair is a catastrophe, potentially dooming the hero to seppuku. The player must decide whether it is more important to accept responsibility for an involuntary act, or to take steps to silence those who might expose the secret.

Loss of Loved Ones

(Kinsman Slain, Kinsman Witness, Executioner)

This scenario is quite straightforward and deliberate, but can be surprisingly hard to utilize in a role-playing environment. The audience (the PCs) is forced to watch the unstoppable death of a loved one. They are faced with the tragic cause of discovering "why," with no answers forthcoming.

This can be an excellent story to begin with the In Media Res introduction depicted earlier in this chapter – the characters do not know who has passed, but eventually the victim's identity is revealed and the story enters a new emotional arena. Rokugani view death differently from Westerners, but they can still feel the pain of losing a loved one. Stories that open with a death are sad and melancholy, and GMs should be careful how they use such themes.

This can be a strong, powerful background option for a character, but could also be the main plot of a sweeping epic. GMs should include other plots with this situation as well, to keep the action alive and force the samurai into life, lest the game become too depressing to continue.

Madness

(Madman, Victim)

Madness – the so-called "false madness of Lord Moon" – can drive Rokugani to almost any extreme. Murder, jealousy, and dishonor all befall the mad. Akira Kurosawa's film *Ran* presents a powerful example of this plot: an Asian retelling of *King Lear*, in which the protagonist is driven by a madness sparked by the petty jealousy of his children.

GMs wishing to incorporate Madness into their scenarios are introducing a powerful debilitating theme. Players may resist the GM forcing mental deterioration on a character they feel is stable, so this is a plot which should definitely be developed in tandem with the players rather than imposed on them. The madness of an NPC, on the other hand, is fairly easy to justify and role-play, and can be a powerful way of motivating or shocking the PCs into action.

Mistaken Jealousy

(Jealous One, Object of Jealousy, Supposed Accomplice, Author of Mistake)

The Othello plot again, from another angle. A suspicious mind can conjure jealousy with or without provocation, and even a platonic relationship can be mistaken for more than it is. With or without an accomplice, this plot can be the source of many scenarios in Rokugan. A samurai who does not remain focused on virtue can be easily blinded, and a wily villain can twist an honorable samurai around like a top.

Consider this sample scenario: a lone female enters or leaves the home of a samurai while his wife is out. When the wife returns, her husband seems perplexed and annoyed. Perhaps he is innocently planning an elaborate gift for another woman. Ideally, rumors could begin to surface, or another samurai could enrage the wife's jealousy with lies and half-truths.

If this plot involves an additional accomplice or NPC, the GM should develop the motivations of the character and plan out their actions accordingly.

Necessity of Sacrificing an Individual

(Hero, Beloved Victim, Need for Sacrifice)

Samurai who face difficult decisions and do not falter are the greatest of all heroes. In this sort of situation, it can be difficult to decide on the "right" or "wrong" answer. For example, suppose a young boy is in danger of being possessed by a powerful oni. Is it better to kill the boy now, allowing his soul to return to the Celestial Wheel? Or does the samurai find it morally easier to let the boy be possessed and then fight the oni, whose power may be beyond his strength? Character is forged from such choices.

Tragedies are filled with tales of people sacrificing a loved one for the greater good, and sometimes such sacrifices are made in vain. In role-playing games such a story can be the crux of an immense, sweeping tale, one that forces a character to balance all manner of powers and fates in his decision. It should be noted that much like Disaster, this sort of plot can be emotionally wrenching for the players, and the GM must consider his players carefully when employing this story.

Obstacles to Love

(Two Lovers, Obstacle)

Marrying for love is rare in Rokugan, and an attempted love match can be blocked for any number of reasons, such as inappropriate social station or clan enmities. Enemies or romantic rivals could easily cause such distress, but simple samurai duty can also be the obstacle, and a lord might even order a love affair terminated under penalty of death. The tale of a doomed young Doji falling in love with a duty-bound Akodo has been recreated in hundreds of Rokugani plays, and the myth is not far from the truth.

Obtaining

(Two or More Opposing Parties, Object, an Arbitrator)

What makes Obtaining different from other situations is that diplomacy and guile supersede action and force. In this scenario, the PC takes on the role of tempter and despoiler, out to claim something for himself or his lord. A material object such as a precious clan heirloom is an excellent focus for this adventure, as are land, titles, or political favors. In Rokugan, the need for favor and approval can be more important than a hundred rice fields.

Pursuing the goal through one's own persuasiveness or through the use of an arbitrator are equally valid scenario hooks. Campaigns built around intrigue may use this situation more than others, and GMs can cycle through a great many obstacles and scenario ideas.

Pursuit

(Fugitive, Pursuer)

There are three reasons why a hero might be pursued. First, there is the fugitive from justice, being hunted by an oppressive (or neutral) policing agent. Second, there is the pursuit for the fault of love, which might be kissing the wrong hand or being forced to marry the wrong man. Lastly, there is the story of the hero running from a powerful force determined to see his death. Perhaps he saw too much, or knows too much, or is the last of a line that must be put down. In this scenario the samurai is probably an innocent bystander. Indeed, pursuit stories frequently involve a character who is innocent, or who is being hunted for the wrong reasons.

GMs can put a twist on this by making the PCs the guilty parties, or making the guilty party someone close to them. Another idea is to accuse the hero of a crime no one can take blame for, so he is forced to run, knowing his innocence. This can be a difficult situation to construct in Rokugan, however, since many honorable samurai will face the consequences rather than run. The GM can try to motivate the PCs by holding out the prospect that the real culprit might be unearthed in future adventures.

Chases are difficult stories to tell. In order to keep the energy up, both the danger and the intensity of the chase must grow consistently throughout. The story must also include character developments to maintain interest. GMs should be aware that these are typically the hardest adventures to run, and should be prepared to find ways to perpetuate the chase. Because the PC can decide at any moment to head somewhere else, the GM is usually forced to run this type of adventure on the fly.

Recovery of a Lost One

(Seeker, One Found)

This is not a rescue scenario – rather, it is a situation where an important NPC returns after being missing for a long time. This is probably the resolution of a deeper plot, but Recovery adds an additional dynamic to the world of the samurai. A parent, child, or sibling who returns after 10, 15, or 20 years is sure to bring many complications with them. GMs should determine what angle they wish to explore, since the story may go in many directions.

For example, who holds the seat of power now? What is the station of the missing person? Has he aged? Where did he go? How will the family react now that the household has changed? What would a samurai do if the lost ancestor-spirit of his father returned with news of his death? Players who run stoic, rigid samurai will likely not enjoy this adventure, but GMs can try to persuade the players to think of this as a fresh challenge.

Remorse

(Culprit, Victim, Interrogator)

In a Remorse scenario, a transgression has faulted the honor of another, a crime has been committed, or a loved one has been maligned. The act can be simple or complex, but the focus of this adventure lies not on the act itself but on the lingering shame that the hero carries from such an act. It is quite possible no one knows of the act, or it could be public knowledge. Dostoyevsky's famous novel *Crime and Punishment* is a classic Remorse tale.

The importance of the Remorse scenario is that the conscience of the character is at war with itself. This can be especially tormenting in Rokugan, where the tenets of society may find an action acceptable which nevertheless conflicts with the samurai's sense of Bushido. Conversely, a samurai who has been overlooked as the criminal may still carry Remorse from the crime he has committed.

The act triggering a Remorse story may be simple: a small lie or betrayal that no one has learned of. Or it can be complex: a murder with great repercussions (especially the murder of a loved one). This sort of storyline can become a long-term plot for a particular character, a quest for redemption or confession that burdens the character until the end of the campaign.

Revolt

(Tyrant, Conspirator[s])

A Revolt story can involve a revolution or conspiracy to overthrow a single lord, an entire government, or a nation. The characters can be part of the Revolt or they can be standing in opposition to it. Either way, no orders need be issued in this sort of game; honorable or dutiful samurai will know what the best course of action is to see the Revolt succeed or be crushed. This type of adventure easily justifies an eclectic group of rag-tag samurai, ronin and clan members fighting together for a single cause.

This sort of story can put honorable samurai into conflict with the code of Bushido. Obedient samurai may find it difficult to defy their lord, even for the sake of Rokugan. Compassionate samurai may find it difficult to brutally crush a peasant uprising. The PCs could easily find themselves agonizing over what is right and what is proper.

If a Revolt scenario is of a conspiratorial nature, all of the major players in the government structure should be included in the story. For example, if the plot is the overthrow of a minor lord, then all of the lord's friends, courtiers, assistants, and potential allies and enemies should be developed and defined by the GM. In a larger-scale game, all of the major NPCs and their attendants need to be identified to increase the dramatic intrigue.

Rivalry of Kinsman

(Preferred Kinsman, Rejected Kinsman, Object)

What separates Rivalry from Enmity? Here, the focus of the antipathy stems from childhood; not from present actions but from a darker, more lurid look at the human soul. If you introduce this sort of plot into your games, be prepared for the repercussions.

The Rivalry of a Kinsman story is rooted in the characters' histories. While Enmity stems from a single act, Rivalry's source is an object, a parent's affections, or a sibling's need for acceptance. In this scenario, the hatred is not obvious and the psychological residue is exposed slowly over time.

Rivalry toward any kinsman is the necessary element of this situation, and GMs should remember that death is not necessary in these stories. Also, much like the other rivalry and enmity plots, this sort of story can take a back seat to a larger tale, driving a PC's own personal story.

Rivalry of Superior and Inferior

(Superior, Inferior, Object)

A Rivalry plot can include a great many dramatic combinations: a good example would be a young noble and the powerful Emperor at odds, but with neither willing to resolve the enmity. Another example would be a master shugenja and his inexperienced apprentice, constantly engaged in verbal and academic disputes. Or consider a PC whose ancestor believes he is not worthy of the title "samurai."

A one-shot L5R adventure could involve two samurai returning home, one a magistrate, the other a prisoner to justice. Traveling a great distance together, they would begin as rivals or even enemies, but their role-play could develop into a tale of compassion and respect, ending either with the release of the prisoner or the sentencing of a new friend to death.

Self-Sacrificing for an Ideal

(Hero, Ideal, Person or Thing Sacrificed)

Perfectly suited for the world of Rokugan, this adventure works best with honorable samurai, those who believe in something bigger than themselves. Although virtue may be sacrificed as easily as life, the way of the samurai often makes any other choice difficult. Sacrificing one's life for the sake of one's word is one of the most common stories in Rokugan, yet also among the most powerful and poignant.

A samurai may be expected to sacrifice himself for any number of reasons. His word, the family, the Empire, and many other plots can drive a samurai to seppuku or death in the line of duty. Honor – instead of life – may be lost in almost any of these situations as well. GMs interested in an all-ronin campaign could use this as the background or initial adventure, especially if the party's goal is to regain their honor.

In order to determine the exact magnitude of the samurai's action, the GM must determine what he is fighting against and what he is fighting for. A samurai driven to self-sacrifice is often resisting events that would dishonor himself or his family. But the real challenge lies in whether the samurai is fighting to be the victor over his true enemy or over his own failings. Tales of samurai may involve accomplishment and success, but more often the reality of Rokugan reveals that a samurai is flawed, and dishonor is not as far away as it was thought to be. Of course, it is up to the players how their characters respond to such situations and challenges, and the GM should not try to pressure them toward the path of honor or cowardice.

Sometimes the loss of a virtue, rather than the loss of life, can be the focus of an adventure. In Rokugan, this can be a delicate plot, and the GM should be careful not to drive a PC to the loss of all things, for a samurai without honor is nothing.

Self-Sacrifice for Kindred

(Hero, Kinsman, Person or Thing Sacrificed)

Very similar to the previous situation, this plot does not always require the death of a samurai. Rather, the samurai is expected to do what is right and place the family or clan above both the good of the samurai and, possibly, the good of the Empire. Life, love, ambition, and honor are all sacrifices a samurai can be expected to make for the family. Scenarios of this type can involve NPCs that are brutal, selfish, dishonest, and ambitious, and the antagonist in these stories is easy to identify. Players looking for a focus for their rage will find one easily.

This sort of adventure works best with players that have a very active role-playing style. For example, a player who expresses a desire to move her character in a selfless direction should be rewarded with a well-crafted adventure of this sort designed just for that character. Indeed, GMs should always endeavor to provide players with satisfactory conclusions to their individual characters' sagas.

Slaying of an Unrecognized Kinsman

(Killer, Victim, Revealer)

This plot is almost self-explanatory. Any circumstance where the main character murders someone they later learn was a family member falls into this category. Slaying a kinsman could involve manipulation by an instigator, or it could result from a curse or prophecy. A samurai driven to anger could easily slay someone through accident or misinformation without any prodding from a devilish NPC, or a kinsman could be slain because of a mistake made by another family member. Perhaps samurai step in to stop a brawl, only to have a friendly blade run them through. Oracles, necessity, rivalry, ignorance, hatred, duty, advice, dishonor, vengeance, duress, and apathy are all possible causes of suffering in this plot.

GMs may feel inclined to write a story in which the news of a kinsman's death at the hands of a rival clan is delivered to their PCs or the daimyo. Later, however, information points at a member of their own clan who struck down the dead samurai. But war is already on the way...

Supplication

(Persecutor, Suppliant, a Power in Authority)

A Supplication is a request for aid. This story involves someone of lower station approaching the hero to seek aid, an excellent opportunity to evoke the code of Bushido and play upon the honor of the samurai. Supplication could be seeking aid for a worthy goal or a dishonorable one, as the story requires. Some examples include:

- Peasants hiring Ronin to protect them from bandits or from a cruel lord – the *Seven Samurai* scenario.
- A courtier maiden asking a yojimbo to come to her aid.
- A lover asking her beloved to kill her husband.

Supplication requires the players be motivated to help. In Rokugan, duty and honor are praised more highly than anything, but convincing an upstart ronin that helping someone else is in his best interest may be difficult, and characters who are unable to care about the cause of the supplication will ignore the adventure completely. A good GM will find out what is important to them and use it to involve them in the story. This helps to diminish arguments within the party, especially when everyone has a personal vested interest in the outcome of the mission.

Vengeance

(Wrongdoer, Anger)

The most common theme in action-adventure stories, Vengeance is also one of the easiest scenarios to run in a Bushido-based culture. It instantly motivates the PCs to lend aid. A samurai may be driven to vengeance by duty, loyalty, the honor of his family, or the death of a lord, just to name a few. There are three common Vengeance plots:

- The slain family or ancestor allows the GM to contrive a simple plot and then provide the necessary clues to ensure the samurai remain on course. Bloody notes or distinctive weapons are easy clues, for instance. The more plot hooks are provided, the longer the chase will last before the enemy is caught. It is very Rokugani to have a samurai catch up with his enemy, only to suffer defeat and die with shame – such tragedies are the subject of many great Kabuki plays, although not every player may be happy with such an outcome.
- Vengeance for intentional injury is a little more difficult to run. It is never easy to know when a PC will find the need to exact retribution. Such instances can sometimes take many sessions to fester before a samurai begins to plot his move. GMs unprepared for this may find themselves forced into running a reactive campaign, as the PC runs about his enemy's province setting fire to everything in sight.
- The pursuit of criminals, the final vengeance plot, is the easiest and most obvious. The PCs can be bounty hunters, magistrates, or regents of their lord, exacting justice in the name of the Emperor. In order for the scenario to satisfy the terms of vengeance, however, the PCs must have a personal stake in the adventure. Otherwise, it is a Pursuit plot.

Vengeance Taken for Family Upon Family

(Avenging Kinsman, Guilty Kinsman, Relative)

This can be the most passionate and bloody of Rokugani tragedies, for it depicts a family destroying itself. A mother might enact vengeance upon the father for the death of her son. A son might be dishonored and dispossessed for letting harm befall the family. A young wife could slay the mother and father of her dead husband after their lord demands his seppuku. An excellent cinematic example of this plot is Zhang Yimou's film *Curse of the Golden Flower*, in which a corrupt Emperor poisons his wife and she, in turn, enlists their son to try to overthrow him.

In Rokugan, the concept of kindred can be taken one step further to include anyone in the greater family (Matsu, Doji, etc) or even the clan. A cousin defending the honor of the family, or betraying the trust of another lord, might be banished from the clan or receive the visit of an army upon his estate. The variations on this theme are endless, and the potential for grim tragedy is infinite. Tread lightly.



Asian Versus Western Storytelling

One of the most important distinguishing features of the Legend of the Five Rings RPG is that it is set in a world based on Asian culture, history, and religion. As we've already discussed throughout this chapter, most fantasy role-playing games are based on a Western setting, often pseudo-medieval in structure and concept, with a loose social structure and few cultural rules or restrictions. By contrast, L5R depends heavily on Asian culture – especially the culture of feudal Japan, which forms the most direct inspiration for the game – to create the tone and atmosphere of its play, and to imbue drama and emotional intensity in its storylines.

Why emphasize culture so much? It would certainly be possible to play L5R in a more Western style as a game in which the Asian elements are little more than scenery. But this would be little different from playing a conventional fantasy role-playing game with a change in background scenery. It would lose the unique flavor that makes L5R a game unto itself.

What makes L5R "Asian" rather than "Western" in style? The most basic element is the vital importance of Rokugani society and culture. Characters are not mere lone "adventurers" wandering through the landscape – they are members of the samurai caste, with a specific social role and duty. They have a lord, a clan, and an Emperor to whom they are sworn as loyal and unswerving vassals, willing to die at a moment's notice. Further, as samurai they are part of an elaborate system of social relations, etiquette, and tradition – a system which they *must* follow, no matter how cruelly it may test them, because the alternative is disgrace or death.

The concept of a character being trapped within the Rokugani social and moral order, faced with impossible choices between conflicting loyalties and expectations, is often referred to as "samurai drama," a concept quite foreign to most Western-style role-playing games. Samurai drama derives from the fact that samurai (even samurai with supernatural powers) are human beings, with the emotional needs, drives, and flaws that humanity entails. The code of Bushido and the Rokugani social and cultural system make demands that push normal human beings to their emotional limits or beyond. Bushido expects perfection, but no human being is perfect. Even a samurai, raised in a tradition of absolute respect for Bushido and custom, can encounter situations where his emotions and innate humanity clash with Rokugan's demands, or where he finds himself unable to decide between conflicting loyalties.

A good L5R game makes samurai drama a key element of its storyline. The emotional and psychological conflicts of the Rokugani social order offer a far more compelling challenge to a character than any mere skirmish, duel, or argument. The essence of samurai drama and the most powerful single story element the GM can create from it is an agonizing choice – a choice between love and duty, for example, or between loyalty to one's clan or loyalty to a friend. If a samurai's lord commands him to do something, but the voice of his ancestor tells him otherwise, who does he obey? By the tenets of Bushido he owes reverence and allegiance to both. Such choices should be the key points of any character's history and development. Players will remember such moments far more intensely than any mere combat.

The Hero in Asian Stories

The modern image of the hero as expressed in most role-playing games is a distinctly Western one, perhaps even a "Hollywood" one. He (it is usually a he, but the role seldom changes even when the gender does) is a loner, a powerful individual who defies authority and goes his own way, winning and triumphing on his own terms. Asian cultures, however, tend to see heroes as people who uphold moral principles – the principles of their society – in the face of bitter adversity and even defeat. To them, the "Hollywood" hero often doesn't look much like a hero at all – he looks more like a rogue or a criminal. As an example, consider the Chinese folk hero Wong Fei-Hung, protagonist of countless king-fu movies. Fei-Hung is a doctor, a respected member of society who upholds traditional Chinese virtues and moral precepts. He is depicted as a wise and peaceful man, and uses his formidable kung-fu skills only when forced to do so by the villains – who are invariably corrupt, violent, and immoral individuals, often "tainted" by Western influence. A far cry from the typical Hollywood rogue cop!

These ideas about heroism should hold true in an L5R game, for while Rokugan is a fictional society, it is one based on historical Asian culture. To the Rokugani, a hero is someone who defends the social and moral order of their society – in particular, someone who follows the code of Bushido, even in the face of dreadful personal loss. A Rokugani hero does not fight for himself and certainly not for personal gain. He fights for honor, for his family and clan, and for the Empire. If he is rewarded for his deeds it is because he has upheld Rokugani society's principles of what is good and noble.

It may be noted that just because Rokugani heroes uphold the moral principles of their society does not mean they exist in harmony with their society. It can be very easy to fall into the trap of believing that Asian heroes are always "insiders" while Western heroes are "outsiders." In fact, Asian stories are replete with outsider heroes who uphold traditional morals against a society which has become corrupt or feckless. For example, consider the famous Japanese graphic novel *Lone Wolf and Cub*, by Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima. The hero of this series, Itto Ogami, seems at first to be the quintessential "Western" hero – an assassin for hire, disregarding all rules and moral principles in the name of personal vengeance. But appearances are deceiving. As the story progresses, it becomes apparent that Itto is actually the only true samurai in the tale, the only one willing to subordinate all personal needs and desires to the cause of honor and justice. By the end of the story, his nobility and sacrifice so shames the reigning authority that the Shogun himself is brought to tears. Itto is an individual hero, but one who ultimately upholds the societal morals which the society itself has forsaken.

How does the Asian concept of the hero apply to the gaming experience? Most gamers expect their characters to win, to triumph over adversity and go from strength to strength. In some ways, L5R can be just as suitable for this as any other role-playing game. Players and GMs who wish to pursue this sort of campaign can do so easily enough, portraying "heroic" samurai who wander the Empire without supervision, defeating enemies and winning plaudits. But a wise GM and skilled players can set aside these basic goals in favor of a more authentically Asian vision of the hero. Plots should reinforce the importance of Bushido and Rokugani morality, and the need for samurai to protect those principles at any cost to themselves. A clever GM will confront the PCs with a choice between upholding Honor or advancing their own wealth and power, giving them the chance to become true heroes... or true villains.

Death and the Samurai

In light of this discussion of Asian storytelling, samurai drama, and heroism, it is quite useful to consider the samurai's attitude toward something very important indeed: death.

In traditional role-playing games, the concept of death is often equated with "losing." It is the ultimate motivator, and characters perform extreme acts to avoid their own demise. Death is something to be feared and hated – or at least to be annoyed by – and a character dying usually reflects a series of poor choices and/or unlucky die rolls.

In L5R role-playing, which emulates samurai culture, death is something very different. Samurai do not fear death, nor do they shirk from it. This is so different from the modern Western view on death that it is very easy for players to bring their own preconceptions about death to the game, imprinting their biases onto their characters and missing out on a key aspect of an Asian-style samurai game.

To understand a samurai's willful acceptance of death, we must understand a samurai's adherence to Bushido (see the *Book of Air* for a discussion of the virtues of Bushido). Samurai believe in something greater than themselves. The more honorable a samurai, the more willing he is to sacrifice his life for the greater good. Each clan may have a somewhat different point of view about what that greater good is, of course, but this does not diminish a samurai's personal honor and sense of duty.

This is not to say that a samurai views death lightly. He does not look for an excuse to die, does not blindly seek out enemies beyond his strength or station. Nor does he ignore his daimyo's wishes – indeed, Bushido means he must always place his daimyo's needs far above his own. Without a daimyo's permission a samurai cannot commit seppuku, cannot accept the challenge of a duel to the death (except in the heat of battle), and certainly cannot throw himself into the Shadowlands to hunt monsters. Even the most powerful of samurai, the Clan Champions and Imperial daimyo, must turn to the Emperor for permission to do such things. Samurai must consider carefully before even daring to ask such a question of their daimyo.

The flip side of this is that no samurai can commit seppuku without his lord's approval. Thus, a dishonored samurai may be forced to carry his shame for a long time, or worse yet, pass his shame onto his children. Committing seppuku without a daimyo's consent is as shameful as the act that caused the shame in the first place – which means a dishonored samurai can be kept alive to pursue the chance for redemption.

Death to a samurai is not a simple affair and should not be taken lightly. It is certainly not merely, "I am out of Wounds." It is an indelible part of the culture that cannot be ignored. A samurai's death, like his life, should have meaning and purpose.

The Role of Tragedy

One of the more important elements of samurai drama, and one of the biggest differences between an "Asian" style of role-playing game and its Western counterparts, is the presence and importance of tragedy. Asian fantasies, folk-tales, and histories are replete with tragedy, with heroes who die for lost causes, lovers who commit suicide, and innocents who perish.

In Western stories, it is often taken for granted that the hero will triumph no matter how much he may suffer and no matter how long the odds are stacked against him. This is carried over into role-playing games in a variety of ways, right down to the concept of "balanced encounters" in which the PCs are never presented with a challenge too strong for them. But in Asian stories there is no guarantee the hero will win or even survive. Indeed, one of the more persistent themes in Asian heroic storytelling is the noble hero who fights to the death in a hopeless cause, knowing full well he has no chance of victory but nevertheless sticking to his principles. Rokugan's history is full of heroic samurai who die for honor and duty, regardless of victory.

Likewise, Western stories usually depict love as a completely positive phenomenon – indeed, the term "love conquers all" has become a modern cliché and romance stories nearly always conclude with happy endings. But in Rokugani culture, marriage is a duty completely unconnected from romance, and a samurai's heart is supposed to be filled with nothing but devotion to his lord. Falling in love is intrinsically problematic to the honorable samurai, for it instantly places him into a conflict of loyalties. Which is more important, one's lord or one's beloved? Such romances in Rokugan seldom end well, and when lovers actually manage to marry each other and enjoy a happy life together it is a rare triumph over long odds. Far more often, the best two lovers might hope for is to carry on a covert romance while fulfilling their duty by marrying others.

Imbuing a spirit of Asian tragedy into a role-playing game can be tricky. After all, much of the appeal of an RPG is the chance to play a character who wins, advances, and grows stronger over time. Dying tragically does not seem to fit that model. However, if the tragic element is stripped out of Rokugan, it becomes a much less interesting place – a generic fantasy world where the warriors happen to carry katana instead of longswords. Tragedy, properly executed, brings a distinctive Asian flavor into Rokugan that makes it unique.

That being said, the GM does not always have to force the player characters into hopeless fatal battles in order to convey the feel and tone of tragedy in Rokugan. Tragedy can be incorporated into a story in a great variety of ways, and death is only one of them. Consider one of the most popular themes of storytelling – romance. As outlined above, love is highly problematic for the Rokugani. They acknowledge its power without question – Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love, is venerated throughout the Empire. But at the same time they are painfully aware of how often love ends badly in the world of the samurai. Rokugani love stories, as depicted in art, poetry, and literature, are almost invariably tragic.

What do your player characters do when they become entangled in romance? Do they try to achieve a happy ending against all odds, or do they accept the limits placed on their lives by Bushido and the Rokugani social order? Offering the problems of romance to the players as a role-playing challenge – leaving the players free to choose their path, and then showing them the consequences – is a powerful and effective way of introducing a tragic aesthetic into your game. If the romance continues or grows, many complications can be introduced into the storyline. What if the player character is in love with someone from another clan, an enemy clan? If their clans go to war, they may well end up facing each other on the battlefield, confronting the character with a bitter choice – kill his true love, betray his duty, or abandon his clan. And such tragic choices are, of course, the essence of good samurai drama.

Love is not the only aspect of a samurai's life that can lead to tragic consequences. Friendship in Rokugan is also fraught with risk. Finding a true friend is difficult in Rokugani society, where everyone hides their emotions behind their public face. But even if such a friend can be found, the relationship can easily become a source of heartbreak if clan rivalries or other political clashes intervene. How does a samurai react when he must champion his lord in a duel... and his best friend is his opponent?

Properly handled, these sorts of situations can bring a true sense of tragedy into the game while still leaving the players free to advance their characters through a long-term game. And they inject an emotional intensity and depth into the gaming experience that is seldom rivaled in a more Western-style role-playing game.

At its heart, Rokugan is a world of choice and consequence. If your players do not have to think about their actions, they aren't being challenged in a manner appropriate for the game world. Use villains to challenge their morals, their perceptions, and their sense of duty. Force them to consider their actions against the code of Bushido – but also by their own moral sense of right and wrong. Many of the greatest epics involve a hero whose suffering is derived from differences between his personal beliefs and those he is forced to adopt.

Making Villains:
Black and White in Rokugan

Many role-playing game worlds are designed for easy conflict – they are filled with monsters, beasts, and horrors that exist simply to be fought and killed, providing ready-made villains for the PCs to oppose. Rokugan does in fact contain a place like that – the Shadowlands, corrupted and twisted by the power of Jigoku, the Realm of Evil. But it is not a place where most samurai ever go. The Shadowlands is a realm of deadly peril, haunted by the foul Taint, and the Crab Clan takes on the duty of guarding against it because no other samurai will ever go there unless absolutely required. The Shadowlands offers a powerful enemy for PCs, but it is not an enemy that can be used regularly or the players will be making new characters every couple of sessions.

Within the Emerald Empire itself, clear-cut villains are the exception, not the rule. Characters often find themselves knee-deep in intrigue and suspense, and the question, "Who's the bad guy?" is not easy to answer. If the Shadowlands is the "black" of Rokugan's moral compass, the Empire itself is a realm of grays where the players must navigate with caution.

At the simplest level, villains provide a foil for the PCs, getting in the way of their goals, actions, and loyalties. They produce strife, either intentionally or unwittingly, and they provide the players with an enemy to be defeated. In Rokugan, however, a villain might only be antagonistic because he opposes a player character's goals; someone who denies a samurai the right to seppuku could be a villain, as might a trusted lord. Some NPCs are truly "villains" in the storyline sense, while others are only chance encounters, rogues, interesting people to meet in the game.



Creating compelling and three-dimensional villains is an important aspect of role-playing in Rokugan. The key here is to treat a villain in the same way as any other NPC – as a fully realized character with purpose and personality. If every villain is merely a carbon copy of the previous one, if every antagonistic NPC is two-dimensional or unmotivated, even the most detailed adventure soon devolves into nothing more than a killing spree.

Creating villains who are truly evil typically involves supernatural powers such as the Taint or the Lying Darkness, but it is also possible to create an NPC who is genuinely evil in a human sense, a sociopath without conscience or remorse. However, such truly villainous people are rare and should be used sparingly. Most people, even villains, have some human qualities, some emotional motivations beyond cruelty or lust for power. An opponent who has complex motives is far more compelling and interesting than a moustache-twirling stereotype.

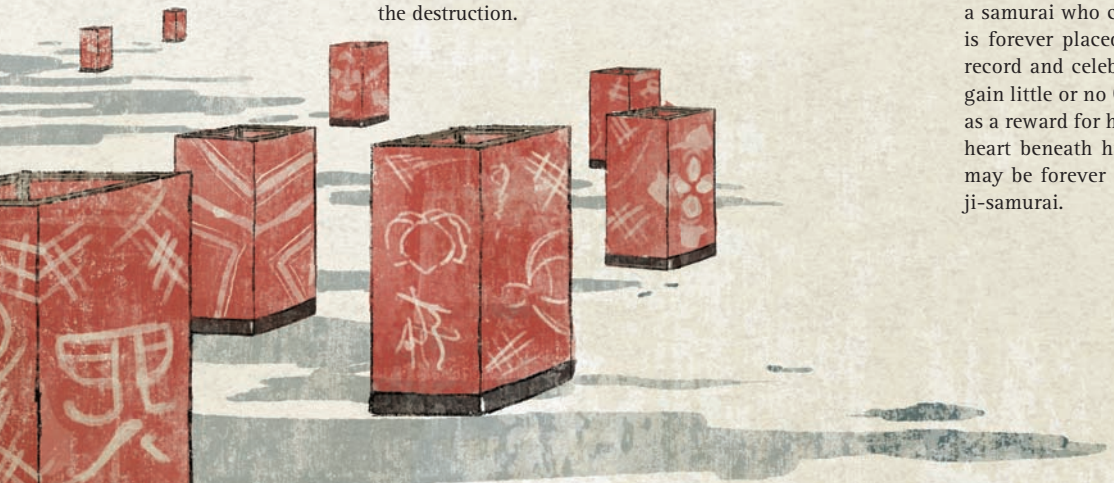
For example, take a Lion daimyo who is rumored to be slaughtering Crane peasants. There might be any number of explanations for his actions:

- He might be a loyalist, fighting to regain a lost clan treasure that was stolen by the Crane. In this case, his loyalty should be commended.
- He might be slaughtering the peasants because they have contracted a horrible plague which they are about to spread through the lands of both the Lion and the Crane. His methods may seem brutal, but – in the end – he may save more lives than he takes by eliminating the village.
- He may be convinced the village is corrupted by the touch of the Shadowlands, and the only way to eliminate the Taint is to destroy them all. Here, his sense of duty to the Empire would be commended by even the most rough-shod Crab.

So, why is your particular Lion villain a bad guy? It's entirely possible he is a raving lunatic, killing peasants for amusement, but that doesn't make for a very deep story. In such a case, the Lion's lord will simply command the seppuku of his insane minion – or better yet, allow the PCs to slay the madman before he causes more shame and trouble.

To take another example, what if an Imperial official commits assassinations in order to prevent a war? His goals may be noble, but he is committing crimes, and perhaps more crimes later to cover up the earlier ones.

By making villains fully defined people, and giving them important (and justifiable) goals and motivations, you create more than a simple enemy. You create drama. And when the player characters discover why the "mad Lion" is killing off a village of peasants, they just might find themselves joining the destruction.



Honor, Glory, Infamy, and Status

The differences between Honor, Glory, Infamy, and Status can be somewhat confusing in the Legend of the Five Rings RPG. When you create a villain, you have an opportunity to play these statistics against one another.

Honor is the internal measure of a character's self-worth, his own sense of how he lives up to the demands of Bushido, and is determined by his true actions. A samurai who always obeys his daimyo is certainly honorable, as is one who impeccably follows the code of Bushido. But if the samurai is only pretending to observe these codes of conduct, he will temporarily act as if his honor is much higher than it truly is on his character sheet. (This can be represented in the game by the "Apparent Honor" Advantage.) Such a samurai is only playing at being truly 'honorable,' and when his façade is disrupted, his true nature will be revealed by his actions.

Glory and Infamy are an entirely different situation. Glory is the representation of how the world views the character, of whether his deeds have brought him popular acclaim. Infamy, likewise, is the reflection of popular revulsion at his deeds. A samurai who has won many famous battles, but is also known for extreme cruelty to those he defeats, might have significant amounts of both Glory and Infamy at the same time. What is important to remember is that both of these stats reflect public knowledge, not private knowledge. A samurai who maintains an impeccable public reputation but engages in depravities within the secret basement of his castle will not have Infamy.

Status measures a character's position within the social order, and in many ways is a more powerful element of a villain's makeup than any Trait or Skill. A lord who is physically unimpressive may nevertheless pose a terrible threat to the PCs simply by virtue of the fact that he *is* a lord, with a Status the PCs cannot hope to match. Status grants a villain all manner of advantages and capabilities, not to mention a huge amount of respect within the Rokugani social order. Indeed, the GM must be cautious about over-using high-Status villains, lest the PCs grow frustrated with their inability to defeat foes who have all the rules of the Empire stacked in their favor.

It is quite possible for a person to have an extremely low score in one or more of these traits and an extremely high score in the others. Someone who dutifully performs deeds for his lord accrues Glory, but if he uses underhanded methods to fulfill those deeds he will certainly lose Honor in the process. Though the outside world only sees that the samurai is trusted and cared for by his daimyo, the samurai knows in his own heart the truth of his actions. On the other hand, a samurai who consistently follows the code of Bushido but is forever placed upon the Crab Wall with no superiors to record and celebrate his deeds may have a high Honor, but gain little or no Glory. A samurai may be promoted in Status as a reward for his service, yet harbor a blackly dishonorable heart beneath his outward loyalty, and a truly loyal bushi may be forever overlooked and spend his life as a Status 1 ji-samurai.

The Art of Being a Good Game Master

The role of the GM has been around as long as role-playing games themselves have been around, and has evolved over time. At the most basic level, the GM is an adjudicator – tasked with administering and resolving the player characters' interactions with the game world. The GM also is a storyteller, constructing plots and characters to bring the world to life. But the GM is above all a player in the most basic sense of the word – someone who is playing the game in order to have fun. Being a good game master does not just mean running an entertaining game for the players. It means *enjoying* running the game. To that end, this section discusses some of the myths, problems, and pitfalls that can confront a GM when running Legend of the Five Rings, and proposes some possible solutions.

Myths: The GM as Entertainer/ The GM as Adversary

A common perception in role-playing games is that GMs are entertainers for a passive PC crowd. The GM plans the adventure, spends hours before the game writing down notes, and presents a complete fully-realized experience that the players can simply sit back and enjoy. This sort of attitude is encouraged by published adventures that present a carefully planned "programmed" adventure with read-aloud text and an inflexible plotline. Indeed, few published RPG books even try to paint an alternative picture to how a role-playing game should function.

And while there is nothing inherently wrong with this style of play, it places a lot of work on one person's shoulders, and exempts the rest from any responsibility for what is supposed to be a mutually entertaining experience. There are number of solutions to this problem, but the most obvious is to do away with the notion that the GM is just here to entertain the players. Instead, the players and GM should see themselves as partners in an effort to have fun. If the players take on a more active role, accepting some of the responsibility for entertaining themselves, each other, and the GM, the GM in turn can put more effort into depicting a vivid game world and its inhabitants.

The flip side of this problem, and one that can be even more debilitating to a successful game, is the frequent tendency of players and GMs to see each other as being on opposite "sides," an adversarial relationship in which the GM is constantly trying to make things harder on the players while they are continually trying to "beat" the GM. This sort of approach to role-playing games is almost the exact opposite of how they should be played. The relationship between GM and players is, or should be, a cooperative one, even a symbiotic one. They are working together to tell a story. The GM presents the players with plots and NPCs, and the players interact with them and feed new material back to the GM, who in turn incorporates that into future storylines.

An Example of Showing Consequences

Years ago, I ran a Western-style fantasy campaign where a PC rogue needlessly murdered a guard he was interrogating. I chose not to admonish the action during play and didn't even say anything about it over the next few weeks. But as the story threads were coming to a close and the city was burning from an internal riot, enemies of the rogue PC pulled him into an alley during the chaos.

The character was never heard from again. The player asked me what happened to his character. I told him, "You don't know." Needless to say, he wasn't happy.

The morals of a society are ultimately made by the people living in it. If you live in a neighborhood where crime is rampant, people do not look down their nose at thievery the way someone in a peaceful suburb might. The PCs, as the "stars" of the story, define and magnify the morality of the game world like no one else (except perhaps the villains). If the PCs do not respect others, this is reflected in the state of the world those PCs live in.

If the world is crumbling around them, and the PCs choose mercy over vindictive slaughter, their actions can change the world. But if the PCs choose to murder in the name of the Emperor simply because the law says they can, their code of Bushido is meaningless, and Rokugan fills with people who espouse the principle of "Might makes Right." The PCs should slowly and subtly find themselves face to face with NPCs exhibiting behaviors very similar to theirs. When the PCs encounter poor manners and negativity flooding every corner of the Emerald Empire, they may begin to see causality.



One of the basic reasons for the prevalence of the adversarial approach to gaming is the assumption that there should be a "winner." Since a role-playing game by definition has no winner, players or GMs who come to role-playing with that mindset find it far too easy to define "winning" as putting one over on the other half of the gaming team – the GM tricking the players into bad decisions, or the players using some obscure rule to trip up the GM. This sort of approach on either side actually diminishes the enjoyment of play for everyone concerned. A game bogged down in rules minutia or tactical arguments is not a game which is fulfilling the most basic function of an RPG – to have fun.

The responsibility to overcome an adversarial approach to gaming must fall on both players and GMs. When players make characters who are full of life and intrigue, it enhances the story... and everyone wins. When the GM lets the players move the plot in an unplanned direction because that's what their characters would do, it again enhances the story, to the better enjoyment of all. Players should respect the GM's authority to adjudicate the rules as he sees fit, and in turn, the GM should not use the rules as a club to beat down the players. Players should not show up with rigid character ideas that do not mesh well with a group, nor should they design characters with no ambition whatsoever. Likewise, the GM should not force the players down arbitrary plotlines, shuffling them around like pawns – something the players are sure to resent later when they realize they've made little to no decisions all campaign. The players should be the prime movers in their own story.

With a little effort and commitment on both sides, a role-playing campaign can rise above these destructive myths, and perhaps even usher in a new era of gaming for all.

Actions Have Consequences

Many RPGs, fantasy or otherwise, operate in a sort of moral vacuum in which there is little or no in-game enforcement of morality or standards of behavior. This forces the GM into the position of being a moral arbiter, an inappropriate role. It should not be the task of the GM to judge the behavior of the PCs; doing so is likely to ignite an argument no one can win.

Rokugan itself, however, is different from many fantasy settings. It is a long-established and highly traditional society with a strong code of both public etiquette and, perhaps more importantly, morals – the code of Bushido. The GM does not need to appoint himself as a moral arbiter in L5R because the world of Rokugan will itself respond, often quite forcefully, to those who violate its standards. All the GM has to do is accurately depict how the Rokugani react to those who break their rules. A character who engages in rude or inconsiderate behavior will soon find that other samurai treat him with thinly disguised contempt. Duels may be in the offing, or drunken Crab may trap him in an alley and beat him to a pulp. The madams at geisha houses will refuse him admittance, magistrates will constantly check his papers, and he will be denied entrance to every court in the land.

At a broader level, the characters' actions – whether or not they violate the code of Bushido – should have an impact on the world they inhabit. Good adventures include relevant choices with relevant consequences. Choosing to save the life of an important governor at the cost of a peasant family has both lasting rewards and lasting guilt associated with it. PCs should be aptly rewarded for any decisions they make, whatever those decisions might be. The GM is there to facilitate the game, not to be the players' conscience, and the PCs should deal with the repercussions of their decisions. If the GM runs the world accurately, the players will have plenty of chances to see the impact their actions have on Rokugan.



The Rules as a Toolbox

One of the more common mistaken assumptions of role-playing games is that the rulebook represents an absolute immutable system which must be rigidly obeyed and ruthlessly exploited by all participants. GMs who don't like what their players are doing will use the rules to keep them under control, while players try to use the rules to constrain the power of the GM.

This sort of approach is certainly appropriate to playing a miniatures game or a card game. But in a role-playing game it can cause significant damage to the play experience. An RPG is not intended to be an inflexible, immutable rules-set that constrains players and GMs like a straitjacket. Rather, it is a toolbox, a set of options to be used, adjusted, or discarded as needed. In its original 1st Edition, L5R often invoked the slogan, "L5R is your game," and

this remains a fundamental truth here in 4th Edition. Every GM should feel free to tweak and change the game to match the style of play he and his players want. Following the strict "letter of the law" with respect to the rules is less important than running a game the GM and players can enjoy.

Above all, neither the players nor the GM should ever try to use the rules mechanics to "force" things which destroy the game's proper balance or make no logical sense. A rule in an RPG is nothing more than an agreed-on mechanism for resolving and controlling actions. If the rule is not working the way it should, the GM should feel free to change it or ignore it. Neither the players nor the GM should feel they "have" to do something solely because of a clever or abusive exploit of the rules.

Fundamentally, an RPG is an exercise in trust. The players trust the GM to create a good story and to administer their actions fairly. The GM trusts the players to participate in his story and not to try to "break" it with bizarre actions or abusive character builds. When trust is maintained, the rules cease to be problematic, because there is no need for either side to use them against the other. (Indeed the very concept of "sides" does not exist in a properly functioning RPG campaign.) It is only when trust breaks down that players and GMs begin resorting to the rules as a weapon, to the detriment of the play experience.

Changing the Rules

As the above section implies, the GM and players do not have to follow every rule they don't like, and can in fact change almost any aspect of the game if they feel a different version would work better or would fit their campaign style. In general, the GM is the final arbiter of all such decisions, but a wise GM will consider the wishes and feedback of his players when making adjustments to the game.

There are many aspects of the game design which can be changed or "tweaked" to match player preferences, and an exhaustive discussion of such ideas would take more space than we have in this book. However, we'll examine one of the more obvious and fundamental areas of the game – bushi school design – as a guideline for how GMs might consider adjusting the rules to their style.

The bushi schools in Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition are designed to fall within a broad middle ground of capability, while allowing each school to excel in its own chosen field – dueling for the Kakita, for example, or mounted combat for the Utaku. However, some game groups may prefer to shrink the differences between the schools, or, conversely, to widen the gaps and make each clan more distinct in its capabilities.

A GM wishing to narrow the gaps between the bushi schools could move all of the "second attack" Techniques (those which change attacks from Complex Actions to Simple Actions) to School Rank Three, rather than having some schools gain the ability at Rank Three and others at Rank Four. Conversely, a GM who wished to widen the power gaps could allow schools like the Akodo and Mirumoto to get their second attack at Rank Two. Another way to adjust balance for these Techniques would be to reduce or eliminate the restrictions on which weapons get to attack as a Simple Action – perhaps all the Schools could award the Simple Action attack for all melee weapons, rather than some awarding it for specific weapons and others for any weapon.

Another way to adjust the power of schools is to ease, or intensify, the restrictions on some of the Techniques. For example, many Techniques have restrictions such as "once per skirmish," "while on horseback," or "spend a Void point." Reducing or eliminating these restrictions will increase the power of the Technique, while strengthening them will make the Technique – and the school – weaker.

Obviously, the GM should approach such changes with care. The schools have been carefully designed and balanced, and changing those balances may result in a school becoming unexpectedly weak or strong, disrupting the overall play of the game.

Alternate Playstyles

As the discussion of rules modifications make clear, the GM and players can change the L5R rules in a variety of ways to suit their playing style. However, this can also be done to depict Rokugan itself in a different manner. The rules and mechanics for L5R role-playing presented in the *Book of Earth*, the *Book of Fire*, and the *Book of Water* represent a "default" version of Rokugan – a world that is realistic overall, with lethal combat and characters who are thoroughly mortal, but which also contains plenty of room for fantasy, superhuman power, and dramatic action. However, GMs and players may wish to try playing L5R in a different style. Perhaps your group would prefer to play in a grittier and more realistic style, reminiscent of Japanese samurai films. Or, conversely, perhaps they would prefer a lighter and more humorous game which focuses on adventure and romance and avoids the sense of mortality and tragedy which pervades "normal" L5R. These sorts of stylistic adjustments can be depicted with storyline and plot, but the GM can also make changes to the mechanics of the game, encouraging play that is more heroic, more light-hearted, more realistic, or more horrific.

Here we present three sample alternate playstyles that GMs and players may wish to try out, each with suitable adjustments to the game mechanics.

Anime Style

Japanese animation, or *anime*, is hugely popular around the world, and many players who enjoy L5R are also fans of anime series and characters. Since L5R is based heavily on Japanese medieval history and culture, anime-inspired play is an obvious variation on conventional L5R gaming.

Although anime encompasses many different genres and sub-genres, there are a number of broad generalizations which can be made to guide a GM in adjusting L5R's rules to support an anime-based style. Most notably, almost all anime is highly dramatic, even melodramatic, with intense emotions and storylines. The traditional depiction of the stoic samurai who maintains face at all times is not always appropriate in an anime-styled game where powerful emotion and dramatic action are the order of the day. Reducing the Honor and Glory losses for showing emotion or losing face will encourage a more anime-like style of role-play. Likewise, anime tends to give romance a very strong role in most stories, whether they are serious or light-hearted, so the traditional L5R depiction of romance as doomed and tragic may not be appropriate. The GM should be more willing to consider a happy ending to love stories within the campaign.

Anime heroes often seem to wind up with weapons or armor of super-powerful nature. An anime-influenced L5R game should make it easier for the PCs to get their hands on the Empire's legendary *nemuranai* (magical artifacts). Of course, the flip side of this is that anime heroes are usually underdogs facing incredibly powerful villains, and the GM should feel free to pull out all the stops and create truly "broken" bad guys who the PCs can only defeat with the utmost courage and commitment. The hero who prevails over a far-superior foe through sheer determination, perseverance, and luck is a popular anime cliché.

Probably the biggest mechanical change from conventional L5R gaming to an anime-style campaign lies in the relatively indestructible nature of anime heroes. Although they can bleed and die, anime characters have a knack for enduring gruesome injuries and coming back from the brink of death to strike down their enemies. They also have a tendency to pull off amazing feats, far beyond their normal capability, whenever it is dramatically appropriate.

The GM can simulate these sorts of events by using one of the higher Wound Rank options from the *Book of Earth*, such as Earth x3 or Earth x4 for each Wound Rank. Another good tool is to allow more options for Void Points. For example, give the characters the ability to spend Void Points to heal Wounds (perhaps at the rate of 15 or 20 Wounds per Void Point, depending on how heroic the GM wants the game to be). The GM can also let a character who is Down or Out spend a Void Point to stand up and take action, briefly ignoring Wound Penalties as he calls on his last reserves of heroic strength. Of course, if the hero does prevail, he should probably get a dramatic scar to remind him of his near-death experience.

Obviously, if Void Points can be employed in such ways they will tend to get used up much more quickly than in a normal L5R game. The GM may want to provide means for the PCs to recover their Void more quickly as well. In some earlier editions of the Legend of the Five Rings RPG, it was possible for characters to recover Void Points any time they got three or more explosions on a single roll. The GM can use an approach like this to increase the effective pool of Void Points for the game, or even take things a step farther and grant the PCs double Void Points.



Cinematic Style

Swashbuckling swordsmen and over-the-top action heroes offer inspiration to many role-playing campaigns. Standard L5R's realistic style and emphasis on the moral complexities of Rokugani society is not really conducive to this sort of game, however. In the past, AEG published another game, *7th Sea*, which portrayed swashbuckling action in a world reminiscent of 17th century Europe. However, one does not have to take inspiration solely from Western stories or Western-style RPGs to create a heroic swashbuckling game. Asian kung-fu and magical swordsmen films, for example, embrace a very similar aesthetic, with heroes who display superhuman skills while protecting the weak and defeating foul enemies.

A cinematic L5R game will typically place a stronger emphasis on action rather than on courtly intrigue or other social challenges. It will also tend to have a much starker and simpler moral compass, depicting a world in which Honor and Bushido represent unquestioned good. Characters of a more dubious moral nature, such as Scorpion or Spider, are unlikely to fit into a cinematic game very well unless the players and GM are willing to depict them as "noble rogues" or as characters who redeem themselves from a dark past (both very common cinematic archetypes).

Mechanically, a cinematic game emphasizes dramatic over-the-top action, performed by heroes who shrug off the direst of injuries as a "flesh wound." Much like with anime-style play, it is strongly recommended that a cinematic-style game use one of the higher level Wound systems (as depicted in the *Book of Earth*) such as Earth x3 or even Earth x4 for character Wounds.

A good way to simulate the heroics of cinema is to take a page out of *7th Sea* and allow the characters the ability to spend a Void Point after they roll as well as before. Thus, a character who barely missed his foe can spend a Void Point to try to get that last little bit needed to strike home. Of course, this means that much as in an anime-style game, a cinematic game will tend to burn through the PCs' Void Points quickly. *7th Sea* used a similar mechanic called "Drama Dice," and its solution to this problem was for the GM to award additional Drama Dice to the players whenever they did something memorably heroic or cool. This mechanic can be used in L5R as well, although the GM will need to be careful to award such extra Void Points impartially – it is very easy for accusations of favoritism to arise in such cases.

The "Thug" Rule

One of the characteristics of cinematic action, both Asian and Western, is the ability of heroes to slaughter their way through vast hordes of faceless, anonymous minions. The conventional L5R rules do not really support this sort of action, but it can be imported into the game by creating a "thug" rule. 7th Sea used a similar mechanic, referring to its lowest-ranking villains as "brutes." Large numbers of weak villains can be represented by giving them a very limited number of Wounds (16 or less), or simply allowing them to be struck down with a single hit regardless of damage rolled. GMs desiring a truly heroic style of play can even allow the players to make Raises to hit multiple thugs with a single attack. For their part, thugs should not be allowed to have a very good attack roll, and should only do a modest amount of Wounds if they hit – perhaps 3k2 at best, or maybe only 2k1 if the GM is unleashing truly massive swarms of thugs.

Grim Realism Style

Although L5R has a strong element of realistic mortality, it still grants its characters considerably more survivability than real samurai enjoyed. Players and GMs who wish to take a darker, grittier look at Rokugan – particularly those who are fans of the samurai films of Akira Kurosawa, with his darkly cynical yet moral vision of samurai life and death – can opt for a playing style that removes the limited safety net of the normal L5R mechanics and forces the player characters to live three feet from death, like the real samurai they are imitating.

A game adopting the grim realism style should, at the very least, trim all the Wound Ranks down to Earth x2. GMs wishing for a truly realistic style can forego Wounds altogether and simply allow a character to die after a single hit from a medium or large weapon, or a number of hits equal to his Earth for a small weapon. This sort of game will have a very different flavor indeed from normal L5R, and will force characters to approach combat both intelligently and with a profound sense of their own mortality. John Wick, the original designer of L5R, once commented that characters in this sort of game would need to fight with "the ruthlessness of Musashi and the cunning of Sun Tzu."

A grim realism game should also eliminate the ability of characters to spend Void Points to reduce damage. In a realistic world, there is no possibility of magically "shrugging" damage. An interesting side-effect of this is that it makes spells which heal or award Reduction much more valuable, hence raising the value of shugenja in the game.

Grim realism is obviously not a play-style conducive to long-term campaigns, and many players will not wish to play in this sort of game. But for those with an open mind, a short-term campaign in this style can be a refreshing change from a normal L5R game.

Creatures Without Void

Most non-human creatures do not have a Void Ring. This represents either their lack of intelligence and self-awareness (in the case of animals) or their lack of connection and harmony with the elements (in the case of Shadowlands creatures, undead, etc). The ability to call on a moment of perfect harmony with the elements is overwhelmingly a human trait, and only a few non-human creatures even possess a Void Ring, let along the ability to spend Void Points.

A creature which does not have a Void Ring suffers a number of penalties and effects. In addition to the obvious disadvantage of not being able to spend Void Points, it also cannot assume the Center Stance, cannot perform an Iaijutsu duel, and cannot meditate or perform other actions associated with Void. Its maximum Raises on any roll are limited by its lowest Trait.

On the other hand, a creature without Void cannot be affected by spells, Techniques, or other game effects which target the Void Ring or Void Points (such as the Void Release spell).

The GM's Toolbox

This section of the chapter provides an assortment of special rules the GM can use to enhance and expand his game. Most notably, it includes the basic rules for non-human creatures and a brief selection of such creatures to begin challenging the players. There are also rules for poisons, to enhance the options for Scorpion and villains alike. The section concludes with a selection of adventure seeds and one fully developed sample adventure, to help new GMs get their campaigns started. Finally, there is a short list of resources – books, films, and similar – which GMs and players can consult for inspiration.

Creatures of Rokugan

Rokugan and the surrounding lands are home to many strange and supernatural creatures, as well as natural animals such as horses, dogs, and lions. The following section provides a modest selection of such creatures that the GM can use to challenge his players. A larger selection of creatures will be available in future expansions.

Creature Statistics

For the sake of consistency, creatures are presented in a standardized format which contains the following information:

Rings/Traits:

Creatures have Rings and Traits in the same manner as humans. Most non-human creatures do not have a Void Ring, although a few do possess it, and certain ancient races (such as Naga and Nezumi) have a different Ring which they can use in a manner near-identical to Void.

Creatures that are native to the Shadowlands also have a Taint Rank, which is permanently set at its current level. Native Shadowlands creatures do not gain any benefit from their Taint Rank and cannot "embrace the Taint" to enhance their physical rolls.

Initiative:

The creature's standard Initiative roll is listed here.

Attacks:

This section lists the creature's normal attack roll, based on its natural capabilities and, if appropriate, its skills. If it has two or more different kinds of attacks, they will be listed separately (for example, "club 4k2 or bite 3k2"). This section also lists whether the creature's attacks are considered a Free Action, a Simple Action, or a Complex Action. Typically, only the most powerful and dangerous creatures have attacks that can be taken as a Free Action.

Damage:

This lists the DR (damage roll) for the creature's attack. If it has more than one kind of attack, damage from each will be listed separately. It should be noted that damage does not always directly reflect the creature's Strength – it may also be impacted by other factors such as sharp claws or supernatural abilities.

Armor TN:

This section shows the creature's Armor TN and also lists whether any of that TN is considered "armor" for purposes of abilities that ignore that portion of a target's Armor TN.

Reduction:

If the creature has any Reduction, it will be listed here. This section will also list whether the creature's Reduction is raised or lowered against certain kinds of attacks. For example, a creature vulnerable to jade might read: "Reduction 15 (5 against jade)."

Wounds:

Some creatures have Wound Ranks in the same manner as humans, and when this is the case, it will be indicated in this section. However, many creatures have Wounds which are not directly derived from their Earth Ring – due to unusual toughness and pain resistance, unusual weakness and fragility, or an otherworldly nature that makes them more (or less) resilient than their physical body should permit. In these cases, this section lists how many total Wounds it takes to inflict penalties and to kill the creature.

Skills:

Intelligent or cunning creatures often have Skills. The Skill ranks listed here will be for the "typical" creature of this type – the GM can easily represent a more potent creature by adding Skill ranks, or a weaker one by removing them.

Special Abilities:

This section lists any unusual abilities or attacks which the creature might possess. Some of these are unique to the creatures which possess them, and are described for that creature. However, there are a number of standard special abilities which may appear in creature entries. These are listed below as "Standard Special Abilities."

Standard Special Abilities

These special abilities are found on many different creatures, and are listed here for convenient reference.

Fear:

Many of the more supernatural or grotesque creatures in Rokugan are terrifying to face. This is particularly true of the potent monsters of the Shadowlands and of the undead, whose very existence is a terrifying blasphemy to the Rokugani. A creature with a Fear ability automatically inflicts it at the beginning of any encounter (see the Fear rules in the *Book of Earth* for the effects of Fear).

Huge:

A huge creature is impossible to Grapple, due to its vast size and bulk, or perhaps due to multiple limbs or a monstrous form. A Huge creature cannot be Grappled or targeted with the Knockdown maneuver, and will not initiate a Grapple with others unless it has ranks in the Jiujutsu skill.

Invulnerability:

A creature with Invulnerability is very difficult to harm with normal mundane attacks. This ability is found most often among oni, but also is characteristic of many other powerful Shadowlands creatures, as well as the more potent of the Lost. A creature with Invulnerability takes normal damage only from spells, nemuranai, and weapons composed of jade, crystal, or obsidian. Against any other attack, the creature takes only a single Wound, no matter how powerful the blow. If a creature has both Reduction and Invulnerability, the effects of Invulnerability are applied after those of Reduction.

Invulnerability, Partial:

A creature with partial invulnerability is Invulnerable only against certain kinds of attacks. For example, a creature might be Invulnerable to arrows, or to fire. Attacks from the designated sources cause only 1 Wound, regardless of the damage roll, just as with normal Invulnerability.

Invulnerability, Superior:

A creature with Superior Invulnerability has all the advantages of normal Invulnerability, but in addition, it is resistant to one (or more) of the attack forms which could harm a normal Invulnerable creature. For example, it might be Invulnerable to jade, or to Air spells.

Magic Resistance:

This functions in the same manner as the Magic Resistance Advantage in the *Book of Fire*.

Adjusting Creature Stats

Creatures do not always derive their abilities directly from their Rings and Traits in the same way as human characters. For example, while a creature's Initiative roll is influenced by its Reflexes, most creatures do not have an Insight Rank, so instead their Initiative roll is raised or lowered to reflect their intrinsic speed or sluggishness.

There are a number of game effects, such as spells and poisons, which can raise or lower a creature's Rings or Traits. The GM can also choose to increase or decrease a creature's stats to reflect a tougher or weaker example of the species. The following rules provide some guidelines for how these Ring/Trait changes will affect the creature's other stats and abilities:

- If a creature's Earth is raised or lowered, the results will depend on whether or not it has human-type Wounds. If it does, its Wounds per Rank will be adjusted to match its new Earth (possibly killing it if its Earth drops after it has taken damage). If it does not have human-type Wound Ranks, however, its total Wounds will instead be raised or lowered by 8 for each Rank by which its Earth is increased or decreased.
- If a creature's Reflexes changes, its Armor TN will be adjusted by 5 for each Rank of Reflexes, and its Initiative roll will be adjusted by 1k1 for each Rank of Reflexes.
- If a creature's Agility changes, its Attack rolls will change by 1k1 for each Rank of Agility.
- If a creature's Strength changes, its damage rolls will change by 1k0 for each Rank of Strength.



Jade Powder

The Crab Clan spends much of its time fighting creatures with Invulnerability, and has developed many strategies and methods for doing so. One of their biggest difficulties is the scarcity of jade and crystal weapons, since only the most skilled of weaponsmiths can forge these rare and sacred substances into usable armaments. To get around this limitation, the Crab rely on a stopgap measure: jade powder.

As its name implies, jade powder is composed of ground-up jade, mixed with a simple paste to make it adhere to weapons. It is usually carried in small pouches, each containing one "dose" of the powder. By smearing this jade powder on a blade, tetsubo, or arrowhead, a Crab warrior can briefly gain the benefits of wielding a jade weapon against a dangerous creature like an oni. Unfortunately, the jade powder is quickly wiped off the weapon as it strikes its targets. The first hit from a weapon with jade powder will inflict full damage, but the second attack will only inflict half damage, and the third attack one-quarter damage. After three hits, the jade powder is exhausted.

Applying jade powder to a weapon is considered a Complex Action. Once it is applied, it will normally last until exhausted or washed off (it cannot be recovered effectively once it has been applied). In the Shadowlands, the corruptive influence of the Taint will consume exposed jade powder within two hours, so Crab bushi in that deadly realm try to keep their pouches of jade powder carefully packed away until right before combat.

Spirit:

A creature with the Spirit quality is from one of the spirit realms outside of Ningen-do, and as such is somewhat resistant to weapons and effects native to the realm of mortals. Spirit creatures in Ningen-do take half damage from any weapon or other physical attack which does not contain jade, crystal, or obsidian, as well as from any spell or magical effect which does not have the Jade or Crystal quality.

Swift:

A creature which is Swift moves at a faster speed than its physical abilities would seem to permit. This may be due to supernatural gifts or it may be the result of sheer energy and rage. Creatures with Swift are considered to have a higher Water – one Rank higher for each Rank of Swift they possess – for purposes of calculating how far they can move with a Free or Simple Move Action.

Creature Schools

Some intelligent creatures have Schools which they study and improve in a similar manner to Rokugani Schools. Examples of this include Naga, Ratlings (Nezumi), Ogres, and Tsuno. The sample versions of some of these creatures presented here in the Book of Void, however, represent "base" versions of these creatures without Schools or other extra training. Creature schools will appear in a future supplement.

Undead:

An Undead creature has no sense of pain, and thus cannot suffer Wound penalties. Undead creatures remain fully functional, with no Wound effects, until they are literally hacked apart (reduced to Dead). Specific attacks such as removing their hands would however remove weapon or claw attacks. Since they are dead, they are also immune to Fear effects of any kind, as well as to any spell, Skill, or Technique that attempts to influence the mind or emotions.

Natural Creatures

Many types of natural creatures can be trained to serve humans, or even to fight for them. A character who has trained an animal (other than a horse) to fight can order the creature to attack a specific target by taking a Simple Action to roll Animal Handling / Awareness at TN 20. However, it should be noted that with the exception of those creatures specifically bred for war (such as war dogs and Unicorn horses), animals sent into a fight will not stay once they are seriously injured.

Dog (Inu)

Normal dogs may be found throughout Rokugan as pets, guard animals, or simple strays. Unless starving or maddened, a dog will usually try to flee once it has taken 12 or more Wounds.

Air: 1	Earth: 2	Fire: 1	Water: 1
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Perception 3

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: 3k3 bite (Complex)*

Damage: 2k1 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: None — *Wounds: 12: +10; 24: Dead*

Skills: Hunting (Tracking) 3

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2.*
- *Scent: Dogs gains a +2k1 bonus to any Perception-based rolls that involve scent.*

Dog, Unicorn War Dog

A large, powerful, intelligent, and deadly breed of dog, specially raised by the Unicorn for service in war. These dogs are loyal and ferocious, and will fight to the death alongside their human master, even staying to protect his corpse if he falls.

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: 5k4 bite (Simple)*

Damage: 3k2 — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 18: +10; 36: Dead.*

Skills: Hunting (Tracking) 4, Intimidation 2

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2.*
- *Scent: Dogs gains a +2k1 bonus to any Perception-based rolls that involve scent.*
- *Charge Attack: Wardogs in the Full Attack stance may move up to (10' x Water) as a Free Action.*

Falcon

Falcons are used as hunting and sporting birds by many samurai in Rokugan – indeed, falconry is considered one of the higher arts. A trained falcon can also be used to attack enemies, although few would risk their precious birds in this way. A falcon which takes 5 or more Wounds cannot fly until it is healed.

Air: 1	Earth: 1	Fire: 1	Water: 1
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 4	Perception 3

Initiative: 5k5 — *Attack: claw/beak 5k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 3k2 — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: None — *Wounds: 5: +5; 10: Dead*

Skills: Hunting (Tracking) 4, Intimidation 2

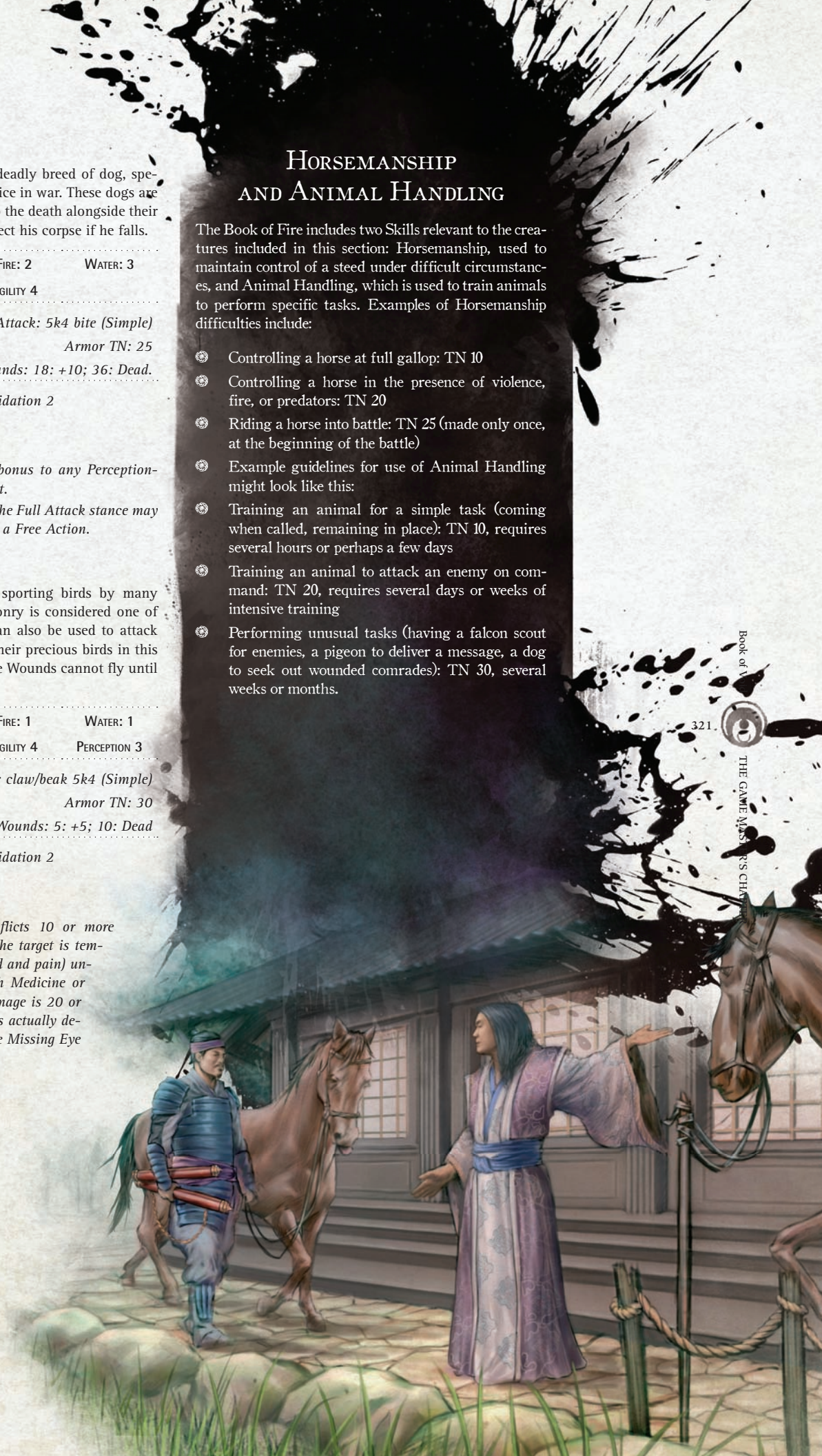
Special Abilities:

- *Swift 5 when flying.*
- *Eye Attack: If a falcon inflicts 10 or more wounds in a single attack, the target is temporarily blinded (due to blood and pain) until the injury is treated with Medicine or magically healed. If the damage is 20 or more Wounds, the falcon has actually destroyed the eye (inflicting the Missing Eye disadvantage).*

Horsemanship and Animal Handling

The Book of Fire includes two Skills relevant to the creatures included in this section: Horsemanship, used to maintain control of a steed under difficult circumstances, and Animal Handling, which is used to train animals to perform specific tasks. Examples of Horsemanship difficulties include:

- Controlling a horse at full gallop: TN 10
- Controlling a horse in the presence of violence, fire, or predators: TN 20
- Riding a horse into battle: TN 25 (made only once, at the beginning of the battle)
- Example guidelines for use of Animal Handling might look like this:
- Training an animal for a simple task (coming when called, remaining in place): TN 10, requires several hours or perhaps a few days
- Training an animal to attack an enemy on command: TN 20, requires several days or weeks of intensive training
- Performing unusual tasks (having a falcon scout for enemies, a pigeon to deliver a message, a dog to seek out wounded comrades): TN 30, several weeks or months.



Horses in Combat

The descriptions of horses above lists the Skill Rolls, if any, needed to persuade them to attack their foes. A horse which is under control will move on its rider's Turn, but attacks on its own Turn in the Initiative order. A horse which is out of control (such as a pony fleeing when hurt, or a horse which has lost its rider) will move on its own Turn.

Horse, Rokugani Pony

These sturdy, shaggy animals are the native steeds of Rokugan, and most samurai who ride a horse possess one of these animals. They can be trained for war, but combat is not their natural environment, and they will typically just try to avoid getting hurt in a fight. To convince a Rokugani pony to attack while in a skirmish, the rider must take a Free Action each round to make a Horsemanship / Awareness roll at TN 20. Success will cause the pony to attack on its next Initiative Turn. A badly wounded pony (32 Wounds or more) will try to flee combat on its Initiative unless forced to stay with a Horsemanship / Willpower roll at TN 25.

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 1	Water: 2
-	Stamina 4	Agility 2	Strength 4

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: Kick 3k2 (Complex)*
Damage: 4k2 — *Armor TN: 15*
Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: Dead*

Skills: Hunting (Tracking) 4, Intimidation 2

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 3.*
- *Huge.*

Horse, Unicorn Riding Horse

The Unicorn brought these foreign horses back with them from the Burning Sands. Although not quite as tough as native Rokugani ponies, they are stronger, faster, and larger, making them a far superior animal for riding into combat. Most Unicorn riding horses have been trained for war, and in a skirmish the rider need only make a single roll of Horsemanship / Awareness at TN 10 at the start of a skirmish (as a Free Action) to convince the horse to attack on its own Turn each round.

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 1	Water: 2
-	Stamina 4	Agility 3	Strength 5

Initiative: 4k2 — *Attack: Kick 4k3 (Complex)*
Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 15*
Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead*

Skills: Hunting (Tracking) 4, Intimidation 2

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 3.*
- *Huge.*





Horse, Utaku Battle Steed

The famous and specially bred horses of the Utaku *Shiotome* (Battle Maidens) are the most formidable steeds in Rokugan, powerful and intelligent beasts who bond closely with their riders and fight ferociously in wartime. By long-standing tradition within the Unicorn Clan, these animals can only be ridden by Battle Maidens. A handful of these animals have been gifted to highly respected individuals outside of the Utaku family (most notably, the various Emperors), although rumor claims none have ever dared to ride such noble beasts.

Utaku steeds will fight willingly and intelligently along with their riders, without any need for a skill roll. They will remain at their rider's side even if she is dead.

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 2	Water: 3
Reflexes 3	Stamina 4	Agility 3	Strength 6

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Kick 4k3 (Simple) or Trample 6k4 (Complex)*

Damage: Kick 6k2, Trample 6k4 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 64: Dead*

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 3.*
- *Fear 2 (when charging).*
- *Huge.*

Lion

Wild lions are dangerous predators who operate in small groups called prides, typically consisting of a single mature male and 2-8 females. They are not very numerous in Rokugan, due to the settled and civilized nature of most of the Empire. Most of them who do exist can be found on the country's central plains – mostly the lands of the Lion Clan, unsurprisingly. Akodo's clan is known to have tamed a small number of these beasts and trained them to fight alongside specially-talented human warriors, the so-called Beastmasters.

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 1	Water: 3
Reflexes 3	Stamina 4	Agility 3	Strength 6

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claws 5k3 (Simple) or bite 6k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k3 (claws) or 4k4 (bite) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead*

Skills: Hunting 3, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 1.*

Ox

Since horses, even ponies, are largely restricted to the samurai caste and the very wealthiest of commoners, common folk in Rokugan rely on oxen to pull carts, drag plows, and perform other laborious tasks. Most Rokugani villages have an ox-pen holding two or three of these strong but stubborn and dull-witted animals.

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 1	Water: 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 6	Agility 2	Strength 6

Initiative: 2k2 — *Attack: Gore 3k2 (Complex) or Trample 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 6k3 (Gore) or 6k4 (Trample) — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 4 — *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: Dead.*

Special Abilities:

- *Furious Charge: If an Ox is injured, it will initially react with fury, charging whatever it perceives as the source of the pain. On its first Turn after it is wounded (assuming it was not killed outright), it does not suffer any Wound penalties, and may add +10 to its attack roll. Once this first surge of anger passes, it suffers the normal effects of Wound penalties.*
- *Huge.*

Wolf (Ookami)

Wolves are found in the mountains and forests of Rokugan, especially in remote areas, and usually operate in packs of 1-10 adults (plus cubs). They prefer to feed on deer, hare, and other natural prey. Wolves are clever animals and can learn from experience, and thus tend to be wary of humans and easily driven away by fire. However, if they are starving or desperate they will sometimes attack lone humans.

Air: 1	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Perception 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Bite 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 18: +10; 36: Dead.*

Skills: Stealth 2

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2.*
- *Scent: Wolves gains a +2k1 bonus to any Perception-based rolls that involve scent.*

Monsters and Nonhuman Races

Bog Hag

Bog Hags are among the more vile creatures of the Shadowlands, for they are able to infiltrate the Empire and spread both death and Taint far and wide. In their natural form they appear to be foul humanoid creatures, vaguely resembling an ancient human woman but with green skin, stringy matted hair, sagging or bloated flesh, monstrously ugly facial features, and sharp jagged teeth and claws. They are meat-eaters and enjoy the taste of human flesh, especially women and children. Most bog hags are solitary and territorial, although older ones sometimes form small groups for mutual protection.

Bog hags are amphibious and normally dwell in marshes, as their name implies. However, they often leave such places to infiltrate human society. Their most dreadful power is the ability to wear the skin of any adult human they kill, allowing them to pass as a normal Rokugani. Even worse, they can absorb some of the memories of the person whose skin they wear, making it easier for them to maintain their deceptions. Their preferred targets for skinning are beautiful young women, allowing them to employ their skills at seduction and manipulation. They can wear anyone's skin, however – even a man, although they greatly dislike having to do so.

Bog hags are some of the most dangerous Shadowlands infiltrators and the Crab Clan watches carefully for them. Sadly, the rest of the Empire is too often unprepared for the threat they offer. Their strength and ability varies from one specimen to another, with some bog hags being fairly weak while others are quite powerful. The example depicted below is one of the more potent types.

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2
-	-	-	Strength 3

Initiative: 5k3 — *Attack: Claws 5k3 (Simple)*

Damage: 3k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 72: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 4

Skills: Acting 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Stealth 3, Temptation (Seduction) 4

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Bog hags swim in water at the same speed they move on land, and need not make a Skill roll to swim.*
- *Disease: Anyone wounded by a bog hag's vile, encrusted claws has a 1 in 5 chance of contracting a foul wasting disease. This disease causes skin boils, blisters, and weakness, reducing the victim's Stamina by 1 Rank per week until death at 0 Stamina. It can be cured with magic, or with a successful Medicine / Intelligence roll at TN 30.*
- *Invulnerable (weaker bog hags do not always have this ability).*
- *Skin Wearing: A bog hag who wears the skin of her victim appears exactly like that victim in life, and acquires the victim's memories and one rank in each Skill she possessed. Skins last a number of weeks equal to the victim's Earth before they begin to rot away, exposing the monster beneath.*



Gaki (Shozai-Gaki)



Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k4

Attack: Claw 4k4 (Complex), ignores physical armor

Damage: 3k3

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: Dead.

Special Abilities:

- *Blood Draining: A gaki may forgo normal damage from a successful attack in order to drain the victim's blood, drawing it out through translucent fingers. This inflicts 12 Wounds on the victim and heals the gaki by the same amount.*
- *Fear 3.*
- *Immortality: Gaki cannot actually be killed, and if their physical form is destroyed, they reform within Gaki-do.*
- *Invisibility: A gaki may become invisible as a Free Action, and while invisible may pass through walls and other solid inanimate objects (though not through living creatures).*
- *Shapeshifting: All gaki can take the form of a normal insect as a Complex Action. Regaining their true form is a Simple Action.*
- *Spirit.*
- *Superior Invulnerability: Gaki are immune to all illusion spells and to all spells, skills, and techniques which affect the mind or thoughts.*
- *Possession: A shozai-gaki can possess a mortal as a Complex Action by winning a Contested Willpower roll. This possession causes the victim to suffer high fever and wracking chills, losing 1k1 Wounds per day as the gaki feeds directly on their essence. The gaki can be driven out of its victim with the spells Ward of Purity or Bonds of Ningen-do.*

Gaki, sometimes called "hungry dead," are spirits from the realm of Gaki-do who have entered the mortal world. Some Gaki are native to that realm, but many of them are actually the souls of humans who led extremely sinful lives but did not succumb to the Taint. Such souls are often condemned to Gaki-do, spending decades or centuries as one of the hungry dead so their kharma can be cleansed. Sadly, not all such souls succeed in earning passage to their next life, for Gaki-do is a malignant realm and its predatory nature can easily infect those souls who dwell within it.

The typical Rokugani often has difficulty telling a gaki apart from a true ghost (see Ghosts, below) and indeed many Rokugani regard gaki as simply a form of ghost. Only those with deep knowledge of the spirit realms, or who have made a detailed study of ghosts (such as the Toritaka family), understand the difference.

There are actually many different forms of gaki, depending on what sort of soul formed them. The unifying nature of all gaki is their relentless urge to feed on something – most typically either an impure physical substance like blood or human flesh, or an impure emotion like cruelty or pain. Very rarely, a gaki may appear which feeds on positive emotions such as courage or love – although such entities do exist, only a handful have ever been encountered in the Empire's history.

The gaki presented here is the ***Shozai-Gaki***, the most commonly encountered sort of gaki. These gaki are created from the souls of greedy and sinful humans, and are usually condemned to feed on an impure physical substance: blood, sweat, bile, flesh, etc. Each shozai-gaki will feed on only one particular substance of this sort, and if it cannot feed it will suffer agonizing pain. Physically, they appear to be grotesque, slightly translucent humanoid creatures with clawed hands and demonic features, often with a vaguely insectoid caste.



Ghost (Yorei)



Rokugan is a superstitious land, and its myths and legends are replete with ghost stories. Although these stories vary widely in nature and contents, they share a general theme: ghosts are human souls who for whatever reason have remained in the mortal realm rather than traveling on to their next place in the Celestial Wheel. Typically this is due to some powerful emotion – love, anger, regret, duty – drawing the soul back to Ningen-do when it should instead be traveling to Meido to accept the judgment of the Fortune of Death, Emma-O. This distinguishes them from Gaki, the so-called "hungry dead," who are souls condemned to Gaki-do.

Ghosts, souls remaining in the mortal world due to some need, frustration, anger, or desire, are commonly known as *Yorei* or "yearning ghosts." There are several different subtypes of Yorei. For example, *Goryo* ("vengeful ghosts") are the souls of those murdered, kept in the mortal realm by their anger and need for vengeance. Another well-known type of ghost is the *Ubume* ("mourning woman"), ghosts of women who died in pregnancy or childbirth.

Ghosts are not always directly malignant, but they can still be dangerous to those they meet. Goryo, for example, will sometimes attack anyone they meet, unable to distinguish between their murderer and the other mortals they encounter. Even when a ghost means no harm, and is merely trying to fulfill some need or complete a task from its life, it will often have a negative effect on those around it, such as causing nightmares or sickness, blighting crops, etc.

Physically, ghosts typically look as they did in life, or as they did at the moment of death. Sometimes (though not always) a ghost's feet are translucent or absent, and the lack of feet is commonly regarded in Rokugani superstition as a sure-fire way to spot a ghost.

Individual ghosts vary widely in their specific nature and abilities, and to some degree each ghost in Rokugan is unique. However, they all share a few basic traits. All ghosts have the ability to pass through solid objects at will, or to sink into the earth, and they cannot be touched if they do not wish it. The three sacred substances (jade, crystal, and obsidian) do have some power to touch and harm ghosts, and the spell Ward of Purity can drive them away temporarily, but otherwise they are largely immune to physical compulsion. Dealing with a ghost usually involves either figuring out what it wants so it can be appeased, or praying and entreating it to depart for Meido where it belongs.

Ghosts have the same Rings, Traits, Skills, and other knowledge and abilities they had in life, but no longer have a Void Ring or Void Points. They can interact with physical objects, use weapons, and otherwise behave like living creatures. As noted above, however, they generally cannot be physically harmed if they do not wish it. Even jade and other sacred substances cannot actually kill a ghost – a Yorei which is reduced to zero Wounds will simply flee, probably returning later in anger to wreck vengeance on the one who hurt it. Convincing a ghost to leave for the afterlife is a matter of religion and conviction, not combat.



Goblin (Bakemono)

Goblins are small, vicious, semi-intelligent creatures who infest the Shadowlands in seemingly limitless numbers. They are humanoid, but with small bodies, spindly limbs, and oversized heads. Their hands and feet are clawed and their wide mouths are full of small sharp teeth. Goblins are only semi-intelligent, and are not individually much of a threat to an armed samurai. However, they have pack instincts and possess a dangerous cunning and malice. They also have a strange knack for imitation – they will often mimic human behavior, expressions, or language. Goblins easily fall under the sway of more powerful Shadowlands denizens, such as oni or Lost, who they serve willingly. They speak their own crude tongue, although few outside of their species ever learn it.

The Rokugani generally believe Fu Leng created goblins in an effort to replace men. Whether this is true or not, goblins have proven a persistent and tenacious danger to Rokugan.

The statistics below represent a "typical" goblin – more powerful goblins appear from time to time, such as the leaders known as "warmongers," as well as shamans who use a crude form of maho.

Air: 1	Earth: 2	Fire: 1	Water: 1
Reflexes 2	-	Agility 2	Strength 2

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: 4k2 (Simple)*

Damage: 4k2 (knife or sharp stick) — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 9: +5; 18: Dead*

Taint Rank: 2

Skills: Stealth 2.

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2.*

Kappa

Kappa are strange and malicious spirit creatures encountered in rivers and streams. They are amphibian and can travel underwater as quickly and easily as on land. Physically, they appear to be vaguely frog-like or turtle-like humanoids whose hands and feet are clawed and webbed. They have a beak-like mouth, a turtle's shell on their back, and a distinctive bowl-shaped depression full of water atop their heads. Kappa are rare and usually malignant, subjects of superstition and fear among common folk. They are trickster spirits with little sense of restraint, often playing pranks that result in serious injury or death to the victim.

Kappa feed on blood, human and animal alike, but sometimes offer their prey the chance to escape if they can best the kappa at a puzzle or a test of wits. Even if the kappa is not hungry, it will often engage passers-by in contests of wits to humiliate them and prove its own cleverness. Although not physically powerful, kappa are dangerous due to their otherworldly spiritual nature, which makes them extremely difficult to harm.

According to legend, the water in the kappa's bowl-like head is the source of its power, and if that water is spilled, the creature is rendered powerless. A kappa which has lost its water is weak and vulnerable, and must retreat into the water for a full day to replenish itself.



Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 3
-	-	Intelligence 3	-

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claws 4k2 (Simple)*

Damage: 3k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 15 — *Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead.*

Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 5, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Kappa swim in water at the same speed they move on land, and need not make a Skill roll to swim.*
- *Spirit.*
- *Trickery: The kappa can create visual illusions, similar to the Mists of Illusion spell, up to three times a day (more for an unusually powerful kappa).*
- *Water of Life: If the water in a kappa's head-bowl is spilled, the kappa loses all Reduction and all of its Rings and Traits become 1 until it spends a full day underwater replenishing itself.*



Ogre



Ogres are huge, bestial humanoid creatures, eight feet tall or more, with massive limbs, tusk-like fangs, and thick, dirty hair. They are vicious and brutal predators, fighting with brute force and eating the flesh of those they kill. Ogres dwell within the Shadowlands, where they lead swarms of goblins or form shock troops for oni or Lost warlords. They also sometimes wander into the Empire, alone or in small packs, where they pose a lethal threat to samurai and peasants alike.

Ogres are actually an intelligent race, and once had a civilization of their own. However, Fu Leng enslaved the ogres at the dawn of the Empire, turning them into bestial creatures whose intellect is usually submerged within the violent impulses of the Taint. After Fu Leng died at the second Day of Thunder, some of the less Tainted ogres began to regain their will and intellect, becoming so-called "Free Ogres" who no longer made war on the Empire. The majority of the race, however, remained brutal Tainted monsters.

Air: 1	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 6	-	Strength 6

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Club 5k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 8k2 (club or small tree) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: +15; 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Huge.*

Oni (Ugulu no Oni)



Oni are the demons of Jigoku, among the most dreaded creatures known to the Empire. There are literally an infinite number of different oni within Jigoku, and only a tiny fraction of them have ever made it into the mortal world. Oni can enter Ningen-do through physical portals from Jigoku – most infamously the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, located at the center of the Shadowlands – and can also be summoned by maho spells. Once in the mortal realm, an oni can spawn lesser versions of itself, many of which will eventually grow to be as strong as their "parent." In this way entire races of oni can come into existence.

Physically, oni vary so widely that making any blanket statement about them is impossible. Some are humanoid, some bestial or even formless. Some are intelligent, others little more than mindless engines of destruction. Their universal trait is their extreme malevolence and evil. Oni seek always to corrupt, control, or destroy everything around them. They often enslave packs of lesser Shadowlands creatures or even Lost into their service.

The oni presented here, Ugulu no Oni, is one of the more powerful oni types known to the Rokugani, and Crab standing guard on the Kaiu Wall have learned to dread its appearance. It is a thirteen foot tall humanoid, with a swollen, grotesquely muscular body as if its purple skin can hardly contain the muscles beneath. Its hands sport claws as long as wakizashi, its demonic head is surmounted by a pair of large curving horns, and a long tongue lolls past the fangs of its great mouth.

Air: 1	Earth: 6	Fire: 2	Water: 2
-	-	Agility 4	Strength 8

Initiative: 3k1 — *Attack: Claws 7k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 9k3 — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 24 (12 against jade, crystal, or obsidian) — *Wounds: 32: +5; 64: +10; 96: +15; 124: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3.*
- *Superior Invulnerability: Ugulu no Oni are completely immune to all arrows except for armor-piercing arrows.*
- *Spell Immunity: All Ugulu no Oni are immune to two spells, although the specific spells vary from one Ugulu to the next.*

Ratling (Nezumi)

The ratlings are a race of intelligent bipedal rats who dwell in the Shadowlands. Unlike other denizens of the Shadowlands, the ratlings are immune to the Taint, a phenomenon which fascinates those Rokugani who are aware of it. The ratlings claim to have once had a great civilization in ancient times, a civilization destroyed when Fu Leng fell from the sky. Whether this is true or not, the ratlings today are a race of primitive tribal creatures. They are notorious for their short attention spans and lack of long-term memory – many Rokugani have compared the typical ratling to a hyperactive six-year-old human child. Ratlings' traditions and knowledge are maintained by a small caste known as Rememberers, who use special sticks as mnemonic devices to strengthen their memories.

Ratlings are often seen as cowardly by the Rokugani, since they do not hesitate to flee from superior force or to employ stealth and ambush to gain an advantage over their enemies. However, the truth is that ratlings are quite courageous when need requires – a ratling female protecting her pups will fight as ferociously as any samurai. The ratlings simply do not see why they should fight without need, or deny themselves any advantages – after all, in the Shadowlands their enemies are often both larger and stronger.

Ratlings live in tribes of anywhere from a dozen to several hundred individuals. Most of these tribes are found in the Shadowlands, but several of them dwell within the Shinomen Forest or even within Rokugan itself. For most of their history, their relations with humans have been distant – the Rokugani typically regarded them as troublesome vermin at best, dangerous Shadowlands creatures at worst. However, the Crab Clan have long seen the ratlings as useful allies in the fight against the Shadowlands. At certain times in history, notably the mid-twelfth century, the ratlings have managed to band together and gain more respectful treatment from the Empire as a whole.

Ratlings have their own language, composed of a mixture of words, squeaks, and clicks. Some of them also speak a pidgin form of Rokugani, characterized by simple sentences and a tendency to repeat words. ("You come this way, man-man!")

Ratlings have several schools of their own, but not all of them are able to learn such techniques. The statistics below represent a "typical" ratling without a school.

Air: 1	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Name: 1
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	-	-

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Crude spear 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: None — *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks.*

Name 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2.*
- *Taint Immunity: Ratlings cannot gain the Shadowlands Taint from any source, and cannot cast maho spells.*
- *Name: Ratlings attach great importance to names, and the "stronger" a ratling's name is, the more potent and lucky he or she will be. In game terms, ratlings have a "Name" trait which functions mechanically in the same manner as the Void Ring does for humans, including the ability to spend "Name Points" for the same effects humans can get from Void Points. However, ratlings cannot meditate or perform tea ceremonies to regain Name points, and cannot enter Center Stance.*



Tsuno (Tsuno Warrior)



The Tsuno are a race descended from the Kitsu, the pre-human race whose last survivors joined the Lion Clan. In ancient times the Tsuno were exiled by their Kitsu cousins into the spirit realms. They spent centuries dwelling in Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter, adapting themselves to its cruel nature. During the time of the Four Winds in the twelfth century, the Tsuno re-entered the mortal realm and dwelled in the Shadowlands as allies of the Dark Lord Daigotsu, becoming Tainted by their own choice.

Tsuno appear to be bestial, furred humanoids with sharp claws on their hands and feet. Their long, slavering mouths are filled with sharp fangs, and they sport a pair of sharp horns atop their heads. Tsuno are highly intelligent and viciously cruel, with a martial culture that prizes strength and treats all other races with contempt. They wear armor and carry weapons – their swords are notorious for their hooked, barbed appearance.

Tsuno fight in organized packs, led by powerful warriors called Ravagers and dangerous spellcasters known as Soultwisters. The sample Tsuno presented here is a basic warrior without such advanced training.

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 2	Water: 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 5k4

Attack: Tsuno blade 7k3 (Complex) or unarmed 6k3 (Complex)

Damage: 6k3 (Tsuno blade) or 3k2 (unarmed)

Armor TN: 30 (5 from light armor)

Reduction: 8 (3 from light armor).

Wounds: Human-type Wound ranks

Taint: 4

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Heavy Weapons (Tsuno Blade) 4, Jiujutsu 3, Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Lore (Spirit Realms) 4, Stealth 3.

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Special Weapon (Tsuno Blade): The cruel barbed swords of the Tsuno gain a +1k0 attack bonus against any opponent who has at least one Rank of Taint, who has the Spirit quality, or who has the Touched by the Realms Advantage.*
- *Spirit.*
- *Swift 3.*

Undead Revenant

Undead revenants are a more powerful form of zombie (see below), created by potent maho spells. Like zombies, revenants are corpses animated by the malignant force of the Taint, seeking to attack and devour living things. However, they are usually under the control of the maho-tsukai who summoned them. Unlike zombies, revenants do not continue to rot once they are reanimated, and their sinews and muscles retain enough tone to allow them to move almost as quickly as they did in life. They also possess a certain animal intelligence that is greater than the mindless aggression of zombies. Like zombies, though, they are fearless, immune to pain, and lack any sense of empathy or humanity. Revenants are usually made from the corpses of samurai, and fight with the weapons they carried in life.



Air: 0	Earth: 3	Fire: 1	Water: 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 3

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Fist 5k3 (Complex) or Sword 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k1 (fist) or 5k2 (sword) — *Armor TN: 15 (revenants sometimes wear armor, with the appropriate increase in TN and Reduction)*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 72: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Beheading: A revenant normally can only be destroyed by literally hacking it to pieces (reducing it to Dead). However, it can also be destroyed instantly by severing its head. This requires taking the Raises for a Called Shot and then inflicting at least 18 Wounds.*
- *Fear 3.*
- *Undead.*

Zombie



Air: 0	Earth: 3	Fire: 0	Water: 1
Reflexes 1	-	Agility 2	Strength 3

Initiative: 1k1 — *Attack: Fist 4k2 (Complex) or Club 4k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k1 (fist) or 3k2 (club) — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 72: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Beheading: A zombie normally can only be destroyed by literally hacking it to pieces (reducing it to Dead). However, it can also be destroyed instantly by severing its head. This requires taking the Raises for a Called Shot and then inflicting at least 18 Wounds.*
- *Fear 3.*
- *Undead.*

In Rokugan, undead are typically created when a corpse is suffused with the Taint. Any corpse left in the Shadowlands will reanimate as a zombie within ten to thirty minutes. A body that dies already Tainted will reanimate even faster. Corpses can also be reanimated by certain maho spells, or by sinister porcelain masks created by the Bloodspeaker cult.

Regardless of how they are created, all zombies are similar: rotting corpses animated by the malignant force of the Taint, seeking to attack and devour all living things. They feel no pain, no fear, nothing but the mindless urge to destroy. No vestige of their former humanity remains. To the Rokugani, these shambling monstrosities are both terrifying and blasphemous, violations of the Celestial Order that strike at the very essence of what it means to be human.

Poison

No honorable samurai would ever stoop to using poison. It is a deplorable action that clearly indicates an inability to resolve a conflict in a manner befitting a true warrior. For the most part, poison is relegated to use by the worst sort of scum imaginable – criminals and assassins (including ninja, if they exist). Such individuals do make ample use of the obvious benefits of poison. To incapacitate or even kill an opponent without risk to oneself is too great an advantage for such dishonorable persons to overlook. Generals, duelists, and prestigious courtiers are frequent targets of poison by their enemies.

Poisons are created through use of the Craft: Poison Skill, and can be applied to a target in a variety of ways, depending upon the poison in question. Some poisons must be introduced into the bloodstream, and thus require either ingestion or application via a wound in order to affect the target. Some of the most dangerous poisons, however, require only contact with the skin in order to be effective. Some poisons can be alleviated or even cured through use of the Medicine (Antidotes) Skill, while others can only be cured with magic.

The following are some of the more common and effective poisons found in use in the Empire of Rokugan. This list is by no means exhaustive and the GM should feel free to create additional poisons based on these guidelines.

The Craft entry lists the TN for creating the poison, using the Craft: Poison Skill and assuming a wide range of herbal components are present, while the Heal entry describes the TN necessary to alleviate the symptoms with use of the Medicine (Antidotes) Skill.

Dripping Poison

The preferred weapon of assassins everywhere, Dripping Poison is so named because of its carefully formulated viscosity, which allows it to be administered by dripping the poison down a thread over the head of the sleeping target, onto the lips. The poison requires some time to create because it must be thick enough to cling to the thread and run down it, but not thin enough to drip down quickly and splatter on the target. Dripping Poison cannot be introduced to the target through any means other than ingestion, and its distinctive flavor makes it highly noticeable if concealed in food. The poison requires four hours in the target's system before its effects become noticeable. It induces sharp stomach pain and overwhelming nausea, which many mistake for food poisoning or illness.

Effects: Once it takes effect, Dripping Poison requires the target to make a Stamina Roll (TN 20) or the poison reduces the target's Stamina by 2. Regardless of whether the Stamina



roll is successful or not, the target is considered Fatigued. The target must make another Stamina roll every hour, with the same possible results, until the poison is treated or 24 hours pass. After 24 hours the poison is typically broken down by the body and all symptoms cease. It is quite possible for victims of Dripping Poison to die due to one or more failed rolls, reducing their Stamina (and thus their Earth Ring and Wounds) to 0.

- **Craft:** TN 20
- **Heal:** TN 15

Fire Biter

This particularly painful poison is more crippling than some, but less lethal than most. It must be introduced directly to the bloodstream, and is far too bitter to be consumed orally without being detected. Its most frequent use is to be painted onto a weapon with a brush and then introduced to an opponent's system via a wound inflicted with that weapon. Once introduced, Fire Biter causes extremely painful inflammation and swelling of joints throughout the body, most severely near the wound. Those who react particularly badly to the poison can suffer violent spasms as well.

Effects: Within ten minutes after being introduced, Fire Biter causes such significant pain to the target that he is considered Stunned. This lasts for six hours, although a successful Stamina Trait Roll (TN 30) can reduce the severity of the effects (the target is then considered Fatigued rather than Stunned).

- **Craft:** TN 25
- **Heal:** TN 25 (can upgrade the effect from Stunned to Fatigued).

Night Milk

Night Milk is one of the first poisons exclusively developed by the Shosuro family, but has also been used by other groups – perhaps with the Scorpion Clan's connivance, so as to divert attention away from their own use of it. It is a somewhat thick and milky compound that must be introduced into the bloodstream directly; ingestion is not a suitable method of delivery. The onset of symptoms is nearly instantaneous, and while they do not last long, the poison is especially brutal and virulent while it is in effect. Night Milk is traditionally painted onto weapons, although this must be done carefully because it does leave a visible white residue.

Effects: The target must make a Stamina Roll (TN 25) immediately after the poison is introduced, and once per minute after that. Each failed roll results in the target becoming Dazed until the next roll. This effect lasts a total of ten minutes before ending on its own.

- **Craft:** TN 25
- **Heal:** TN 20 (this will end the ongoing effects)

Poisons & Conditional Effects

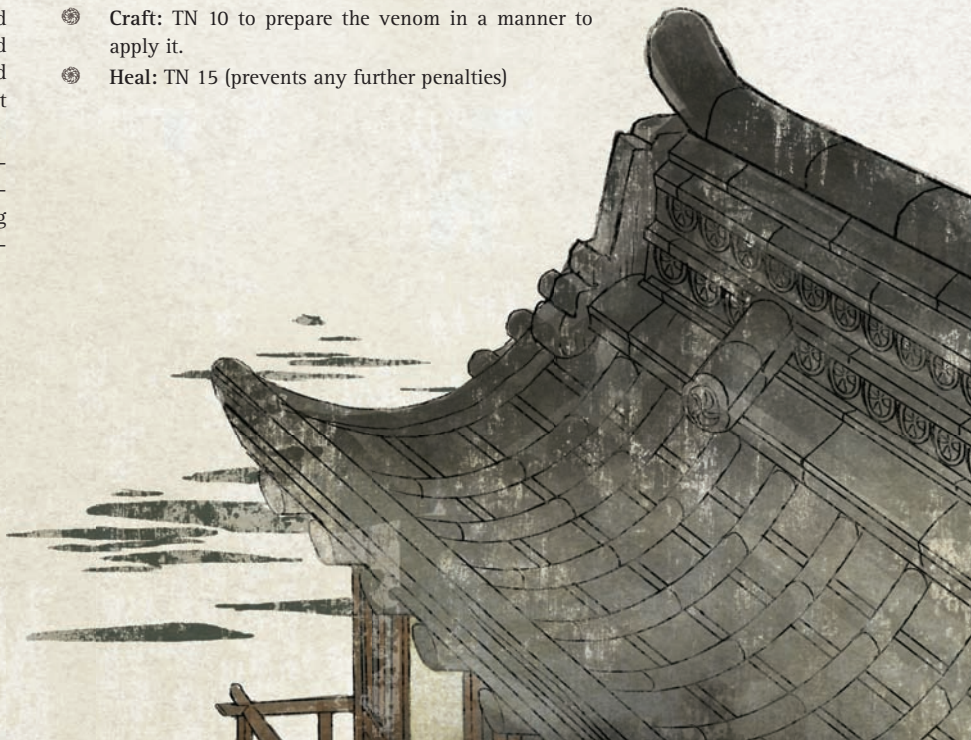
Unless otherwise specified, Conditional Effects caused by poisons, such as Fatigued and Stunned, do not expire as they normally do as described in the Book of Earth. Rather, these Conditions are not alleviated unless the poison is treated as listed under the Heal entry.

Venom

One of the simplest tenets of the Shosuro family, who are without question the greatest poison masters in all of Rokugan, is that elaborate concoctions can be avoided by using the poison nature itself has provided, such as the venom of spiders or snakes. These compounds, while difficult to collect, have the advantage of being less suspicious than most and leaving signs that many will recognize as natural. In some cases, it befits an assassin to simply place the venomous creature in close contact with the intended target rather than attempting to apply the venom directly.

Effects: Introduction of venom into the bloodstream reduces the target's Agility, Reflexes, Stamina, and Strength by 1 each hour. At the beginning of the second and each subsequent hour, the target may make a Stamina Roll (TN 25) to prevent additional penalties for that hour. Otherwise, these penalties continue to accrue until the target succeeds on three consecutive rolls, the poison is treated, 24 hours pass, or the target has an uninterrupted eight hour period to rest. If Stamina is reduced to 0 by the poison, Earth and Wounds become 0 as well, and the victim dies. Reduced Traits return at the end of 24 hours if the victim survives.

- **Craft:** TN 10 to prepare the venom in a manner to apply it.
- **Heal:** TN 15 (prevents any further penalties)





Emerald Empire Location Guide

Provinces of the Crab Clan

The most distinctive aspect of the Crab lands, indeed the thing that defines them above all else, is their role as border and defense between the Shadowlands and the rest of Rokugan. Their southern and western edge is largely defined by that foul realm, and over the course of centuries many lands once claimed by the Crab have fallen to the Taint – most famously and terribly during the eighth century, when the clan came under attack by the Oni Lord known only as the Maw. Since the defeat of the Maw's army, the Kaiu Wall has formed the Crab Clan's (and the Empire's) border, standing vigilant against any further attack by the forces of Jigoku. The Wall is the single largest fortification in Rokugan, standing over a hundred feet tall and stretching for countless miles. It is studded by a series of heavily fortified towers, strong-points from which siege engines and assault troops unleash destruction on any attack. On the outer side of the Wall is the River of the Last Stand, forming a sort of moat that further hampers enemy attacks, while on the interior side a road runs its entire length. Yasuki merchants are notorious for lining the road from one end to the other with stalls, shops, and tea-houses. Passage through the Wall into the Shadowlands is accomplished through a network of heavily trapped and guarded tunnels beneath the mighty fortification.

The lands immediately within the Kaiu Wall are chiefly those of the Hida, whose provinces are known to be rocky and poorly-watered with only minimal agricultural production. They do contain extensive mineral and iron deposits, chiefly on their eastern side where they encompass the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. To the southeast, the Hida lands abut on the vast warm-water inlet known as Earthquake Fish Bay, whose abundant marine life is a major food source for the clan. The Hida lands are studded with many formidable castles large and small, most notably the ancestral hall known as Koten and the family seat, Kyuden Hida.



The Yasuki family control the lands on the northern and eastern shores of Earthquake Fish Bay, ruling from their splendid fortress of Yasuki Yashiki. They also maintain the fortified city of Clear Water Village at the head of the bay. The city lies at the point where the River of Gold flows into the bay, and thus forms a major trade hub for the southern Empire. The bay itself boasts abundant fish, often producing more food than the Hida farmlands. The Yasuki lowlands on the eastern bank are also major producers of sake and tea-leaves, which along with iron form the Crab Clan's principle exports. This is fortunate, since the clan's huge armies inevitably outstrip its food production. Even when the Yasuki do well, the Crab must sometimes call on the generosity of the Imperial treasury to maintain their war with the Shadowlands.

The bleakest part of the Crab lands are the territories of the Kuni family. When the Maw's army attacked in the eighth century, these lands were largely overrun and heavily Tainted. After the defeat of the Maw and the construction of the Kaiu Wall, the Kuni systematically reclaimed their lands, using magical rituals to purge the Taint from the soil – but in the process driving out every other elemental kami as well. Today the so-called "Kuni Wastes" are a bleak lifeless desert of gray soil and bare rock, a vacant blight in the midst of Crab territory whose empty vistas are interrupted only by the occasional huts of the Kuni shugenja. Few outsiders willingly venture into the Kuni Wastes, and even the Kuni themselves sometimes admit that living in such an unnatural and lifeless environment can be... trying... to the mind.

The Hiruma family's ancestral lands, sadly, lie chiefly on the wrong side of the Kaiu Wall, in the Shadowlands. Up until the eighth century they were a normal part of the Crab territories, but during the Maw's attack they were completely overrun. The Hiruma spent the better part of three centuries fighting vainly to retake their ancestral castle, finally accomplishing it in the year 1130 during the reign of Emperor Toturi I. After that time the Hiruma re-occupied their old lands, purging them of the Taint in the same manner as the Kuni lands earlier. Due to the exposed location of these territories

they are heavily fortified and patrolled, and food and water must be shipped in from the Kaiu Wall to keep the Hiruma alive and fighting. The Hiruma also control some territories on the Empire's side of the Wall, including some modest farmlands north of the Kuni Wastes and some lands on the northeastern slopes of the Wall Above the Ocean mountains. For the most part these are poor and sparsely populated lands, and the Hiruma produce little for the rest of the Crab Clan other than their formidable bushi and scouts.

The Kaiu provinces are located in the northern part of Crab territory. Their provinces are known for being exceptionally rocky and mountainous even by Crab standards, and include the lesser mountain range known as the Twilight Mountains. The Kaiu Wall comes to an end here, since the Shadowlands themselves do not extend any farther north. The Crab maintain a number of smaller fortresses and outposts, such as Razor of the Dawn and Shattered Keep, to watch over their northern flank and make sure the forces of the Shadowlands do not attempt an end-run around the Kaiu Wall.

On the northern slopes of the Twilight Mountains, facing the great expanse of the Shinomen Forest, is the single province of the Toritaka family. It occupies a narrow valley called Tani Hitokage, or the Valley of the Spirits, reputed to be a place with both exceptional spiritual qualities and an exceptional frequency of ghost hauntings. For most of the Empire's history the Toritaka are an independent minor clan, the Falcon, but after a catastrophe in the twelfth century they join the Crab Clan. Their valley is fertile enough to make the family self-sufficient in food, but produces little else, and no major Imperial roads come to the Valley of the Spirits.

Clear Water Village [CB1]

Although it is referred to as a "village," in actuality Sunda Mizu Mura is a major city with a population of over 5,000, as well as a major commercial center for the Crab Clan. Originally controlled by the Crane Clan, the city passed into Crab hands along with the rest of the Yasuki family holdings in the third century. Clear Water Village does a booming trade on both river and sea, and its wharves and docks are always full. True to Crab tradition, it is also heavily fortified both on land and especially in the water, with extensive sea-walls and underwater barriers to obstruct any possible aquatic threat.

Face of the East Castle [CB2]

This castle, also called Shiro Koatsuki no Higashi, lies on the eastern edge of the Twilight Mountains close to the Shinomen Forest. This remote location would seem to make it a place of little value, and in truth the castle has been threatened less often than almost any other Crab stronghold. For that very reason the Yasuki have made it into a major center of diplomatic relations with other clans. The distance from the Shadowlands makes it a place where other clan dignitaries can visit with little danger, and the Yasuki have worked to make Face of the East a friendlier and more pleasant castle than most Crab fortresses. Although it cannot rival the splendor of Yasuki Yashiki it is still considerably more luxurious than typical for the Crab, and clan ambassadors and dignitaries visit it regularly during the year. The castle is also a hub for overland trade (both legal and illicit) with the Unicorn Clan, whose caravans can reach it directly without passing through the strict tariff inspections of the Scorpion lands.

Fortress of the Forgotten [CB3]

The Crab are notorious for the berserkers who appear in their ranks, men (and sometimes women) whose battle fury sweeps them away in murderous rampages that can turn the tide of a battle single-handedly. Unfortunately, the very qualities that make berserkers so formidable on the battlefield also make them very troublesome away from it. Berserkers are notorious for being crude, ill-mannered, violent, and socially reprehensible, and the Crab usually try to keep them from mingling too much with the rest of the Empire – or even the other Crab troops, whose discipline can sometimes be undermined by the temperamental berserkers. The worst of the berserkers are isolated into their own units, and when not serving on the wall these problem soldiers are garrisoned at the Fortress of the Forgotten, also known as Toride no Wasuremono. A bleak castle even by Crab standards, located in some of the most rugged and forbidding territory of the Hida provinces, the Fortress of the Forgotten is little more than a massively fortified barracks with only the most minimal requirements to maintain life and health. The Crab have been careful to locate it well away from the traders' road that parallels the Kaiu Wall, since otherwise the off-duty berserkers would quickly poison themselves with sake and other less savory indulgences.

Koten, the Crab Ancestral Hall [CB4]

The Crab are not known as an especially contemplative people, and few of their samurai ever choose to retire to the Brotherhood of Shinsei. However, their pragmatic lifestyle does not mean they are any less pious than the rest of the Empire, and anyone who visits Koten will understand this at once. Here, in a temple which is as well-fortified and heavily constructed as any Crab fortress, the Crab pay reverence to those who have gone before and remember their deeds for all time. Statues of Crab heroes line the walls and monks chant perpetually in mourning for the dead and the lost. There are few artifacts or mementoes here, for seldom is the Crab hero who lives to pass such things on to Koten. What is preserved here are stories, legends, and tales of Crab valor which are remembered here if nowhere else in the Empire. The monks here are always ready to listen to the stories of their visitors, to listen while a heartbroken Crab warrior tells the tale of a heroic brother, or father, or mother, or cousin. It is the preservation of these tales that the monks hold as their most sacred duty, and they perform it without fault.

Kyuden Hida [CB5]

Perhaps the single most formidable defensive fortress in all of Rokugan, the mighty seat of the Hida family serves as the central command post for the entire Kaiu Wall and is home to a permanent garrison of over 3,000 veteran Crab bushi. The castle is a brutally practical-looking structure, wholly free of any sort of art, decoration, or beauty. Its main gatehouse stands over 60 feet high, and the castle's walls are built to withstand siege from any conceivable opponent. It is located atop a high stone escarpment that offers an excellent view of the surrounding territory, and the castle's masonry blends seamlessly with the rugged landscape, almost as though the fortress sprouted whole from the ground. After the tumultuous eighth century, the castle does acquire one notable adornment – the skull of the Maw, cleansed of Taint and hung over the main gate as a gesture of defiance against the Shadowlands.

Razor of the Dawn Castle [CB6]

Located near the northern end of the Kaiu Wall, this ancient fortress in Kaiu lands was once a key defensive position for the northern Crab provinces. After the Kaiu Wall was built, Razor of the Dawn became the anchor of the Wall's northern flank. It is positioned between two great peaks of the Twilight Mountains, and any Shadowlands force which tries to circle around the Wall will run headlong into its formidable defenses. In point of fact, no enemy of any strength has ever threatened Razor of the Dawn, and it usually serves instead as a marshalling point for reserve forces. During the major crises of the twelfth century, such as Daigotsu's assault in 1158 or the Kalima invasion of 1172, Razor of the Dawn assumes a much more active role, functioning as a central marshaling point for Crab forces counterattacking against the broken Wall.

Shattered Peaks Castle [CB7]

One of the strongest of the fortifications which stand alone on the northern edge of Crab lands, Shattered Peaks is a smaller counterpart to Razor of the Dawn, located on the western side of the Twilight Mountains while Razor of the Dawn guards the eastern side. The northern edge of the Shadowlands is visible from the walls of Shattered Peaks Castle and it has turned back more than one assault from the forces of Jigoku. During the eleventh century it withstood a large-scale assault from the legions of the Dark Moto, enduring a forty-day siege before relief forces arrived to drive away the enemy. The castle suffered severe damage during the siege but never fell, and after the Shadowlands forces retreated the fortress was rebuilt stronger than before.

Shiro Hiruma [CB8]

The ancestral seat of the Hiruma family is a relatively small castle. It stood proudly unconquered until the disasters of the eighth century. After the Maw's legions overran the Hiruma lands this castle fell into the grasp of the Shadowlands, becoming a symbol of shame and horror to the Crab Clan. The Hiruma mounted numerous expeditions to try to retake it but all of them failed, often with bitter loss of life. Finally in the year 1130 a combined Crab army recaptured the castle. It was purged of the Taint and rebuilt to be considerably larger and stronger than before. Extensive fortifications, traps, and secondary entrenchments surround the modern castle, ensuring it will not be caught undefended as it was before.

Shiro Kaiu [CB9]

The seat of the Kaiu family is not quite as large and formidable a fortress as Kyuden Hida but may actually be a more intimidating obstacle to an enemy. Home to the Empire's premier masters of siege warfare, Shiro Kaiu boasts some of the most refined and sophisticated fortifications and siege engines ever seen in Rokugan, and no enemy has ever breached its walls despite its close proximity to the Wall. In addition to its military role Shiro Kaiu is also home to the legendary Great Forge, where the clan's master weaponsmiths craft some of the finest swords in the Empire. Only a few score of the fabled Kaiu blades are made each year, by craftsmen who undertake special rituals of purification before they are even allowed near the forge.

Shiro Kuni [CB10]

The Castle of the Land, as it is sometimes called, serves more than one role for the Crab Clan. The Kuni maintain their primary dojo here, along with other facilities that include an extensive laboratory for their sinister experiments. However, the castle also serves as one of the command centers for the Kaiu Wall, and significant troops are held here in reserve to reinforce the Wall during dangerous assaults. The castle itself is relatively small in size, and like most Crab construction it is quite plain and functional in design. It is not especially well fortified, however – its role is command post, communications center, and training center, rather than defensive fortress.

Yasuki Yashiki [CB11]

The primary home of the Yasuki family is a study in contrast with most other Crab settlements. Although it is well-fortified and as capable of withstanding attack as any other castle in Rokugan, Yasuki Yashiki is also built to be a beautiful castle, splendid to look upon, with fine gardens and a selection of splendid art from across the Empire. Although the Yasuki tend to be a bit gaudier than more restrained and traditional clans like the Crane and Scorpion, Yasuki Yashiki is nevertheless a far more comfortable and familiar place to other Rokugani than the stark, stony practicality of the Hida, Hiruma, and Kaiu castles. Major diplomatic and trade negotiations take place here every year. For samurai whose duties require them to conduct mercantile business, winning an invitation to the winter court of Yasuki Yashiki is a prize indeed.

Provinces of the Crane Clan

The lands controlled by the Crane Clan are among the most beautiful and bountiful in all the Empire, which has made the enmity of other clans a little easier for the Crane to acquire over the course of the centuries. The clan's rivals claim their lands are the finest because Lady Doji was the favorite sibling of the first Hantei Emperor, while their allies defend them by pointing out the Crane have worked very long and hard to ensure the beauty of their home, cultivating it for centuries in the name of the Emperor.

The Doji might be expected to hold the finest lands in the Crane provinces, but that distinction actually belongs to their Kakita cousins. The Doji do control extremely fertile regions, however, and have some of the most industrious peasants in the Empire. This is a necessity for the family, since the Doji are among the most numerous samurai in Rokugan. The family also controls ample lumber resources, most notably the Osari Fori forest, which they carefully conserve, cultivate, and harvest for artistry and construction.

It is said by some that the Kakita lands are the most beautiful of all the Crane holdings, and thus by extension the most beautiful in the Empire. It is entirely possible this is not hyperbole. The family's ranks include a vast number of artisans, and over the centuries much of their land has been carefully domesticated and used for gardening, sculpture, and other such wonderful pursuits. Even the most practical regions, such as the rice paddies maintained by the common folk, are rarely out of sight of some strikingly beautiful landmark. Their provinces are no more fertile than those of the other Crane families... which is to say they are slightly more productive than the average province of any other clan.

The Daidoji lands are a stark contrast to those of their kinsmen, since the only significant development in their provinces has been agricultural in nature. What little beautification has been done was undertaken by the other families, usually as a gift or service for the Daidoji. The Daidoji are the core of the Crane Clan's military defense against their enemies, and while their lands may appear quite natural and pleasant to the eye, they have been carefully altered over the years to ensure the family possesses the maximum possible strategic advantage against any enemy force. A knowledgeable Kaiu or Akodo who surveyed their lands would be greatly impressed, but to most other samurai this subtle effect is completely lost.

The Asahina provinces do not reflect outward beauty and wealth to the same degree as the other Crane families' lands, but instead emphasize serenity and calm. Some have said it would be nigh impossible to go to war in the Asahina provinces, so calming is their atmosphere. Sadly, history has proven this myth inaccurate, but the Asahina never stop seeking a means of placating the warrior spirit in the heart of other samurai. To them, the largest and greatest canvas upon which this work of peace can be painted is the land itself.

Benten Seido [CN1]

Shrines to many Fortunes, particularly the Seven Great Fortunes, are a common sight throughout the Empire. Each of the Great Clans tends to revere one of the Seven over the others, not through design but simply because of the unique philosophies to which each clan subscribes. For the Crane that Fortune is Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love. This should not be taken to suggest the Crane believe in love above all else; far from it, for as one of the most political of clans they recognize the value of marrying for duty and politics. However, romantic love is a powerful emotion, and a magnificent topic for use in plays, poems, stories, and all manner of artistic endeavors. In this regard the concept of love has served the clan exceptionally well over the course of its history. That so many thousands throughout the Empire covet a beautiful Crane maiden or a dashing Crane swordsman as a spouse has only increased the clan's appreciation for Benten's power, and in thanks for such blessings they have constructed a large and elaborate temple to celebrate the Fortune. The temple, although elaborate for such religious structures, is still very modestly appointed compared to the majority of Crane holdings. It is staffed by a mixture of Asahina shugenja and Brotherhood monks from a sect of the Fortunist orders devoted to Benten.

Kakita Dueling Academy [CN2]

The Kakita artisans are for the most part regarded as the finest in the Empire, although there are some among the Empire's other art-inclined families who would doubtless contest the claim. Shiro sano Kakita is the home for all branches the Kakita Artisan Academy, although it is named for and dominated by the Kakita duelists who are its most famous graduates. Although the number of aspiring artisans among the Kakita and Doji families is greater than in any other clan, their number is still dwarfed by the students studying the methods of Crane dueling, universally regarded as the preeminent dueling style of the Empire. Though there are numerous places in the Crane lands where Kakita sensei teach their students, none are as large or well known as the institute which bears their name. The Kakita Academy exists for no other purpose save instruction. Its student body is dominated by young Crane, but there are always a fair number of students from other clans as well. It is not uncommon for other families and clans to call in considerable favors in order to permit their children the opportunity to study at this incredibly prestigious academy.

Kosaten Shiro [CN3]

For the majority of its existence, Kosaten Shiro has been the vanguard of the Crane Clan's seemingly endless conflict with the neighboring Lion Clan. As with most military matters, this conflict was largely managed by the Daidoji family. Early in the Empire's history, it became obvious the conflict with the Lion was not one that was going to be quickly or quietly resolved. Rather than be forced to move large numbers of troops from Shiro Daidoji each time skirmishes broke out along the border, the Daidoji built Kosaten Shiro right at the line of conflict, ensuring the Daidoji would have a constant presence in the area and could respond quickly to outbreaks of violence. The castle is considered an important cornerstone to the Crane's defense of their western border, and the Daidoji hold it in high regard. However, they are an imminently practical family and consider even Kosaten Shiro to ultimately be a useful but potentially disposable military asset.



Kyuden Doji [CN4]

Kyuden Doji is the true center of the Crane Clan's power. From here the Doji govern the massive Crane provinces and coordinate the incredibly intricate political machine that empowers their clan. The first designs of this beautiful estate were put in place by Lady Doji herself, and the clan has gone to great lengths to preserve her vision, adding to it only after careful consideration of how such an act might impact the structure as a whole. The ten-story castle perches atop a high coastal plateau, surrounded by vast gardens and numerous supplemental structures. Indeed the Fantastic Gardens are almost as famous in the rest of Rokugan as the Doji palace itself.

Unlike many familial estates, the Doji palace does not host any major dojo or military forces. It is reserved exclusively for matters of governance and politics. There are extensive and lavish guest quarters, allowing for more than a hundred guests and their entourages to attend at any one time. A visiting contingent of such size is not routine, of course, but the Doji have frequently hosted the Emperor's Winter Court.

The training of Doji courtiers, the principle school the family maintains, is conducted in a small nearby city called Shizuka Toshi. The settlement was constructed specifically for that purpose in order to avoid any possibility of young courtiers embarrassing the clan before they are fully trained. Likewise, although politics and art are on display in great abundance throughout the Doji family palace, the family chooses to train its artisans at a branch of the Kakita Artisan Academy known as Seven Fold Palace.

Lonely Shore City [CN5]

Mura Sabishii Toshi is a relatively out-of-the-way city, isolated by coastal hills and cliffs, and located well inside the borders of the Crane Clan's southern provinces. Few visitors to the Crane lands ever stumble upon it unless they are seeking it out specifically. This suits the Crane perfectly, since Lonely Shore City is a major center for their trade and commercial interests. Such things are not exactly proper for an honored guest to witness while traveling in one's lands. Of course, merchant patrons who are visiting for commercial reasons will seek out Lonely Shore City willingly enough.

The Daidoji family is primarily responsible for overseeing the merchants who traffic in the Crane Clan's considerable material goods, and the legendary Daidoji Trading Council has its headquarters in Lonely Shore City. It is said Crane negotiations are never more ruthless and cutthroat than when conducted in this settlement, and it is certainly true that the Daidoji are not known for being as diplomatic or considerate as the other Crane families.

This city is the center of almost all Crane relations with the Mantis Clan, since the Mantis are generally considered poor guests and in other locations are kept under careful supervision. Only within this city does the true nature of the Crane and Mantis relationship exist in its natural form, a commercial rivalry that varies wildly from season to season.

Seawatch Castle [CN6]

A minor village and keep in the southern Crane provinces, Seawatch Castle's original purpose is unknown, although many believe it was intended to survey the seas for potential pirate attacks early in the Empire's history. Certainly the small castle is perched on a high cliff where it affords a fine view of the sea. That purpose, if true, has long since fallen into disuse, and for much of its history the castle did little other than to serve as an out-of-the-way assignment for those Crane soldiers who managed to earn the ire of their commanding officers.

At some point, however, a young and talented bushi was stationed at Seawatch Castle after being singled out by a jealous and ambitious superior officer. Far from being upset at his assignment, the young warrior enjoyed the serenity of the ocean, and often meditated on the cliff top. Over the years, this young warrior became a great duelist and eventually a sensei at the Kakita Dueling Academy, where his unique swordsmanship style was popular with the students. Although it never became the dominant style within the Kakita dojo, many still enjoy the fluid movement and natural rhythms of the Seawatch style, and in modern times Seawatch Castle has begun to enjoy more popularity with younger members of the clan.

Seven Fold Palace [CN7]

The Doji family's policy of placing its training facilities outside of the family's ancestral estate led inevitably to the creation of specialized locations where young Crane, especially Doji, can prepare for a life of service in the name of their clan. The principle training site for the legions of young Doji courtiers is the small city of Shizuka Toshi, a short distance from Kyuden Doji. Due to the sheer number of students that must be trained every generation, however, a second site was created over the centuries: Seven Fold Palace.

In addition to its purpose as a courtier training facility, Seven Fold Palace also serves as a dojo for those members of the family who choose to study as artisans. The Kakita Artisan Academy maintains a subsidiary dojo within the palace for this purpose, and the students sent here are of the highest caliber. The Doji would never dishonor their Kakita cousins by sending sub-par students. For their part, the Kakita ensure the sensei at this school are just as superb as those at Shiro Sano Kakita itself.

Unlike Shizuka Toshi, however, Seven Fold Palace can and does entertain guests. Since the students who are trained there are of the highest caliber, they are not generally considered risks for embarrassing the family with poor performance.

Shinden Asahina [CN8]

In a clan that defines the social norms of an Empire, the Asahina stick out badly. Descended from a union between Crane and Phoenix, the Asahina eschew violence at all costs and adhere to a strict, almost monastic creed that puts them at odds with the more conventional (and sometimes ostentatious) families of their extremely wealthy clan.

The Asahina family estate is far more conservative in its appearance than other Crane ancestral estate, and as its name implies, much of it is actually a temple complex rather than a castle. This is not to say that Shinden Asahina is stark or austere. Rather, the Asahina simply prefer to appoint their home with less blatant displays of wealth. Everything within Shinden Asahina is of exceptional quality, and the artifacts, paintings, and sculptures are of superb quality. Indeed, this art is the only true extravagance found here, displays of exquisite craftsmanship – predominantly created by fellow Crane, but with plenty of outstanding examples from other clans as well. The Shiba artisans in particular have numerous works of art

on display, and the close relationship between the Crane and Phoenix has made it possible for artistic exchanges to take place with regularity.

The central temple of Shinden Asahina is quite ancient, dating back to the founding of the Asahina family, and its dark stone walls are carved with historical scenes and prayers for peace. It is said among the Crane that it can take a lifetime – or more – to read and truly comprehend all these carvings.

Shiro Daidoji [CN9]

Those who do like the Daidoji family sometimes claim the only things they truly care about are the well-being of the Crane Clan and the preservation of their ancestral estate at Shiro Daidoji. Others dispute such a claim, stating the Daidoji care little even for their estate.

In truth, the Daidoji regard their ancestral estate with a reverence most would reserve exclusively for holy sites or major temples. It is the most significant military fortress in the Crane lands, a distinction rivaled perhaps only by Kosaten Shiro. Shiro Daidoji is the only place most Daidoji ever truly feel at home within their own clan's lands. It is a stark and foreboding place, uniquely suited both to the militant family who calls it home and to its duty as the key to the northern Crane provinces' defense.

Shiro Daidoji has the least extensive guest accommodations of any Crane estate, and typically only officials from other Crane families pay visits to the place. It is rare indeed for out-of-clan visitors to stay at Shiro Daidoji longer than an overnight visit, and normally such visits are confined to those guests who can only be made more amenable to Crane diplomacy through appreciation of military strength. The castle does, however, boast a very extensive library of military writings, so extensive in fact as to rival the military records of the Lion Clan.

Tsuma [CN10]

Although it is often referred to as a village in official records, in truth Tsuma long ago became a bustling city and one of the great attractions of the Crane Clan provinces. The village was once home to a simple dojo of the Kakita Dueling Academy, a dojo that began a unique tradition for its students' gempukku ceremony. The practice came to public notice when the Emperor and his court happened to attend one while traveling through the Crane lands. The Emperor enjoyed the event tremendously, and it soon became a topic of conversation throughout the Empire. In very short order, the tournament-style gempukku ceremony hosted at Tsuma became hugely popular and prestigious, and many clans and families solicited the Crane for the right for their young samurai to attend and compete.

In the centuries since, Tsuma and its dojo have increased dramatically in size and the gempukku ceremony hosted in the city has become the most prestigious in all of Rokugan, with all clans sending their best and brightest to participate. Each winner of the tournament is declared the Topaz Champion, holding the title until the next year. Often the Champion is appointed a prestigious position in the Emerald Magistrates or another branch of the Imperial bureaucracy. Although the Emperor does not attend every spring, one or more of the Emperor's Chosen is almost always present.

Provinces of the Dragon Clan

The word hospitable would never be spoken regarding the Dragon provinces, although this has nothing to do with the samurai who dwell there. Rather, it is their lands' mountainous nature, far more so than any other Great Clan territory, that makes them so unpleasant and unwelcoming. Furthermore, the Great Wall of the North Mountains are noticeably cooler than the Spine of the World or Twilight Mountain ranges farther south, so the temperature within the Dragon provinces is less comfortable than most. In addition to discouraging guests, this has the effect of making life more difficult on the Dragon themselves, but in response they have become a hardy, industrious people who can thrive almost anywhere.

The Mirumoto provinces are the stark and foreboding stereotype that most have of the Dragon mountains. They are rocky and largely frigid, with the few arable regions carved out of the mountains through backbreaking labor and sheer dedication. The family is the largest of the clan, comprising roughly half its number, and dojo for the training of its young samurai dot the rugged countryside. Despite their bleak nature, the Mirumoto provinces are the most heavily settled of the Dragon lands, with small villages and towns scattered all across the region, even in the most inhospitable locations.

The Kitsuki family controls the lower ranges and foothills of the Dragon provinces, a region that supplies the majority of the clan's crops and foodstuffs. Although more mountainous that most citizens of Rokugan are used to, these provinces are the most familiar to those outsiders who are honored to enter the Dragon lands. The routes into Kitsuki lands are notoriously difficult for visitors to locate, and some legends claim the paths cannot be found at all unless the Dragon wish it. Regardless, some artisans make considerable effort to earn invitations, finding the snow-capped peaks inspiring to their work. The Kitsuki lands, like those of the Mirumoto farther north, have many small villages and dojo, and the family places a strong emphasis on education and continued training.

The Togashi lands are surprisingly productive despite being the least densely populated of the Dragon provinces. Their territory is for the most part little more than vast tracts of mountains with sparse villages appearing here and there, yet these villages are easily self-sufficient. The common folk who dwell here look upon the Togashi tattooed monks with a mixture of awe and discomfort, but have come to understand that they are benevolent and generous lords, if somewhat peculiar.

The Tamori family's provinces (the Agasha provinces prior to the War Against the Darkness in the twelfth century) are the least hospitable of all the Dragon lands, consisting almost exclusively of jagged peaks and narrow valleys with little in the way of flatlands at all. The lands are sometimes referred to, by outsiders and occasionally the Tamori themselves, as the Twisting Labyrinth. The Tamori are not as socially inclined as their predecessors among the Agasha, however, and are perfectly content to dwell in such inaccessible and dangerous lands despite. They rely upon magic and the generosity of the other Dragon families to provide for themselves and their modest number of peasants.

Furthest Fortress [D1]

Built into the side of the great Tenkenniyoru Yama, the second largest mountain in Rokugan, Furthest Fortress was conceived and designed to be extremely difficult for anyone unfamiliar

with its location to even see it, much less reach it. The very walls of the fortress blend in seamlessly with the rocks around them, so much so that the uneducated or unperceptive onlooker might easily assume the entire structure was nothing more than an oddly shaped rock outcropping and continue about their business (as if anyone could have legitimate business so high in the Great Wall of the North Mountains). Although ostensibly a Togashi holding, the fortress is staffed by members of all Dragon families in small numbers. Despite its relatively large size, its total contingent seldom numbers more than about three dozen or so at the most.

The true purpose of the fortress is to house a large vault concealed deep within its innermost recesses. The vault doors are a puzzle (something the Dragon notoriously enjoy), an elaborate design that requires specific knowledge in order to enter. Some believe only the Dragon Champion knows how to open the vault known as the Final Riddle, while others believe no one at all knows how to open it. Its contents are unknown, and some in the clan claim it contains nothing at all.

Great Fall Castle [D2]

A joint holding of the Mirumoto and the Kitsuki families, Great Fall Castle is perhaps the greatest dojo of the Dragon Clan outside of the ancient and legendary Iron Mountain Dojo itself. Within its walls the bushi of the Mirumoto train side-by-side with the Kitsuki investigators. The unique martial sect of the investigators known as the Justicars, who rely on martial skill to prove the guilt of criminals, are also trained here, benefiting from the techniques of both the Kitsuki and the Mirumoto.

In addition to its value as a major dojo for the clan, Great Fall Castle is a repository of weapons and other resources, carefully stockpiled in case an invasion, siege, or other calamity strikes the clan. Stockpiling weapons might seem out of character for the Dragon, but for all their poetic and enigmatic reputation the Mirumoto are ultimately an eminently practical people, and they consider this simply a sensible precaution to ensure future security.

High House of Light [D3]

The mysterious monastery that is home to the Togashi tattooed order has been known by many different names throughout its history, including Kyuden Togashi and Kyuden Hitomi, but is most often known simply as the High House of Light. Situated high in the western mountains of the Dragon provinces, the High House is visible for miles around to all who care to look for it... but there is no visible path leading up the mountain to the monastery's mighty gates. The few outsiders who have visited the place sometimes question how the great mountaintop complex could have been constructed in the first place, but the Togashi do not care to address the issue. Physically, witnesses describe the High House as a mixture of temples and castle seems to.

Supposedly, the purpose of the monastery's difficult location is that the climb to reach it represents the change that comes over those who seek out the Togashi in hopes of joining their ranks. It is certainly true that while the majority of the tattooed order are former Dragon, all Great Clans and most Minor Clans have former members among their ranks as well.

As one might expect, the quarters available for guests at the High House are extremely limited, and no Great Clan has sent a formal delegation there in many decades, having learned long ago that such endeavors are pointless. The limited quarters available are primarily for visiting members of the other Dragon families, but all tattooed monks are free to invite guests as they see fit, and some take advantage of this right from time to time. Aside from austere living chambers, the High House is primarily a temple complex, with a main level boasting shrines to every major Fortune and Kami while the lower levels – carved out of the living rock of the mountaintop – contains countless smaller shrines to every minor Fortune known to the Empire.



Northern Towers of Flame [D4]

The Northern Towers of Flame, also sometimes called the Northern Watchtowers, are a series of five large towers built along the relatively flat land in the northernmost Dragon provinces, where they meet the higher slopes and deep recesses of the Great Wall of the North Mountains. The towers are placed on the very edge of vision from one another, so signals can conceivably be sent between them across the open miles of the northern Dragon border. They were constructed to aid in defending the clan against aggression from gaijin enemies to the north, primarily the Yobanjin raiders who live in the northern steppes beyond the mountains. Realistically, the towers are too distant from one another to do more than serve as an early warning system.

The Mirumoto have sometimes broached the topic of adding additional towers to the line, but the rugged geography of the mountains prevents that from being a realistic possibility. Over the years, the Dragon have at least added more barracks and storage chambers at the base of each tower to ensure that additional troops can be stationed there should it become necessary.

Pillars of Virtue [D5]

The Pillars of Virtue is a sacred site associated with the Togashi order. Few outside of the order are aware of its existence, and even fewer have ever visited it. For a Togashi to bring an outsider to the Pillars is considered an act of the greatest respect, and indicates the monk believes the individual in question is of such strong caliber and understanding that they may be ready to embrace the simple but life-altering precepts represented by the Pillars.

The Pillars are a place for the Togashi to reflect upon the most basic lessons of their order, a place far removed even from the concerns of the rest of the Dragon Clan. Their location is high in the Dragon mountains, far from all other settlements, even the High House of Light. A simple torii arch stands before three enormous stone spires, each hollowed out for use by the order and each topped with a statue representing one of Togashi's first followers, founding members of the tattooed order. Although their names have been long forgotten, each of these three monks represents one basic aspect of the Togashi philosophy: wisdom, morality, and discipline.

Morning Frost Castle [D6]

The remote keep known as Morning Frost Castle is one among many locations within the Dragon lands that could likely exist nowhere else, simply because the philosophy behind it is so strange (and occasionally unnerving) to other clans. Morning Frost Castle's principle purpose is as a dojo, but one unlike any other in the Dragon lands, possibly in the Empire, for its purpose is simply to teach samurai how to teach. It is, in effect, a dojo for sensei. Among the other clans, this sort of approach would make little sense. The conventional wisdom, after all, is that a great warrior becomes a sensei by choosing to teach his methods to another, and students must prove worthy to learn in a manner befitting their teacher.

The Dragon have not truly abandoned the traditional view of the relationship between sensei and student, but they do understand it is in the best interests of the clan for its greatest warriors to pass on as much as they are able to their students. In order to facilitate this, those who are chosen to succeed other sensei at major dojo in the Dragon lands are taken to Morning Frost Castle for a period of up to six months in order to prepare them for their impending duties as teachers. By the reckoning of even the most traditionalist Dragon samurai, a soldier would not be sent to war without proper training, so why should those responsible for training the next generation of warriors be left unprepared?

Shiro Kitsuki [D7]

Last Step Castle is both the ancestral estate of the Kitsuki family and the diplomatic center for the Dragon Clan. It is the first major holding along the principle road that guides travelers into the Dragon mountains, and the only one easily reachable by conventional means. Legend holds that even the road to Shiro Kitsuki is difficult to find for anyone not welcome in Dragon lands, and whether this is true or not, the routes from the castle onward into the Dragon mountains is by all accounts extremely difficult to traverse for all but the most experienced travelers and mountaineers.

Shiro Kitsuki is a trio of high castles, connected to each other by an encircling fortified wall. Dozens of windows line those walls, looking down on approaching visitors like curious eyes. Because of both its relative accessibility (a point many visitors would vigorously contest) and the notoriously keen perceptions of the Kitsuki, the estate was long ago chosen to become the clan's primary hosting site for guests, particularly during the winter. The large castle has more than double the number of guest accommodations available from the next closest contender, and the court chambers are very slightly more lavish – and noticeably more traditional – than those of more individualistic family estates. There is a small set of suites set aside specifically for visitors from the Dragonfly lands to the south, so they can coordinate more readily with their allies among the Dragon (for whom they act as a sort of buffer against unwanted guests).

In addition to its primary purpose as a diplomatic center, Shiro Kitsuki is also a great center of learning, with vast libraries, multiple dojo for the training of young Kitsuki, and a large temple created and operated in conjunction with the Tamori to further the knowledge of both families.

Shiro Mirumoto [D8]

Although not traditionally the home of the Dragon Clan Champion, Shiro Mirumoto is very much the place from which the clan has been governed over most of its history. The Togashi Champions have usually delegated much of their authority, and with it responsibility, to the Mirumoto lords, and as such it has become second nature for most functions of clan government – such as succession debates, inter-clan relations, and the collection of taxes – to center around Shiro Mirumoto.

Accordingly, Shiro Mirumoto is a sort of jack-of-all-trades when it comes to the purposes normally fulfilled by a familial estate. It is, first and foremost, a military fortress, its intended purpose at the time of its construction. In fact, it is the largest and most heavily defended fortress in all the Dragon lands. It is also one of the largest centers of learning, for just nearby is Iron Mountain Dojo, the greatest of all Mirumoto teaching institutions.

Although the Kitsuki traditionally maintain the majority of the clan's guests at Last Step Castle, the Mirumoto are known to host smaller numbers of guests each season as well. Traditionally, the military nature of Shiro Mirumoto means that only rigidly military individuals are invited to stay; most courtiers and artisans find the place far too stern to enjoy a season there, and the Dragon would certainly not wish to offend their guests.

Shiro Tamori [D9]

Previously known as Kyuden Agasha, Shiro Tamori was significantly changed when the remnants of the Agasha who did not defect to the Phoenix Clan were reformed as the Tamori family. The castle now better reflects the Tamori's martial inclinations and their unquestionable disinterest in entertaining guests. This is a rather equitable arrangement, for the few individuals who have been guests at the castle find it almost entirely inhospitable, not to mention disconcerting. In addition to the militant and generally cold nature of most Tamori samurai, the strange alchemical experiments that are constantly ongoing within the castle's large foundries generate a constant sense of unease. Strange smells fill the air at all hours, and those who visit feel a constant lingering suspicion that the castle could explode at any moment. These are not entirely unfounded suspicions either; the castle is built into the side of a largely but not entirely dormant volcano known as Fire Tooth Mountain. The castle itself is surrounded by frowning battlements and defensive towers, looking more like a Crab fortress than the home of a shugenja family. Despite its remote location it is a nearly self-sufficient castle. The peasants who work the modest fields below its walls, the artisans who make its clothing and tools, the eta who deal with its waste and corpses... all dwell within its walls.

In earlier centuries, when this castle was still called Kyuden Agasha, relations with the Phoenix were cordial, and visitors from that clan sometimes paid visits to this settlement despite its remote and forbidding nature. In modern times, the lingering resentment of many Tamori over the Agasha family's defection to the Phoenix prevents any significant cooperation.

Tetsu Kama Mura [D10]

Iron Mountain Village is the home of the single most productive iron mine in all of the Dragon provinces, an impressive claim indeed when one considers how mineral-rich the northern mountains are. The Mirumoto provinces in particular can boast a great many iron mines, but none can rival the sheer volume of output from those maintained at Tetsu Kama Mura.

The Provinces of the Lion Clan

The central lands of the northern Empire are those of the Lion Clan, and as one might expect from such a militaristic and disciplined clan, they are extremely well managed and tended. Very little in the way of wilderness remains after a thousand years of Lion management. The Lion are fortunate to possess some of the most fertile lands in the northern half of the Empire, rivaled only by the most productive regions of the Crane and Unicorn. This is especially fortunate because the Lion also have one of the largest populations of any Great Clan. The Matsu family in particular is the largest in all the Empire, larger by a noticeable margin than even the numerous Hida and Doji families.

The central Lion provinces, protected on all sides save the northern border by the rest of the Lion lands, are the most fertile of all. These lands are administered by the Kitsu family. Some believe the land is so productive because a family of traditional priests tends it, while others claim the priests are assigned to tend these lands because they are so fertile. Regardless of the truth of the matter, the simple fact is that this region serves as the Lion Clan's breadbasket. It is comprised mainly of vast, rolling plains, almost all of which have been transformed into rice paddies and fields of buckwheat and barley. There are very few other geographical features to speak of in the region; no mountains, forests, or even major waterways grace the area. Fortunately, the weather is quite temperate, with frequent and plentiful rains to ensure a healthy growing season and high agricultural productivity.

The western Lion provinces are even flatter and more open than the central region, if such a thing is possible. These wide-open plains mark the divide between the Lion lands and the neighboring territory of the Unicorn, likewise dominated by plains. The western provinces do exhibit slightly more diversity in their features, however, which suits the nature of the Ikoma family that administrates them. In the south, the Ikoma provinces border on the great Spine of the World Mountains, and include the geographical oddity known as Lookout Mountain, which stands grossly out of place in the midst of an otherwise flat region of plains. The Ikoma lands are also bordered on the north and west by a major river, allowing more rapid transport of goods along the waterways. Additionally, although the majority of their land is utilized for farming, they have significant portions of land set aside for grazing by the clan's limited horse stock. The primary horse-masters in the clan are the Matsu family's Ikeda vassals, but the Matsu lands are farmed so rigorously that no space remains for horses to roam.



The eastern provinces of the Lion Clan are the home of the Akodo family, lords of the Lion and the greatest tacticians in the whole of Rokugan. The Akodo lands are also flatter than those of many other clans, but compared to the endless plains of the Kitsu and Ikoma, they seem hilly by comparison. Farming is abundant here as well, but focuses less on rice and more on other crops. They have other resources as well, including the only significant forest located within all the Lion lands. The ever-practical Akodo very carefully supervise the collection of valuable lumber from this forest, avoiding over-harvesting at all costs and ensuring it remains viable for centuries to come. The Akodo provinces also contain a sizeable portion of the clan's border with their traditional enemies, the Crane, so there is often a significant military force along the border. The Akodo lands are unique from the rest of the clan in one way – they actually contain some territory which is not used, simply because the practical Akodo have not yet found a clear and efficient purpose for it. This contracts with the other Lion families, which have domesticated almost the entirety of their lands.

The southern reaches of the Lion provinces belong to the Matsu, the largest samurai family in the Empire. Even more so than the other families, the Matsu have domesticated every possible inch of their lands, farming even the most forsaken regions in a constant struggle to feed their endless ranks. In addition, the Spine of the World Mountains that border the entire southern and southwestern edge of the Matsu lands contain the richest copper mines in Rokugan. The material is vigorously mined to trade for additional crops to feed the Matsu; fortunately, the versatile metal is used by virtually every clan, ensuring a steady trade for the family.

Bishamon Seido [L1]

This massive temple to Bishamon, Fortune of Strength, is the largest shrine to the great Fortune found anywhere in the Emerald Empire. Even the mighty warriors of the Crab Clan, many of whom revere Bishamon above all other Fortunes, have not constructed any shrine even half its size. Some find it strange that the normally stoic and traditional Kitsu would maintain such a shrine, but the Kitsu consider war a holy pursuit, and there is never any shortage of shugenja to staff the temple and learn the art of using the kami on the battlefield. In addition to its dual roles as a temple and a dojo, the shrine is also a major storehouse for food and additional goods, usually excess supplies and materials that cannot be stored in the nearby city of Tonfajutsen.

Castle of the Swift Sword [L2]

Although it is not the ancestral estate of the Akodo family (an honor which belongs to the more simply titled Shiro Akodo), the Castle of the Swift Sword is home to the largest of the Akodo family's dojo. Also known as Shiro sano Ken Hayai, the Castle of the Swift Sword is one of the cornerstones in the clan's northern and western defenses, borders shared with the Dragon and Unicorn, respectively.

While Shiro Akodo is the seat of the Akodo family's power, the Castle of the Swift Sword is in many ways their heart and soul. Hundreds of young samurai are trained within its walls each year, bolstering the ranks of the Lion armies. The sensei who teach here are widely renowned as the finest in the Lion lands, respected by other sensei in both the Lion Clan and among other clans of the Empire as well.

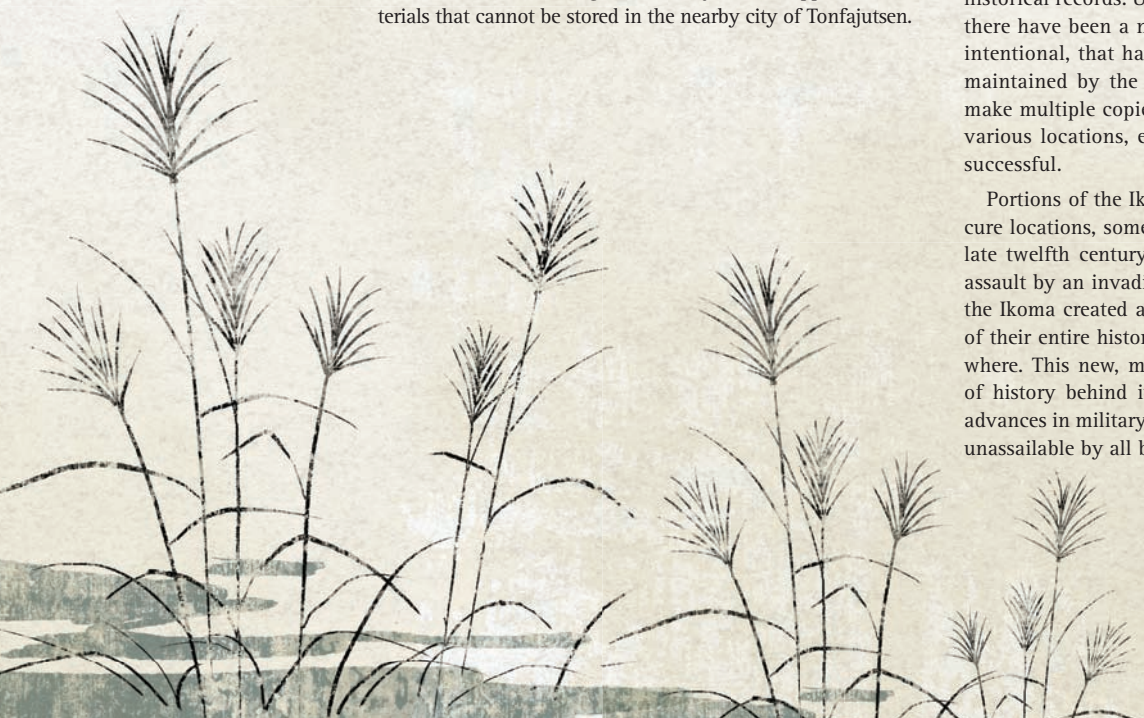
Crossroads Castle and Tonfajutsen [L3]

Also known as Central Castle, Crossroads Castle is located in the city of Tonfajutsen, which is in turn situated directly in the middle of the Lion provinces. The simple, unadorned castle is the centerpiece of the city, itself a practical place entirely focused on properly gathering, sorting, and distributing the incredible volume of supplies necessary to ensure the Lion Clan's massive military operation continues to function properly. Virtually every ounce of rice, barley, or any other foodstuff available to the Lion, whether it be grown in their own provinces or imported from other clans, is collected within this city's seemingly endless storehouses. An entire legion of quartermasters and officers is permanently stationed at the castle, poring endlessly over every report. They review everything from the most recent census to the constantly changing accounts of the clan's troop placement and movement, assigning the vast resources within the city accordingly.

Great Hall of Records [L4]

The Ikoma family has a strong tradition of dutiful and reverent and their line includes some of the greatest historians of each generation. There are entire branches of the family whose duties for the clan are nothing more than the painstaking maintenance and extension of the Lion Clan's vast historical records. Unfortunately, during the Empire's history there have been a number of tragedies, both accidental and intentional, that have damaged historical records like those maintained by the Ikoma. The family learned long ago to make multiple copies of every document and secret them in various locations, ensuring no purge has ever been wholly successful.

Portions of the Ikoma histories are kept in a variety of secure locations, some of them unavailable to outsiders. In the late twelfth century, Kyuden Ikoma itself was sacked in an assault by an invading Unicorn force, and after that incident the Ikoma created a new fortress to protect a complete copy of their entire histories, above and beyond what is kept elsewhere. This new, modern fortress does not have the weight of history behind it, but it does enjoy all the most recent advances in military construction and defense, making it nigh unassailable by all but the most dedicated enemies.



Hall of Ancestors [L5]

Given the absolute reverence all members of the Lion Clan have for their ancestors, the Hall of Ancestors is easily the most sacred site within the whole of Lion lands. Here in this vast temple, the ashes of the clan's great heroes and veterans are interred, accompanied by funeral rites by some of the finest priests in the Kitsu family. The intermingling of bloodlines over the centuries ensures not only that all Lion samurai have some relation, no matter how distant, interred within the Hall, but that they are keenly aware of exactly who these ancestors are and how they died. Although it is not mandated, an informal tradition among the clan expects all Lion samurai to travel to the Hall at least once during their lifetime (barring a sudden and violent end to said lifetime). The vast majority in fact undertake this pilgrimage many times throughout their lives.

It should go without saying that the Lion defend the Hall of Ancestors fiercely from any and all threats. Traditionally, the second child born of the Matsu family daimyo is appointed as Defender of the Hall, the person responsible for coordinating its defense from outsiders. Although this is a military position, there is a strong spiritual aspect to the office as well. Members of the Brotherhood of Shinsei attend the temple to assist in its upkeep as well as to serve as advisors to the Defender and his men.

Kitsu Tombs [L6]

This remote temple is the private burial place of the Kitsu family. Traditionally only Kitsu remains are interred here, although they do very occasionally offer highly honored personages from the other families the tremendous privilege of sharing the Tombs. The reasons for the Kitsu preferring their own sacred site for interment over the Hall of Ancestors lies in the inhuman ancestry of the first Kitsu. It is rumored there are unusual rites and prayers the Kitsu use to usher their dead into the next world. Certainly it is a documented fact that the Kitsu have private rituals that allow the most powerful of their number to cross into the spirit realms and walk among the dead. The precise nature of these private rituals is guarded from the other Great Clans, necessitating absolute secrecy – a further reason for the Kitsu Tombs. Even other Lion families, while welcome to visit, are not free to wander the grounds on their own, and are escorted at all times during their stay.

Kyuden Ikoma [L7]

Sacred Watch Palace is the ancestral estate of the Ikoma family, a family both diverse and conflicted in their history and philosophy. The first Ikoma was a consummate warrior and a canny negotiator, traditions that his descendants have embraced along with his penchant for stories and tales, the latter leading to their reverence for history. What is not as commonly discussed are accounts of Ikoma as a hard-drinking and rough-spoken man and a ruthless opponent who would exploit any advantage against his enemies. Modern Ikoma samurai for the most part do not discuss this aspect of their founder, and take issue with any who do, but there are still a few among their number who exemplify these tales with their own boisterous lifestyles.

Kyuden Ikoma, like all Lion fortresses, is a simple and spartan castle designed with practical military defense in mind. The lands surrounding it are particularly fertile, and are generally known as the Venerable Plains. They are considered sacred and the Ikoma go out of their way to defend their core lands against interlopers.

Permission City [L8]

Also known as Ninkatoshi, this city is one of the clan's easternmost holdings, a major fortification along the often-contested border the Lion share with their traditional enemies, the Crane. Ninkatoshi began centuries ago as a farming village, one of countless minor settlements in the area that took advantage of the fertile central plains of the Lion provinces. Because of the long-standing animosity between the Lion and Crane, however, the village rapidly became a center for border enforcement, and from there grew into a base for military mobilization against the clan's enemies. Over the centuries there have been a tremendous number of skirmishes and major engagements near the city. It is a testament to the industriousness of the city's peasants that the lands around it remain fertile and productive despite the frequent passage of large armies. Due to the city's legacy as a center of war, an assignment to Ninkatoshi is looked upon by Lion samurai as a great honor even during periods of peace between the Lion and Crane.

Shiro Akodo [L9]

The ancestral estate of the Akodo family could quite easily be mistaken for a much more mundane building, were it not for its large size. Indeed, even with its formidable bulk the castle is sometimes mistaken for a fortification of lesser importance. Shiro Akodo is largely free from any adornment or decoration, other than the most basic elements inherent to castle design. It is a perfect example of the Akodo family's general disinterest in matters of art or politics, in which they engage only as necessary. In fact, because the castle is so simple in its construction and appointment, the Akodo rarely if ever host guests, preferring to allow such duties to fall to the Ikoma.

The Akodo philosophy places tremendous emphasis on their duty as officers and tacticians and on the vital and honorable tradition of teaching. In fact, the Akodo are reluctant to combine such matters with the mundane duties of governance, lest the work of administration interfere with the study of war or the instruction of a new generation. For this reason, while Shiro Akodo is every bit the military installation one might expect from a Lion familial estate, its primary function is the governance of the Lion Clan. The family has moved most of its teaching and military training to the Castle of the Swift Sword elsewhere in the Lion lands.

Shiro Matsu [L10]

If the ancestral estate of the Akodo family is simple, the only word that can be used to describe the Matsu family's ancestral home is 'stark.' The Matsu care nothing whatsoever for politics, diplomacy, or (to hear some say it) even basic common courtesy. They are warriors, one and all, and the family's general philosophy is that if war is their destiny it should be embraced eagerly. Most in the Empire would consider a position as guest at Shiro Matsu to be a terrible punishment. The Matsu are not gracious hosts and their home has nothing at all that could be considered luxury. Guests can expect only the most basic accommodations, and can also expect to be awakened well before each dawn by the cacophonous noise of hundreds or even thousands of young samurai training in the vast courtyards and drill fields surrounding the castle.

Provinces of the Mantis Clan

No Great Clan commands more varied lands and resources than the Mantis, a direct result of their origin: a series of Minor Clans who united and seized the title of Great Clan during a particularly tumultuous period of conflict in the twelfth century. Three clans joined initially, and a fourth joined some decades later, so the Mantis control sections of land in radically different portions of the Empire – wherever their constituent clans were positioned at the time of their assimilation.

The Yoritomo lands are by far the most unusual of the entire Empire, as they consist exclusively of islands off of Rokugan's shore. While anything more than simple coastal sailing is a recent development for other Great Clans, the Mantis have been negotiating the seas with impunity for nearly one thousand years. The primary island chain the Yoritomo control is known as the Islands of Silk & Spice, and while they are extremely short on farmable land, the jungle that covers much of the islands yields a great deal of exotic fruit and consumable plants, supplementing the seafood diet the Mantis harvest from the ocean. Seafood is the principle profitable resource of the Yoritomo, although they do harvest other items from their islands that can be sold or traded, including exotic pets, unusual minerals, and even such minor things as driftwood for use in sculpture. Because of the size of the islands compared to the mainland, these commodities are traded in very small quantities; naturally, this only increases their value.

The influence of the Moshi family is limited primarily to the valley they call home, which is productive enough to maintain their own nearly self-sufficient existence but offers little in the way of tradable commodities. Since the Moshi's induction into the Mantis Clan, their profile within the Empire has increased, and they have developed a reputation for traditionalism and piety that has earned them favor in the eyes of other shugenja families. Even the Kitsu and Isawa families of the Lion and Phoenix Clan respect the Moshi. Accordingly, the quiet serenity of the Valley of the Centipede and its many temples has become a popular pilgrimage location for especially pious and dutiful samurai. In particular, the Moshi family's reverence for the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and her celestial successors has been lauded by many as a shining example of true reverence among mortals. The massive shrine of Amaterasu Seido is far and away the most popular destination for visitors to the Moshi province.

The Tsuruchi family's provinces are largely mountainous, with a few farmland holdings located on the outskirts of their lands where the Spine of the World Mountains meet the plains to the south. Prior to the family's induction into the Mantis, they survived on imported goods that were purchased using the funds brought in by the Wasp Clan bounty hunters. Otherwise, their people would most likely have starved to death, for with the exception of their most recent acquisitions the lands given them are largely useless as farms. There are some meager mineral resources to be had in the mountains the family controls, but given the general level of wealth the Mantis possess, it is simpler to purchase the metal they require rather than mine and refine it themselves. The principle attraction of the Tsuruchi lands is Kyuden Ashinagabachi itself, for the castle is known as the finest archery dojo in the entire Empire. Although the Tsuruchi do not freely accept students from outside the clan, they do host an annual archery tournament each year, and the winner is always invited to study with the Tsuruchi. Hundreds attend the tournament every year in hopes of further refining their skill at archery.

Uniquely among the Mantis provinces, and indeed the Empire itself, the Kitsune family's lands are predominantly forested, with only a few plains regions. During the family's earliest years, the land was not arable at all, and the Kitsune largely survived from hunting. Since then a few of their lands have been cultivated to provide proper support for the small family. The greatest resource and most dominating feature of the Kitsune provinces is of course the Kitsune Mori, the large and mysterious forest they inhabit, which is known to be home to many trickster spirits. In particular, the forest is reputed to be rife with kitsune, the benevolent fox-spirits from the Realm of Animals.

Broken Wave City [M1]

Broken Wave City dominates the entirety of the small island known as Kaigen's Island, which was formed by the heroic sacrifice of two shugenja during the final moments of a costly war between the Mantis and Phoenix. The city covers most of the island, which in turn sits just off the Phoenix coastline. Broken Wave City and its capital, the fortress of Kyuden Kumiko, serve as the center of Mantis trade with the mainland throughout the northern Empire, and on rare occasions serve as a point of departure for ships leaving north toward the Yobanjin lands outside the Empire. Broken Wave City has an extensive series of docks, known as Seven Seas Port, that allow the relatively small island to serve as the headquarters for the First Storm, one of three large fleets of vessels the Mantis Clan maintains for naval combat and commerce. Despite its success for the clan, Broken Wave City continues to serve as a point of contention with the Phoenix Clan, who regard the island (which they call Sachi's Anvil) as a portion of their territory ceded to the Mantis in a hasty and ill-advised treaty.

City of Lightning [M2]

Toshi no Inazuma is a prominent and important Yoritomo holding, very nearly on par with Kyuden Gotei in most regards. It began primarily as a religious holding, and contains one of the Empire's largest shrines to Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Fire and Thunder. The temple is the tallest building in this sprawling city. In the past, the temple was struck by lightning at least once a year, causing frequent fires that damaged the city. Eventually, the shugenja maintaining the temple discovered that attaching a metal rod to the temple's peak would allow the fury of the Thunderer to be mitigated without repeatedly burning entire portions of the building – and city – to the ground.

Dragon's Guard City [M3]

This port city existed for centuries as an independent settlement north of the old Imperial capital, Otosan Uchi. Due to its proximity to that great metropolis, the city remained safe and prosperous for centuries, feeding off the trade that ran from the capital north to the Phoenix and Dragon clans. Even after Otosan Uchi fell into ruins, Dragon's Guard City's strategic location allowed it to remain a successful settlement. However, during the chaos of the second half of the twelfth century, the city became a target for the more opportunistic Great Clans,

who were attempting to garner as many resources as possible to make a bid for a vacant throne. The leaders of Dragon's Guard City, through the assistance of their allies in the Tortoise Clan, solicited the protection of the Mantis in exchange for a mutually beneficial arrangement of trade and defense. The Mantis accepted, and under the clan's rule the city has become even more prosperous than before.

Iron Turtle City [M4]

Koutetsukan is a largely unremarkable city, with very few landmarks of any significance and little to keep in the memory of its few visitors. In fact, the only landmark to speak of in the city is the massive array of shipyards that dominate virtually every inch of its coastline. More ships are probably produced in Koutetsukan than in every other shipyard in the Empire combined – although there are certain ports in the southern Crab provinces that might challenge such a claim. The shipyards at Koutetsukan are responsible for the vast majority of ship production for the Mantis, although there are a small number of other much less grandiose shipyards serving the clan. They also produce ships for the Crab, Phoenix, and Crane, which the Mantis sell to the intended clan for a very handsome profit.

Kyuden Ashinagabachi [M5]

Kyuden Ashinagabachi has a sordid history that is a point of contention with not one, but two other Great Clans. It was once a Scorpion holding, but the lord of the castle abandoned his duty to marry his lover, a Lion, who also abandoned her arranged marriage for this improper union. Needless to say, the Lion and Scorpion did not look kindly upon this and attempted to destroy the castle and all its occupants. Although the two lovers perished, their son led his men to victory and recaptured the castle. Afterward the Emerald Champion was granted the charter of a Minor Clan, the Wasp Clan. Since then the castle has built a reputation as housing the greatest archery school in the Empire, and the Tsuruchi warriors who maintain the estate are widely feared as terrible opponents capable of killing from vast distances.

Nestled high in the mountain peaks, Kyuden Ashinagabachi is extremely difficult to approach with any sizeable force. Those who are foolish enough to attack must make their way through miles of narrow, difficult canyons, while hundreds of Tsuruchi marksmen able to pick them off from above at their leisure.

Kyuden Gotei [M6]

The center of the Yoritomo family's power, Kyuden Gotei is not only the largest and most magnificent palace in the Mantis Clan, but also the center of one of the largest cities in the entire Empire, rivaling Ryoko Owari Toshi and the Imperial capital. It is also, by general consensus of those who have visited it, perhaps the most ostentatious family estate in Rokugan. The Yoritomo have different views than most samurai regarding wealth and material possessions, and tend to decorate their estate with elaborate and gaudy treasures, many of a gaijin nature. Very close at hand to the palace is Heaven's Bank Hold, the vault in which the clan stores most of its substantial wealth, and its proximity may contribute to the elaborate décor of Kyuden Gotei.

During the long centuries when the Mantis Clan was a Minor Clan, this palace served as the diplomatic center for their relations with other Minor Clans, and it was within its halls that the beginning of the alliance between the Mantis, the Centipede, and the Wasp was born. Since the ascension to Great Clan status, the Mantis islands have seen a dramatic increase in the number of visitors, and Kyuden Gotei has become a major center for diplomacy. The Mantis host their guests in all the splendor their wealth will allow, reveling in the fact that the other Great Clans now have ample reason to maintain diplomatic ties.

Kyuden Kitsune [M7]

For almost the entirety of its existence, Kyuden Kitsune was the Fox Clan palace, the center of civilization for the small, rural Fox Clan. The Fox were always a poor clan, even by Minor Clan standards, and their recent annexation by the Mantis has seen an influx of resources the likes of which the Kitsune family has never experienced at any point in its history. As such, Kyuden Kitsune, already a diplomatic center for Minor Clan activity and the favored haunt of certain influential Great Clan ambassadors, has begun to improve its size, décor, and accommodations. This has already resulted in a slight increase in the number of visitors each year, particularly because the Yoritomo hope to capitalize on the strong positive opinion of the Kitsune family throughout Imperial political circles.

In addition to its practical value, Kyuden Kitsune is becoming a popular destination for young courtiers during the winter because of its proximity to the mysterious and beautiful Kitsune Mori, one of the most breathtaking forests in the Empire. It has developed a reputation as an inspiring sight for young lovers, especially when its trees are covered in snow during the winter months.



Shaiga [M8]

This small and seemingly unassuming village is of enormous importance to the Tsuruchi family, since it accounts for the vast majority of their mainland food production. It is located some distance from Kyuden Ashinagabachi, on a stretch of plains that sits between the Scorpion and Crane lands. The lands are surprisingly fertile, owing perhaps to the fact that a lake once existed here but dried up long ago. The Tsuruchi maintain virtually no military presence within the village, hoping its seeming unimportance will keep other clans away while its status as a Tsuruchi holding will deter bandits. Still, the Tsuruchi do secretly train the village peasants in the use of weapons such as the tonfa and nunchaku so it can be defended if necessary.

Shaiga's value is greater still than its agricultural production. There is a very small gold mine nearby that is kept absolutely secret at all costs. The Tsuruchi use their contacts within the Emerald Magistrates to pay taxes on the mine's yield while keeping its existence concealed from all outside the clan.

Thunder Dragon Bay [M9]

This serene and reclusive bay is on the eastern edge of the Mantis islands, just before the Islands of Silk & Spice give way to vast open seas that stretch as far as any man has ever seen. This bay is well protected by a natural barrier of jagged coral reefs that lie just beneath the surface of the water, along with occasional rocky outcroppings large enough in size to technically be called islands by the most generous of observers. When the celestial entity known as the Thunder Dragon manifests in the mortal realm, it often appears here – the dragon favors this location for unknown reasons. During its more extended stays, the Mantis Clan provides fleet resources to ostensibly protect the dragon. Of course, this is almost a ridiculous gesture, since there is nothing that could threaten the creature that the Mantis would be capable of destroying. The Yoritomo, however, see it as sort of an honor guard, and insist upon providing this service for their celestial patron regardless of its questionable value.

Tokigogachu [M10]

This tiny fishing village in the eastern islands is unremarkable in every regard save for one exceptional quality. In almost all ways it is quite average, with hard working peasants and perhaps a slightly above average yield of fish. The unique nature of Tokigogachu is the special zeal of its citizens for festivals of all kinds. Because the village has ample fish harvests to pay its taxes, and has a small amount of arable land to grow rice and barley and more tropical fruits, there is never a shortage of funds or food. Rather than purchase extravagant treasures and decorations as so many villages in the island are prone to doing, the people of Tokigogachu prefer to host lavish celebrations of the various religious and cultural festivals observed by the Empire. Decorations and fireworks are always in ample supply, as is excellent food and music. The villagers welcome any and all visitors, peasant and samurai alike. Rumor holds that even Emperors have attended the festivals in the past, although always disguised in order to avoid embarrassing or troubling the village. After all, no Emperor would openly visit such an obscure and mediocre village.

Valley of the Centipede [M11]

Tani Senshio is a remote valley in the Spine of the World Mountains, arable but with little enough value that the neighboring Crane never claimed it. It was settled by a small group of Phoenix, separated from their clan's holdings by great distance and difficult geography. The family maintaining the small Phoenix school within the village eventually experienced a religious revelation that attracted the attention of the Imperial families. They were granted a charter as the Centipede Clan, partly out of respect for their piety and partly to simplify matters of taxation. The Centipede were among the first Minor Clans to pledge their service to the Mantis during a time of war, and when the Mantis became a Great Clan the Centipede joined them as the Moshi family.

The valley remains the Moshi family's principle holding. Outside of a few specific estates in the lands of other Mantis families, the Moshi control no other land. The valley is not exceptionally fertile, but since the Moshi are a small family, it easily handles the majority of their food requirements.

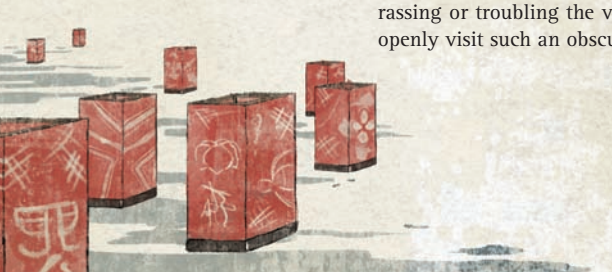
Provinces of the Phoenix Clan

The Phoenix Clan controls the northeastern-most portion of the mainland of Rokugan, a region including significant forests as well as a portion of the Great Wall of the North Mountains. It is without question the coldest portion of Rokugan, with the shortest summer season and the most severe winters, rivaled only by the stark and deadly cold of the Twilight Mountains in the distant Crab provinces.

Unquestioned lords of the Phoenix Clan, the Isawa also command the largest and most fruitful portions of the clan's provinces. Despite the less than ideal climate and temperature, the Isawa provinces are remarkably productive, supplying the majority of crops required for the clan to continue functioning. As the largest shugenja family in the Empire, it is a simple matter for Isawa priests to bless crops and perform the appropriate rituals during the planting and growing season, ensuring a bountiful harvest each and every year, barring unforeseen disasters. The Isawa also administer the Mori Isawa, one of the largest forests in the Empire, which lies primarily in their lands. They regard the forest as sacred, and harvest wood from it carefully in limited quantities. The wood is generally considered the finest in the world for the purpose of creating spell scrolls.

The Shiba provinces, much like the family that administers them, are the workhouses of the Phoenix lands. They enjoy fertile plains and are generally the southernmost lands in the clan (save for a few held by the Agasha). Thus, they enjoy the most temperate climate. The yield from these plains is considerable and, unlike in the Isawa lands, this is a result of nothing more than hard work and dedication on the part of the Shiba's vassals. A portion of the Mori Isawa extends into the Shiba lands as well and, while they respect the policies of the Isawa with regard to the forest, they do harvest from it somewhat more readily than the Isawa do in the northern portions.

Although not the most abundant in the Phoenix lands, the Asako provinces are noteworthy for their serenity, which may be the result of centuries of doting care by the monastic Asako family. The Asako value the beauty of nature and the inspiration of simple things, and their provinces are dotted with well manicured gardens, minimalist sculptures that appear seemingly at random in the countryside, and settlements which make little impact on the surrounding environment.



Those few major cities and castles within the Asako lands are as beautiful as any found in the Empire, but in addition are built in such a way as to appear completely in harmony with the world around them.

The Agasha family, once vassals of the Dragon Clan, joined the Phoenix after a disastrous falling out with the Dragon Clan Champion, Hitomi, in the twelfth century. The Agasha lords were convinced she was being controlled by a sinister outside force (fears that later proved well founded) and fled the Dragon lands. After their acceptance into the Phoenix Clan, they were ceded a small portion of the Shiba provinces to make their home, a task to which they set themselves with remarkable fervor. Unfortunately, the Agasha lands are hardly the most bountiful even among the Phoenix lands. They control a considerable region of coastline, but much of it is taken up by rocky cliffs and hills that are not conducive to development. Furthermore, the southern portions of their provinces are dominated by a small mountain range, the Mountains of Regret, which forms a barrier between them and the rest of the Empire to the south. Fortunately, the Agasha are rather self-contained, and have little reason to interact with those outside the clan, so the isolation of their provinces suits them well.

City of Remembrance [P1]

Previously known as the City of Suffering, Toshi no Omoidasu has a strange and sometimes tragic history. Early in its history, it was home to a deadly maho-tsukai of such power that only a rare collaboration between the Jade Champion and the Elemental Council of Masters was able to defeat him. Even in death, however, he cursed the city with a powerful spell designed to ensure he could one day return. Centuries after the sorcerer's death, the city became home to the legendary Lion hero Matsu Hitomi, who spent her final days there. She was much beloved by the city's citizens, and after her death the city was renamed to remember her.

Despite its strange history, or perhaps even because of it, Toshi no Omoidasu is a bustling center of commerce, one of the central lynchpins of the southern Phoenix provinces. It is one of the few locations where trade between the Mantis and Phoenix clans is conducted in any significant quantity, perhaps because the opportunity is simply too great to pass up even with centuries of bad blood between the two clans.

City of Tears [P2]

Known by other names during its history, the City of Tears was one of five elemental cities constructed within the spirit realms by samurai whose souls had gone to Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors, after death. During a period of tumult and conflict with the spirit realms, the city moved into the mortal realm, although at the time it was under siege by evil spirits who slew all its inhabitants. The Phoenix initially declared the city sacred and restricted due to the pervasive sorrow that afflicted it, but eventually purged it of its evil influences and made it inhabitable once more.

The City of Tears is unique in that it was completely constructed prior to any living Phoenix ever setting foot within its boundaries, and as such some of its buildings are complete mysteries. The Phoenix have made the city their own while at the same time respecting the entire settlement as sacred; no structures have been altered, removed, or added to the city since its purification was completed. Because of its supernatural origin, the city is a major center of learning for shugenja, particularly those who are attuned to the element of Water, with which the city was originally aligned.



Kyuden Agasha [P3]

Built following the Agasha family's defection to the Phoenix Clan, their new estate bears little resemblance to the one they abandoned in the Dragon lands, for the Agasha were never a particularly sentimental family. Their new home includes massive foundries for them to continue their history of magical experimentation, combining shugenja traditions with that of blacksmithing. Although the family is careful to administer the lands given them by the Phoenix in a proper manner, they have little attachment to anything outside their estate. Virtually all crafted objects and goods the Agasha need are created by members of the family or their trusted vassals in workshops contained in or below the castle. Kyuden Agasha has remarkable meager space devoted to diplomatic purposes, as the Agasha are keenly aware that many within the Empire have held them in very low regard since their controversial defection.

Kyuden Asako [P4]

Also known as Morning Glory Castle, Kyuden Asako is the most celebrated diplomatic estate in the Phoenix Clan, and historically has proven a popular site to host the Winter Court of the Emperor. This is somewhat ironic given the castle's relatively inaccessible location; although quite beautiful, the castle is built high atop a mountain, a design more befitting a military fortress. The castle is relatively small, significantly smaller than either Kyuden Isawa or Shiro Shiba, and is generally regarded as the standard example of the smallest possible size an estate could be and still host an Emperor's Winter Court.

Kyuden Isawa [P5]

Kyuden Isawa and its associated city form one of the greatest centers of learning throughout all of Rokugan, and there are very few shugenja in the Empire who do not covet the chance to study there. Those who do not usually hold some manner of grudge against the Phoenix that prevents them from recognizing the value of doing so. As the home to the largest shugenja family of Rokugan, Kyuden Isawa devotes a tremendous amount of space to libraries, shrines, and temples, the majority of which deal with the constant training of new and inexperienced shugenja. An entirely separate tier of scholarly pursuit is available, however, for the more experienced and higher-ranking shugenja. The libraries, in particular, are carefully stratified so that young students cannot access the rare and powerful documents available to their senior kinsmen. The Phoenix are all too familiar with how power can corrupt those who are not ready to wield it.

Unlike the other major Phoenix holdings, Kyuden Isawa has an elaborate set of sub-levels built into the stone below the castle. The greatest and deepest of these houses the sacred meeting room of the Council of Elemental Masters, a chamber that only the Masters and the Phoenix Champion are free to enter without an invitation.

Nikesake [P6]

The small city of Nikesake exists as a testament to the long-standing alliance between the Crane and Phoenix clans. It was from this city that Phoenix forces once aided the Crane during one of the more severe conflicts in the long-running series of wars fought between the Crane and Lion over Toshi Ranbo. This act cemented an alliance that has endured for centuries, and the Crane hold significant estates within the city as well. Additionally, while Nikesake is not the Phoenix holding nearest to Otosan Uchi, it does have the easiest overland travel routes to that city, and as such often served as a waypoint for trade and commerce bound for that destination.

In terms of its physical make-up, Nikesake's focus on trade makes it a remarkably wealthy city for its relatively small size. All the Phoenix families maintain estates there, and there is also a lavish Crane embassy and several smaller, less remarkable embassies from other clans. Particularly influential individuals within the Phoenix Clan often maintain private holdings in Nikesake, and it is common for one or more Elemental Masters to have personal estates in the area as well.

Pale Oak Castle [P7]

Other than Kyuden Asako, Aoijiroi Oku Shiro is the most popular court for visitors to the Phoenix lands, and the only other one to have hosted an Emperor's Winter Court. The castle surrounds a grand white oak that grew over the grave of one of the Hantei Emperors. He abandoned tradition and asked on his deathbed to be buried at the site of his wife's birth. The castle was built, in part, to ensure the eternal defense of the sacred tree. The bark of the oak is rumored to have tremendous healing powers, and the few cuttings taken each season are greatly coveted.

Shiro Shiba [P8]

In the lands of a clan that attempts to eschew warfare as much as possible, Shiro Shiba is an anomaly: a prominent and significant fortress, by far the most martial settlement in the Phoenix provinces. In the eyes of a more conventionally martial minded family like the Matsu or the Hida, it might be considered no more than a secondary fortress or perhaps even a keep, but for the Shiba it is more than sufficient for their needs.

To outsiders, the layout of Shiro Shiba is confusing and nonsensical, a winding labyrinth of gardens, courtyards, audience chambers, and other estate components, all thrown together in an apparently haphazard fashion. The Shiba seem to have no difficulty navigating the castle, but visitors without an escort can and frequently do become hopelessly lost. The absolute center of the castle is the legendary Sacred Heart Dojo, the oldest and most important training center maintained by the family.

An important aspect of the castle that the Shiba keep to themselves is the presence of the Shrine of Champions, and elaborate shrine on the outskirts of the castle grounds that honors the memory of each individual Phoenix Clan Champion since the days of Shiba himself. Because Phoenix Champions are so rarely chosen along bloodlines and frequently rise from obscurity, rare is the Shiba samurai who cannot find one of his own ancestors honored somewhere within its walls.

Shrine of the Ki-Rin [P9]

The sacred and enigmatic Ki-Rin is known to appear occasionally to worthy mortals over the course of the Empire's history. The Shrine was built in response to one such visitation. However, unlike most such occurrences, in this instance

the person receiving the vision did not heed it; the shrine was built later, out of shame and penitence. The mountaintop site of the shrine's construction was chosen because, according to legend, it was also the site of the Ki-Rin's appearance in the dawn of the Empire, when the Ki-Rin Clan departed the Empire to follow Lady Shinjo.

The shrine is located high on a mountain, and reaching it requires ascending a long series of paths and stairs. Thus, only the most devoted religious pilgrims make it up to the shrine to offer their veneration. However, the shrine does get visitors once a year when it hosts a famous Phoenix shugenja tournament, the Festival of the White Orchid.

Twin Soul Temple [P10]

A venerable temple established centuries ago by the Order of Chikai, Twin Soul Temple has remained obscure through most of its history. In a tradition that would be unusual among most clans, the temple offers training facilities for bushi but also the customary libraries and shrines for shugenja. The training at the temple emphasizes the close bond between shugenja and yojimbo, teaching the bushi to protect his charge at all costs but also teaching the shugenja to value the counsel and courage of his bodyguard, protecting him in turn. The pairs of shugenja and yojimbo who train within this temple and pass their gempukku ceremony are among the most effective and cooperative samurai who serve the Phoenix Clan.

Yobanjin Mura [P11]

The Scorpion are not the only clan to have secrets. Yobanjin Mura is an extremely well-kept secret, and a rather scandalous one should its nature ever be revealed. There is no samurai presence within Yobanjin Mura, which is a village only by the most generous interpretation of the term. Its small size and distance from established travel routes has kept it off of any maps, and while the Phoenix are always very careful to pay the appropriate taxes by slipping them in elsewhere in their annual tithes, no one outside the clan has ever been to the village; indeed, even very few even within the clan are aware of its existence. The reason for the village's secrecy is that many of its inhabitants are of mixed blood – they have Yobanjin blood somewhere in their immediate ancestry. Although contact between the Empire and the barbarian tribes to the north is rare and officially prohibited, occasional parties do range through the Great Wall of the North and into the northernmost regions of the Empire, leading sometimes to individuals such as those who dwell within Yobanjin Mura. For their part, the half-bloods of Yobanjin Mura feel somewhat blessed that the Phoenix have allowed them their own village far from the scorn of others, where they are left to their own devices. The only thing required of them in return is to maintain a modest level of trade with the occasional Yobanjin visitors. This trade is for relatively minor items that can be used in casting or researching spells.

The Phoenix who administer the village rationalize the legality of Yobanjin Mura to themselves by pointing out that some of the Yobanjin tribes are descended from outcasts who fled the Empire more than one thousand years ago. This means they are not in fact gaijin, and therefore the Imperial edict forbidding unsanctioned trade with gaijin does not apply. Whether the Emerald Champion would see things the same way is another question, of course.

Provinces of the Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion lands are located in the center of the Emerald Empire, with borders that touch territory of four other Great Clans. Their central position makes them perfect to control much of the trade and travel across the land. In fact, the Scorpion Clan has access to all of the large mountain passes that allow armies to pass the Spine of the World Mountains. Unfortunately, this location does not always serve the Scorpion Clan's purposes. The clan is politically aggressive at heart and often rouses the ire of its neighbors, so the warriors of the Scorpion are often forced to defend their lands from those who seek to punish them for their offenses. Given their location, the Scorpion must always remain vigilant for signs of impending assault. Fortunately, the geography lends itself well to defense.

The northwestern lands, bordering the Unicorn Clan, are home to the Soshi family. The secretive shugenja family values privacy, and their chosen home reflects their personality. Their lands are nestled against the Spine of the World Mountains, with few direct access paths. Their inconvenient position deters many visitors who might otherwise seek out the Soshi lands. Those who do visit are disappointed to discover rocky, barren lands with no interesting landmarks. They are usually encouraged to leave as soon as possible.

The Yogo lands are similarly guarded by the Spine of the World Mountains. The northeastern provinces of the Scorpion Clan, bordering on the Lion and Crane lands, are small and seemingly deserted. These provinces are barely populated. The customary shrines that dot the landscape throughout most of the Empire are missing as well, lending a strange atmosphere to life among the quiet family.

The Shosuro regions in the very center of the Scorpion lands do not border any other Great Clan, since their western edge gives way to the Plains of Thunder and beyond, the vast and mysterious Shinomen Forest. Despite this fact, the Shosuro build just as many defensive structures as the other families. Constant observation is a trait that could be ascribed to any Scorpion family, but the Shosuro live and breathe by this creed. Despite (or perhaps because of) these precautions, the Shosuro lands are among the most peaceful in the Empire. They have a mixture of farmlands and forest, with only modest agricultural production. Their most valuable asset is instead a city, the notorious Ryoko Owari Toshi.

The Bayushi provinces border the lands of the Crane and various Minor Clans to the south. This large region contains the vast majority of the clan's rice fields, which are fertile and normally quite productive, compared even with the fruitful lands of other Great Clans. The bountiful annual harvest often allows the Bayushi family to increase the clan's standing in the Empire by trading the surplus for political favors.

Beiden [SC1]

The city of Beiden is a small and unremarkable place. Its people are simple, honest folk who live to serve the Emperor. Unfortunately, this city's close proximity with Beiden Pass, the Crossroads of the Empire, has caused it no end of trouble. The large and militarily vital mountain pass, connecting the Empire north to south for a thousand years, was both a curse and a blessing. Beiden has been devastated by war more often than not, a fact its inhabitants seem to take in stride. Throughout most of its history, the city also enjoyed significant prosperity due to its proximity to the pass, and its citizens enjoyed this wealth despite the constant threat of living

next to the only pass large enough to move an army through the Spine of the World Mountains.

In modern times, after Beiden Pass was destroyed, the city's fortunes changed considerably and it became safer but also far less prosperous. More and more of its citizens departed the city to seek their fortunes elsewhere, and by the time the much smaller Shamate Pass was discovered and opened in the late twelfth century, Beiden was a shadow of its former self. Shamate Pass allows for small amounts of trade to pass through the mountains, and it has halted the decay at Beiden, but the city is unlikely to regain its former glory.

Hotei Seido [SC2]

The Fortune of Contentment deserves a temple as cozy and comfortable as the aspect of life it watches over. This view is embraced to full effect by the monks who built and maintain the shrine to Hotei. Beautiful sculptures, paintings, and scrolls line its walls, all dedicated to the finer points of life. The fact that this shrine is small and modestly appointed compared to some of the other major Fortunes' shrines in other Great Clan lands does not bother the monks who maintain it.

Some find it strange that the Scorpion lands are home to the most prominent shrine to the Fortune of Contentment, but the Scorpion themselves consider this perfectly appropriate. A samurai who lives a life of absolute loyalty to his lord has nothing but contentment in his soul, for he knows how great will be his rewards in the next life. For this reason more than any other, a tremendous number of Scorpion visit the shrine each year, and the donations to the brothers who maintain it are well in excess of any other major temple within the Scorpion provinces.

Kyuden Bayushi [SC3]

The Bayushi family castle is also the center of Scorpion political affairs. The Scorpion Clan Champion calls the castle home, and manages the clan's affairs from within its well-protected walls. Its court chambers are among the finest in the Empire, and a splendid garden is located outside, rivaling the beauty of the Crane gardens in Kyuden Doji. In a truly eccentric move, many of the interior walls are moveable, allowing the Scorpion to change the castle's interior layout at their whim.

An appointment to Kyuden Bayushi is generally considered highly prestigious, and the Scorpion are generous and pleasant hosts – but such a mission is also more than a little risky, for in Scorpion lands politics is truly a blood sport. Ambassadors sent to represent their clans at Kyuden Bayushi must be extremely seasoned and experienced. For their part, the Scorpion prefer to invite guests who either have something the Scorpion want, or who are considered threats the clan wishes to keep close at hand. Neither is a particularly envious position for a samurai to find himself in.

In addition to its function as the clan's primary court, Kyuden Bayushi is also the Scorpion Clan's most prominent fortress, capable of withstanding siege from large armies. It is built atop a low plateau in the center of an open plan, making it impossible for hostile forces to approach undetected. The plateau is riddled with secret passages and tunnels, allowing the Scorpion to come and go unobserved. Despite the many assaults the Scorpion provinces have endured, the castle has only ever truly fallen once, during a period when the clan was dissolved by Imperial edict and its denizens forced to flee or hide.

Ryoko Owari Toshi [SC4]

Ryoko Owari, also known as the City of Lies, the City of Stories, and the City of Green Walls, is said to be the home of every vice, sin, and guilty pleasure found within the Emerald Empire. The city turns a notoriously blind eye to criminal activities of every type, from gambling dens to illegal trade. Control of the city has changed hands many times over the centuries, with the Unicorn in particular ruling it on more than one occasion, and the Crab and Lion each briefly occupying it as well. However, it always seems to return to the hands of its Scorpion masters. Perhaps only they can properly rule over such a place.

Although the exact dimensions and populations of major cities change from decade to decade, the City of Lies is usually counted at around 10,000 people and is generally considered the second largest city in the Empire, smaller only than the Imperial capital. This is a point of contention between the Scorpion and the Mantis, who believe that the city of Kyuden Gotei is larger than the City of Lies, but so many more people are familiar with Ryoko Owari that its position can never be unseated within the public consciousness.

Ryoko Owari straddles the River of Gold, the major river trade route of the western Empire, and is home to countless merchants. Perhaps more importantly, the fields surrounding the city are particularly well suited toward growing poppies, and the City of Lies is the center of the Empire's legal opium production and trade. The drug is used for a number of medicinal purposes throughout Rokugan, and is a major source of commerce for the Scorpion Clan. There are those who speculate, however, as to why the merchants of the city grow many times more poppies than are necessary to produce the required amount of medicinal opium. Still, such topics are never addressed in polite company.

Shiro no Shosuro [SC5]

The home of the Shosuro family seems to be a normal castle at first glance. Any who know enough of the family's reputation to look closer, however, will find that nothing is what it appears to be. The palace is filled with masked actors and smiling assassins, and those assigned to the courts here often regard it as a more dangerous assignment than a battlefield.

One of the few obviously noteworthy aspects of the castle, and indeed perhaps its most famous features, are the beautiful gardens that fill so much of the available space within. It is said that Shiro no Shosuro, also called the Castle of Pretending, has the largest gardens of any castle in the Empire, and few who have visited contest the claim (at least not while they are in attendance). In addition to being a source of exquisite beauty, however, the gardens have a more nefarious role. By repute, this is where the Scorpion concoct their most sinister poisons, although this rumor is never discussed publicly. One legend has it that the castle was once put to the torch by an enemy army, and the entire army was killed by the vapors that emerged from the burning garden.

A village near the castle is home to the famous Shosuro Acting School and the many theater troupes that it trains. Thus, while many samurai fear to visit Shiro no Shosuro, actors from across the Empire eagerly seek invitations to its acting school, which is almost as well regarded as the acting branch of the Kakita Artisan Academy.

Shiro no Soshi [SC6]

The Soshi family castle is constructed high amid the peaks of the Spine of the World Mountains, close to the Lion and Unicorn lands. The proximity of such enemies meant the Scorpion Clan was forced to take practicality into far more account than style when designing this castle. Its mountainous location ensures it cannot be approached by a force of any significant size, granting it relative security so long as even a meager defense force is on hand to protect the passes leading to its gates. The castle's high towers loom over every other construction in the area, of which there are few, and are supplemented by additional tall watchtowers on every side. It is rumored the watchtowers are among the tallest constructs in the Empire, although doubtless not even the Scorpion would commit such a breach of etiquette as to make them taller than the Imperial Palace. Due to their great height and unusually narrow design, the Scorpion spent vast sums of money hiring Kaiu engineers to ensure they could withstand the mountains winds.

Warriors stationed in the Soshi towers' peaks can spot the southernmost Lion lands, giving the Scorpion Clan precious warning before any incursion from their northern neighbors can take place. Although they ostensibly serve the clan as shugenja, in truth the Soshi are the Scorpion's jack-of-all-trades, maintaining an extensive network of skills throughout their ranks. For this reason, their estate is sometimes known as the Castle of Organization.

Seven Stings Keep [SC7]

The military masterminds of the Scorpion Clan reside within Seven Stings Keep. The castle is nestled at the foot of the Spine of the World Mountains, with easy access to most of the mountain passes that provide access to the Scorpion lands. Seven Stings Keep is widely recognizable for its very visible seven high towers. The tower roofs are sharp and foreboding, serving to remind the clan's enemies that the Scorpion are always ready to strike at their foes.

Militaristic clans like the Lion do not generally regard the Scorpion as a military threat, believing their victories come only as a result of underhanded and dishonorable tactics. However, any of their leaders who saw the interior of Seven Stings Keep might be sorely tempted to revise that opinion. The tacticians of Seven Stings understand that strategies can only be part of an overall military approach, and as such they maintain extensive diagrams and reproductions of troops, army movements, and terrain details of all the clan's current and potential enemies. Each Great Clan has a single chamber devoted to it where Scorpion analysts study that clan alone, constantly striving to update their information and formulate new strategies to deal with them in the event a conflict happens.

Palace of Crimson Shadows [SC8]

The Palace of Crimson Shadows was constructed to serve as a secondary training facility for the Bayushi courtiers, and if necessary to serve as a second possible location for the Scorpion to host the Emperor's Winter Court. The intense and refined design that went into the castle is obvious in every opulent inch. The Scorpion Clan spared no expense to make life comfortable for visitors coming to the Bayushi provinces, while still making sure their own influence is seen in every room of the stronghold. Thus, while the palace is seemingly a wide-open and inviting place, every corridor is lined with dark red lanterns, giving a sinister tinge to the whole building. This is one of the most fundamental lessons the sensei here teach to their students: control the perceptions of your friends and enemies, and you can manipulate both of them all the easier.



Yogo Shiro [SC9]

The estate of the Yogo family is often overlooked by everyone – Scorpion and non-Scorpion alike – as insignificant in comparison to the family dojo at the Yogo Towers. Little importance is placed on the Yogo family estate, nestled as it is in the middle of the empty, remote Yogo provinces.

The Hidden Moon Dojo, a secret society of Yogo shugenja dedicated to studying and fighting the Lying Darkness and other enemies in the shadows, often holds council here. The Hidden Moon does not have any formal lands of its own, and usually relies on Yogo Shiro to serve as host.

Yogo Towers [SC10]

The Yogo family shugenja dojo is actually more famous than the family estates. The Towers themselves look both imposing and dangerous, as if designed to deter any visitors who might appear in the area. Most Yogo spend a great portion of their lives inside the Tower's halls, struggling to gain a mastery of the kami. The library inside the Towers is of modest size, but provides extensive information on the subjects that interest the Yogo family: curses, black magic, and the methods of preventing such things.

The Shadowlands and the Provinces of the Spider Clan

The Spider Clan does not formally control any specific region of land. This is of course because they are not truly a Great Clan, having never been recognized as such by any Emperor. Rather they have claimed the title for themselves based on the premise that they, like the other clans, follow the teachings of a child of the Sun and Moon. In their case, the Kami in question is Fu Leng, whom the other clans regard as evil incarnate – a perception that is quite literally true. Despite this, during their reign in the twelfth century the Spider do manage to place a small number of areas within the Empire firmly under their control. Prominent locations within the Shadowlands are also discussed here, due to the inseparable bonds between the Spider and the Shadowlands.

The Daigtosu are the unquestioned masters of the Spider Clan, and the most diverse among them as well. They excel as warriors and as deceivers, and the most successful Spider agents who have infiltrated the courts of other Great Clans are usually members of the Daigotsu. Likewise, because of their leadership of the clan, any stronghold of the Spider has strong ties to the Daigotsu family. Highly specialized Spider holdings tend to be given over to families that have more ties to the area in question, but the default for any Spider holding can be assumed to be strong Daigotsu leadership, with a largely Daigotsu-staffed defense force protecting it from potential discovery.

The Chuda are the Daigotsu's oldest vassals, but perhaps the least trustworthy. It was the Dark Lord Daigotsu who granted leave for the last descendant of the true Chuda family to recreate his line among the Lost, but the family's loyalty has wavered in the past when strife among the servants of Fu Leng has arisen (as it inevitably does). Thus far, the Chuda have always been accepted back into the ranks following their eventual assistance in overcoming whatever interlopers have threatened the Daigotsu, but it is never an opportunity that is taken for granted. Because of their great emphasis on blood sorcery and other forms of blasphemous magic, the Chuda are generally given dominion over areas with strong mystical origins or the potential to be of great use in some sor-



cerous endeavor. The Field of the Dead, described below, is an example of a Chuda holding granted them by the Daigotsu.

The Goju are the least human family in service of the Spider Clan. They are not technically a family at all, but rather a group of individuals who have surrendered part or all of their identity in exchange for a portion of the power possessed by the primordial entity known as the Lying Darkness, and later, the Shadow Dragon. The Goju have little desire or need for material possessions or physical comfort, and as such have little interest in holdings. They consider physical locations only in the sense of what they can contribute to individual Goju accomplishing their assigned tasks. They rarely control any given area for more than a short time, abandoning it and moving on as soon as they no longer need it. The lone exception seems to be the Shadowlands Marsh of the Shinomen (described below), which the Goju have an ongoing and inexplicable interest in.

The monastic sect known as the Order of the Spider is radically different from the other Spider families in two significant ways. First and foremost, of course, it is not actually a family, but a sect of warrior monks devoted to the sinister ideals of the Spider Clan. Perhaps more importantly, the order is at least nominally a part of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, if only because the Brotherhood is largely aware of its existence (having hundreds of sects within it). As such its members are permitted to travel through the Empire as any Brotherhood monk would. So long as they do not openly bear the Spider mon, they are not identified as agents of that clan. The order has half a dozen monasteries firmly under their control throughout the Empire, all of which are completely free of Brotherhood influence. There are perhaps a dozen more where they hold some degree of influence, but are not the controlling sect.

Big Stink [SH1]

Once known simply as Kappa, Big Stink was originally a Crab fortress under the control of the Hiruma family. When the Hiruma lands were lost to the Shadowlands during the eighth century, Kappa was overrun and believed destroyed. Because of its relative unimportance compared to Shiro Hiruma, no significant effort was made to recapture Kappa. In the absence of samurai to maintain it, Kappa became a city of goblins. Various tribes of the insidious little creatures have infested the ruined city, turning it into a mockery of its former glory. The creatures engage in what passes for diplomacy and commerce there, haggling over food and objects of highly questionable value, and even fighting one another for the affection of females. The Kuni family is aware of the existence of Big Stink, and has on occasion conducted negotiations with the goblins for one reason or another, but they have not revealed its existence to the rest of the Crab Clan, who would doubtless destroy it immediately.

City of the Lost [SH2]

The crowning achievement of the Shadowlands and of the Lost, even before they called themselves the Spider Clan, is surely the City of the Lost. Constructed at the command of Daigotsu, the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, the City of the Lost is a dark reflection of the Empire of Rokugan, a vast experiment to bring order to the previously chaotic forces of the Lost within the Shadowlands. Under Daigotsu's tutelage, the diverse members of the Lost learned to overcome their own petty hostilities and work together, not only to build a vast city, but to combine their prowess against their common enemy: Rokugan. Built using the unholy power of a legion of maho-tsukai and the incredible physical power of creatures like oni, ogres, and trolls, the City of the Lost rivals the largest cities of the Empire in sheer size. It has all manner of training grounds where large units of bushi practice maneuvers, massive (and blasphemous) temples to the Ninth Kami for maho-tsukai to practice their dark arts. The city even has mundane things like tea and sake houses, although the wares they serve are unlike anything ever seen within the Empire (and thankfully so). In a continuing parallel of Rokugan, the City of the Lost is protected by a Wall of Bone in a manner similar to the Great Carpenter Wall's defense of the Empire.

The Festering Pit of Fu Leng [SH3]

It is said no mortal has ever laid eyes upon the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, but none can question that it exists. The only firsthand accounts of its existence are available to the Crab from their allies among the Nezumi tribes, the rat-men who are immune to the effects of the Shadowlands Taint and thus can travel farther into its depths than any human. The Pit was created at the dawn of the Empire, when the divine form of Fu Leng, child of Lady Sun and Lord Moon, plummeted to the earth after the epic battle between his brother, Hantei, and Lord Moon. For reasons no one can know, Fu Leng fell along a different path and landed far, far away from his siblings. When he struck the earth, he plunged through it into Jigoku, the Realm of Evil, where the malevolent presence of that sinister place corrupted him and created the ultimate minion of evil. While Fu Leng's war against the Empire has waxed and waned over the centuries, the Pit has never closed, allowing all manner of vile and twisted creatures to crawl forth and populate the Shadowlands. The Kuni family of the Crab theorize it is the existence of the Pit that allows the Shadowlands itself to continue to exist and that, were it ever closed, the Taint and the Shadowlands would cease to spread. Unfortunately, no one has any idea how a task such as sealing the Pit could ever be accomplished.

The Fields of the Dead [SH4]

The Spider excel at locating forgotten corners of the Empire in which to weave their webs, and the Fields of the Dead are a perfect example of such industriousness. Centuries ago, the Emperor issued an edict mandating cremation as the means of disposing of human remains. Prior to that the Rokugani had buried their dead, but the battle with the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban in the Imperial City changed that. Neither the Emperor nor his subjects desired to see their ancestors re-animated and used as shock troops for a blood sorcerer.

The region now called the Fields of the Dead was an old graveyard, long since filled to capacity, concealed among the craggy cliffs on an uninhabitable region of coastline north of Otosan Uchi. There were none to pay homage to the shrines there, as the entire graveyard was filled with the bodies of those washed upon shore, victims of pirates and shipwrecks, most of whom were completely unidentifiable and were only buried out of basic respect – not to mention the fear of angering both Emma-O and Suitengu, the Fortunes of Death and the Sea, respectively. While portions of the graveyard have been utilized by enterprising maho-tsukai over the centuries, the majority of it remains intact and undisturbed, at least until the Spider located it and co-opted it for their use. After that it became a center for the Chuda family to perfect their sacrilegious necromantic arts, and a constant source of undead forces for the Dark Lord to use as he willed.

The Fingers of Bone [SH5]

North of Rokugan, high in the unexplored regions of the Great Wall of the North Mountains, there exists a field of strange rock spires unlike anything ever seen within the Empire. In the first days of history, there were tribes of Rokugani who sought shelter among these spires, constructing crude shelters around their bases and even within some of the larger and stronger spires. These shelters were forgotten with the coming of the Kami, however, as the people of Rokugan either flocked south to join the newborn Empire or fled east to the steppes, where they would become the Yobanjin tribes. The Fingers, as they were called at the time, were forgotten, and remained so for hundreds of years. They were rediscovered purely by accident when agents of the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands stumbled across them while traveling back from the Burning Sands, where they had delivered a message for their lord. When the Dark Lord discovered the Fingers' existence, he immediately dispatched a small force to assess and occupy them, hoping to use them as a staging point for attacks against the Empire. Since that time, the Fingers have proven remarkably useful, as their natural geography makes discovery exceptionally unlikely, and the Spider Clan's abilities allow them to hollow out the spires without compromising their integrity. A large portion of the entire Spider Clan can be housed within the Fingers of Bone, as they have renamed the formation, without much difficulty.

The Forgotten Tomb of Fu Leng [SH6]

This massive, mysterious edifice exists deep within the Shadowlands, farther south than is safe for regular travel even by the hardiest of the Crab Clan's scouts. It is believed this is where the remains of Fu Leng were interred after his defeat by the Seven Thunders, although by whom no one knows for certain. The architecture is completely alien to Rokugani sensibilities, and the few Crab who have ventured far enough to look upon the Tomb report it resonates a truly horrific evil. Even the twisted plants of the Shadowlands do not grow in a wide radius around the structure. So far as the Crab are aware, none who have entered the building have ever emerged again. What they do not know is that within, the boundaries between the mortal realm and Jigoku, the Realm of Evil, do not exist. The most horrible, nightmarish oni to be found in that sinister realm, even those who are unable to cross the boundaries into the mortal world, can affect anything or anyone that enters the tomb, ensuring that it is without question one of the deadliest locations in existence. On one occasion, when the demon master known as the Shokansuru entered the Tomb, he was able to completely transfer some of the most powerful demons the Empire has even seen into the mortal realm by reaching through the boundary and merging the creatures with mortal souls. Doing so created oni of nigh unimaginable power, but also fully incarnated them in the mortal realm, leaving them vulnerable to final death if destroyed.



The Shadowed Dojo [SH7]

The temple known as the Shadowed Dojo is the greatest temple of the Order of the Spider, the renegade sect from the Brotherhood of Shinsei that serves the Spider Clan. The order's founder, the insane monk Roshungi, spent a decade carefully removing all mention of the dojo's location from Brotherhood records, while likewise carefully culling the Brotherhood's ranks of all who knew of its location. Those stationed at the temple itself were very slowly won over by Roshungi's particular brand of charismatic madness, and formed the core of the Order of the Spider.

Once Roshungi's agenda was complete, the Shadowed Dojo was truly born. Situated deep within one of the few forested regions in the Twilight Mountains, the dojo is secluded from all outside influences, ensuring those who are brought to study there have no recourse but to embrace the dark philosophy and rigid conditioning offered at the temple.

The Shadowlands Marsh of the Shinomen [SH8]

At some point during the Empire's history, a sizeable force of Shadowlands creatures managed to circumvent the Crab Clan's defenses and penetrate the Empire. Even as the sons of Hida were preparing to pursue them, the creatures disappeared into the vast depths of the Shinomen Mori and were never seen again. Although no human knows of their fate, in fact the creatures disturbed the sleeping Naga within the forest. The serpent men awakened just long enough to eradicate the horde and seal their corrupt influence within a relatively small area. This became a vast, vile, stinking marsh that, while not capable of passing the Taint on to others, remained inherently Tainted itself. The marsh has proven a useful hiding place for the Spider Clan, as no human or denizen of the forest ever ventures within its boundaries.

Provinces of the Unicorn Clan

If the Unicorn were of a mind to do so, surely their lands could produce enough crops to feed not only their own ranks but potentially the ranks of multiple other Great Clans as well. The vast rolling plains they possess as part of their Imperially mandated holdings are fertile and enjoy a temperate growing season. The Unicorn are loathe to cultivate the land more than necessary, however, for they prefer the unbroken beauty of the wilderness to an excess of crops for trading. And of course, as the premier horsemasters of Rokugan they prefer to let their mighty mounts roam and graze freely across the fields of their provinces.

The Shinjo and Utaku families control the northernmost holdings of the Unicorn Clan, where the vast plains meet the bleak stone face of the Great Wall of the North. As a result they control the greatest portion of the clan's mineral resources. However, neither family has ever exploited this to the fullest, preferring instead to trade their ample crop surplus for such things and reserve their time and energy for more favored pursuits, such as the continued development of their riding stock's bloodlines.

In modern times the Moto control perhaps the most diverse holdings in the clan's provinces, containing significant portions of the central provinces, the mountainous western lands that border upon the vast Western Steppes beyond, and a single province south of the Spine of the World Mountains, where they oversee the clan's defense against potential threats from the Shinomen Mori. These scattered provinces are due both to the family's large modern size and to its earlier travails in Rokugan – during the tenth and eleventh centuries, when the Dark Moto roamed the Shadowlands and much of the family's pure bloodline still wandered the Western Steppes, they controlled only a single province.

The Ide and Iuchi control the majority of the clan's holdings that adjoin the Spine of the World Mountains in the south, and unlike the Shinjo and Utaku, they have few reservations regarding mining. The clan's mineral wealth, in precious metals, gems, and ore as well, is largely collected from mines maintained by these families. Because of the nature of the plains and their location compared to the mountains, the holdings of these families are generally home to strong winds, and are known for their stormy, blustery climate.

The tiny Horiuchi family, founded at the end of the eleventh century, has but a single province to administer in the name of the Unicorn Clan, and they struggle to ensure it is a profitable and prosperous one. The province has no major settlements to speak of, only a scattering of small villages and a single one that might be considered a large town or, by the most generous estimations, a small city. It is in this city that Shinden Horiuchi stands, although the family maintains smaller shrines in virtually every village within their borders. In general the province is regarded as rural and relatively unimportant in terms of strategic value, but is well liked within the clan for its serenity and beauty.

Dark Edge Village [U1]

For much of Rokugan's history, the Unicorn provinces were unaligned lands shared between the Lion and Scorpion Clans. Dark Edge village was a small, out of the way settlement that was overlooked by the Lion as largely insignificant. After the creation of the Emerald Champion position, an early Hantei Emperor chose Dark Edge Village as the site for the tournament where his Champion would be selected. The Emerald Championship was held within the village numerous times throughout history, although eventually it would be moved elsewhere to break the power of a particularly influential regent acting in the name of a missing Emerald Champion. Although the village has not since been host to the tournament, the pervasive interest and dedication of the people there has not changed, and the chief dojo remains the pre-eminent iaijutsu training facility in all the Unicorn holdings. The Ide family maintains an estate within the village in order to supervise the training of their yojimbo; while they understand the necessity of trained duelists in resolving courtly disputes, they hope to mitigate the aggressive martial training and ensure their personal champions remember their ultimate cause is one of peace.

Mountain Watch Keep [U2]

A relatively recent addition to the Shinjo holdings, Mountain Watch Keep is situated where the plains meet the Great Wall of the North, a region that has generally been undeveloped because of its lack of immediately accessible resources. After a particularly disastrous incursion from the northern steppes by a massive Yobanjin army, an incursion in which the Unicorn suffered significant losses, the family constructed this keep to maintain a watch over the northern passes and ensure there would be ample warning before a force of any size could gain access to the clan's lands. The keep itself is not particularly large, and cannot house a military force of any significant size. The intent behind its construction is simply to hold enough troops for a minor delaying action, either hit and run tactics or, if necessary, a suicide attack to clear the mountain passes and collapse them upon an advancing enemy. At the same time, couriers on the clan's fastest horses would be deployed along well-practiced routes to the nearest large fortifications, summoning larger military forces in a timely manner. Thus far the system has not been put to the test, but the drills conducted by the Shinjo family indicate it should prove an effective means of strong, immediate defense against further incursion from the north.

Shinden Horiuchi [U3]

The primary holding of the small Horiuchi family, Shinden Horiuchi has always been more of a temple than a castle. Even at its peak, the tiny Horiuchi family never had more than two to three dozen samurai and thus never had need of a larger holding. The temple, surrounded by a moderately sized village, has all the amenities one would expect, with the addition of considerably larger living space to accommodate not only the family and any guests they might have, but also the orphans the family is known for taking in. The first Horiuchi, a woman named Shoan, was a caretaker for the Clan Champion's children, and her love of children became an integral part of the family's philosophy. After a series of Empire-wide conflicts left many tens of thousands dead, Shoan and her followers made it their mission to find and take in any and all children who were left without parents and had no one else to take care of them. The number of children who came to the family was at first only a few dozen, but with increasing conflicts throughout the family's history, the number climbed steadily over the years. Most of these children choose to swear fealty to the family when they come of age, and are welcomed into the clan without reservation.

Shinomen Tower [U4]

Southwest of the Unicorn provinces lies the vast and mysterious Shinomen Mori, the largest forest in the known world. Its depths have never been fully explored, and many have entered in search of its mysteries and never returned. There are things within that no man has ever seen, and occasionally creatures that completely defy description emerge from the forest's depths. Rather than run the risk of having the clan's lands jeopardized by such enigmatic threats, the lords of the Unicorn established a watchtower to supervise the northern border, capable both of sending word north in the event of disaster and of defending the clan borders against smaller incursions. The fortification consists primarily of a tower (significantly taller than most of its type due to the need to survey an extremely long tree line) and a moderately sized barracks capable of housing up to one hundred men. During those periods of Rokugan's history when the Naga race has been awake and active in their cities deep within the Shinomen, the tower serves as a waypoint between their civilization and those humans, Unicorn or otherwise, they might consider their allies.

Shiro Ide [U5]

By far the most conventionally constructed castle in the entire Unicorn provinces, Shiro Ide is the clan's center for diplomatic training and negotiations. Shiro Moto (and in earlier eras, Shiro Shinjo) remains the capital and often hosts important guests, but when matters of a more delicate nature arise, Great Day Castle is the preferred host. The castle's familiar style and décor, not to mention its extremely beautiful surroundings, put guests more at ease than the strangely alien world of the Unicorn capital.

Shiro Ide is among the least military-oriented estates in all of Rokugan, with only the most basic defenses demanded by the lords of the Unicorn Clan. The Ide themselves are extremely pacifistic in philosophy, or at least as much as a samurai can be a pacifist, and their attitudes are more in keeping with the ideals of the Phoenix Clan or the Asahina family of the Crane than with their warlike cousins among the rest of the Unicorn. The vast majority of all court representatives for the Unicorn Clan are trained within Shiro Ide, learning how to put into practice the ideas the family collected from interacting with dozens of unique cultures during their years spent wandering the Burning Sands.

Early in the family's history, the Ide maintained their own shugenja tradition, with a unique emphasis on spatial magic. In the modern Empire, however, those practices have largely been folded into the standard Iuchi techniques, and the Ide do not maintain their own temple any longer.

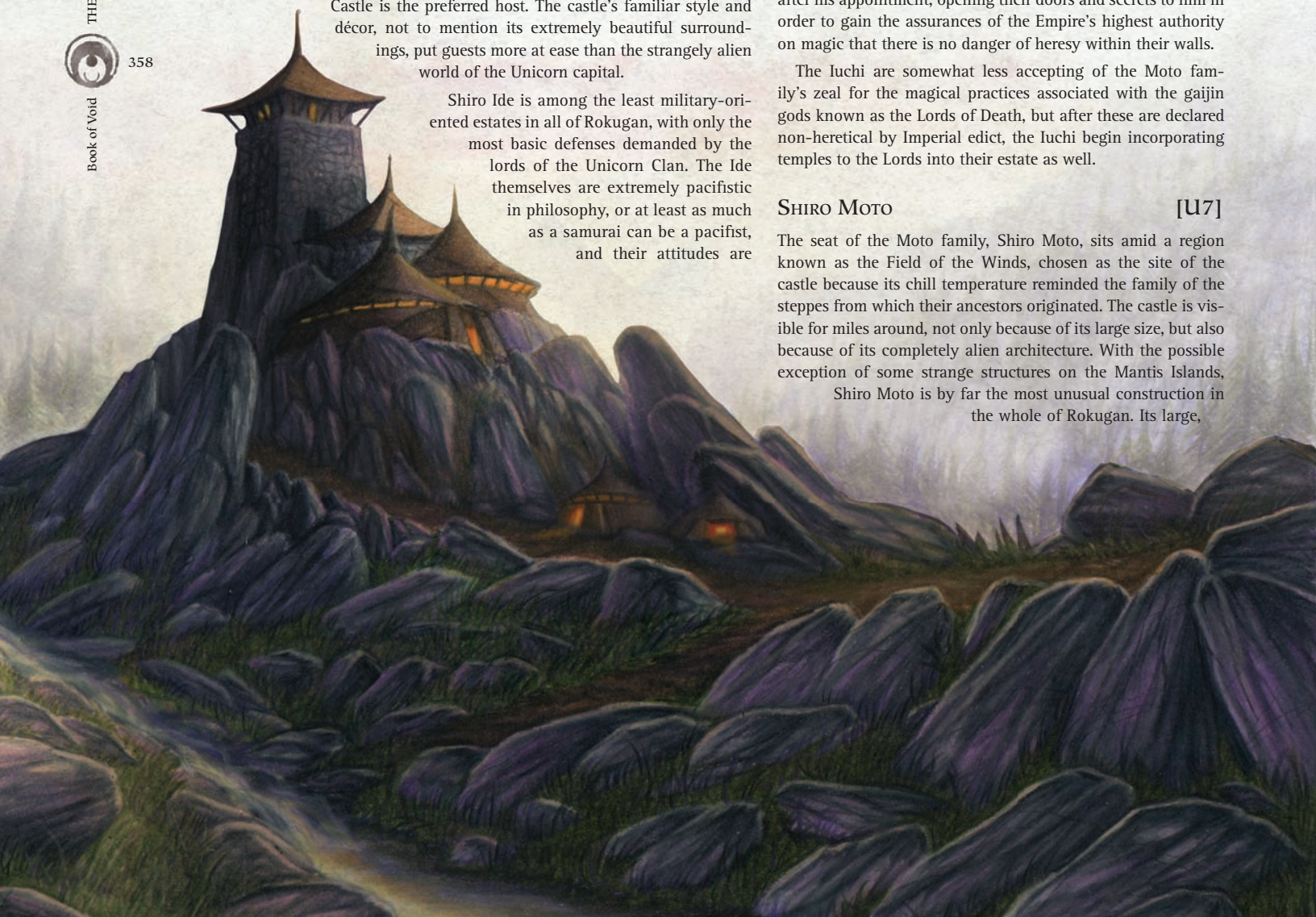
Shiro Iuchi [U6]

Also known as Gatherer of Winds Castle, Shiro Iuchi is the Unicorn Clan's center for shugenja training and research. The castle boasts much of the same unusual construction as other major Unicorn estates, such as onion-shaped domes atop its towers, but the many temples and shrines incorporated into its confines are more traditional, making it a bit more welcoming to outsiders. The Iuchi family's emphasis on unusual forms of magic has made them somewhat less than open to visitors and students from outside the clan. There are many who covet the secrets they believe the Iuchi possess, and just as many whose narrow view of magic would make them vilify the Iuchi family for blasphemy. Keenly aware of the potential dangers, the Iuchi always extend an invitation to a new Jade Champion shortly after his appointment, opening their doors and secrets to him in order to gain the assurances of the Empire's highest authority on magic that there is no danger of heresy within their walls.

The Iuchi are somewhat less accepting of the Moto family's zeal for the magical practices associated with the gaijin gods known as the Lords of Death, but after these are declared non-heretical by Imperial edict, the Iuchi begin incorporating temples to the Lords into their estate as well.

Shiro Moto [U7]

The seat of the Moto family, Shiro Moto, sits amid a region known as the Field of the Winds, chosen as the site of the castle because its chill temperature reminded the family of the steppes from which their ancestors originated. The castle is visible for miles around, not only because of its large size, but also because of its completely alien architecture. With the possible exception of some strange structures on the Mantis Islands, Shiro Moto is by far the most unusual construction in the whole of Rokugan. Its large,



bulbous spires would be more at home in the strange lands north of the Empire, across the vast desert known as the Burning Sands.

The castle is a major military installation for the Unicorn Clan. From here emerged the concept of forming the Unicorn military into three armies, the offensive Khol, the defensive Junghar, and the shugenja-intensive Baraunghar. After the defeat of the Dark Moto, this castle becomes the capital of the entire Unicorn Clan, gaining significant political importance. Additionally, the castle is also the center for the worship of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, the ancient gaijin gods worshipped by the Moto as the Lords of Death. Initially regarded as blasphemous by the rest of the Empire, the Lords were adopted into the Rokugani cosmology in the mid-twelfth century for services rendered in the name of the Fortunes in Tengoku. In modern times a small but growing sect of Rokugani revere them as lesser Fortunes. The greatest temple and center for learning of the Lords of Death is located within the halls of Shiro Moto.

Shiro Shinjo [U8]

Far Traveler Castle, as Shiro Shinjo is also known, was for centuries the diplomatic and governmental hub of the Unicorn lands. As befitting the family it serves, the castle is not particularly large, although its architectural style could best be described as eclectic. The castle is triangular in shape, ascending to three separate towers, and incorporating architectural elements from many different cultures the Unicorn encountered during their travels abroad. The castle's appearance is a distraction, however, that belies its strategic value as a stronghold. There are few other locations in the Unicorn lands as heavily and effectively fortified as Shiro Shinjo.

Like other major Unicorn estates, the castle has a stable vastly larger than one could expect to find attached to a similarly sized estate elsewhere in the Empire. Although the Shinjo do not place the same nigh-religious importance upon their steeds as the Utaku, they do regard them with more value and compassion than the other families. The average Shinjo bushi looks upon his horse as an ally or brother more than as a beast of burden. While the Shinjo were the lords of the clan for most of Rokugan's history, shortly after the Clan War in the early twelfth century they were removed from power by the returned Kami, Shinjo herself. She was disgusted by the degree to which the heretical Kolat organization had subverted her family. Although the family has worked hard to purge such influences from its ranks, many in the modern Empire continue to look upon the Shinjo with bias despite the Moto's endorsement of their purity.

Shiro Utaku Shojo [U9]

There are poets and storytellers throughout the Empire's history who refer to the Utaku Plains where Shiro Utaku Shojo stands as the most beautiful place in Rokugan. The plains seem endless, stretching out from horizon to horizon with almost nothing to interrupt the majestic view. The Utaku are among the most pious of all bushi families, and as part of their unique philosophy they have tremendous reverence for their homeland, cultivating it only to the extent necessary to fulfill their duties. The majority of developed land consists of small villages and towns with very carefully constrained fields where the maximum amount of foodstuff can be harvested, not only for the people of the provinces, but for the sacred herds of the legendary Utaku steeds as well.

The majestic Utaku steeds have vast tracts of land set aside for their use, far more than the peasants or even samurai make use of. They have the perfect environment to grow and prosper, both before they are trained and in between their tours of duty. Shiro Utaku Shojo sits amid these ample plains, and is much more a part of the landscape than most castles.

Minor Clan Holdings

Generally speaking, the lands held by the various Minor Clans is less valuable than that of the Great Clans. If this were not the case, it is likely these lands would have been claimed by one or another Great Clan long before now, and the circumstances giving rise to the different Minor Clans might not have taken place at all. Most Minor Clans are at best capable of self-sufficiency, so a Great Clan seizing them would probably not gain enough resources to sustain the effort expended to hold the land in the first place. Since most of the Minor Clans also do not hold lands of strategic value, they are generally left alone by their betters. This is the true secret of the Minor Clans' continued existence, even more so than the Imperial edict that forbids a Great Clan to make war upon a Minor Clan without clear and demonstrable provocation.

Kudo [MC1]

Kudo is a large village that, despite its simplicity, is something of a flashpoint not only for its owner the Hare Clan but for the entire Minor Clan Alliance as well. Although not as fertile as Koeru Mura, Kudo is nevertheless one of the most productive holdings among those controlled by the Minor Clans. It generates the vast majority of the food used each year by the Hare Clan, and there is frequently a small but appreciable surplus, which the Hare often share with their allies in the Minor Clan Alliance. Additionally, in modern times the Hare have granted holdings within the village to the Alliance, which maintains barracks and dojo within its confines. The single legion the Alliance controls can be housed entirely within the village at one time, though that has never actually been the case. The fertility of the land and the presence of adequate if not exceptional training facilities make the village an attractive target, unfortunately, and during the tumultuous period at the end of the Toturi Dynasty the village is forcibly annexed by the Lion Clan. Although the annexation is brief in duration, it has a long-lasting effect of souring relations between the Hare and Lion, who had been frequent allies prior to the incident.

Kyuden Komori [MC2]

The tiny Bat Clan is likely the smallest of all modern Minor Clans and, if one includes the history of the Tsi ronin family before they became the Oriole Clan, the Bat are the youngest such clan as well. The castle that houses the entire clan is constructed on a tiny island previously known simply as the Island of Lost Wilderness. It was a Mantis holding, but at the time of the Bat's formation the Mantis Clan Champion presented the island to the Bat Clan's founder as a gift. The island had never been developed due to its small size and relative scarcity of resources. Lord Komori was determined to make it a viable home for his new clan, however, and with the generosity of the Yoritomo family he was successful in constructing a large estate and small village. The lands and nearby seafood have been just enough to sustain the clan in the years since its founding.

The estate hosts the entirety of the Bat Clan, and also has room for a small number of guests, although to date they have had none save from the Mantis Clan and the Minor Clan Alliance. The village around the estate is filled with idealistic peasants, generally younger couples and their children, who flocked to the island at the Bat Clan's founding. They sought the opportunity to be part of something greater than themselves, and hopefully to earn the magnanimity of their new lords in the process.

Kyuden Kasuga [MC3]

There are many castles and palaces in the Empire that have strange architectural details, particularly in the Mantis and Unicorn clans, but none that are more strange in appearance than the complete oddity that is Kyuden Kasuga. The castle is deliberately built to resemble a tortoise shell, making it perhaps the strangest-looking building in all of Rokugan.

The formal estate of the Tortoise Clan is constructed on the peninsula leading into the bay of Otosan Uchi, for centuries the Imperial City and largest city in the Empire of Rokugan. The Tortoise used the Imperial city as their base of operations since their clan was created, and have never controlled significant holdings outside of its boundaries. Kyuden Kasuga was created only after the Tortoise were finally awarded a formal family name, and is not only the center for their clan's operations but also an important location for the Minor Clan Alliance, of which the Tortoise are active members. The castle contains numerous court chambers, ensuring that a number of different courts (or more likely trade negotiations) can be conducted simultaneously without any participants knowing what is taking place in adjoining chambers. Naturally the Tortoise themselves have areas that allow them to overhear multiple chambers simultaneously if they feel the need.

Kyuden Suzume [MC4]

This castle is not the only Minor Clan holding to bear the appellation Kyuden, which normally implies the estate in question is large enough to host the Emperor's court, but Kyuden Suzume is the only estate in the Minor Clans which can actually claim the honor of possessing such physical size. The Sparrow have never hosted the Imperial Winter Court, of course, and have no particular desire to do so, but they take some small degree of pride in the fact that they theoretically could. Ironically, no one who ever looked upon the castle would ever imagine its true size, since from the exterior it seems quite meager and rather underwhelming. The castle's true capacity can only be appreciated when one experiences the surprising array of tunnels beneath it, extending in every direction for hundreds of yards. These tunnels and warrens are actually well appointed, at least in terms of the impoverished Sparrow Clan's meager resources, but of course the Suzume would never presume to host guests beneath the surface of the earth. Thus, it is likely that no court of any significance will ever be held within the castle's confines.

Kyuden Tonbo [MC5]

The ancestral estate of the Dragonfly Clan is situated very near the Lion Clan's borders. This would perhaps not be an issue at all save for the circumstances surrounding the birth of the Dragonfly Clan, which included a grave offense to the Lion. The Lion are hardly known for forgiving such things – indeed they are reputed to be some of the greatest grudge-holders in Rokugan. On at least three different occasions the Lion have nearly devastated the entire Dragonfly province, but each time the resilient Tonbo have rebuilt, and each time Kyuden Tonbo has become greater for it. (Ironically, on one occasion the Lion vigorously defended the palace from Yobanjin raiders to the north, on the principle that the defense of the Empire was a matter of greater honor than any feud with the Tonbo.) In modern times, Kyuden Tonbo's estate centers on a cylindrical tower, eight stories or more in height, visible for miles around.



Because of the damage the Dragonfly lands have suffered regularly during the centuries since their founding, there are few temples and shrines of note within the Tonbo lands. Most sites of religious importance are located within the palace itself, and as a result there are a great many visitors to Kyuden Tonbo on a daily basis. Some among the Dragonfly's allies have cited this practice as dangerous, since it dramatically complicates attempts at security, but the Tonbo family leaders feel it is important for their people to live without fear that their ancestral shrines will be destroyed by any future invasion of their homelands.

Meidochi [MC6]

The village of Meidochi is a minor holding in the most remote region of the Hare lands. It is out of the way of virtually everything, and the only road leading to it was specifically built in order to collect taxes from the village. It is, for all intents and purposes, completely isolated. The village is able to sustain itself and meet its taxes for both clan and Empire, but has little else in the way of resources. In fact, it was something of a problem for the Hare until the creation of the Ujina family, who accepted the village as their primary holding within the clan's single province. The Ujina founder sent the Usagi troops stationed in the village away, greatly reducing Meidochi's cost to the clan. When bandits attacked shortly thereafter, the ten Ujina samurai who lived there slaughtered more than twice their number of bandits while suffering no losses. Today every bandit in the Empire is afraid of the village, and Meidochi has become somewhat more profitable for the Hare, thanks to the fanatical loyalty most in the village feel for their Ujina lords. There is little of note within the village save for the Ujina dojo, which is only slightly larger than the peasant buildings. There is a quiet aura of menace within the village, however, since the disturbing nature of the Ujina family seems to some extent to affect even the villagers loyal to them.

Shiro Chuda [MC7]

The Snake Clan was founded by one of the Empire's most decorated Emerald Magistrates, and he built a grand new temple in the middle of the Dragon Heart Plain. This location suited a number of purposes. For one, it was close to Isawa Chuda's homeland within the Phoenix provinces. For another, the Dragon Heart Plain was one of the largest unclaimed territories within the Empire, and as a result was often the site of activity by those who did not wish to be found, such as the maho-tsukai Chuda and his newly formed family had vowed to hunt to the ends of the earth.

Sadly, Chuda married for love rather than duty, and his beloved wife simply was unable to resist the temptations Chuda himself brushed aside so easily. The Chuda family fell into maho use and within a generation was utterly corrupt. When the Phoenix discovered this, they purged the small Minor Clan from the face of the mortal realm, an uncharacteristic display of military might that gave many in the Empire pause. The ruins of their ancestral estate remain undisturbed on the Dragon Heart Plain, and occasionally things not of this world emerge from them. Some have championed the notion of destroying the ruins once and for all, but others argue that doing so could unleash something completely unforeseen and visit terrible devastation throughout the northern Empire. The debate continues with no end in sight.

Shiro Heichi [MC8]

Deep within the Twilight Mountains lie the ruins of Shiro Heichi, seat of a Minor Clan purged utterly from the face of the earth by a combination of treachery and time. The clan's origins lie in a group of Crab sent in to mine a particularly fruitful valley in the mountains. They had been there some months when a terrible rockslide cut off all points of entry into the valley. The Crab attempted to clear the path, but this only caused more rockslides, and eventually they decided the valley was too unsafe to proceed. Decades later, a massive earthquake in the region opened the valley again, and a group of samurai emerged carrying a massive quantity of jade and ore. They did not speak the Crab who attempted to engage them, but traveled directly to the Imperial City, where they offered the minerals to the Emperor as taxes owed from the years spent isolated within his valley. The Emperor, greatly pleased, decreed the former Crab to be the Heichi family of the new Boar Clan.

Tragically, the clan existed for only slightly more than half a century before they were betrayed by a guest, an individual known only as Agasha Ryuden. He took from the valley ore created by the fallen blood of the First Oni and created the Anvil of Despair, one of the most accursed artifacts in all history. It was forged using the souls of the entire Heichi family. Since that day, samurai have occasionally claimed direct descent from the Heichi, but these claims have never been proven. Eventually an Imperial edict formally rendered the Heichi family, and with it the Boar Clan, extinct.

Shiro Ichiro [MC9]

Easily the most beleaguered Minor Clan stronghold by any estimation, Shiro Ichiro was created a few centuries after the dawn of the Empire, ostensibly to guard the northern passes from potential incursions by Yobanjin raiders and other gaijin on the steppes. Although most Badger Clan samurai truly believed this was their role, in truth it was only a façade for the clan's real purpose. This was to guard a secret shrine that marked the grave of Ryoshun, the tenth Kami that mortals never knew. The secret was known only to a handful of the first Badger samurai, and within a few generations, the knowledge was lost to the clan entirely; an unfortunate series of accidents ensured the secret was never passed on.

The Badger have never been the most populous Minor Clan, and have little in the way of holdings. The vast majority of the locations under their control are patterned after Shiro Ichiro itself: mountain fortresses that sit atop virtually unassailable plateaus. The clan's vassals vigorously mine the mountains for any valuable resource they can find, and use the majority of the yield to trade for the clan's food from their neighbors to the south, the Unicorn. The castle can be reached by a number of small paths that lead up to the plateau, all of which can be quickly and easily collapsed to obstruct invaders. Unfortunately, due to the necessity of trading for their food, the Badger are quite vulnerable to long term sieges, and if such a situation were to arise, even the clan's ancestral estate would only be able to hold out for two or three months at the very most. However, there are a small number of secret escape tunnels leading away from the castle, primarily using mines that are no longer in use.

Shiro Morito [MC10]

The foreboding fortress of the Ox Clan is one of the most militant holdings along the Empire's northern border, even taking into account the neighboring lands of the Dragon and Phoenix. Although those Great Clans command vastly superior resources and military forces, they are also among the more peaceful of the Emperor's servants, whereas the Ox are among the most warlike. Shiro Morito is a fortress, and none would ever make the mistake of considering it a palace or even a castle, although for simplicity's sake the latter title is normally applied. It is perhaps the largest military installation under the control of a Minor Clan anywhere in the Empire. Many find it very strange that a Minor Clan would defend itself so fiercely, but assume it is because the clan is situated close to the Great Wall of the North and might have to fend off attacks from Yobanjin raiders from outside Rokugan's northern border. While this is true to some extent, in truth the founder of the Ox Clan was actually a high-ranking member of the subversive Kolat conspiracy, and built the fortress in its current location as a means of defending the conspiracy's secret headquarters, hidden in the mountains behind.

Shiro Morito does contain a court chamber, which is used quite infrequently, as well as a large dojo and what is likely the largest stable in the Empire outside the Unicorn Clan provinces.

Shiro Usagi [MC11]

The ancestral estate of the Hare Clan was first constructed when the clan was founded centuries ago. The ronin Reichin had offered vital assistance in a battle with the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban, and as reward was allowed to found his own Minor Clan. Reichin and the other ronin who joined the nascent Hare Clan were well regarded by the Empire, and they enjoyed good fortune for many generations. That would not last, unfortunately, as the Hare's investigative nature and tendency to stick their noses in where they did not belong attracted the ire not only of the Bloodspeakers, but eventually of the Kolat and the Scorpion Clan as well. False allegations of maho use, planted by Kolat agents, resulted in the clan's temporary dissolution and the destruction of Shiro Usagi itself, but they were eventually reinstated and the castle rebuilt. The loss had a significant effect upon the clan, however, and the rebuilt Shiro Usagi is larger and vastly more fortified than it was before. In a fit of irony, the castle contains numerous secret passages and chambers known only to the highest echelon of Usagi samurai, much like the castles of the Scorpion. These tunnels allow the Hare to move secretly and avoid potential compromise at the hands of enemies, enemies the Usagi tend to see around every corner even if they are actually encountered rarely at best.

Tanuki Grove [MC12]

At some point during the Empire's history, a Badger Clan samurai was lost within the depths of the Shinomen Mori for more than a year. The man emerged with no sense of the time he had lost, but experienced terrifying dreams of strange spirits, the likes of which no one had ever encountered. The Emperor of that era was a scholarly man with an interest in the spirit realms, and had the Badger brought before him for several days to learn all he could about what the man had seen. At the conclusion of their discussions, the Emperor declared the samurai to be the lord of a new Minor Clan, which the Badger named the Tanuki Clan in honor of his parent clan. Their duty was to delve into the mysteries of the Shinomen. The clan dwelled within a small grove of trees on the outskirts of the forest, and submitted regular reports to the Imperial City as mandated by their charter. The Emperor who created the clan died shortly thereafter, however. His heir found the Tanuki absurd but amusing, and read their reports to the Imperial Court as a form of entertainment. In the generation after that, the new Emperor sought to dissolve the clan and erase what he saw as an embarrassment to his grandfather's name – but when Imperial agents arrived at Tanuki Grove, they found nothing. No trace of the samurai of the Tanuki Clan was ever found, and their names were stricken from many records, rediscovered centuries later purely by accident.

Toku Torid-e [MC13]

The Vigilant Keep of the Monkey is the principle holding of the Monkey Clan, called by some the favored vassals of the Toturi Dynasty. Within decades of the clan's formation, the keep was nearly destroyed on two separate occasions, but each time ample funds were made available by the Imperial families to facilitate its reconstruction. Although by no means as impressive as the fortifications of the Great Clans, or even some of the more militant Minor Clans, Toku Torid-e is a soundly and strategically constructed castle, better built than many of its size thanks to its Imperial funding. It is the site of one of only three major Monkey Clan dojo, and the largest dojo the clan maintains. It is also home to the Empire's largest shrine to Toku, the Fortune of Virtue and the founder of the Monkey Clan. The Toku have also built individual shrines devoted to each Emperor of the short-lived Toturi Dynasty, for Toku himself was a close friend and ally to the dynasty's founder and his descendents continue to hold the Toturi in the highest regard.

Tsi Uchi [MC14, Located inside I16]

Despite the status of the Oriole as one of the youngest Minor Clans in the Empire, they have little want for material goods, and indeed are well on their way to becoming one of the wealthiest Minor Clans. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that within six months of their founding the clan began purchasing and developing holdings within the Imperial City itself.

Long before they became a formally recognized family, the Tsi were among the greatest ronin smiths ever to draw breath, and their creations, particularly their famed Tsi Blades, were sought all across Rokugan. Now that they possess clan status, the Tsi have more leverage to demand good prices or favorable exchanges for their splendid creations – when they were ronin, rejecting an offer that seemed unreasonable could legitimately be met with violence from an offended clan samurai.

Despite the Oriole Clan's newfound wealth, Tsi Uchi is rather meager in its appearance, and seems more of a merchant house than a grand estate. Its coloration is drab, with a strong tendency toward a militant style of decoration. There are many rock gardens but few flowers or cherry trees such as might be found in other clan estates. Of course, Tsi Uchi does boast some of the finest forges anywhere in Rokugan, rivaled only by the great forges of the Kaiu and Tamori. Although the estate serves the clan well for now, plans are underway for a larger, vastly grander castle to be built once need arises.

Unaligned / Imperial Holdings

Like the holdings of the Minor Clans, most unaligned regions simply do not have enough promise of reward to warrant the expense of annexing them, leaving them unprotected by a Great Clan. Imperial holdings are the exception, and usually are of high quality, either due to their inherent value or because the clans have expended great effort to improve their quality as a means of currying favor with the Imperials.

Castle of the Emerald Champion [I1]

This rather lavish castle is the personal estate of the Emerald Champion, maintained very carefully by each individual Champion and his staff to be turned over to the Champion's successor upon the end of his service to the Empire. Because of the nature of the Emerald Championship, this estate is in the hand of individuals for decades at a time, although it is not altogether uncommon for a violent end to cut an individual's occupation of the castle quite short indeed. Likewise, the duties of an Emerald Champion take him all across the Empire, which can mean that months or even years go by with no significant period of the castle being occupied by its master. Still, perhaps because of the prestige associated with the position, most Emerald Champions prefer to leave their mark on the castle in some way, adding something to its décor or character in some way. Since so many different clans have had representatives among the ranks of former Emerald Champions, the castle is among the most uniquely and diversely decorated in the Empire. In addition to the actual castle itself, the estate includes a rather extensive barracks and training facility as part of the compound, which is where many young samurai honored with an appointment as Emerald Magistrates are brought. Small units from within the Imperial Legions are also trained here, but for the most part such things are reserved for another site specific to Legion training elsewhere. The Ruby Champion, the master sensei who trains the Emerald Champion's forces, has a small estate adjoining the castle as well.

Hub Villages [I2, I3, I4, I5]

There are four Hub Village, the North, South, East, and West villages that surround the outskirts of Otosan Uchi, the former Imperial City. During the period when Otosan Uchi was the Imperial City, the Hub Villages were major centers of trade and commerce for goods coming into and leaving the city, particularly because such things were distasteful for many of the samurai who dwelled within the city proper. Due to the slowed growth of the city and the limited housing suitable for those of samurai birth, the Hub Villages were also an opportunity for those who could not acquire housing within the city to have a personal estate near the city borders. Commuters from the Hub Villages were a common sight during the city's heyday, and even now that the Imperial City has been changed to Toshi Ranbo, the Hub Villages remain important centers of trade and commerce. The presence of the port at Otosan Uchi and the lack of a major port at Toshi Ranbo, the new Imperial City, means that a great deal of trade still passes through the region despite the destruction of the city proper. In fact, the fortunes of those who dwell within the Hub Villages has actually increased since Otosan Uchi's death. The Northern Hub Village is home to several major shipwrights sponsored by the Mantis Clan. The Southern Hub Village is protected by the Yotsu family, a former sect of ronin defenders of the weak who have since been accepted as vassals of the Seppun and who continue to protect the denizens of the Hub Villages. East Hub Village is home to the East Wind, a group of ronin allied with the Shinjo family of the Unicorn Clan. The West Hub Village is home to holdings of the Oriole Clan and several private holdings of the Dragon Clan.



Iyotisha [I6]

The race of serpent men known as the Naga existed long before the rise of mankind in the mortal realm, and while their time has passed, their mark is still upon the world they left behind in the form of the great cities that they created for each of their people's major bloodlines. Iyotisha, the City of Astronomy, was the home of the Constrictor bloodline, the rarest and least numerous of the Naga people. The Constrictors were the priests and judges of the Naga race, those who communed with the forces of their cosmology and used that wisdom for the betterment of their people. They were healers and sages, and their fewer numbers signaled the slow decline of the Naga race, one of the many reasons that they entered their Great Sleep during the final days of their empire. During a particularly tumultuous time in Rokugan's history, the Naga awoke from their Great Sleep to assist in facing a terrible foe that threatened the Empire. Unfortunately, the City of Astronomy was discovered to have been lost to the ravages of time. Few if any Constrictors awakened, and fewer still seemed to have survived the Sleep itself. The City of Astronomy remains in ruin, lost to time even to the Naga people.

Kyuden Miya [I7]

The ancestral home of the Miya family is located far from the majority of Imperial holdings, an oddity that makes little sense to many until they consider that the Miya have chosen a location that allows for more centralized distribution of information, something that is extremely important to the family that serves as the heralds of the Emperor. Their castle is near the Unicorn lands, and they make ample use of the vast plains in their holdings to raise and train a massive herd of exceptional riding horses, many descended from a handful of bloodlines given them by the Unicorn shortly after that clan's return to the Empire. These horses are vital to the execution of the Miya family's duties, and allow them to reach all across the Empire in relatively short order. Unsurprisingly, Kyuden Miya is home to one of the largest stables in the Empire, certainly larger than any found outside the Unicorn provinces and the Imperial City. The lord of the castle is the Miya family daimyo, but since that position is almost always synonymous with that of the Imperial Herald, it is rare for the daimyo to be in attendance at the castle for any long period of time. For that reason, the Miya daimyo typically chooses a gifted hatamoto to oversee his affairs, and this person serves as governor of the Miya province in the daimyo's absence.

Kyuden Otomo [I8]

The ancestral estate of the Otomo family existed within Otosan Uchi for over a thousand years while that was the home of the Imperial City. The Otomo firmly believed that, as the overseers of the Imperial Bureaucracy, the Emperor depended upon them and that they must always be close at hand. Some among the Great Clans believe that the bureaucracy serves the Otomo rather than the other way around, but few would ever dare to speak so to the members of an Imperial family, at least when an Emperor sits upon throne. During times of a vacant throne, however, the Otomo generally keep a lower profile and try to avoid drawing the ire of the clans. Following the destruction of Otosan Uchi, the Otomo family's estate was burned to the ground along with many of their holdings. Their allies among the Crane constructed a new estate for them within the Crane lands, where it remains despite that the family has relocated many of its major functions to a new estate within the new Imperial City, Toshi Ranbo.

Kyuden Seppun [I9]

The ancestral estate of the Seppun family is located a short distance south of Otosan Uchi, close enough that the city is visible in the distance and vice versa. It is from the castle that the family organizes and supervises the execution of its duties as the protectors of the throne. Despite the thousand years of diligence in protecting the Hantei Dynasty, the Seppun family's failure to protect the lives of the Toturi Emperors weighs heavily upon them, and the atmosphere of Kyuden Seppun is often somber as a result. Since the relocation of the Imperial City, the estate is no longer conveniently situated near the personage of the Emperor. Although the family has moved many of its essential functions to Toshi Ranbo, they have not forsaken their ancestral estate. The family's strong sense of duty makes such a thing virtually impossible, and even if it was their wish to do so, Kyuden Seppun is considered by the Brotherhood of Shinsei one of the holiest sites in the Empire of Rokugan, and is unlikely to be abandoned under any but the most dire of circumstances.

Nirukti [I10]

The City of Joy is the ancestral city of the Greensnake bloodline of the Naga race. Among all the Naga cities, it endured the Great Sleep with the least amount of damage suffered, a testament perhaps to the adaptability and perseverance of the Greensnake people. The Greensnakes are the scouts and ambassadors of the Naga, and vastly better suited to interact in the world of men than any of their fellow serpent men, even the hardy and militant Asps. More of the Greensnake bloodline survived the sleep than any other bloodline, and even though the vast majority of them have returned to sleep, a few remain awake to assist their Asp cousins with overseeing the Naga during their slumber. Ironically, despite the city's generally intact state, samurai never enter it because of a long-standing Imperial edict that prohibits any Rokugani from entering it. Although this edict was issued during the reign of Hantei XI shortly after scouts discovered the city within the Shinomen Mori, it was never countermanded by succeeding Emperors, and thus even the Naga's allies among the Crab and Unicorn have declined to enter.

Otosan Uchi [I11]

Founded at the dawn of the Empire, Otosan Uchi served as the home of the first Hantei Emperor, and was the Imperial City for the entirety of the Hantei Dynasty that ruled over Rokugan for more than one thousand years. For the first few centuries, the city expanded rapidly, but its growth slowed eventually, never actually stopping but holding relatively stable as time went on. Unfortunately the coastal region in which the city was built is among the Empire's unstable in terms of the frequent, low-grade earthquakes that plague the area throughout portions of the year. As a result, many structures are constantly damaged by the quakes and exist in a state of near constant repair. Some of the outermost portions of the city, including the low stone wall that surrounds it, are never fully repaired and mar the image of the city as the most grandiose in the Empire with their terrible condition. The innermost regions of the city are vastly more stable, however, owing to their superior construction. In fact, there is a sort of second city within the city, forbidden to all those who do not live within or possess an invitation. This "forbidden city" is dominated by the Imperial Palace, the embassies of the Great Clans, and some of the most ancient and revered temples in all of Rokugan.

Pleasure City [I12]

The city known as Zakyo Toshi is a testament to five centuries of vice and debauchery. The city's founding and its original purpose are largely unknown and unimportant, as those who dwell within the city find little purpose for things such as record-keeping or sentimentality. For a city of such size to have developed in unaligned lands would surely have required significant financial backing, but who may have been responsible for such a thing remains unknown. Over the centuries since its creation, Pleasure City has become known throughout the Empire for the diversity and quality of its vices, including gambling, drinking, geisha houses of ill repute, and any number of other questionable opportunities for visitors. The city occupies some strategic importance, situated as it is on the border between the Scorpion lands and the lands of the Three Man Alliance, a cooperative alliance between the Fox, Sparrow, and Wasp Minor Clans. It was for this reason that the Scorpion, under the command of a Scorpion Emerald Champion, annexed the city during the twelfth century. Prior to that, the city was almost lawless despite the efforts of a limited number of Imperial troops constantly struggling to curb the worst of the city's excesses.

Reihado Shinsei [I13]

The crow is a creature of great symbolic value in Rokugan, as it is associated with the Little Prophet, Shinsei. It is said that a crow accompanied Shinsei and the Seven Thunders into the Shadowlands prior to the first Day of Thunder more than a thousand years ago, and that up until that point it had brilliant white plumage. Traveling through the Shadowlands, and the forces that Shinsei and the Thunders encountered, caused the bird's feathers to turn black, and its sacrifice is remember by all who see it. Who constructed the Shrine to Shinsei is unknown, as is so much about the Little Prophet, but it is said that it is maintained by the kenku, the strange crow-men who revere him. The shrine's exact location is a mystery as well, and even those few who have managed to locate it cannot describe its location to others, but must lead them there. Legend holds that only those who are pure of heart and spirit can find the shrine.

Siska [I14]

Also known as the City of Courage, Siska is the ancestral city that is the homeland of the Asp bloodline of the Naga people. As the warriors and defenders of the Naga race, the Asp have more in common with the samurai of Rokugan than perhaps any other of their brethren, but this does not mean that they are particularly similar. Of the four large Naga cities that endured the Great Sleep, Siska is by far the least damaged city in which the Rokugan have ventured. It endured the ravages of time particularly well, although some degradation of structures and its populace was naturally unavoidable. As warriors, the Asp were perhaps better suited for the Sleep, having made preparations for their awakening with the expectation that they would be entering a great war in the process. It is for perhaps this reason that the city endured so well, although that cannot be known for certain. Since the Naga returned to the Great Sleep, the Asp city is one of two, along with the Cobra bloodline's city, that sees regular traffic from humans, and is frequently visited by the handful of Naga who remain awake in the Empire.

Temple of Osano-Wo [I15]

The largest and most prominent temple devoted to the Fortune of Fire & Thunder in the Empire, the Temple of Osano-Wo is located south of Otosan Uchi, near the Crane coastline. The monks who adhere to the strictures of Osano-Wo are a particularly militant and combative group, prone to displays of strength and temper to rival that of the Fortune they revere. Osano-Wo is a particularly important figure in Rokugani's cosmology because he was among the first great mortal heroes to be elevated to the divine. For that reason, in addition to the litany of great deeds Hida Osano-Wo performed prior to his mortal death, he is revered by heroes and warriors throughout the Empire. This ensures that his great temple sees a steady stream of pilgrims, a fact that seems to annoy his monks more than anything else. Thunderstorms are nearly constant in the area, coming at least once during the average day and ensuring that the rocky and difficult terrain is nevertheless plagued with lush overgrowth, rendering travel through the area even more difficult.

Toshi Ranbo [I16]

For most of its history, Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigisaho, also known as Violence Behind Courtliness City, has been a flashpoint of conflict between the Lion and Crane, upon whose shared border the city rests. The city has changed hands countless times between the two clans, each bloodier and more costly than the last, but the city's possession has often been a matter of honor. Both the Lion and the Crane have historical records that indicate they are the rightful administrators of the city, and no arbitration or mediation has ever been able to determine which account is correct. Countless heroes have been made and died in the sacking or defense of the city, and it is littered with shrines to the thousands who have died within its confines. After the destruction of Otosan Uchi at the hands of the Shadowlands, a rare moment of cooperation between the Lion and Crane Champions resulted in Toshi Ranbo becoming the new Imperial City. It was host to the reign of Emperor Toturi III, the final Emperor of the Toturi Dynasty, as well as home to the dawn of the Iweko Dynasty shortly thereafter. Following the city's appointment, massive construction began to accommodate the presence of the Imperial families and the many private estates and embassies that sprung up around it, doubling the city's size almost overnight. It is now one of the largest cities in the Empire, rivaled only by Ryoko Owari and the sprawling port city surrounding Kyuden Gotei.

Vyakarana I17]

The City of Magic is home to the Cobra bloodline of the Naga race, and is a source of great mystery and confusion even to the other serpent men. When the Naga emerged from the Great Sleep, the Cobra did so in noticeably smaller numbers than the other bloodlines (save of course for the doomed Constrictors), and soon discovered that their city was covered in thick webs of an unknown origin. Many of the sleeping Cobra had perished, and as of yet the Naga and their allies have no idea why this has happened or what might be responsible for such a thing. Because the people of Rokugan are prohibited from entering the city of Nirukti by a standing Imperial edict, the Naga's allies among the Unicorn have made Vyakarana the center for their operations within the Shinomen Mori, and use this as the point of contact between them and the few Naga people who remain awake.

Geographical Features

The Empire of Rokugan is a remarkably diverse land, with mountains, plains, forests, and tropical islands all within a relatively small area (at least when contrasted with the larger world). There are countless areas and geographical features which are considered important by those who live near them, and a full accounting of them would fill a book. Here are presented some of the most significant.

Beiden Pass / Shamate Pass [G1]

The Spine of the World Mountains bisect the Empire, separating northern Rokugan from southern Rokugan with a nearly impenetrable barrier, all but impossible to traverse with any significant military force. Skilled individuals in small numbers can cross the mountains, but larger caravans and military forces must use the few available passes. For the vast majority of the Empire's history, no pass was greater or more often used than Beiden Pass. Called the Crossroads of the Empire, Beiden Pass was the only way to move anything larger than a single legion through the mountains. It was larger by a considerable margin than its closest competitor, the vastly smaller Iuchi Pass in the southern Unicorn lands. Because of this, Beiden Pass was also the site of many great battles through the centuries, most often between the Lion and Scorpion, who controlled the northern and southern ends respectively.

In the twelfth century the pass was collapsed upon the spirit armies of the Steel Chrysanthemum, ending the so-called War of Spirits. The pass has never been reopened, but in the late twelfth century the samurai Matsu Hatake discovered a far smaller pass in the same area. Hatake was on a quest to find the men who killed his Scorpion lover, Shamate. He faced and killed the nine men responsible for her demise before succumbing to his wounds. The pass was named in honor of his lost love, and so far has been protected by both the Lion and the Scorpion, a rare display of cooperation that others consider unlikely to last.

Black Finger River / River of the Dark Moon [G2]

These two malevolent rivers both branch off from the River of the Last Stand which marks the border of the Crab territories. The two smaller rivers wind through the Shadowlands, and over time have become horribly corrupted and poisonous.

The River of the Dark Moon can be navigated and often has been by Hiruma scouts, who regard it as one of the most dangerous stable geographical features within the Shadowlands. The waters are as black as pitch, and terrible deformed plants grow along the banks, many of them aggressive and capable of attacking moving targets. It is said nothing that falls into the waters, not man, creature, or demon, ever emerges. Occasionally, though, things come *out* of the water, usually dying from exposure to the air but not before inflicting terrible damage on anything nearby.

Black Finger River winds deeper into the Shadowlands, and no one who has ever crossed it has returned unscathed. Most do not return at all, and those few who claim to have done so have been clearly mad, so their word cannot be trusted. The Crab regard this river as the point of no return. All samurai must turn back from it and head toward the Empire, or be lost forever.

Carpenter Pass [G3]

Sometimes referred to as "Little Beiden," Carpenter Pass is the largest passage through the southern Twilight Mountains. As such, it is used extensively by the Crab for the movement of troops through their own provinces. The Crab constantly shift forces in their never-ending campaign to keep the Shadowlands at bay, and Carpenter Pass is a major route for those movements. On those occasions when other clans offer to send troops to reinforce the Carpenter Wall, they also send their forces through the pass, giving the Crab ample opportunity to examine them and determine whether or not they are genuine in their desire to help – and whether or not they actually *can* be of any help. Because of the importance of their supply lines, the Crab maintain the road through the pass meticulously, ensuring it is one of the finest in the Empire. Much like the road that parallels the Kaiu Wall, the road through the Carpenter Pass is often lined with merchants and vendors, most sponsored by the Yasuki family, attempting to sell their wares to passers-by. Although most other Crab families find this somewhat annoying, the revenue generated by the merchants from outside visitors assists in funding the clan's efforts atop the Wall, so they generally overlook the matter.

Dragon Heart Plain [G4]

The vast open plain that separates the Dragon and Phoenix provinces is known as Dragon Heart Plain. Despite the relatively cool climate, the region is quite fertile, and many from the southern provinces find it wasteful that this area has not been cultivated for food production. Those who make this observation are unfamiliar with the area, however, which is well known for its physical eccentricities and spiritual nature. Odd things are sometimes found in the Dragon Heart Plain, things that have no business in the mortal realm, and their presence cannot be accounted for. The ruins of Shiro Chuda, former home of the defunct Snake Clan, are one of the most dangerous and supernaturally active areas in the entire Empire, and many point to these ruins as a perfect example of why the Plain should remain undisturbed, exactly as it has been for centuries.

Drowned Merchant River [G5]

This river forms a natural boundary between the Lion provinces and the region generally associated with the Dragon Clan to the north, although the Dragon do not technically control all the lands in question. From the Lion lands on the southern bank, it is possible to see the Dragonfly lands in the distance, just before the foothills of the Dragon Mountains. Some believe it is only the presence of the river that has protected the Dragonfly from the Lion's vengeance, since moving an army across the wide river usually takes long enough for the Dragon to bring troops to defend the Dragonfly.

The name of the river comes from an old legend surrounding it. Supposedly, during the dawn of the Empire bandits captured a merchant and his family. The bandits tortured and murdered the family, drowning them in the river. Many believe the vengeful spirit of the merchant still lurks in the water, seeking to punish the guilty. Although educated samurai may dismiss this as superstition, there is no denying that bandits have sometimes been found torn to ribbons with no clear explanation. Peasants claim the merchant's ghost is responsible.

Earthquake Fish Bay [G6]

This vast inlet separates the older Crab provinces from those of the Yasuki. Despite the frequently cool weather in this region of the Empire, the waters of the bay are much warmer than one would expect, a result of ongoing volcanic activity beneath the waves. Three times during the Empire's history, a particularly strong earthquake, significantly more powerful than the small tremors that constantly plague the region, has resulted in a massive increase in temperature and killed vast numbers of fish. Although these instances have led to bountiful amounts of fish available in the short term, they also result in poor fishing for the longer term, which the Crab find most unfortunate. Further, these instances have always preceded dire events for the Empire as a whole, so a fish kill in Earthquake Fish Bay is regarded as one of the most ominous of portents.

Great Wall of the North / Northern Wall Mountains [G7]

This vast mountain range, known by both names depending upon the area or historical record, serves as the effective northern border of Rokugan. It dominates the entirety of the Dragon Clan provinces (who refer to their own portion of the range as the Dragon Mountains), as well as those of the Badger Clan, and occupies portions of the Ox and Phoenix Clan holdings as well. The mountains of this range are higher than the Spine of the World, and generally colder as well. However, they are more stable than the Spine, making them less dangerous to climb; the elements claim more wayward travelers than do rockslides or cave-ins. For whatever reason, large plateaus are much more common in the Northern Wall Mountains, making them somewhat easier to live in (thankfully, for the Dragon Clan). Beyond the Great Wall are vast steppes, occupied mainly by the various Yobanjin tribes who fled the Empire at its formation. North and west of that lies the vast desert known only as the Burning Sands.

Lookout Mountain [G8]

A singular mountain grossly out of place with its surroundings, Lookout Mountain is found in the center of a vast plain in the Lion provinces. Its presence is completely inexplicable, and even shugenja who can commune with the spirits of the earth cannot explain why it stands where it does. The Ikoma records state the mountain simply erupted from the plains during an incredibly powerful but localized earthquake more than a thousand years ago, but this account raises more questions than it answers. What the Lion do not know, and indeed only a handful of people anywhere in the Empire know, is that the mountain was created accidentally when the Phoenix Clan was experimenting with an incredibly powerful magical construct known as Isawa's Last Wish.

Mori Isawa [G9]

Although not as large as the expansive Shinomen Mori, the great Isawa forest is probably the largest forest within the Empire proper. It is located entirely within the Phoenix lands, and like its larger counterpart it is an extremely mysterious and spiritual place. Spirits from many different realms have been discovered near the forest. The Phoenix Clan shugenja believe a portal to one or more spirit realms may exist within the forest's confines, but no concerted attempt to local them has been made; the Phoenix consider such an act to be inviting disaster. Wood from the forest is considered the finest in the Empire for the creation of the spell scrolls shugenja use. Because of this, the Isawa do authorize a small amount of wood to be harvested, carefully restricting the quantities to ensure the forest remains viable for many years to come.

Plains Above Evil [G10]

A vast and utterly empty wilderness, the Plains Above Evil are so named because they adjoin the Shadowlands to the south. Despite this, the area remains largely desolate, and even the creatures of that dark realm seem reluctant to enter the region. Consequently the Crab lack any significant presence or fortifications in the area, although the Hiruma scouts do keep an eye on the region. In addition to its strange and almost otherworldly emptiness, the area is also home to bizarre ruins that are clearly ancient but do not resemble any currently known pre-human civilizations. The most popular rumor is that they are Naga ruins, and although the serpent men acknowledge it is possible that a failed colony was attempted in the area, they have no concrete knowledge of such a thing.

River of Gold [G11]

Through much of the Empire's history this river was used extensively to transport valuable commodities from Scorpion lands to all ports of call along the Rokugani seacoast. Although this trade still exists in modern times, the Scorpion have ceded control of many of the more profitable stretches of the river. Due to the large amounts of trade, pirate activity has always plagued the River of Gold, and in the war-torn twelfth century piracy sometimes rises so dramatically that the river goes unused for years at a time. Although efforts to cleanse the area of pirate influence usually manage to kill large numbers of the criminals, the lure of heavily-laden trade ships soon attracts replacements.

River of the Hour of the Wolf [G12]

The River of the Hour of the Wolf is linked to a rare instance of widespread cultural change due to tragedy. It was the site of a battle between the Lion and Scorpion clans that was truly spectacular in scope. The sheer enormity of the forces confronting one another, and the vehemence of their combat, led to a vast number of casualties. It is said that ten thousand samurai died within the span of a single hour, an hour known in that age as the Hour of the Wolf. The river in question, which bore a different name at that time, ran thick and red with the blood of the dead and wounded. The water carried that blood to other settlements and other clan lands, where the horror of what had happened was nearly too great to bear. Countless shugenja exhausted themselves purifying the river, and even today there are those who refuse to drink from it, fearful that some trace of the unclean remains. Due to the widespread horror at this slaughter, the Hour of the Wolf was renamed the Hour of the Dog, while the river was renamed to ensure the terrible battle would never be forgotten.

River of the Unexpected Hero [G13]

Celebrated by the Unicorn with an annual festival, this strangely named river is the site of a famous battle waged and won by the Unicorn roughly a century after their return to the Empire. A sizeable force of Shadowlands creatures, having circum-

vented the Crab's defenses in the south, threatened the Unicorn Clan's southern provinces in a sudden and violent attack. The Unicorn responded as rapidly as possible, but the advantage of surprise was a powerful one, and the creatures threatened to break the line and lay waste to the clan's innermost holdings. At a crucial moment in the battle, a lone farmer took up the tools of his trade and joined the battle, striking a deadly blow against a vital leader of the creatures. This turned the tide against the Shadowlands, and the Unicorn rallied and were victorious. On at least one day each year, all Unicorn remember the valor of a simple farmer.

Seven Day Battle Plain [G14]

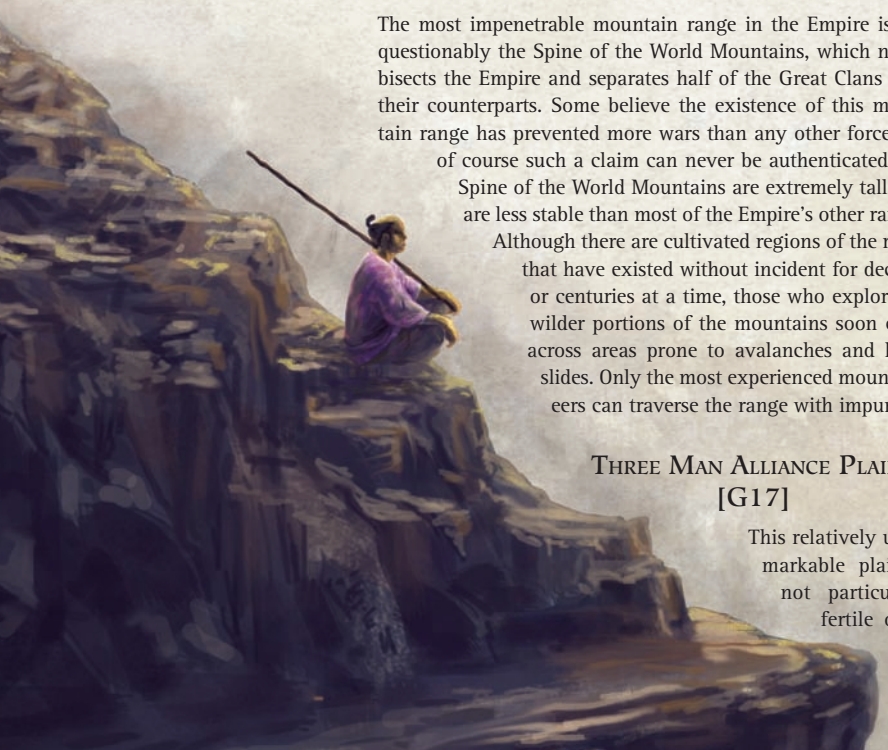
This large plain was home to a massive battle between the combined forces of the Emperor's loyal subjects and the vast legion of undead commanded by the dreaded Bloodspeaker, Iuchiban. The battle was lengthy and extremely costly, as every soldier in the Emperor's army who fell to the Bloodspeakers rose again and joined the enemy ranks. Among the many heroes and villains of the day was a ronin warrior named Reichin, a wave man who had previously been a valuable scout against the Bloodspeakers as they advanced upon the city of Ryoko Owari Toshi. When the seven days of battle were over, Iuchiban had been defeated, and for his part in the battle, Reichin was granted leave to found his own Minor Clan, the Hare Clan.

Shinomen Mori [G15]

So far as anyone in the Empire knows, the Shinomen Mori is the largest and densest forest in the entire world. It is certainly multiple times larger than any forest within the Empire, and its depths have never been fully explored by any living human soul. Within its vast expanse are hundreds of square miles no man has ever seen. Even the Naga race, who dwell almost entirely within its confines, have never completely explored it or learned all of its mysteries. Those who have studied the enigmas that emerge from the forest believe it may be home to several stable doorways into other spirit realms. Such occurrences are exceedingly rare, but with such a vast area covered by the forest, no one can deny it is possible.

Spine of the World Mountains [G16]

The most impenetrable mountain range in the Empire is unquestionably the Spine of the World Mountains, which neatly bisects the Empire and separates half of the Great Clans from their counterparts. Some believe the existence of this mountain range has prevented more wars than any other force, but of course such a claim can never be authenticated. The Spine of the World Mountains are extremely tall, and are less stable than most of the Empire's other ranges. Although there are cultivated regions of the range that have existed without incident for decades or centuries at a time, those who explore the wilder portions of the mountains soon come across areas prone to avalanches and landslides. Only the most experienced mountaineers can traverse the range with impunity.



Three Man Alliance Plain [G17]

This relatively unremarkable plain is not particularly fertile or of any significant strategic value, but it is nevertheless a hot spot of the southern Empire because of the boundaries it represents. For centuries the plain marked the border between the Scorpion Clan provinces and the lands controlled by an alliance of three Minor Clans, the Sparrow, the Fox, and the Wasp, known as the Three Man Alliance. The plain was the site of all major confrontations between these two forces. The Scorpion were always vastly superior militarily to the might of even three combined Minor Clans, but the surprising tactics and cooperation of the Three Man Alliance always managed to prevent the Scorpion from eradicating what they considered a minor annoyance in their elaborate schemes. In the twelfth century the Wasp Clan and later the Fox Clan became families within the Great Clan of the Mantis, but they maintained close and cordial relations with the Sparrow, and the emergence of the Minor Clan Alliance meant the Sparrow still did not have to face their Scorpion neighbors alone.

Three Sides River [G18]

Historically speaking, Three Sides River is the most hotly contested body of water anywhere in the Empire. Because of its location, the river has been claimed at differing times by the Lion, the Crane, and the Scorpion, and it has been a vital component of each clan's trade and commerce in turn. Although the three clans in question are frequently enemies, there have also been long periods of time when the river was considered unaligned and the three grudgingly cooperated in its use. Inevitably, however, one clan eventually attempts to annex the river and the conflicts resume.

Tidal Landbridge [G19]

This natural passage is the principle means of crossing Earthquake Fish Bay. It connects the core Crab provinces with the southernmost Yasuki and Crane holdings, including a number of influential Daidoji estates. As befits its name, the landbridge is only above water during low tide, when it can be crossed quickly and without difficulty (other than the mud and slime of the sea bottom). During high tide, however, it is completely submerged by over twenty feet of water, making any manner of crossing completely impossible. During the high tide it is easily possible for ships to pass across the bridge, and traffic through the region is carefully observed and regulated by the Hida on the western edge and the Daidoji on the eastern shore.

The landbridge is a site of unusual cooperation between the Hida and the Daidoji due to a famous incident from centuries ago. The third son of the Crab Champion was grievously wounded and the troops under his command threatened with complete eradication by the attack of powerful oni. He survived because the Daidoji daimyo and his hunting party crossed the landbridge and engaged the demon. The Daidoji lord fought until both he and the demons disappeared beneath the waves, allowing the Crab time to evacuate their wounded lord. After the tide receded, only the Daidoji daimyo's helmet could be found, and ever since the Hida have reverently maintained a shrine to his memory on the western shore of the landbridge.

Treacherous Pass & the Mountains of Regret [G20]

This dangerous pass is the only major route through the Mountains of Regret, a small mountain range, perhaps more of an outcropping, located north of Otosan Uchi. The mountains separate the Phoenix Clan provinces from the Imperial City, and mostly lie outside the boundaries of any clan's holdings. The Phoenix have several significant holdings immediately north of the pass, and the Mantis hold sway over the formerly unaligned Dragon's Guard City at the southern end, but there are no major settlements or holdings along the length of the route itself. Perhaps for this reason, they are unsettled and known to be particularly dangerous. The cycle of freezing and thawing of the ice atop the peaks causes frequent landslides, and there have been intermittent reports of goblins and ogres in the area for centuries. Some shugenja theorize there is a hidden breeding ground for these creatures somewhere deep within the caves and valleys of the mountains, but even the most dedicated searches have never been able to locate them.

Twilight Mountains [G21]

One of the southernmost mountain ranges in Rokugan is perhaps also the oldest, and has lower and less jagged peaks than the Spine of the World or the Northern Wall ranges. Generally speaking, however, this means the crags and valleys are deeper as well, and strange things often hide within their recesses.

Valley of Two Generals [G22]

This is the site of one of the greatest battles between the Lion and Crane, two clans that have been at odds for the majority of the Empire's history. The previously unnamed valley was the battleground for an entire Lion army that faced off against an equal number of troops from the Crane Clan provinces, making it one of the largest engagements to take place between the third and eleventh centuries. The battle raged for seven days, waxing and waning over that period of time, and thousands lost their lives. At the battle's conclusion, the Matsu general faced the Kakita general in personal combat and, although the Matsu was victorious, she succumbed to her wounds only moments later. The honor and sacrifice of the two officers was enough to end the battle, and both clans would later cooperate in erecting a shrine to their memory within the valley.

Wall Above the Ocean [G23]

Although some consider these mountains part of the Twilight Mountain range, many records identify them as a separate range. Even smaller than the Mountains of Regret, the Wall Above the Ocean mountains are completely unremarkable, and serve largely as a natural barrier between the Crab and Crane holdings.

White Shore Lake & White Shore Plain [G24]

White Shore Plain is where the armies of the Unicorn Clan, only days after reentering the Empire, faced the army of the Scorpion Clan on the field of battle. The fighting was intense, but the unexpected power of the Unicorn cavalry won the day and the Scorpion were handily defeated. Very shortly after the battle's conclusion, word came from the Imperial City that the Unicorn had proven their claim to be the descendents of the Ki-Rin Clan and, with sponsorship from the Crane, had been accepted by the Emperor as a Great Clan.

White Shore Plain is lightly developed, with only a few villages appearing on the coast of the great White Shore Lake that dominates the area. The lake is rumored to have intelligent creatures called ningyo dwelling within its depths, but this is generally believed to be nothing more than peasant superstition.

Sample Adventure Seeds: Challenge, Focus, Strike

What follows in this section is an assortment of short adventure "seeds," presented in a specific format. In each case, the potential adventure is offered in three sections. "Challenge" presents the basic situation, "Focus" offers a complication or exploration of the scenario, and "Strike" addresses how the PCs must deal with it, as well as offering unexpected twists the GM can unleash to keep the players guessing.

These scenario seeds are designed to be generic and undefined, allowing the GM and players to flesh them out into proper adventures. It is up the GM to determine exactly where and when these scenarios take place, and to populate them with interesting NPCs and descriptions. Also, it is important to note that the PCs' involvement in a Challenge/Focus/Strike can take place almost anywhere and in any form. The PCs could be one of those mentioned in the Challenge, or know someone in the Focus, or get there just before the Strike takes place. Use these as inspiration for your own adventures, or invent your own CFS and build your epic around it.

All That Is Not

- **Challenge:** An Asako scribe, driven insane by the words on a prophetic scroll, rips out his own eyes and tongue in a fit of inexplicable madness. The Phoenix Elemental Masters seek to conceal the event, but word has spread and rumors have already reached the capital.
- **Focus:** Reactionary advisors close to the Emperor cry for an end to the Asako libraries – clearly no good can from them. Courtiers from the various clans vie for their own agendas, amidst controversy and calamity in the inner courts. Some even claim their own clans could do a better job of protecting the Empire from "unknowable" magical secrets.
- **Strike:** All the while, the prophecy waits for those who might visit, warning of terrible events to come.

By My Own Hand

- **Challenge:** An infamous Crab Clan district governor, vexed for an explanation of his holding's constantly poor output, strikes a bargain with a Crane exchequer. In exchange for a loan of 2,000 koku of rice, the Crab must lend the services of one dozen elite Crab samurai to cover the interest of the loan, paying the principle over five years.
- **Focus:** On route, the Crab are ambushed and slaughtered, with tactics far exceeding those of bandits or bakemono. The Crab governor, unable to explain the death of his men, now has a bigger problem. The interest must still be paid to the Crane, and taking further forces from the Kaiu Wall will only diminish his holding's strength. And of course the loan must still be paid off.

- **Strike:** When a package arrives at the governor's estate with a broken weapon inside, the remnants of a weapon from his lost elite guard, the governor sees seppuku as his only remaining option... unless someone can learn the truth behind the attack.

Carefully Inlaid Plans

- **Challenge:** A band of hungry ronin take a small village hostage, including a shugenja, a monk, and two nuns.
- **Focus:** Unwilling to risk the lives of the clergy, the local magistrate negotiates for their release, offering horses, koku, and other valuables to the ronin.
- **Strike:** If the ransom is delivered, the ronin will try this tactic again and again. But the only alternative may be the deaths of the hostages.

The Damned

- **Challenge:** A small remote village is beset by constant visions of a lost spirit looking for something or someone of importance. The villagers do not know the spirit, nor what it speaks, but seek freedom from its constant visitations.
- **Focus:** The local lord, far removed from the pangs of his constituents, does not consider roaming spirits to be much of an issue. As such, no one has been sent to investigate the haunting.
- **Strike:** The village headman, overwrought by the terror his fellow villagers must endure, seeks out a witch to put a curse on the heartless and unjust lord.

Darkness Begets Darkness

- **Challenge:** A pair of samurai are ambushed and captured by bandits (perhaps drunk or just desperate). Tortured and beaten, the samurai are finally released after the bandits shave their topknots and break their swords.
- **Focus:** Disgraced and humiliated beyond redemption, the two samurai choose not to commit seppuku. Instead, they disguise themselves as monks and set out in search of vengeance.
- **Strike:** Leaving a trail of slaughter that cannot be described as anything but inhuman, the two "monks" travel Rokugan seeking out injustices and punishing those responsible, stirring up the populace and drawing attention to the rotten underbelly of the Empire. Soon, they themselves are labeled as dangerous criminals.

To Give My Life...

- **Challenge:** A disgraced samurai stumbles from place to place, seeking redemption or a purposeful existence.
- **Focus:** A Scorpion happens upon the samurai during an episode of extreme drunkenness. After hearing the samurai's sad story, the Scorpion offers hope...
- **Strike:** Dressing the samurai in his clothing, the Scorpion kills him and leaves him for dead in an obvious place for magistrates to discover. The Scorpion, now "dead," can act in a manner that most benefits his clan. However, the disgraced samurai may have enemies or family members who seek him out...

Glory Before Honor

- **Challenge:** A Lion general, driven by ego, attacks a Crane stronghold on the border. A short skirmish erupts and hundreds lie wounded or dead on both sides of the battle.
- **Focus:** Members of the Lion Clan, unable to chastise the general openly, find themselves overtly yelling at the Crane in Imperial court, decrying the acts of the clan and opening old wounds. The Crane, shocked by the reprehensible actions of the Lion, focus their political machine, leaving no quarter for peace.
- **Strike:** In a plea for a new age of peace, the Emperor refuses to take a side. As tempers flare, conditions in the court worsen, and talk of open war rises from a murmur to a shout.

Heart of Darkness

- **Challenge:** A pious and devout daimyo allows traveling monks to stay in his estate for a few evenings and even extends the use of his familial shrine to the ascetics.
- **Focus:** On the second evening, several attendants living in the lord's stronghold become violently ill. The lord's own priests are unable to explain the cause of the maladies. They turn to the foreign monks for assistance.
- **Strike:** Left alone to attend to the sick, the monks perform a *maho* ritual on the ill peasants, drawing out their spirits and creating unholy revenants from their lifeless bodies.

An Invitation

- **Challenge:** A young ji-samurai receives an invitation from an unknown lord in a remote castle.
- **Focus:** The journey to the castle is long and arduous, filled with tricks and traps. However, none of them are deadly.
- **Strike:** When the samurai finally arrives, the castle is an illusion of ghosts, restless from years of neglect.

In the End of Times

- **Challenge:** A prophet predicts many things, including the events that will unfold at the end times.
- **Focus:** Local samurai consider him mad, especially when his words stir up peasant unrest.
- **Strike:** Then one of his prophecies comes true...

Lies and More Lies

- **Challenge:** An aged and remorseful Scorpion trickster visits a low-ranking Phoenix sage. The Scorpion proclaims he wishes to unburden himself for the sins of his clan. Before taking his own life, he gives the sage a diary containing riddles and half-truths.
- **Focus:** The Phoenix, overcome with curiosity, hides away in his temple and studies the diary. After months of reading, he stumbles upon a passage about accursed Yogo blood still present within the lines of the Phoenix. Believing the book to be true, the sage presents the work to his lord.
- **Strike:** Unaware the diary implicates his own lord as a descendent of Yogo, the sage presents the work in a hall filled with Asako and Isawa scholars.

Local Legend

- **Challenge:** Rumors persist of a ronin displaying skill with the blade far beyond his years and training.
- **Focus:** His infamy precedes him. Everywhere the ronin travels, peasants shower him with attention and other ronin beg him to train them.
- **Strike:** Begrudgingly the ronin takes on a disciple/student and before long, a small cadre of students follow him from village to village. Word soon reaches a local daimyo... who is none to happy too hear about this roving army/dojo.

Nine Tails

- **Challenge:** A beautiful maiden of another clan approaches a samurai, entrancing him into her arms. In the morning, the maiden is gone – and no sign of her existence can be found. Other samurai in his retinue do not remember her, the town has no recollection of her arrival, and her own clan denies she ever existed. The samurai's *obi* is missing, but nothing else is awry.
- **Focus:** Nine months later, the maiden reappears in a dream. The samurai is instructed to go to a small shrine nearby and look for a sign from the Celestial Heavens – and he finds it, in the shape of a squalling baby. The baby is wrapped in his own obi. To all appearances, the child belongs to him.
- **Strike:** The 'maiden' is a *kitsune, mikokami,* or other magical being who fell in love with the samurai and wished to bear his child. The baby is magical, special, and many opponents will come after the child in order to end its pure existence. If the child survives to maturity, a prophecy comes true – and the samurai is rewarded beyond his imagining, perhaps even with the ability to join his spirit-wife in her immortality.

Northmen

- **Challenge:** A traveling stranger visits a teahouse in a small Unicorn village. He speaks no known language and his features are foreign and unrecognizable.
- **Focus:** Everyone treats him with puzzlement and distance, perhaps disgust, but no harm comes to him until drunken samurai enter the tea house. First they are insulting, then degrading, and finally violent.
- **Strike:** An inevitable fight ensues, as loud, fiery magic erupts inside the establishment. When the smoke clears, the samurai are dead as well as a few innocent peasants. The stranger is nowhere to be found...

Naïve

- **Challenge:** A young samurai, too inexperienced to properly lead, inherits a castle and over 1,000 retainers. Among them, a seneschal embittered over his lack of upward mobility, and a corrupt advisor who owes far too many favors to another clan's lord.
- **Focus:** Overwhelming challenges constantly beset the young lord. Each time he thinks to advance the cause of his family with an ill-advised decision, he actually degrades the quality of life for his people.
- **Strike:** The seneschal and advisor join forces, trying to shield the young lord from the dire state of his own lands and people until it is too late...

One Part Kill Bill

- **Challenge:** A Crane courtier utterly disgraces and humiliates a Matsu samurai-ko in court. Being well below his station, she swallows the disgrace and leaves the court.
- **Focus:** Returning home shamed, the Matsu plots revenge on the Crane who caused her disgrace.
- **Strike:** On a dark and rainy night, the samurai-ko appears at the home of the Crane dressed like a ronin... her mind fixated on plans for murder.

A Proposal of Peace

- **Challenge:** On route to a peace meeting, delegates are ambushed and slaughtered, their bodies left as a message and warning.
- **Focus:** Emerald and Jade Magistrates are sent to investigate, but tempers in court are already fever-pitched.
- **Strike:** When the Magistrates are never heard from again, it begins to look like someone wants this war to happen...

Without Honor, Without Glory

- **Challenge:** A young samurai fails his gempukku and disgraces his family. Because of his age, his lord denies him the right of seppuku and instead banishes him from the clan.
- **Focus:** Becoming a ronin, the young samurai must now learn to fend for himself. Quickly he learns to use his sword as his bread-winner, taking on protection jobs and eventually serving as muscle for a criminal gang boss (*oyabun*).
- **Strike:** While visiting an outlying village, the samurai's younger brother is struck down by a thug from the oyabun's gang. Learning of this, the disgraced ronin must now choose between the family that cast him out and the family that feeds him.

A Complete Sample Adventure: Tournament of the Samurai

By Rob Hobart (from ideas by Parvez Yusufji)

This adventure is based on the "Invitation" concept described earlier in this chapter, and is designed to introduce players to the world of Legend of the Five Rings, as well as to the way criminal investigations work in Rokugan (which is considerably different from in the modern world). The adventure is built around the concept of rising border tensions between two clans, the Dragon and the Phoenix. However, if that does not fit the GM's concept for Rokugan, two other clans can easily be substituted with a few name changes.

The Isawa and Asako families have decided to try to defuse these tensions by hosting a so-called "Tournament of the Samurai" in the Phoenix lands. This tournament will be a contest, but not in the bugei skills. Rather it will test the participants' courtly and peaceful skills, those which add to the harmony and beauty of the Empire – poetry, painting, dancing, and so forth. In this way, the Isawa hope to persuade the rest of the Empire to see that peace is preferable to war.

These noble plans will be interrupted by a brutal crime – the host, Asako Shizu, will be murdered. It will appear at first that a hot-tempered Dragon, Mirumoto Rai, is the culprit. Rai will proclaim his innocence, but cannot provide an alibi for himself – he is committing a crime of his own, a secret affair with a married woman, Doji Aiko. The smitten Rai is caught in a bind – he does not want to dishonor his true love, but neither does he want a false accusation to dishonor the Mirumoto family and possibly bring the Isawa into favoring war on the Dragon.

It will be up to the PCs to try to clear Rai's name. The real criminal is actually a Shiba samurai named Reikun, whose younger brother was killed during a recent border skirmish. Reikun is mad with grief, and wants to force the rest of the Phoenix Clan into supporting a war against the Dragon – no matter what the price.

Since this is not a combat-oriented adventure, stats are not provided for most of the NPCs. The climax of the scenario should be the PCs providing testimony before the court to either clear or convict Mirumoto Rai. If the PCs learn enough, they may actually be able to put the blame on Shiba Reikun, who will demand a duel to clear his name. One of the accusers will have to face him in the duel... unless they are all shugenja and courtiers, in which case they can call for a champion.

The adventure assumes the PCs will be at least somewhat interested in what happens at the Tournament of the Samurai. If they do not have any personal motivations for getting involved, you may need to adjust the adventure to provide more hooks for gaining their interest.

Beginning the Story

The Tournament takes place at Aojiroi Oku Shiro, Pale Oak Castle, located in the Kyuukai province in Phoenix lands. The castle is famous as the grave-site of Emperor Hantei the Seventeenth, who disregarded tradition and demanded to be buried – not cremated – in a field near where the woman he loved was born. Below the castle are the Pale Oak Plains, fertile farming lands which lie between the great forest of Isawa Mori and the Phoenix mountains.

The PCs are assumed to have been invited here to attend a tournament of "samurai virtues." Ronin PCs, if any are present, could be presumed to have wangled invitations as well – after all, the Phoenix are not quite as hostile to ronin as some of the other clans.

When the PCs arrive, the main hall of Pale Oak Castle is decorated with festive banners. The hall's thin wooden walls have been slid open to reveal the central courtyard and garden of the castle, where a great oak tree grows, supposedly on the very site where Hantei the Seventeenth was buried. Many samurai stroll through the gardens, admiring the mighty tree, while other samurai within the hall visit tables laden with rice candy, sushi, and other foods. Quiet servants hurry about with trays of tea and sake. A troupe of Crane artisans is present as well, performing light and pleasant music on the biwa, taiko drum, and samisen.



This is an opportunity for the PCs to mingle with the various other samurai NPCs at the tournament (see "A Selection of Guests" below).

Eventually the host of the event, Asako Shizu, arrives in the hall. He is a plain-faced, immaculately dressed man in his thirties. Everyone bows in greeting, and he welcomes the samurai with a brief speech. "Honored guests, I welcome you to Aojiroi Oku Shiro, and to our humble tournament. In truth, though, this is no contest, but a celebration, a splendid display of samurai virtue. However, this shall not be a contest of dueling or combat." A few surprised looks, quickly hidden behind fans, will pass between some of the visitors. "Instead, we are here to remind ourselves that the way of the samurai is also one of culture. A samurai need not fight on the battlefield to prove himself honorable and skilled. In peacetime there are many other ways for samurai to serve their lords with distinction. The Isawa and we, the Asako, have always venerated peace, ever since the founding of the Empire. It has been our honor to serve the Empire and the Emperor as keepers of knowledge and protectors of the heimin, and we know all of the clans understand and share our desire for peace, especially now." He rests his eyes for just a moment on the Dragon and Phoenix bushi in the room. "The contests shall be in poetry, painting, dance, and the tea ceremony. The famed artisan Doji Yujiro shall be the judge for the first two contests, and the honored courtier Isawa Masahiro will judge the second two contests. But before the contest begins, let us spend some time acquainting ourselves with each other. Let us remember that while we must stand vigilant against the enemies of the Emperor, we are not enemies of each other. We are brothers, citizens of one Empire, serving one Emperor." The Asako lifts a cup of sake in a toast. "The Emperor!"

No honorable samurai will refuse such a toast. After the toast, some more time while pass as the various guests circulate around, talking and gossiping, sharing the latest news and scouting out the other contestants. Again, this is an opportunity for you to introduce the various NPCs listed below. You can also use NPC gossip and conversation to introduce any larger political rumors or events which are part of your campaign storyline.

A Selection of Guests

The following is a list of the most prominent and interesting NPCs present at Pale Oak Castle. In addition, though, there will be about twenty lesser courtiers and samurai, mostly Phoenix, so you should feel free to improvise additional NPCs to make the story fit your own vision of Rokugan. It can be presumed that most ordinary NPCs are Insight Rank One or, at the most, Rank Two, with stats as appropriate.

Asako Shizu, daimyo of Aojiroi Oku Shiro. Shizu is plain-faced but well-spoken, with a smooth, cultured voice (Voice advantage). He does suffer from a tendency to be judgmental and a bit overbearing, and will sometimes stress his points about "peace and brotherhood" to the point of becoming irritating. Not that anyone can do much but suffer through it – Shizu is a provincial daimyo with Status 6.0, and outranks everyone else at the castle. He also has a tendency to put all of the blame for the current problems on the Mirumoto family, which will likely somewhat short-circuit his efforts to bring about peace. Shizu is a widower – his wife Kaorin died in childbirth years ago. Both of his living children (he has a son, Sokuto, and a daughter, named Kaorin after her mother) are away training in the Phoenix schools.

Isawa Masahiro, karo and courtier. Masahiro is Shizu's *karo* (chancellor), and helps keep the castle running smoothly, as well as serving as a liaison between his daimyo and the Isawa family. He is in his late twenties, good-looking but a bit plump, and wears his hair long and tied back into a loose ponytail, Crane-style. (He is trained in the Doji Courtier school, rather than in a Phoenix school.) His wife, Isawa Sukimi, is a pretty but small and mousy woman, shugenja-trained, who follows after him and reinforces whatever he is trying to say or do. Masahiro is a loyal and true servant of both his daimyo and the Isawa family, and will push the Isawa agenda (peace, reconciliation, and honor) relentlessly. Lacking his daimyo's character flaws, and better-trained in the courtly arts, he will also know when to back off and change the subject. He is quite adept, in fact, at finding conversational topics which appeal to his audience. Most PCs should find him a pleasant and engaging man.

Asako Keiko, historian. Keiko is a pretty, quiet young woman, unmarried, 21 years old. She is the court historian to Asako Shizu, and is trained in the Loremaster School. Keiko is a calm and enlightened young woman, very honorable and proper. She does have a whiff of scandal about her, however – three years ago she was accused of maho (black magic) by a Phoenix Inquisitor. Although she was later cleared of all charges, the damage of gossip and rumor remains.

Isawa Hitsukawa. The other Isawa here is a quiet, elegant older man, approaching the age of retirement. He is an Air shugenja with a deep interest in the spirits and Fortunes, and is also quite learned in the Tao of Shinsei. Hitsukawa is largely free of emotional problems or attachments – indeed, he is halfway to being a monk already. Highly enlightened or erudite PCs will find him a pleasant and educational conversationalist. He will support the Isawa position, but does so with less vigor and fervor than the others, preferring to employ parables and pungent quotations from the Tao.

Shiba Reikun, embittered military officer. Reikun is a cold, hard-faced man in his mid-twenties, muscular and swift, with a white, ridged katana scar on the outside of one arm. He will be polite but distant to most people from outside his clan, and coldly hostile to Dragons (but without stepping over the bounds of etiquette). Reikun is a *taisa* (captain) in the Phoenix army, and was invited here because he has always been an obedient servant of the Isawa. However, that has changed. His younger brother Tokaro, with whom he had a kharmic tie, was killed in a border skirmish with the Dragon last summer. Now Reikun is a man filled with bitterness and cold, festering hatred, a hatred turned as much against his own clan as against the Dragon – Reikun is furious that the Isawa and Asako are seeking peace when he believes they should be seeking vengeance and victory. If they had suffered losses like his, perhaps they would understand.... He will normally not reveal any of his true feelings to PCs, but if some of them also seem hostile to the Dragon Clan, he may express a little of the truth – at least about the death of his brother.

Doji Yujiro, splendid artisan. Yujiro is a slim, almost effeminate man with a beautiful, musical voice. He dresses in court kimono of supreme splendor, and the white of his long, carefully-styled hair dazzles the eye. He is known and famed as a Kakita artisan, a poet and painter, master of word and brush. Yujiro is here as a willing assistant to the Isawa quest for peace. His every word and gesture is a calculated act of perfection – even more than most samurai, he wears a public mask, and there is nothing natural or spontaneous about him. He is charming, but it is an artificial charm, a painted-on face. He never does or says anything without purpose. He is also being cuckolded by his wife, Aiko. Yujiro does not know about this – his brilliant skills at reading and manipulating those around him have never been extended to his own life, and he simply assumes that his wife is as honorable and dutiful as he is.

Doji Aiko, dissatisfied wife. Yujiro's wife is a very beautiful and energetic woman, full of fire and sparkle, quite different from her husband's cool self-control. She will flirt casually with any handsome or charming man who comes her way, although she is careful not to say anything that cannot be laughed off as a joke. Aiko has a passionate heart, and is bored to tears with her elegant, calculating husband. Last year she had a torrid secret affair with Mirumoto Rai, and she will use this gathering as an opportunity to renew it.

Mirumoto Rai, disgruntled Dragon bushi. This young Dragon bushi is a *chui* (lieutenant) in the armies of the Dragon Clan. He is slim and spare-featured, handsome in a clean and precise way. His dark eyes flash often with emotion, and he finds it difficult to endure the talk of courtiers for long – Rai is a man of war, not of the courts. He does, however, have artistic talent – like many Dragon, Rai is a "samurai poet" and often composes haiku in his head while practicing sword kata. He is here unwillingly. The Dragon received invitations to this tournament along with everyone else, and it was Rai who drew the duty of attending. He has been instructed to sabotage any Isawa diplomatic efforts. However, soon after his arrival, the presence of Doji Aiko will disastrously distract him from his duties.

Ikoma Katsu, Lion bard and historian. The main representative of the Lion is a short, flat-faced man with large, clumsy-looking hands and hair shaved and tied into a strict samurai topknot. He speaks slowly and carefully, with great dignity and weight, and always cites the examples of great samurai and famous battles to back up any assertion he might make. Katsu will oppose the Isawa peace-making efforts. However, he will do so with much greater skill than Mirumoto Rai or Shiba Reikun, treating everyone with the utmost courtesy and respect, and employing careful and subtle tricks of rhetoric to make his points.



Bayushi Ejiro, Scorpion courtier. This small, nondescript man wears a wooden *mempo* (mask) which conceals all of his face except for his mouth and eyes. His mouth is usually smiling, and he always speaks in a friendly and confidential manner, as one friend to another. He will make a point of introducing himself to every guest at the castle, and will ask every PC probing questions about their goals, purposes, and past – but without ever stepping over the bounds of propriety. Anyone who speaks with Ejiro gets the unsettling impression that he knows everything about them.

Hida Fuya, Crab visitor. This man is of normal size, unlike many Crab who are noted for their bulk, but his mannerisms are very much those of the "typical Crab" – loud, crude, and brash. He has a wooden leg, and is missing his right arm at the elbow. Since he is no longer useful for fighting, the Crab Clan uses him as a diplomat instead, shuttling him off to various courtly gatherings which they consider unimportant. Fuya regards this "tournament" as little more than a chance to eat good food and drink lots of sake. Given the chance, he will happily recount the gruesome battle in which he lost his limbs.

Shinjo Agui and Shinjo Shujiri. These two representatives of the Shinjo family are brothers, separated by a year. Agui has trained with the Iuchi as a shugenja, while Shujiri is a bushi. Agui is cheerful and friendly, with no prejudices or enmities, and likes to indulge his skills with the flute. Shujiri seems a similar man, also with musical tastes – he plays taiko drums, and their musical duets tend to be wild and quick, full of the spirit of the open steppe. However, Shujiri seems more serious and morose than Agui, and tends to be a bit anti-social, especially around Scorpions. (He is being blackmailed by the Scorpion Clan, due to a past personal failing.) Neither of these men has any particular goal or purpose at the tournament, beyond representing their clan honorably and well.

Kitsune Retsu, Mantis shugenja. This young man is 15 years old, just past gempukku, and is on only his second trip away from the Kitsune lands. He is a handsome youth, although easily startled or embarrassed, especially by pretty women. His father is a minor lord of the Kitsune family. (Depending on when your campaign is set, Retsu may be representing an independent Fox Clan rather than the Mantis.) Retsu is an earnest and impressionable young man. He will quickly be won over by the appeals of the Phoenix Clan, and speaks out against the evils of war. "Our own family lives in close harmony with the animals and spirits of nature – and in nature, there is no war."

Kitsune Sanae, Mantis samurai, bodyguard to Retsu. Sanae is a quiet, gentle woman in her early twenties, whose eyes show flecks of green amid their dark brown. She wears her hair long and carefully bound up in a maiden's foxtail, and always moves and speaks with complete calm and deliberation. Trained as a Yoritomo bushi, she avoids wearing armor or carrying weapons except when necessary, and spends the rest of her time dressed in a formal flowing kimono, armed only with a simple tanto tucked under her obi. Indeed, many have mistaken her for a courtier or shugenja on first encounter. She is here as Kitsune Retsu's protector, and will keep herself close to the boy whenever possible.

Gift-Giving

After the PCs have had a chance to circulate, meet the various NPCs, and pick up the current gossip, Isawa Masahiro will step forward. "In honor of today's celebration, the Isawa have a gift to present to the clans. Please accept this fine sculpture, which represents the unity and strength of the Emerald Empire." Masahiro gestures, and servants draw away a silk veil from one of the tables. Beneath is a beautiful sculpture of ivory, jade, and gold. It depicts the *mon* of the major families from each clan, worked in gems and precious metals, encircling a large Imperial mon at the center. Since there is only one sculpture, the gift must be shared – Masahiro explains the Isawa will send it on a pilgrimage, spending one winter at the court of each clan Champion in succession. He then asks the guests to accept the gift on behalf of their clan.

As many PCs as possible should be selected to accept the gift for their clan, while clans which are not represented by PCs should be "filled in" with NPCs from the guest list. **Exception:** Mirumoto Rai will always be chosen to accept for the Dragon, even if Dragon PCs are present.

Since this is a gift, proper etiquette is to refuse the gift twice, allowing the giver to offer it three times. You can have the PCs roll **Etiquette/Awareness** at TN 10 to remember this, if their players are unaware of it. (Alternatively, make sure one of the NPCs accepts before any PCs have to do so.) Accepting a gift without refusing twice is considered a Minor Breach of Etiquette, and an insult to the giver, implying that the gift is worth nothing. It can cost both Honor and perhaps a point or two of Glory.

Eventually, it is time for Mirumoto Rai to accept on behalf of the Dragon Clan. Isawa Masahiro bows before him. "Mirumoto Rai, on behalf of the Dragon, please accept this fine sculpture, symbolizing the sincere wishes of the Phoenix Clan that peace and unity may prevail throughout the Empire."

Mirumoto Rai looks uneasily at the sculpture. His eyes scan the crowd for the briefest of instants. "I thank you for this... sculpture."

The crowed will murmur and whisper softly, reacting to this breach of etiquette. Isawa Masahiro is taken aback for a moment, but then recovers, smiles politely, and moves on to the next clan representative. A PC who observes Rai after this incident can roll **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 15 to realize he is uncomfortable with his own deeds... and that when he glanced around before accepting, his eyes lingered for an unhappy moment on Doji Aiko.

The First Contest, Poetry

After the insult in the gift giving ceremony, the Isawa will be eager to move on and start the Tournament of the Samurai. After only a few minutes, Doji Yujiro will step forward and speak in his musical, perfectly modulated voice. "Now that we have been blessed with this gift, it is time for our first contest. The creation of a poem is the expression of the soul. It is an art as essential to Bushido as the sword or the bow. You are invited now to compose your finest haiku, to share with all who have gathered here."

The Phoenix do not demand that everyone compete – a PC can bow out without shame if they feel their skill insufficient. Among the NPCs, the younger of the two Unicorns, Shinjo Shujiri, will stay out of the contest (he only knows Unicorn travel poetry, which would not meet the criteria here).

If a player wishes to actually compose their PC's haiku, the meter is 5-7-5 (number of syllables per line). A "true" haiku will also contain some kind of alliteration or ironic shift between the first two lines and the third. In general, haiku does not rhyme. If you prefer to use skill rolls in place of, or supplemental to, writing an actual poem, the PCs can roll **Artisan: Poetry/Awareness** at TN 15. You can award Free Raises to the roll for those actually composing a poem, if you wish to reward their efforts, or at the very least one Free Raise for describing their topic (as opposed to simply rolling dice).

For purposes of the Tournament competition, everyone who makes the base TN gets 1 point. For each successful Raise (including Free Raises), they get 1 additional point.

The NPCs will also compose poems (except for Shinjo Shujiri). Most of them will be pedestrian efforts which earn only 1 point each, but the following entries are worthy of note.



Doji Aiko smiles coquettishly as she recites her poem. A PC who watches the reactions of the NPCs to this poem can roll **Simple Awareness** at TN 20 to notice a blush on the face of Mirumoto Rai, who thereafter seems distracted and lost in thought. (Earns 2 points):

Laughter and music
Women running through the halls
A house of secrets

Ikoma Katsu (earns 3 points):

Life and death entwine
Accepting purpose and truth
The Celestial wheel

Asako Keiko (earns 2 points):

Light upon shadow
Purity of the Thunders
A child's simple smile

Kitsune Sanae (earns 2 points):

Winking green eyes see
A path through forest grove
Guidance of the Kami

Shiba Reikun recites his poem in clear, ringing tones, his eyes fixed straight ahead. There are shocked murmurs at his work's grim themes, and disapproving frowns briefly cross the faces of the Isawa and Asako who are present. (Earns 1 point)

Birds white and fiery
Rising through shining clear skies
Bitter ashes fall

Hida Fuya grumbles and mutters for a time before offering his contribution. It does not go over well. (Earns 0 points.)

Courage strong as steel
Shreds before blackened claws
Duty and death combine

Mirumoto Rai will not at first offer a poem. Doji Yujiro will smile and remark, "Mirumoto Rai-san, are not the Dragon revered as samurai poets, as enlightened in thought as they are deadly with a blade? Please, do not deny us the chance to appreciate your skill." Rai sighs, swallows, and then recites (earning 2 points):

Blood pulsing crimson
Breath rasping in labored throats
The touch of Benten

Anyone who can roll **Artisan: Poetry/Intelligence** or **Temptation/Intelligence** at TN 15 can tell that Rai's work is a love poem. A **Theology/Intelligence** roll at TN 10 identifies Benten as the Fortune of Romantic Love. A **Simple Awareness** roll at TN 20 (TN 10 if a PC is specifically watching) will detect a faint pleased smile on the face of Doji Aiko when Rai recites his poem.

The Second Contest, Painting

Doji Yujiro and his Phoenix hosts clap their hands as the poetry contest concludes. "That was a wondrous demonstration of the spiritual nature of the samurai," Yujiro purrs in his perfect voice. "Let us continue now by exploring the fine art of the brush – a different sort of weapon than some of you are accustomed to wielding, I am sure." Servants move forward and set up easels, placing them to take advantage of the golden late-afternoon sunlight. Ink, paint, and brushes are placed ready to hand by each piece of blank white silk.

Again, the PCs are not required to compete if they don't wish to do so. This time, all of the NPCs will participate except for Shinjo Agui. As before, the Skill roll is **Artisan: Painting/Intelligence** at TN 15, with players who describe what their characters are painting earning 1-3 Free Raises (the more detailed and creative the description, the more Raises). Also as before, a success earns 1 point, plus 1 additional point per Raise.

Most of the paintings will be "classic" Rokugani artwork, depicting scenes of natural beauty. Rokugani culture considers the spontaneous beauty of nature to be far superior, and far more moving, than anything posed or artificial. Each such painting earns 1 point, except for Doji Aiko and Bayushi Ejiro, who are skilled enough to earn 2 points.

There are four paintings which diverge from these conventional themes:

Ikoma Katsu produces a painting, titled "Dawn," which shows an army gathered at dawn for battle. The rising sun is burning away the gray morning mist, gilding the helmets of hundreds of Lion samurai. Their faces are calm and tranquil as they await the day's battle. (2 points.)

Kitsune Sanae's painting is titled "Guardian." It shows a green-eyed fox looking out of a dense thicket of woods. (2 points.)

Mirumoto Rai's painting is titled "Honor." He labors over it at length. It shows two duelists meeting in a clearing, surrounded by trees. Although no clan colors or mons are visible, one duelist is clearly in the two-blade stance of the Dragon, and from the poses, his opponent is about to suffer a lethal blow. However, there is a hidden detail in the painting, which requires a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 10 to notice: the bushes in the upper right background nearly conceal the outline of a very beautiful woman kneeling to smell a flower. (1 point.)

Hida Fuya's painting is rendered entirely in black ink, with sharp, crude, broad brush strokes. It is titled "Tranquility." It shows a horrific battle at the Kaiu Wall, with desperate samurai battling and dying against terrible monsters and hordes of undead. A **Simple Perception** roll at TN 15 will be needed to notice that, behind the battle, a small bird is in her nest, feeding her chicks – in perfect safety and tranquility, protected by the courage of the Crab. (1 point.)

After the paintings are completed, there is a quiet period of reflection as everyone studies them. Both Fuya's and Rai's paintings are clearly met with disapproval by the majority of the Phoenix and Crane present (although Asako Keiko does spot the birds in Fuya's painting, and compliments him). The PCs can roll **Courtier/Perception** at TN 15 or **Investigation/Awareness** at TN 15 to notice that Doji Aiko smiles and blushes just slightly when viewing Rai's painting.

The painting contest consumes all the rest of the afternoon – by the time everyone is viewing the completed works, servants are bringing out paper lanterns to illuminate the castle. When everyone has viewed the paintings, Isawa Masahiro claps his hands and invites the guests to share the evening meal. "We will conclude our tournament tomorrow, under the splendid light of Lady Sun."

Dinner and Conversation

Dinner is a glorious affair, held on long tables set up in the main hall. The doors to the courtyard are kept open so the guests may view the legendary Pale Oak while they eat. The Phoenix spare no expense on the meal, which features the finest on Rokugani cuisine. During the dinner, the PCs are free to interact with any of the NPCs. Depending on which clans are enjoying good or bad relations in your storyline, the PCs may notice all sorts of subtle tensions and conversational gambits during the meal.

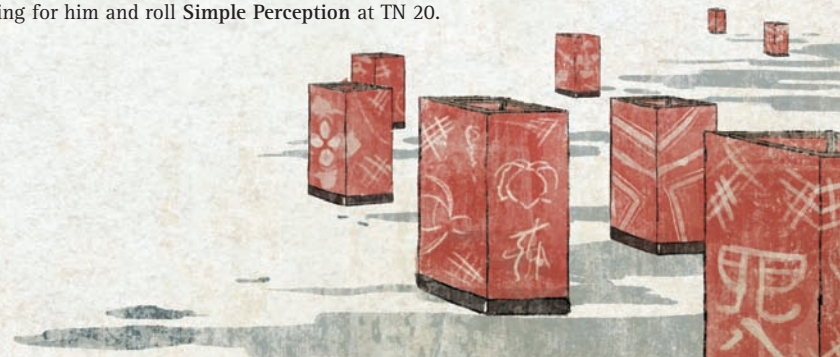
Mirumoto Rai will of course attempt to offer comments and conversational gambits designed to put the Phoenix in a bad light. However, anyone who rolls **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 can tell Rai's heart is not really in this – something is distracting him.

Asako Shizu, Isawa Masahiro, and the lower-ranking members of their families will repeatedly seek to steer the conversation toward peace. They will ask leading questions such as, "Is not a diplomatic solution just as honorable as one earned with bloodshed?" or, "Is pride worth the sacrifice of lives of those not even involved in this disagreement?" Isawa Hitsukawa will also make able use of quotations from the Tao of Shinsei to bolster his position. (For example, "At times, the voice of peace must ring like Thunder." Or, "Has not Shinsei said of war: See a man murdering a child. The child is you. Know what you would do next.") Shiba Reikun, however, will absolutely not participate in such conversational gambits.

After the dinner, socializing and conversation will continue in the courtyard, as the guests stroll about, chat, gossip, and enjoy the cool evening air. Soon after the meal ends, Isawa Shizu will excuse himself, explaining that he has matters to attend to in preparation for tomorrow. Isawa Masahiro will remain and continue hosting the evening, circulating around the room and injecting himself into any conversation that becomes too warlike.

A bit later, Mirumoto Rai will quietly slip away with Doji Aiko for a tryst in a servant's room. PCs will not notice this unless they are specifically watching one or the other of these individuals and make a **Simple Perception** roll at TN 20. Doji Yujiro will be oblivious to this incident – he is deep in conversation with the Phoenix and Mantis guests on the finer points of the art of painting.

Aside from any possible PCs, the only person to notice the departure of Rai and Aiko is Shiba Reikun. The mad Phoenix is seized with a sudden inspiration, and departs as well. Again, PCs will not notice him leaving unless they are specifically looking for him and roll **Simple Perception** at TN 20.



The Murder

Shiba Reikun goes to Mirumoto Rai's room and quickly dons the Mirumoto's spare kimono over his own. He also covers his face with a green obi belt, wrapping it around his head so only his eyes are visible. Thus attired, he sneaks to Asako Shizu's room. PCs will only notice him if they are actively looking around the castle (perhaps trying to find Rai and Aiko) and make a **Contested Roll** of their **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** against Reikun's **Stealth (Sneaking) /Agility**.

It may be noted that there are no guards within the castle, and only a few posted on the outer walls – Asako Shizu is trying to make his castle seem like an oasis of peace, not a fortress. At the moment there are not even guards on his personal quarters. Shizu's intentions are noble – and cost him his life. Assuming Reikun is not intercepted, he will sneak into Shizu's unguarded room. The daimyo is seated on the floor, writing instructions for the servants tomorrow. Reikun stabs the daimyo through the back with his wakizashi, killing him instantly. The killer then rips a piece off the Dragon kimono he is wearing and places it in the Asako's right hand.

His murderous work completed, Reikun departs. He makes sure at least two guests (Ikoma Katsu and Hida Fuya) see him from a distance as he hurries away from Shizu's quarters. If any PCs are snooping around for any reason, they can roll **Simple Perception** at TN 15 to catch a glimpse of Reikun as well. Of course, since he is dressed in a Dragon kimono and seen only from behind, hurrying away, the other witnesses all assume they have seen Mirumoto Rai.

Shiba Reikun returns to his own room via a circuitous route, checking to make sure that he is not followed. Other than the Ikoma and Hida (and any PCs), no other samurai will see him. (Several castle servants do see him, however.) Once in his own room, Reikun removes the Mirumoto's bloodstained kimono, along with his own clothes underneath (which are also bloodstained), and hides then under his futon.

After this deed, Shiba Reikun returns to the courtyard and makes a point of mingling and establishing his presence. PCs who roll **Etiquette/Perception** at TN 15 will notice that Reikun is wearing a different kimono than before. They can also roll **Intelligence** at TN 20 to realize that Reikun was gone for a while. If he is asked about this, he will claim to have taken a bath.

Mirumoto Rai will return to the courtyard shortly thereafter. He has a pleased glow about him, which can be noticed with a **Courtier/Perception** or **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 20. Again, PCs can roll **Intelligence** at TN 20 to realize that Rai was also gone for a while. If asked about this, he will verbally stumble for a moment, then claim he was conducting "private negotiations" on behalf of his clan.

Doji Aiko will head for the baths after her tryst with Mirumoto Rai, and is not seen again until after the murder is discovered.

Interrupting?

It is possible that the PCs may interrupt this sequence of events, most likely by following Rai, Shizu, or Reikun. Any PC who lurks around Shizu's quarters will encounter Shiba Reikun dressed in the Mirumoto's kimono. An **Investigation/Perception** roll at TN 20 will realize that the man concealed beneath the obi is not Mirumoto Rai. The maddened Reikun may well try to kill any lone PC who sees him, hoping to quickly dispose of the body and complete his plan. If not, he will back off and retreat to his room.

If the PCs prevent the murder, the rest of the tournament (and the adventure) will play out without further incident.

PCs who follow Mirumoto Rai or Doji Aiko may be able to catch them in their dishonorable tryst. Rai will implore any PC who catches him to stay silent, "not for me, but for the lady's honor." If the PCs agree, they can take the advantage **Blackmail: Mirumoto Rai and Doji Aiko.** (Needless to say, this should cost the PCs Honor, and may well gain them Doji Aiko and Mirumoto Rai as Sworn Enemies.) See the conclusion of the adventure for details of what happens if the PCs expose Rai and Aiko's affair.



Harmony Shattered

As the evening is winding down and guests are starting to head off to bed, a servant hurriedly enters the courtyard and whispers to Isawa Masahiro. A stricken look crosses the karo's face and he leaves immediately, without explanation. On his way to Shizu's quarters, he is joined by four Shiba bushi, summoned by the servants from the walls of the castle. PCs may follow Shizu if they wish, but the bushi escort will not allow them into the murder scene unless they are members of the Phoenix Clan.

Regardless, after a few minutes Masahiro will return to the courtyard, accompanied by the bushi, and order all the guests assembled. There are murmurs of confusion and concern as everyone gathers. Doji Aiko will reappear at this time, dressed in a fresh kimono and with her hair still damp from the bath.

Isawa Masahiro's face is tight with carefully controlled emotion and his voice shakes just slightly as he speaks. "There has been a... a terrible tragedy. Even as we pursue peace and beauty, the evil in men's hearts has murdered our daimyo Asako Shizu in his own quarters." There are shocked gasps from behind fans as the crowd absorbs this news. "I regret to say that we cannot allow anyone to leave the castle until we can properly investigate this foul crime. We do not have a magistrate here at Aojiroi Oku Shiro, but we shall do our best to see that justice is done. Does anyone know anything about this crime? Anything you saw which might shed light upon it?"

After the briefest of pauses, Ikoma Katsu steps forward and bows low. "Isawa Masahiro-sama, I fear I may have such information. I saw a Dragon, I believe from the mon it was Mirumoto Rai, leaving the area of Isawa Shizu's quarters just a short while ago. Hida Fuya was with me and will be able to verify my words."

The Hida's usual loud and boisterous manner has changed to one of sadness, and he looks directly at Mirumoto Rai as he speaks. "*Hai*. I must concur with Ikoma Katsu-san. I saw the Miromoto walking away from Isawa Shizu's quarters. Though his face was wrapped with a green cloth, I do not doubt it was him."

Mirumoto Rai's face is fluid with shock, his public face momentarily shaken. "This cannot be. I was nowhere near Isawa Shizu-sama's room."

Shiba Reikun steps to the side of Isawa Masahiro, hand on sword-hilt. "Then where were you? You were not here."

"I was..." For the briefest moment an expression like a trapped animal crosses Mirumoto Rai's face. "I was... wandering the castle hallways."

Isawa Masahiro looks around the room. "Can anyone corroborate your testimony?"

Unless one of the PCs steps forward to lie on Rai's behalf, Isawa Masahiro will immediately have him arrested and confined to his quarters, pending a trial.

If a PC does testify on behalf of Rai, s/he will have to roll **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** at TN 20 to tell a convincing lie. Masahiro will be even more troubled, and will finally ask Mirumoto Rai to voluntarily remain in his quarters while the matter is investigated.

The crowd will slowly break up and head for bed, still murmuring about the shocking incident. (Everyone will assume that Rai is guilty. Doji Aiko will do her best to play along, but anyone rolling **Awareness** at TN 15 can tell she is very distressed about Rai's arrest.)

Masahiro Approaches the PCs

If possible, you should try to have the PCs become involved in the investigation of the murder. The best way to do this is to have Isawa Masahiro recruit the PCs, which he will try to do if they have impressed him so far as samurai of honor and integrity. He will approach the PCs shortly after Rai is confined/arrested, and tells them, "Mirumoto Rai continues to protest his innocence, and has asked for honorable samurai to investigate on his behalf. Although his guilt seems clear, in this sort of delicate situation, we must be sure that we have found the truth... especially since Rai-san is a Dragon here in Phoenix lands. If we punish Rai for this crime, we must be absolutely sure of his guilt, or we will only be fanning the flames of the war we seek to prevent."

Masahiro will explain that the tournament will continue regardless, so PCs who join the investigation may have to miss one or both of the remaining contests (unless they can complete the investigation that night). Masahiro is asking this as a favor, and will understand if the PCs are unable or unwilling to help. If none of the PCs assist in the investigation, Masahiro and his bushi will conduct the investigation themselves to the best of their ability. They will reluctantly find Rai guilty.

The Investigation

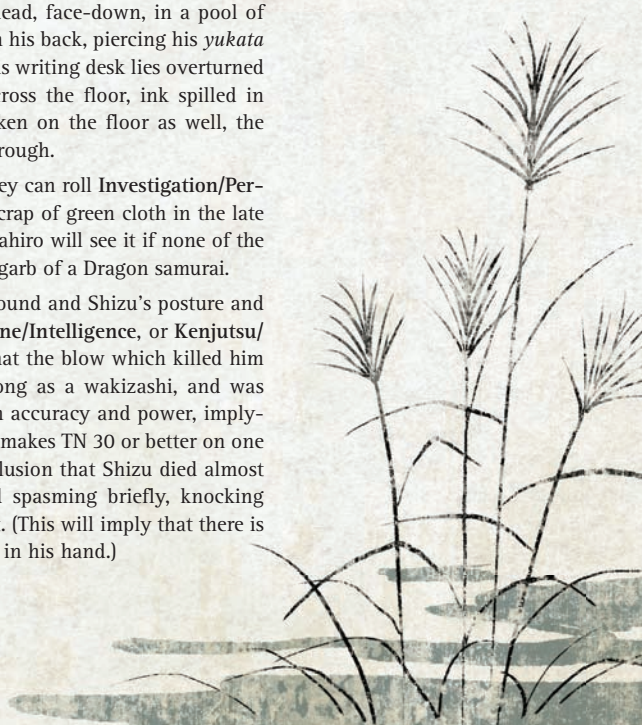
Assuming at least some of the PCs do participate in the investigation, there are several avenues for them to explore in seeking the truth.

Investigating Asako Shizu's Room: This is the obvious place to begin, and Isawa Masahiro will expect the PCs to start here. He will hold the room untouched until he and the PCs have examined it. He will also summon an *eta* to examine the body for the PCs and to remove it once they have finished their investigation. (This is a good opportunity to explain to the players the Rokugani taboo against touching dead flesh. Without an *eta* to handle and move the body, they will not be able to conduct an effective investigation. Anyone of the samurai caste who so much as touches a dead body by their own choice loses a point of Honor, more if they do so repeatedly or callously.)

The scene in the daimyo's room is a horrifying one, made all the more chilling by the soft yellow candlelight which illuminates it. Asako Shizu lies dead, face-down, in a pool of blood. A stab wound is visible in his back, piercing his *yukata* (a sort of Rokugani bathrobe). His writing desk lies overturned beside him, papers scattered across the floor, ink spilled in a black pool. A teapot lies broken on the floor as well, the tatami mat beneath it soaked through.

If the PCs look at the body, they can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 15 to notice the scrap of green cloth in the late daimyo's right hand. (Isawa Masahiro will see it if none of the PCs do.) It is definitely from the garb of a Dragon samurai.

Anyone who examines the wound and Shizu's posture and rolls **Battle/Intelligence**, **Medicine/Intelligence**, or **Kenjutsu/Intelligence** at TN 20 can tell that the blow which killed him was from a blade at least as long as a wakizashi, and was delivered from behind with both accuracy and power, implying a skilled attacker. A PC who makes TN 30 or better on one of these rolls comes to the conclusion that Shizu died almost instantly, pitching forward and spasming briefly, knocking over the writing desk and teapot. (This will imply that there is something fishy about the cloth in his hand.)



Questioning the Kami: The PCs can learn more by having a shugenja (one of their own, or an Isawa NPC) cast *Commune* to speak with the local elemental spirits. If none of the PCs are aware that this is possible, they can roll Lore: Shugenja / Intelligence at TN 15 to remember it. However, they should also know that the testimony of spirits is not admissible under Rokugani law, due to the possibility that a shugenja might fabricate evidence. This can be recalled with a roll of Lore: Law/Intelligence at TN 15.

Asako Shizu's room contains plenty of Earth and Air spirits, plus Fire spirits in the candles and Water spirits in the spilled ink and tea. (By morning, the candles will be out and the spills dried – a shugenja will have to make two Raises in order to recover those spirits at that point.) The Earth, Air, and Fire spirits can all describe a man entering the room and stabbing Asako Shizu in the back. All three types of spirits will be able to describe the man as wearing clothing "the color of fresh leaves" and covering his face with a wrapped cloth. The spirits will not mention the planting of the piece of obi cloth unless the Communing shugenja asks about it specifically. Water spirits will show a silent image of the murder. The PCs can roll **Investigation/Perception** at TN 20 to determine that the man in the green kimono, while clearly a skilled swordsman, does not move like Mirumoto Rai, and his clothing seems oddly bulky. Again, if the PCs ask what happened next, the Water spirits can show the killer planting the scrap of cloth.

Questioning Mirumoto Rai: Rai will insist he is innocent. He will also claim (truthfully) that one of his kimonos has been stolen. However, under no circumstances will he admit the affair with Doji Aiko, and he cannot provide any alibi other than his earlier claim to have been "walking around the castle." If the PCs press him closely about his whereabouts, he will scowl and proclaim he must remain silent as a matter of Honor. If PCs ask the right questions, they may be able to make him admit that he is trying to protect another, although he will never say who. Rai makes it clear that he does not want this incident to besmirch the name of the Mirumoto family. "It would be a terrible thing indeed if this foul crime convinced the Isawa of our family's dishonor. Our quarrel is with the Shiba, not the Isawa. If need be, I shall commit seppuku to expunge this shame."

If the PCs confront Rai with accusations about his affair with Doji Aiko, he will clearly be crushed, and asks the PCs to keep her involvement quiet in order to preserve her honor. "Any blame here should be mine." Again, he will make plans to commit seppuku.

Mirumoto Rai's Room: There are no physical clues in Rai's room. If a shugenja *Communes* with the spirits there, it contains Air, Earth, and Fire spirits, but no Water spirits. (Again, the Fire spirits will be nearly gone by the next day.) Any of these spirits, if asked the right questions, can describe a man in orange clothing entering the room, putting on one of the Mirumoto's kimonos over his own, and then leaving.

Questioning Doji Aiko: Aiko will normally stick to her story that she was in the baths when the crime occurred. However, if the PCs confront her with even the slightest evidence of the connection between her and Mirumoto Rai, she will quickly break down and confess. "Mirumoto Rai is guilty, as I am guilty, of great dishonor. But he is not a murderer." She will plead with the PCs, in the name of the Fortune Benten, to keep the affair secret and find some other way of clearing Rai's name.

Questioning the Servants: It may not occur to the PCs to question the castle servants, who are for the most part silently ubiquitous throughout Pale Oak Castle. (It did not occur to Shiba Reikun to hide from the servants, since like most samurai he considers them to be only heimin, "half-people," not worth bothering over.) By asking the right questions, the PCs can elicit the following information from the servants:

- Two servants saw Shiba Reikun near Mirumoto Uso's quarters, shortly before the murder.
- Four servants saw Shiba Reikun in the blood-soaked Dragon kimono after the murder. They saw him not only leaving the area of the daimyo's quarters, but also approaching his own room.
- Three servants saw Mirumoto Rai and Doji Aiko sneak into a room together. They remained there together for at least half an hour, during the time that the murder took place.
- Several servants can confirm that Shiba Reikun was not in the baths at the time of the murder.
- After the start of the Tea Ceremony contest (see below), five servants will report seeing Shiba Reikun take a bundle outside the castle and burning it there.

Unfortunately, the word of heimin has little value under Rokugani law – one samurai's word overturns the testimony of any number of commoners, as the PCs will know with a **Lore: Law / Intelligence** roll at TN 10. The PCs will need something else – either samurai testimony, or direct physical evidence – to bolster what they learn from the servants.

Questioning the Witnesses: The PCs will probably want to question Ikoma Katsu and Hida Fuya about their claim to have seen Mirumoto Rai leaving the area of the daimyo's quarters. The two men will explain (separately or together) that they were taking a private stroll while they discussed Lion-Crab relations. They saw a man in a green kimono, his head wrapped in green cloth, walking quickly away from them.

- **Ikoma Katsu** will assume the man he saw was Mirumoto Rai. ("Who else could it have been?") If the PCs question him closely about anything odd or suspicious about the man, he will admit the man's kimono looked oddly bulky. If the PCs press him hard, he will be forced to admit he never saw the man's face and that, therefore, it could have been someone else wearing the Mirumoto's clothing. (He will declare this "quite improbable," however.)
- **Hida Fuya** will not remember what he saw clearly enough to make such fine judgments. If the PCs press him, he will admit that he drank quite a bit of sake at dinner. However, he will declare, "I saw what I saw," and if the PCs try too hard to convince him otherwise, he may become angry and name them "Scorpion-tongued tricksters" or similar. If the PCs respond with belligerence of their own, Fuya may even demand a duel.

Questioning Shiba Reikun: PCs who noted Shiba Reikun's absence from the after-dinner conversation, or who decipher the evidence presented by the kami or the servants, may decide to confront him. He will claim he was in the baths at the time of the murder. Persistent questioning will make him nervous and angry, as his underlying emotional disturbance

begins to show through. However, he will never voluntarily confess his deeds. Even if the PCs find incontrovertible physical evidence (such as the bloody clothing in his room), he will insist to the bitter end that he is innocent, and demand a duel to prove it. See the conclusion of the adventure for details on how to resolve that.

Shiba Reikun's Room: The PCs will need some sort of justification (from Communing with spirits, interviewing servants, or realizing that Reikun has no alibi) to search Shiba Reikun's room. Simply barging in on suspicion alone is a breach of etiquette, costing 1 point of Honor (and 2 points of Glory to any PC if others witness the deed).

The key evidence in Reikun's room is the bloody clothing hidden under his futon. If the PCs wait too long, the clothing will be gone – in between the Dance and Tea Ceremony contests the next day, Reikun will wrap up the clothes in a satchel, take them outside the castle, and burn them. However, there will still be bloodstains on the futon itself.

Either way, finding this clue will require searching the room and rolling **Investigation (Search) / Perception** at TN 20 (or casting the spell By the Light of the Moon). If a shugenja Communes with the spirits in Reikun's room, they will give descriptions of him coming back in the Mirumoto's bloodstained clothing, stripping off all the garments and hiding them under the futon. After he disposes of the clothing, they can get a description of that act as well.

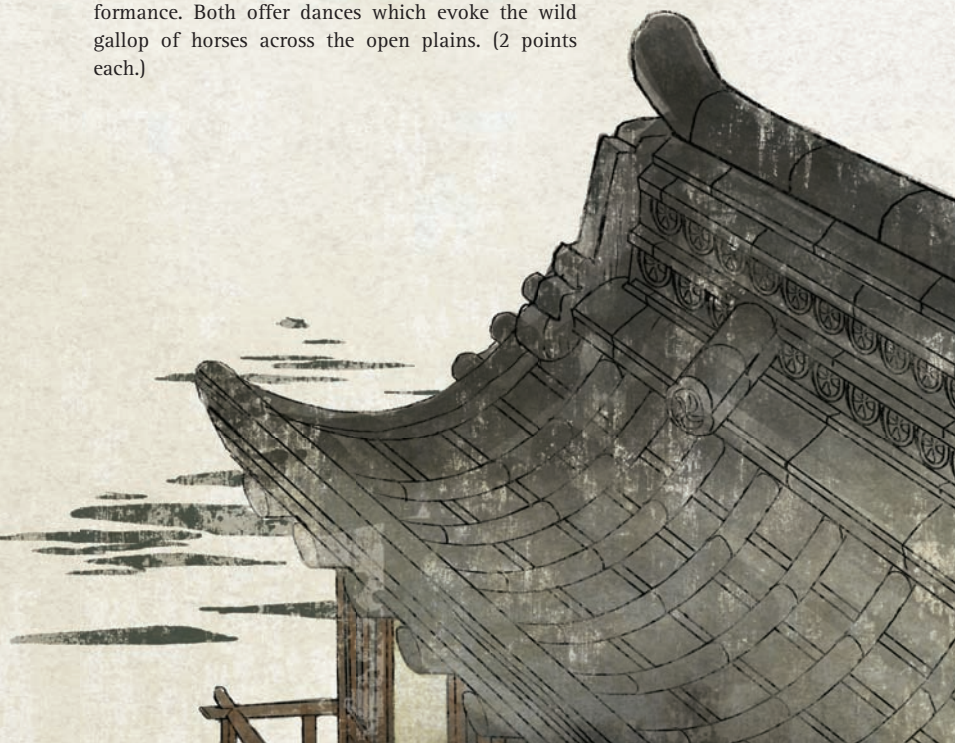
The Contest of Dancing

Regardless of whether the PCs have concluded their investigation or not, the Phoenix will resume the tournament the next morning after breakfast. The mood is subdued and anxious, but Isawa Masahiro will do his best to carry on in the same manner as yesterday. "Today, we shall see that skill and grace are not just for the battlefield. A learned samurai may put those skills to use on the floor of the court as well. We shall have a contest of dance, giving each of you the opportunity to display your skills. We are honored to have a fine troupe of Kakita musicians to accompany your performances." The musicians from yesterday's welcoming ceremony step forward and bow before preparing their instruments.

The dances presented here are solo artistic performances, in which the contestants tell a story or evoke an emotion through their movements. This is sometimes seen as a "female art" in Rokugan, but in fact male samurai dance quite often as well. Popular themes of Rokugani dance include the lives of animals (birds, foxes, fish, etc), the deeds of spirits and legendary creatures, the cycle of life, the changing seasons, and the power and blessing of the Fortunes. Similarly to the other contests, each competitor rolls **Perform: Dance/Agility** at TN 15. Players who describe creative or artistic concepts for their dance gain 1-3 Free Raises at your discretion. All those who hit the TN get 1 point, plus 1 point per Raise.

Hida Fuya will sit out this competition with a snort, and Isawa Hitsukawa will plead the weariness of aged bones. For obvious reasons, Mirumoto Rai will also be a non-competitor.

- Shiba Reikun will offer a brief, unimpressive dance, actually more of a fancy sword kata, designed to evoke the power and might of the legendary Phoenix. It is clear to anyone who rolls **Perform: Dance/Awareness** at TN 15 (or **Awareness** at TN 20) that Reikun is badly off his center, consumed with dark emotion. (0 points.)
- Asako Keiko offers a delicate and beautiful abstract dance which depicts the fall of innocence to falsehood, corruption and ultimately, death. It is a profoundly moving experience, and at least some of the samurai are unable to hide their tears. Any PC who rolls **Awareness** at TN 15 can tell that Keiko is inspired by events in her own past. (3 points.)
- Doji Aiko will offer a dance about birds welcoming the arrival of spring. Although she is clearly a very talented dancer, her performance is oddly off-key, and fails to impress. Any PC who **Awareness** at TN 15 can tell that Aiko is still deeply concerned and distracted by the events of last night. (1 point.)
- Ikoma Katsu offers a dance portraying the cycle of life, from infant to old man. The dance is both humorous and poignant, mingling the joy and sorrow of life, and the Phoenix are clearly unexpectedly impressed to get a work of such depth from the Lion. (2 points.)
- Kitsune Sanae performs a dance depicting a fox *hengayokai* (shape-shifter) playing tricks on hapless humans, peasants and samurai alike. The dance is quite humorous and is greeted with many appreciative chuckles. (2 points.)
- Bayushi Ejiro offers a dance depicting a wolf stalking and killing his prey. Although it is technically competent, Ejiro evokes the bloodlust of the wolf a little too well for comfort. (1 point.)
- Kitsune Retsu tries to offer a dance about hunting in the forests of the Kitsune lands. Unfortunately, halfway through he trips and almost falls. Retsu stumbles to a halt, his young face flushing with embarrassment. After a strained moment of silence, Isawa Masahiro rescues the situation by apologizing. "The floor must not have been properly polished, Kitsune-san." Retsu nods and retires gratefully, while servants buff the (perfect) floor before the next performance. (0 points.)
- The two Shinjo brothers will use their musical instruments to supplement the Crane musicians, each brother providing musical support to the other's performance. Both offer dances which evoke the wild gallop of horses across the open plains. (2 points each.)



The Tea Ceremony

After the contest of dance concludes, there is a pause while the musicians depart and servants bring in several low tables, each laid out with the cups, pots, whisks, and other equipment needed for performing a tea ceremony. As the servants finish setting up, Isawa Masahiro again stands before the guests. "We have seen painting, poetry and dancing. All are skills the Emperor finds laudable among loyal samurai. However, even more important than these artistic endeavors is the simple, pure harmony of soul which all samurai must have. It is our highest goal to achieve enlightenment and purity, lifting ourselves above the distractions of the world. In our last contest, we ask that you seek this harmony through the performance of the tea ceremony."

All of the guests (except Rai) will participate in this "competition," in which they are judged on the purity and harmony of their Tea Ceremony performance. The roll is **Tea Ceremony/Void** at TN 20. Success earns 2 points. Every successful Raise is an additional point. A PC who makes at least two Raises (TN 30) also regains one Void point.

Some of the contestants are obvious, abject failures – Hida Fuya breaks one of his teacups, Shiba Reikun (if still here) stirs too vigorously and spills tea on the table, and the Shinjo brothers have clearly never performed a tea ceremony in their lives. Most of the remaining contestants manage to at least perform the Tea Ceremony properly, earning 2 points. Asako Keiko, Isawa Hitsukawa, Ikoma Katsu, and Kitsune Sanae all perform with exceptional purity and tranquility.

Ending the Investigation

The PCs may approach Isawa Masahiro at any time if they think they have completed their investigation. He will listen carefully to their accounts and question them about any uncertain or incomplete aspects of their investigation. If the PCs conclude that Mirumoto Rai is guilty, Masahiro will agree with a sad nod (this is the conclusion he will reach if none of the PCs help him). He proposes to delay any announcement until after the conclusion of the tournament, in order to minimize further disruptions.

If the PCs accuse Shiba Reikun, Masahiro will question them even more carefully, pointing out any flaws in their case.

- If the only evidence the PCs have is the testimony of spirits, Masahiro will sadly point out, "It is the wisdom of the Divine Emperor that no man can be condemned solely on the word of spirits, since such word can be manipulated by the shugenja who summons them."
- If the PCs rely on the testimony of servants, Masahiro will frown. "No samurai may be accused solely on the word of heimin."
- If Doji Aiko has confessed to her affair with Rai, Masahiro will be deeply troubled. "This does seem to prove that Rai is innocent, but it also brings great dishonor upon both these people and their families." He will ask the PCs to wait until after the tournament concludes before troubling the guests with such a shocking announcement.
- The bloody clothing will be the key clue to actually pinning the crime on Shiba Reikun. If the PCs have found this, Masahiro will agree that, shocking as it seems, Reikun is probably guilty. Again, he asks that the PCs wait until after the tournament concludes before making their accusations.

Announcing the Winner

After the Tea Ceremony concludes, the guests will enjoy a light midday meal. Afterward, they gather once more in the main hall of the castle, before the watching Pale Oak, while Isawa Masahiro announces the winner of the contest. "As we have seen, there are many more facets to a samurai than merely skill in battle. We may lift our calligraphy brush instead of our sword. We may launch poems instead of arrows. Let us hope that even with the shadow cast upon these proceedings, the Fortunes' wisdom can show us the path to peace and harmony."

To determine the winner of the tournament, compare the total points earned by each PC to the totals listed below for the various NPC contestants. The winner will be recognized with the gift of a blessed fan, a beautiful artifact inscribed with the Phoenix mon and reputed to have been carried by Asako herself. Polite winners remember to refuse three times...

- Asako Keiko: 9 points
- Isawa Hitsukawa: 6 points
- Shiba Leikun: 2 points
- Doji Aiko: 7 points
- Ikoma Katsu: 10 points
- Bayushi Ejiro: 6 points
- Hida Fuya: 1 point.
- Shinjo Agui: 3 points
- Shinjo Shujiri: 3 points
- Kitsune Retsu: 4 points
- Kitsune Sanae: 9 points

Arresting Shiba Reikun

If the PCs convinced Isawa Masahiro of Shiba Reikun's guilt, he will call everyone to witness while the PCs deliver the evidence. Reikun will gradually become more pale (with anger, not fear) as the PCs lay out the case. Finally he will shout out that his honor has been compromised, and demands a duel to prove his innocence.

If the PCs found the bloody clothing in Reikun's room, Isawa Masahiro will not permit a duel. He orders Reikun arrested and questioned. The Shiba makes confession and is executed a few days later.

If the PCs did not find the bloody clothing (but still made a fairly convincing case, such as by finding the bloodstain on Reikun's futon, and/or getting Aiko to testify to Rai's in-



nocence), Masahiro will have no choice but to permit a duel. One of the accusing PCs will have to face Reikun in a duel – if none of them carry a katana, they must elect a champion (some other PC, or possibly Mirumoto Rai). Shiba Reikun will demand a duel to the death. Isawa Masahiro will refuse, suggesting instead a duel until one combatant can no longer stand (thereby allowing the possibility of an "accidental" death).

- If Reikun wins the duel, he has been proven innocent and matters will proceed to the condemnation of Mirumoto Rai (see below). The PCs will lose Glory for making a "false" accusation and losing the duel.
- If Reikun loses (but is still alive), he stands condemned before all. (Mirumoto Rai will manage to barely defeat Reikun, if a PC elects him as a champion.) Isawa Masahiro will order Reikun arrested and questioned (tortured). Reikun will eventually confess and be executed for his crime.

A Back-Up Plan: Accusing Shiba Reikun

If the PCs could not convince Isawa Masahiro of Reikun's guilt, they can still choose to publicly accuse Reikun and present their evidence anyway. This will upset Isawa Masahiro, since it creates a spectacular disruption to the orderly proceedings he had planned. Shiba Reikun will turn white with rage, cords standing out of his neck. He grips his sword as he demands to face his accusers in a duel and "cut them down like the lying, Dragon-serving dogs they are." Isawa Masahiro, clearly angry that the PCs went ahead with their accusation, accepts a duel as the only honorable way of ending the matter. Again, one of the accusing PCs (or their champion) will have to face Reikun in a duel.

In this instance, Isawa Masahiro will be more inclined to grant a duel to the death, but finally decides not to since it could take months to arrange it with the PCs' daimyo. He again orders a duel until one combatant can no longer stand.

Again, if Reikun wins the duel, he has been proven innocent and matters will proceed to the condemnation of Mirumoto Rai. The PCs will lose even more Glory in this situation, because they have also displeased Isawa Masahiro. If the PCs win, the results are as listed above (arrest and eventual conviction), but the PCs should earn less Glory due to their questionable methods.

Exposing the Affair

If, for whatever reason, the PCs choose to publicly expose the affair between Mirumoto Rai and Doji Aiko, they create a horrible scandal. Although Rai is proven innocent of the murder of Asako Shizu, both lovers stand condemned for succumbing to the sin of Desire and violating Bushido. Mirumoto Rai and Doji Aiko will both commit seppuku forthwith in order to cleanse their shame from their family lines.

Mirumoto Rai is Condemned

If Mirumoto Rai has not been cleared, Isawa Masahiro will call him forth and ask him to submit to arrest. The Dragon samurai stands straight and tall, and speaks in a clear voice. "Isawa Masahiro-sama, you have my deepest sympathies for the loss of your daimyo. I grieve with you at the death of a man of honor and culture. I am innocent of this crime, but I cannot prove it, and the Phoenix Clan seeks justice for the loss of one of its own. I gladly give my own life to satisfy them." With that he strides into the courtyard and kneels before the Pale Oak, the tree which grows on the grave of the Hantei. Sunlight shines brightly upon him as he slowly and deliberately pulls his wakizashi from its scabbard. His voice is clear and even as he asks, "Would someone do me the favor of serving as my second?"

A PC may choose to serve as the second if they wish – otherwise one of the Phoenix castle guards (not Shiba Reikun) will volunteer for that duty. Rai will smile, nod thanks, and then recite a final haiku:

Flesh is illusion
A fitful and fleeting dream
The soul, eternal

His poem completed, Rai unhesitatingly plunges the wakizashi into his belly, cutting across and up before bowing his head for the second's blow.

Shiba Reikun, embittered Phoenix bushi

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

Honor: 2.5 *Status: 1.5* *Glory: 2.0*

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 1

Advantages: Quick

Disadvantages: Driven (vengeance on the Dragon), Lost Love (his brother)

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 3, Etiquette 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Meditation (Void Recovery) 2, Polearms 2, Stealth (Sneaking) 3, Theology 1



Resources and Inspirations

Players and GMs alike should seek inspiration for their L5R game wherever they can find it. This section lists some of the books, films, TV shows, and other sources of inspiration which have influenced the design and development of L5R over the last 15 years.

Non-Fiction

- *A Book of Five Rings,* by Miyamoto Musashi (a must!)
- *Bushido: The Soul of Japan,* by Inazo Nitobe
- *Hagakure,* by Yamamoto Tsunetomo
- *Legends of the Samurai,* by Hiroaki Sato
- *Samurai Warriors,* by Stephen Turnbull
- *The Samurai Sword,* by Stephen Turnbull
- *The Samurai,* by Robert T. Samuel
- *Tao Te Ching,* by Lao Tzu
- *The Art of War,* by Sun Tzu

Fiction and Stories

- *Japanese Tales and Legends,* edited by Helen and William McAlpin
- *Lone Wolf and Cub,* by Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima
- *Musashi,* by Eiji Yoshikawa
- *Myths of China and Japan,* edited by Donald A Mackenzie
- *Okko,* by Hub
- *Shogun,* by James Clavell
- *The Initiate Brother* and *Gatherer of Clouds,* by Sean Russell
- The "Sano Ichiro" series of novels, by Laura Joh Rowland
- *The Tale of Genji,* by Murasaki Shikibu
- *Usagi Yojimbo,* by Stan Sakai
- *Vagabond,* by Takehiko Inoue
- *Warrior of Zen,* by Suzuki Shosan

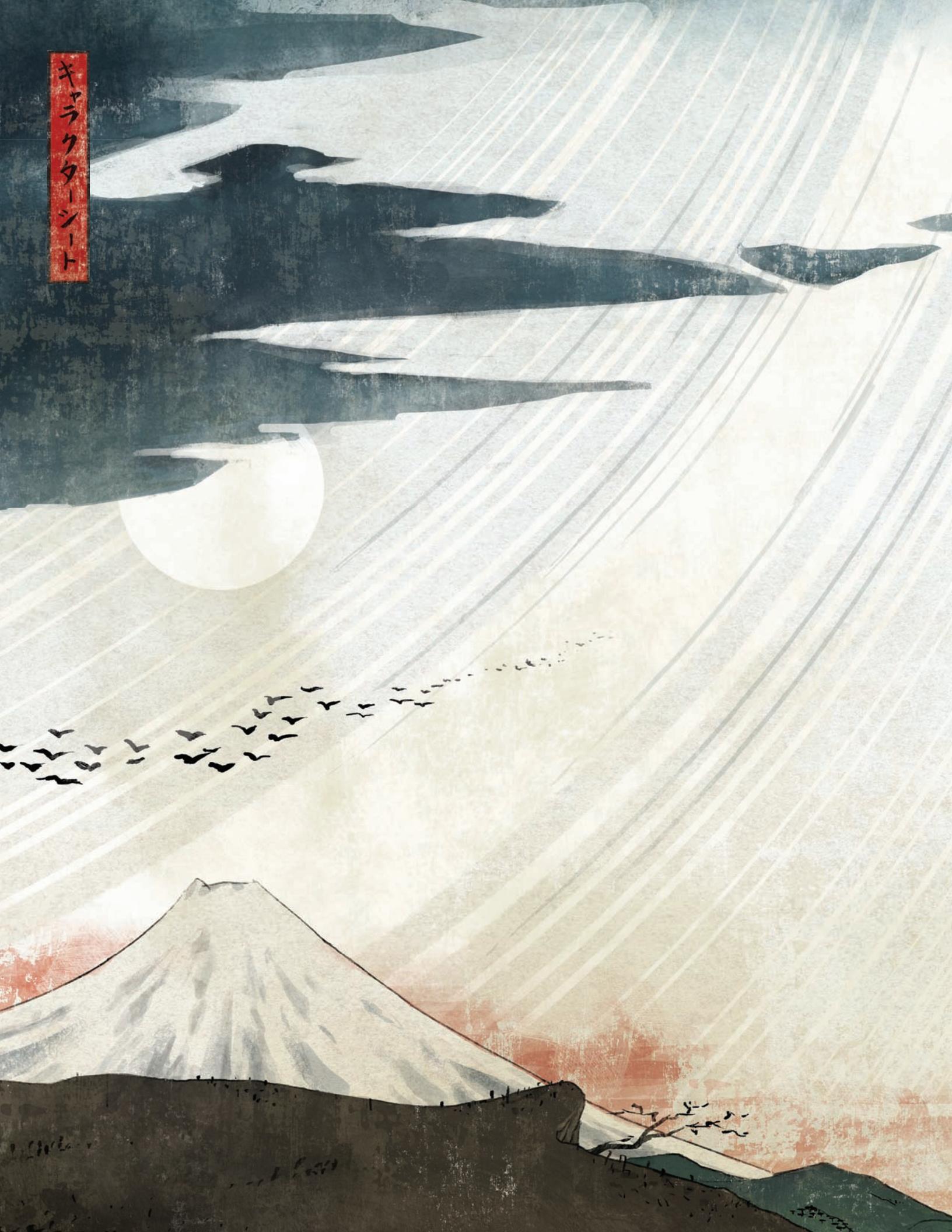
Film and Television

- *Chushingura/The 47 Ronin* (any version)
- *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000, Ang Lee)
- *Kagemusha* (1980, Akira Kurosawa)
- *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005, Rob Marshall)
- *Ran* (1985, Akira Kurosawa)
- *Rashomon* (1950, Akira Kurosawa)
- *Samurai* trilogy (1955-57, adaptation of *Musashi* novel)
- *Sanjuro* (1962, Akira Kurosawa, and modern remake)
- *Seven Samurai* (1954, Akira Kurosawa)
- *Shogun* (1980 television miniseries)
- *Ten To Chi To/Heaven and Earth* (1990, Kadokawa Haruki)
- *The Last Samurai* (2003, Edward Zwick)
- *Throne of Blood* (1957, Akira Kurosawa)
- *Yojimbo* (1961, Akira Kurosawa)
- *Zatoichi* film series (original Japanese film series ran 1962-1973, plus the 2003 remake directed by "Beat" Takashi)








キャラクターシート

Name _____ Rank _____

Clan _____ Experience Points _____

School _____ Insight _____

(Rings X 10) + Skills

Legend of the Five Rings

Earth

Stamina

Willpower

Strength

Perception

Air

Reflexes

Awareness

Agility

Intelligence

Water

Fire

Void

Void Points Spent

Honor

Glory

Status

Shadowland taint

School Skill

Skill Name	Rank	Trait	Roll	Emphases & Mastery Abilities

Weapon 1		Weapon 2		Arrows		
Type		Type		Type	Damage	Quantity
Attack Roll		Attack Roll				
Damage Roll		Damage Roll				
Bonus		Bonus				
Notes		Notes				

Initiative	
Insight Rank / Reflexes	
Modifiers	
Current Initiative	

Armor TN	
Type / Bonus	
Reduction	
Current TN	

Armor	
TN Bonus	
Quality	
Notes	

Wounds	
Earth x 2 per Level Earth x5 for Healthy	

Wound Level	Penalties	Total	Current
Healthy (+0)			
Nicked (+3)			
Grazed (+5)			
Hurt (+10)			
Injured (+15)			
Crippled (+20)			
Down (+40) must spend void to act			
Out Cannot Act			

Rate of Wound Heal	
Stamina x 2 + Insight Rank	
Modifiers	
Current Rate	

Personal Information

Sex		Age	
Height		Weight	
Hair		Eyes	
Father			
Mother			
Brothers /Sisters			
Marital Status			
Spouse			
Children			
Notes			

Advantages	Points	Disadvantages	Points

Equipment & Possessions

name	T	H
	○	○

T: *In the traveling pack or with the Character* / **H:** *Left at Home*

Money

Koku	Bu	Zeni

1 Koku = 5 Bu = 50 Zeni / 1 Bu = 10 Zeni

School Techniques (Non-shugenja)

School	learned
Rank 1	○
Effect	
Rank 2	○
Effect	
Rank 3	○
Effect	
Rank 4	○
Effect	
Rank 5	○
Effect	

School Techniques (Shugenja)

School 1			
Affinity		Deficiency	
Technique			
School 2			
Affinity		Deficiency	
Technique			
School 3			
Affinity		Deficiency	
Technique			
School 4			
Affinity		Deficiency	
Technique			

Miscellaneous Mechanics

Kata

Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			

School Techniques

School	learned
Rank 1	○
Effect	
Rank 2	○
Effect	
Rank 3	○
Effect	
Rank 4	○
Effect	
Rank 5	○
Effect	

School Techniques

School	learned
Rank 1	○
Effect	
Rank 2	○
Effect	
Rank 3	○
Effect	
Rank 4	○
Effect	
Rank 5	○
Effect	

School Techniques

School	learned
Rank 1	○
Effect	
Rank 2	○
Effect	
Rank 3	○
Effect	
Rank 4	○
Effect	
Rank 5	○
Effect	

Kata

Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			

Kata

Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			

Kata

Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			
Name			
Ring/ Mastery		Duration	
Effect			

Spells & Kiho

Name		M. Level	
Element		Duration	
Area		Range	
Effect			

Campaign Summary Sheet

Encountered Characters

F	H	U	
○	○	○	
○	○	○	
○	○	○	

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