

Legend of the
Five Rings



FEALTY AND FREEDOM
THIRD EDITION



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FEALTY AND FREEDOM



INTRODUCTION

“...And be sure to send representatives to the heads of each clan’s magistrate organizations,” the Emerald Champion continued. “I insist upon full disclosure of any and all information they might have on possible conspirators or subversives. This Dark Oracle and his Army of Fire must be gaining intelligence from somewhere.”

“Of course,” the scribe said, hurriedly jotting the order down. He fanned the ink for a moment to speed its drying, then rolled the scroll and offered a quick bow. “Will there be anything else, my lord?”

Shosuro Jimen stared at the scribe for a moment. “What do you think you are doing?”

The smaller man blinked in surprise. “I was going to enact your orders, Jimen-sama. Would you prefer I have another do it?”

“We are not finished here.”

Again, the scribe blinked, this time more nervously. “I... I am sorry, Jimen-sama. You said that you wanted notations on the threats from each of the clans, and we have completed that. I just assumed...”

“I am disinterested in your foolish assumptions,” Jimen said, the hint of an edge to his voice. “We have discussed only the Great Clans. There are a number of other threats that I have orders pertaining to, including the Minor Clans, the Imperial Families, and a number of ronin organizations.”

“Oh, yes,” the scribe said, sputtering slightly and trying to unroll the scroll. “I apologize. I did not realize you considered such groups threats.”

“Do not be an imbecile,” Jimen rebuked. “Do you not remember Yoritomo’s Alliance? Have you even read about To-

turi’s Army, or the Shogun? If you do not consider the possibility of such things repeating themselves as threats to the Empire, then you need to be relieved of your duties.”

“No, of course not,” he stammered. “I apologize. Please forgive my foolishness.”

Jimen glared at the man for a moment, then waved it away, as if further consideration of the issue was beneath him. “Let us begin with the Badger and Ox Clans,” he said. “They stand directly in the path of the Army of Fire, and are far more likely to fall before our enemies than the Dragon and Phoenix. We need to assess what resources they possess, how likely those assets are to fall into enemy hands, and what steps need to be taken in order to ensure that they cannot pose any threat to the Empire as a whole. This is particularly true of the Ox, who may hold information the other Clans lack.”

“Sensitive information, Jimen-sama. Duly noted.”

There is little doubt that, taken together, the Great Clans dominate the political landscape of Rokugan. They have the numbers and resources to exert significant influence, and it often seems as if the only force that can stand in the way of a Great Clan is another Great Clan. There are winters when the Imperial Court feels like nothing so much as an arena in which the Great Clans strive against each other with the Emperor as an onlooker. But they are not the Empire’s only important political factions, nor is their power absolute. Otherwise, the Emperor would be nothing more than a pawn for the Great Clans to move about at their will, and the throne would hardly be worth the trouble of occupying it.





In fact, the Emperor has always had more counterweights at his disposal than just respect for his traditional authority and his claim to wield the mandate of Heaven. The Imperial Families, all descended from important followers of the original Hantei, have dedicated themselves to protecting the Emperor's person and interests at all costs. The Seppun are his bodyguards; the Miya are his heralds; and the Otomo continuously probe and poke at the Great Clans for signs that they can be turned against each other, weakening them so that the Emperor may remain strong. Taken together, the Imperial Families are the heart of the Imperial government; without them, the Emperor would have almost no practical power.

The Emperor's power to go outside of the Great Clan structure and directly ennoble those who have rendered exceptional service to the Empire also works in his favor. Such individuals may be given the right to form their own Minor Clans, so that they and their descendants may become (theoretically) permanent parts of the Rokugani nobility, with the tacit understanding that they owe their

position to the Emperor and the Emperor alone, not to a Great Clan. In fact, Minor Clans have been created to shield samurai whom the Emperor wished to protect from the Great Clans, as happened with the Dragonfly Clan.

Even ronin have played important parts in shaping the Empire's destiny, whether as individuals or in groups. The most important, of course, was Toturi's Army, which rallied around the disenfranchised Lion Champion Akodo Toturi and played an important role in the Clan War. At the very least, they are wild cards in Rokugan's political equation, and although they may never again enjoy the prominence they had during the Clan War, ronin have shown they can also balance — and even defeat — the aims of Great Clans.

Of course, all of these factions are far more fragile than the Great Clans because of their size. Ronin live their lives as if cast upon the waves, even when they band together for strength. As discussed below, not even the Emperor's favor can guarantee that a Minor Clan will survive the ages, and the history of the Empire is unfortunately dotted

with Minor Clans that were destroyed, never to recover. Even the Imperial Families face uncertain prospects while they wait for a new Emperor to take the throne.

Fealty and Freedom gives all of these smaller but nonetheless important parts of the Rokugani political landscape their due. Chapters 1-9 each describe an existing Minor Clan, detailing their history, customs, and outlook. Each of these chapters also provides new mechanics and advice on playing a character from that faction. Chapter 10 describes the Imperial Families and covers similar topics, and also speculates on their future now that the Toturi Dynasty has fallen. Finally, Chapter 11 discusses ronin and the roles they play in the Empire, for good and ill. It also provides a lengthy description of Nanashi Mura, the notorious City of Ronin.

Those Who Have Gone Before

Unlike the Great Clans, the Minor Clans and Imperial Families have all suffered truly catastrophic losses during the history of Rokugan. Many among their number have been lost, and while some of those groups have resurfaced or been reborn in some manner, others have not and are likely never to reappear.

Imperial Families

The disappearance of an Imperial Family is a fortunately rare event, and one that should rightfully be mourned by the entire Empire. Such a thing is not merely a loss for mankind, but for the entirety of existence; Imperial Families are sanctioned by the Celestial Heavens, and mourned by them as well.

THE HANTEI

The extinction of the Hantei Dynasty is one of the greatest shames that mankind has ever known or will ever know. The Hantei ruled for over a thousand years, each successive Emperor striving to earn the prestige afforded him by his ancestor's glorious name. There were stains upon the name, of course, most notably the infamous tyrant Hantei XVI, but for the most part these were quietly covered up by historians, preserving the honor and integrity of the Hantei name.

The doom of the Hantei line began when Hantei XXXVIII was assassinated by his closest friend and advisor, Scorpion Clan Champion Bayushi Shoji. Shoji attempt-

ed to kill the Emperor's heir as well, but he failed and was killed by Akodo Toturi for his blasphemies. Hantei XXXIX proved an ineffective leader who was slowly poisoned by his new wife, Shoji's widow Bayushi Kachiko. Later, during the Clan War, Hantei XXXIX became possessed by the spirit of Fu Leng and was ultimately killed during the Second Day of Thunder, ending the Hantei line.

The Hantei line was briefly revived when the spirit of Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum, returned to the mortal realm through the ancient artifact called Oblivion's Gate. He attempted to reassert his control over the Empire, but his spirit armies were eventually defeated and he surrendered to Emperor Toturi I on the condition that he would be allowed to train the Emperor's youngest son, who took the name Hantei Naseru. Years later, however, when Naseru took the throne, he abandoned the name and became Toturi III, ending the Hantei line once again.

THE TOTURI

History will surely remember the Toturi Dynasty as both glorious and tragic. The ronin Toturi, formerly Lion Clan Champion Akodo Toturi, took the throne as Toturi I following the death of Fu Leng at the Second Day of Thunder, and ruled for decades with wisdom and fairness rarely seen in the history of the Empire. His great failing, if he can be said to have one, is that he died without declaring an heir, and the Empire was promptly divided as his four children each sought to take the throne for wildly varying reasons. His eldest legitimate child and only daughter, Toturi Tsudao, eventually proclaimed herself Empress Toturi II, a claim that received support among many, but not all, of the Great Clans. Her reign lasted but a year and she perished in battle with the Shadowlands, as she claimed the life of the Dark Lord Daigotsu and saved the lives of her three brothers in the process.

After Tsudao's death, her youngest brother Naseru was proclaimed Emperor, and he retroactively recognized her reign as legitimate. He ruled from the throne for nearly a decade, but he too perished in the Shadowlands while on a quest for Enlightenment. Unlike his father, he left no heirs, and the subsequent deaths of his wife and two brothers effectively ended the Toturi family line forever. Some samurai still carry the name, granted to them as an honor by the Emperor, but without a blood connection to the previous Toturi Emperors it is unlikely that they will be able to make the name mean what it once did.



Minor Clans

The death of a clan, even a Minor Clan, is not something that most samurai wish to consider even in passing. When a clan is lost, it is often forgotten. To contemplate such a thing for too long is to dwell upon the mortality of one's own clan, and that is not something most samurai wish to do under any circumstances.

THE BOAR CLAN

The samurai who would found the Boar Clan were Crab trapped in a remote region of the Twilight Mountains by a massive landslide while investigating a potential mine site. They were assumed dead by their clan, but emerged years later bearing a truly prodigious amount of high quality ore, which they transported to the Imperial City and offered as a gift to the Emperor. They proclaimed this gift to be the taxes they owed the Emperor from their time in isolation. In recognition for their perseverance, the Emperor granted them the family name Heichi and proclaimed them the Boar Clan.

The Boar were a clan devoted to mining as their principle duty for the Emperor. The region of the Twilight Mountains they occupied was rife with rich veins of incredibly high-quality ore, and there was little the clan needed that they could not trade for easily. Their remote location, however, made them somewhat reclusive and unaccustomed to visitors. When they were visited by an eccentric Dragon weaponsmith named Agasha Ryuden, who wished to study their techniques, they welcomed him appropriately and went about their normal lives.

Unfortunately, Ryuden was either a contemporary of the infamous Asahina Yajinden, or possibly Yajinden himself in disguise (accounts differ in this regard). Ryuden sought out a particular vein of steel that had been created by the blood of the monstrous abomination from the dawn of time called the First Oni, and he used it to create an artifact of unspeakable dark power, the Anvil of Despair. The blood and souls of the Heichi Family became reagents in the Anvil's creation, and Ryuden drove them into extinction virtually single-handedly.

Since the Boar perished, there have been occasional ronin who claimed descent from the Heichi, most notably a rather well-known ronin shugenja during the Clan War, but now even their lines have died out. The Boar Clan is well and truly dead.

THE CENTIPEDE CLAN

The Centipede Clan was founded by an offshoot of the Isawa Family centuries ago. A minor Isawa governor died with no sons, leaving eleven daughters behind to assume his duties. Since he had failed to declare an heir, his daughters shared their duties equally. Because they were highly efficient in their duties, the daughters were allowed to continue this practice despite its extraordinary oddity. The Emerald Champion of that era, a Crane samurai-ko with a tendency to reward strong women, granted them governorship of a small valley, high in the mountains of the unaligned lands, that desperately needed effective leadership. It was there that the eldest among the sisters, Isawa Moshi, received a vision from Lady Sun and was granted her blessings. When this was verified by other shugenja, the Emperor appointed her as daimyo of the Moshi Family. She took the name Moshi Azami, and became the first daimyo of the Centipede Clan.

The Centipede Clan was the first and only completely matriarchal clan in Rokugan, and was widely viewed as an oddity. However, their isolation prevented their reputation from having much effect on them. They revered Lady Sun above all others, and they were known as particularly pious shugenja with great knowledge of theology. They were among the first clans to pledge their support to the Mantis Clan Daimyo Yoritomo when he united the Minor Clans during the Clan War, and with the authority of the Mantis behind them, they became much more prominent within the Empire.

The Centipede suffered considerable upheaval after the death of Lady Sun. Completely bereft of the old certainties that had justified their religious beliefs, they seemed entirely lost. Shortly before that time, however, their daimyo's daughter Wakiza married Yoritomo, and the Moshi Family ceased to be the Centipede Clan and became a family of the newly appointed Great Clan, the Mantis Clan. This absorption, and the support of their adaptable kinsmen among the Yoritomo, allowed the Moshi to overcome the crisis and move forward, leaving their identity as the Centipede behind them forever.

THE FALCON CLAN

The Falcon Clan was formed when a simple man inadvertently learned of the most dishonorable of all acts, an attempt on the Emperor's life. He was in a position to do something about it, and through his actions the attempt was thwarted before it ever began. As a reward for his valor, the Emperor bestowed upon this man the right to

found his own Minor Clan, although the lands assigned to him were among the most remote and underpopulated in the entire Empire. The Falcon Clan was born.

Very quickly, however, the Falcon learned why their lands had so few peasants: The region was plagued with spirits of all types, indicating that the barrier between the so-called Valley of Spirits and the spirit realms beyond was unusually porous. The Falcon began studying means to communicate with and combat these entities, and the Toritaka Family's spirit hunters became well-known for their unusual skill in handling ghosts and other spirit creatures.

Just before the Clan War, a maho-tsukai descended from the Snake Clan attempted to enact a powerful ritual that would have exploited the thin barriers near the Falcon lands and allowed a massive army of hungry spirits to emerge. The maho-tsukai intended to use them against the Phoenix Clan, but a group of Imperial magistrates managed to disrupt the ritual and prevent its completion. The ritual's limited success caused considerable death and destruction in the Falcon lands. Because the clan's lands bordered on the Crab's, the Crab considered this a potential security issue, and they annexed the clan, the family, and its lands as the Toritaka Family. The Toritaka continue to serve the Crab Clan to this day, and they often use the Falcon Clan mon as their family mon.

THE SNAKE CLAN

The Snake Clan is almost never spoken of in polite company, and they are remembered only in the foulest of curses and the most horrifically stern rebukes. The Snake were born of great intentions, formed by the Imperial magistrate Isawa Chuda as a reward for his great service to the Emperor in rooting out corruption. Sadly, Chuda married for love rather than character. His wife, a former Kuni of great intelligence and a tremendous asset in Chuda's quest to understand and destroy maho, succumbed to a moment of weakness and used dark sorcery to destroy an assassin who attempted to kill their son. Chuda, in his first and only failure to his lord, abandoned his family, clan, and duties rather than kill his wife, and joined a monastery in horror over what she had done.

Without Chuda's leadership, the family that bore his name fell into the use of maho in less than a generation, and became a terrible, corrupted force that spat poison into the lifeblood of the Empire. The family's leaders came under the sway of a shuten doji, a powerful spirit in service to the forces of evil, and grew more depraved

and corrupted with each passing day. What horrors they might have visited upon Rokugan had they continued unchecked are beyond imagining, but they never had the opportunity.

The Phoenix learned of the Snake Clan's corruption and, in a move most uncharacteristic of the pacifistic Clan, moved to destroy them utterly. In a battle known as the Five Nights of Shame, the Phoenix eradicated every living thing within the Snake lands. Only a single servant escaped, preserving the clan's terrible knowledge for posterity.

Today, a family of maho-tsukai calling themselves the Chuda family have appeared within the Shadowlands, and joined Daigotsu's new Spider Clan. A powerful shugenja named Chuda Mishime now rules this new Chuda Family. Isawa Chuda's true bloodline survives as well, however, in the ronin duelist and swordsmith Utagawa. The only other remnant of the Snake Clan is the ruins of Shiro Chuda, which sit abandoned on the vast Dragon Heart Plain, avoided by all intelligent beings and even lower animals, as they can sense the evil that still lingers there.

THE TANUKI CLAN

Documents recently discovered in a library in Toshi Ranbo indicate that there was, at some point in the Empire's history, a forgotten Minor Clan called the Tanuki Clan. The library in question was located in the basement of a building that had been destroyed and rebuilt countless times during the centuries of fighting over the city between the Lion and Crane Clans, and so the exact date of many events described in the scrolls recovered there is uncertain. Equally uncertain is what would compel an Emperor to name a clan after a mischievous spirit creature rather than the conventional system of naming them after animals native to the mortal realm, but the whims of the Imperial line cannot be questioned. Regardless, it appears that the Tanuki Clan did exist at one point, was destroyed, and was summarily forgotten by history.

The story of the Tanuki Clan is unique in that its progenitor apparently came from the ranks of a Minor Clan himself, namely the Badger Clan. His name has been forgotten, but the incomplete records discovered in Toshi Ranbo indicate that he was a yojimbo to an Emerald Magistrate. The magistrate and his retinue pursued a bandit lord into the Shinomen Mori, and the Badger samurai was lost in the vast depths of the forest, presumed dead by his master. One year later, to the very day, the Badger



emerged from the forest, perplexed and confused by what had happened. At first he did not seem to realize any time had passed, but over the next few weeks he began to remember vivid "dreams," many of which involved the spirits of animals that had spoken to him.

The incident was something of a sensation in the courts, as the Emperor of that time was a scholarly man fascinated with the spirit realms as well as the mysteries of the Shinomen Mori. The wayward Badger was honored with a summons to the Emperor's person, and asked to recount his experiences. After three days, the Emperor finally felt he had heard enough. He granted the samurai the right to found his own Minor Clan, and out of respect for the Emperor's interest as well as in homage to his own clan, the new daimyo named his clan the Tanuki.

The master of the Tanuki gathered followers to his banner. They were an odd lot, enigmatic and disenfranchised, obsessed with the spirit world and all manner of strange phenomena. Tasked by the Emperor to delve into the mysteries of the Shinomen Mori, the Tanuki Clan took to their task with great relish, forsaking even the traditional land allotment of a Minor Clan and choosing instead to dwell within the forest itself. For three generations, the Tanuki Clan plumbed the mysteries of the world's largest forest, sending periodic reports to the Emperor as instructed. Unfortunately for them, the Emperor who sanctioned their clan passed away a short time after their creation, and his successor found the Tanuki's existence ridiculous, and their reports even more so. He often read them aloud to amuse the Imperial Court, and all laughed at their peculiar theories and claims.

When the grandson of the Emperor who created the Tanuki Clan took the throne, he was eager to eliminate what he saw as a blemish on his grandfather's legacy. He ordered the Tanuki brought before him, but no trace of them could be found within the forest. The search took place over the course of a year, and not so much as a scrap of cloth or single footprint was ever discovered. After a year, the Emperor called off the search and ordered all records of the Tanuki Clan's existence struck from the records.

THE WASP CLAN

The origin of the Wasp Clan involves betrayal and revenge on a scale that one might normally expect to find only in a dramatist's hyperactive imagination. It began with the story of a Scorpion lord, a distant cousin of the

Scorpion Clan Champion, and his remote holding, Shiro no Uragiru. The Scorpion lord forsook his arranged marriage to a Unicorn in favor of his Lion lover, who bore him a son. The Lion were enraged by the affair, for the boy's mother had also abandoned her arranged marriage and duties to her native clan. The Scorpion, on the other hand, were angered that the castle's lord chose to keep his son in his own care and train him himself, rather than turning him over to the Bayushi to be trained as a weapon against the Lion. Neither clan could move against them without enormous public loss of face, however.

When the son, named Tsuruchi, was nineteen, the Scorpion insisted on meeting the man who would one day inherit control of Shiro no Uragiru, a vital component in the Scorpion's border security. The clan was not pleased with his nature, and it was decided that the entire family must die to preserve the Scorpion Clan's security. At the same time they spread rumors that Tsuruchi would make a claim for Lion territory based on his mother's bloodline, something the Matsu Family would never allow. Lion forces soon marched on the castle, even as Scorpion assassins killed Tsuruchi's parents. Tsuruchi himself, however, escaped and rallied the castle's guardsmen, who were loyal to him, against both the killers and the approaching Lion forces.

The battle was won at great cost. Realizing they could hold out for less than a month, Tsuruchi sued for peace, but the Lion had orders to take the castle at any cost. Tsuruchi escaped with only a handful of his men. Leaving them in hiding, he sought an audience with the Emerald Champion, a Crane, who heard his case and granted him special status as an Imperial Magistrate and the head of a new Minor Clan. The Emperor, who was known to favor the Crane and their advice, readily supported this appointment, and the Wasp Clan was born. Less than two years after the Lion took the castle, Tsuruchi and his men recaptured it. Tsuruchi slew the Lion commander with his own hand, although the man was his maternal uncle.

Tsuruchi and his clan readily joined forces with Yoritomo and the Mantis Clan during the Clan War, and the Wasp were the first among the other Minor Clans to swear allegiance to the Mantis when they were appointed a Great Clan. The Tsuruchi family continues to serve as the right hand of the Yoritomo Family.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM

THE
BADGER CLAN

Ichiro Domogu bowed low before the Emperor as the ceremony concluded. Less than two hours ago, he had defeated his rival in single combat to claim the mantle of the new Clan — the Badger, guardian of the northern wastes. The katana gleamed at his side, handed to him moments ago by Hantei himself. He looked at the gray and white Clan mon on the scabbard, and the enormity of his new task settled around him like a cloak.

At a gesture of the Emperor's hand, the courtroom emptied. The Son of Heaven wished to have a word with his newest daimyo alone. Only one figure remained, eyes hidden behind an elaborate black mask. Domogu didn't know the Scorpion's name, but he had learned through bitter experience not to trust those skulking troublemakers. His presence at the Emperor's side when the rest of the court retreated made the weight on Domogu's shoulders a little heavier.

"You fought well today," Hantei said conversationally. "I would have expected nothing less from a bushi of the Crab."

"How could I not do so when my Emperor was in attendance?" Domogu smiled inwardly at the mention of his former Clan. It would take him some time to get used to being an Ichiro and not a Hida.

"Indeed, and I am sure you and your new Clan will discharge your duties with equal dedication."

"The northern borders will remain secure, my Lord. So long as any of us draw breath."

"I have no doubt of that, Ichiro Domogu." The Emperor's tone shifted ever so slightly, taking on a darker aspect. "But guarding the border is not the true duty for which you have been selected."

"My Lord?" Domogu hesitated slightly at the surprising news.

"We must watch the Burning Sands to be sure, for none know what forces may emerge from those shifting dunes. But we have been untroubled from that region for nearly a century, and while I have no doubt the Badger bushi will remain vigilant, it is not a duty worthy of such a noble Clan."

For the first time, the Scorpion stepped forward, gazing implacably through his slatted mask at the new Badger Daimyo.

"Tell me, Domogu-san," his voice rumbled like distant thunder. "How much do you know about kami?"

History of the Badger

Founding of the Badger Clan: year 110

The foundation of the Badger Clan originates with the discovery of one of the most sacred sites in Rokugan. Ryoshun, the tenth and youngest child of Mother Sun and Father Moon, fell to earth in the spot where the Badger Clan holdings now stand. Like his brothers and sisters, he was consumed by Onnotangu, but unlike them, he did not survive long enough for Hantei to cut him free. While they fell to Earth and created a great empire as their legacy, his soul fell into the Realm of Waiting, while his mortal

remains touched down in the Empire's northwest corner.

Scorpion scouts soon discovered the site while probing at the newly formed Empire's borders. It hummed with mystical energy, pervading the landscape around it with a deep feeling of sadness. But power lay there too — the unfulfilled potential of what Ryoshun could have become had he not died in his father's stomach. Not only was the site sacred to the lost Kami's memory, but it could prove to be a devastating weapon if the oni of Fu Leng ever discovered it. The Scorpion brought their findings to the Emperor, who agreed with their conclusion. No one must know about this site, and it must be protected in absolute secrecy.

Naturally, the Scorpion volunteered for such duties themselves, but Ryoshun's tomb lay far from their lands and the Emperor was reluctant to trust them so completely. Instead, he commissioned the formation of a new Clan — the founder to be determined by a tournament of honor — whose ostensible purpose would be to guard the northern borders. Only the daimyo of this new clan and a few of his most trusted samurai would know their true purpose. To the rest, they would simply be watchmen, an unexceptional family serving mundane and boring duties.

The hills and mountains surrounding Ryoshun's tomb were quite harsh, and Hantei Genji knew the new Clan would need considerable strength. He thus designed the tournament as a wrestling match, a test of strength and

perseverance which would serve the new daimyo well in his station. Few competitors attended, but their eagerness for the task made up for their lack of numbers. In the end, it was a Crab, Hida Domogu, who emerged victorious. The Emperor graced him with the name Ichiro, and pronounced him the first daimyo of the Badger Clan.

As predicted, Domogu and his followers soon settled into their assignment with no one the wiser. The Emperor explained his true purpose and admonished him to share that knowledge only with those he trusted completely. Domogu commissioned the construction of the new Badger Clan fortress directly on top of the tomb, guarding the site personally. The sadness emanating from the tomb mingled with the Badger's Crab-like stoicism, and children born to the Clan became a uniformly quiet and reclusive lot. They tended to their own affairs, they fulfilled their duties with quiet competence, and they made it clear they wished nothing more from the other clans than to be left alone.

The tomb became the Badger's most closely guarded secret. In the thousand years following the formation of the Clan, no more than ten family members knew of it at any one time. Early members of the Badger soon forgot about Domogu's odd vigilance during the fortress's construction, and none outside of the daimyo's family had even the slightest inkling that they existed for any reason other than watching the Burning Sands.



Murder of Ichiro Akitomo: year 1118

Scandal and alarm surrounded the Badger Clan, bringing them unwelcome attention, when Champion Ichiro Akitomo was assassinated while visiting the Crane lands. The Crane were deeply humiliated by their failure to keep a respected guest safe. The Badger, for their part, were outraged that this could happen to their leader, and dismayed at becoming a focus of the Empire's attention. However, the identity of the killer was never determined, and remains a mystery to this day.

Hideo no Oni and the destruction of the Badger Clan: year 1126

They called it Hideo no Oni, a name stolen from the son of the Clan Champion. Who summoned it and for what ultimate purpose are still unknown. What is clear is that it wished to plunder the tomb which the Clan had kept secret for so long, and corrupt the magic that lay dormant there. Slaughtering every man, woman, and child it could find was just a bonus. The oni laid waste to a dozen villages in the span of a single day, gutting their residents like trout and setting their entrails sizzling amid the fires of their burning homes. The Badger did not call for help, for it simply did not occur to them to do so. Their Champion, Ichiro Kosho, summoned all of his most reliable bushi and set them against the monstrous beast. They were joined by a small handful of ise zumi from the Dragon lands and a few Shinseist monks.

The Badger refer to what happened next as the Battle of Sorrow's Road, and they do not speak of it to any outsiders. The oni marched from village to village, burning and slaughtering as it went. The Badger Clan forces set themselves against it again and again, only to be knocked aside like children's toys. They eventually settled into a campaign of constant harassment, repeatedly engaging the oni as it marched its bloody path, only to fade away as it retaliated. They could not prevent its indiscriminate butchery, but slowly their constant assault began to take a toll. The creature bled from a thousand wounds, its hide scarred by endless arrows. By the time it arrived at Kyuden Ichiro, Kosho was ready for it.

None can say for sure what transpired in that final battle, for all present were killed to a man. Kyuden Ichiro was razed to the ground, and not a living soul escaped the bloodshed. The Clan itself was all but wiped out, reduced to a few huddled bands of refugees and a handful of samurai to protect them. The lands around Kyuden Ichiro — already forbidding — were razed to the ground. Even the

crows would not risk lingering amid such desolation. But at the heart of the Clan's holdings, the great oni lay dead, the Badger Clan's shattered ancestral sword plunged into its heart with Kosho's dying breath. Beneath their corpses, Ryoshun's tomb lay undisturbed.

It took some time for their sacrifice to gain the Empire's attention. Distracted by the brewing Clan War and accustomed to ignoring the insular Badger, Rokugan learned about it only after a visit from Imperial Magistrate Kuni Osuki, who arrived at Kyuden Ichiro weeks after the final battle. He reported the incident back to Otsan Uchi, but with the Emperor in frail health and rumors of similar incidents running rampant, it was easy enough to forget.

The Badger rebuild: 12th Century

The Badger tried their best to rebuild from the disaster. Many of their bushi turned mercenary, hiring themselves out to the highest bidder to try to earn the funds to rebuild their lost home. Their peasants emigrated to Dragon or Unicorn lands, though a few gathered at the ruins of their former palace and tried to start again. They retained their status as a Minor Clan, but only through bureaucratic indifference, as their tragedy was dwarfed by the enormity of the Clan War. The Badger rarely spoke to outsiders about their plight... or about anything else, for that matter. They did what they always did: fulfilled their obligations, kept their heads down, and said as little as possible. A pair of bushi stood vigil over the tomb each night — scant protection, but all the Clan could afford — and in so doing, upheld their oath to the Hantei.

So it remained for over 30 years, a slow, agonizing period of struggle and hardship. Save for the occasional tattered Badger mon on a katana scabbard, there was nothing outside of the Clan's territory to confirm they even existed. It might have remained that way indefinitely had the Keeper of the Void not stumbled onto a remarkable secret. Researching the early Emperors' relationship with the Kami, Asahina Hira found a long-forgotten scroll detailing the Badger Clan's true purpose. A lengthy journey to Kyuden Ichiro confirmed the existence of Ryoshun's tomb and revealed the Badger's duty to the Empire. Word quickly spread throughout the Great Clans and aid began pouring into the Badger Daimyo's coffers. Rebuilding the clan remains a slow process — the Badger lands were always quite barren and the damage was considerable — but now, after a thousand years, the Clan finally has the respect it was earning all along.

Customs of the Badger

The recent shift in the Badger Clan's fortunes has done little to alter its reclusive ways. Indeed, most Badger bushi treat their newfound popularity with a mixture of bewilderment and distrust. Self-sufficiency has always been the Clan's watchword and they see no reason to change it now. Their code has been drummed into them from an early age, subtly influenced by the energies from Ryos-hun's tomb: Trust none but your own. Say little and reveal less. Be true to your word, for honorable men are not questioned. Look to your duty and let others look to theirs.

As mercenaries, this makes the Badger almost ideal. They do not care for whom they fight, nor are they troubled by upholding a questionable cause. They adhere to Bushido by following the orders given by whoever is paying them, for as mercenaries, their paymaster is their rightful lord of the moment. The money they earn goes back to their daimyo to help restore their lands to some semblance of livability, so they work for whoever will pay them the most. They do not see this as dishonorable, for not only does it benefit their Clan, but it helps them to continue fulfilling their duty to the Emperor — a duty even they were not aware of until Asahina Hira's revelation.

The Badger do not intermingle readily with other Clans, and remain curt and standoffish in the company of others. This can cause friction in the mixed units in which they often serve. They make up for it with their tenacity, their attention to their orders, and their impressive strength and stamina. Most employers need look no further than that, and instruct their officers to smooth over any feathers a Badger samurai may ruffle.

On those few occasions when a Badger is surrounded by members of his own Clan, his attitude undergoes a remarkable shift. He seems to relax, as if an invisible weight has been lifted from his shoulders, and he speaks with a ready ease that he would never reveal to an outsider. Because there are so few of them left, members of the Badger Clan cherish their rites and traditions, and use any gatherings as an excuse to express them. They will sing songs and tell tales of their champions, or explore moments of their history which Asahina Hira's revelation

now casts in a much different light. The Battle of Sorrow's Road is a particular favorite, and every Badger samurai can state with unfailing accuracy where his grandparents or great-grandparents were during that terrible time. Tea ceremonies and similar acts of civility are conducted as well — one of the few times the Badger will indulge in such artistic formality. In so doing, they seek to preserve their heritage through these dark years and restore it once their clan has fully rebuilt their homeland.

The Badger are noted for their enthusiasm for sumai wrestling, at which they excel far and away beyond any other Minor Clan. Man for man, only the Crab can match their love of wrestling in general, and sumai in particular. Young Badger samurai who show talent for wrestling may be sent to train with the Hiruma Family, who teach wrestling as a combat form, or even to the Stone Tower Dojo in Toshi Ranbo, where the Crab train their elite competitive wrestlers. For a Badger this is an opportunity of a lifetime, a chance to escape hard circumstances and better themselves, while representing and honoring their clan at the same time.

Historically, the other clans have dismissed the Badger as rude, boorish, stubborn, and uncouth. Since Asahina Hira's announcement, however, those terms have subtly shifted. Many Rokugani now prefer to use words like enduring, tenacious, plainspoken, and honest. The Crab hold the Badger in particularly high esteem, using the term "little brother" (a high honor among the Hida Family) to describe Badger samurai and quietly reminding others where the Minor Clan originally came from. For their part, the Badger do not concern themselves with other people's opinions. It never altered their mission before; why should anything change now?

Lands of the Badger Clan

The Badger Clan lands are as forbidding and inhospitable as any in Rokugan. Komichi no Kanashimi road winds through their territory toward the border, dotted with a few hardy farms and villages but otherwise abandoned. To the south and west lie the endless plains of the Unicorn Clan. To the east are the hostile peaks of the Dragon, while the alien wastes of the Burning Sands lie to the north. Between them sits an isolated wedge of valleys,

passes, and scrub grass. There is little room for farmland in Badger territory, just a few miserable clusters growing vegetables in some of the lower valleys. Many Badger peasants also herd goats, which thrive in the harsh environs and provide them with a number of precious necessities. The Badger borrowed a number of habits from the Unicorn to the west, and not only consume goat meat, but also fashion saddles and other tools out of the hide. Like the Unicorn, they don't consider this barbarous, merely a necessity for surviving.

Before the coming of Hideo no Oni, the Badger Clan villages were clustered in bunches amid the winding pathways between mountains. Individual townships would be visible from across the valleys below, and each village would light lanterns each night as a means of signaling the others. Originally, this was intended to spread messages quickly from the northern border, allowing Roku-gan to be alerted if invaders approached from the Burning Sands. As the centuries passed, that purpose fell by the wayside, but the tradition remained and every village in the Badger lands was always within eyesight of at least one outpost or watchtower.

The system collapsed amid the carnage of the Battle of Sorrow's Road. Almost all of the clan's villages were destroyed by the oni, and the Badger possess neither the resources to rebuild them nor the population to inhabit them. The surviving peasants now live within a stone's throw of Kyuden Ichiro. They work either at rebuilding their ancestral homestead or supporting those who do. The outlying territories have been left to a few lone families and the occasional patrol from the central fortress, fulfilling their duty of guarding the northern border as best they can.

A series of outposts line the passes on the edge of the Burning Sands, designed to keep lookout for interlopers arriving across the desert. Originally, each outpost was large enough to hold a full company of troops. Their positions high above the surrounding landscape afforded them an excellent view, and the clear desert air to the north allowed them to spot the tiniest figures from some distance away. Signal towers led back to the northernmost villages, and from there to Kyuden Ichiro, providing clear lines of communication in the event of attack.

Though the Clan made efforts to maintain these structures, time and boredom took their toll. After the attack of Hideo no Oni, there were not enough samurai left to man the outposts, and they stood empty for nearly twenty years. The recent infusion of money from other Clans has

allowed the Badger to repair the worst of the damage, but they still lack the samurai to properly man these watch stations. Small groups of four or five soldiers stand watch in forts designed to hold a hundred or more. Many of them are well past retirement age, and most of the rest are mere boys barely past their gempukku.

The only other inhabitants of the Badger lands are monks from the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Those seeking quiet and solitude are often drawn to the area and can be found meditating amid the ruined villages or keeping watch in mountain caves. The locals are content to ignore them, as they do all outsiders, and the monks know better than to solicit the poverty-stricken Badger for alms.

Aside from these monks, the odd patrol, and the few peasant families hardy enough to eke out a living on their own, the bulk of the Badger lands lie abandoned.

Kyuden Ichiro

Ninety percent of the remaining Badger Clan has gathered in and around Kyuden Ichiro, and now works tirelessly to complete its reconstruction. It stands half-built at the foot of a mountain meadow, surrounded by a scattering of peasant huts, craftsmen's shops, and tents donated by the Unicorn Clan. The fortress itself is already inhabited, although it will not be finished for several years. Its rough stone walls fit the temperament of the clan which dwells within, and necessity has stripped it of even the most modest artistic flourishes. The walls came first, followed by the defensible barriers on the perimeter. Everything else is addressed according to necessity as funds come in. The current Clan Champion, Ichiro Kihongo, lives in a few sparse rooms on the ground floor, along with his grandson. The remainder of the completed portion contains half-populated guards' quarters, kitchen and sleeping rooms for the servants, and a stripped-down meeting hall for those few occasions when the daimyo must entertain visitors.

Hidden beneath the daimyo's chambers is a secret passage known only to himself and his daughter. It leads into the heart of the nearby mountainside, where a large crater sits in the center of a hollowed-out cave. Here, Ryoshun's mortal remains fell to earth while his spirit passed on to the Realm of Waiting. The mountainside partially collapsed behind him, sealing the tomb from sight, and the bones have long since merged with the surrounding rock. But the essence still remains here, emanating its song of sadness and loss to all who can sense it. Kihongo comes down here to meditate sometimes, but allows no others to learn the exact route to reach it. When the time is right, he will tell

his grandson Ryozan; no one else must know. The Empire may understand what the Badger are guarding here, but Kihongo will die before he lets anyone learn where.

Kibukito

On the far southern border of the Badger lands sits a Unicorn village known as Kibukito. It is the Badger Clan's primary link to the outside world. Once a month, Kihongo dispatches representatives to the village to procure supplies and speak with diplomats from the Imperial Court. They have grown more numerous of late, since the Great Clans began contributing to the rebuilding effort... and the threat of banditry rises accordingly. The village itself is an unremarkable trading post, featuring a number of blacksmith's shops and a pair of serviceable inns for the odd visiting dignitary. Badger mercenaries returning to their lands can be found in large numbers here, and often bolster the guards ferrying precious supplies back to their homeland.

A pair of Imperial dignitaries are stationed here full-time to maintain a liaison with the Clan. The post was once considered a professional exile and even now, with the Badger's fortunes in ascension, it remains more punishment than gift. Contacting the Badger directly is a tedious and extremely difficult prospect. From Kibukito, only a single path leads up into their territory, winding through the mountains and requiring a careful hike to navigate successfully. It is approximately one week's journey to Kyuden Ichiro, though the distance is less than a day as the crow flies. Most diplomats prefer to wait in the village for the Badger's monthly visits and convey any news or orders then. In extreme emergencies, Kihongo will send a messenger out as quickly as possible, with the understanding that he need travel no further south than Kibukito to deliver it.

At the edge of the village sits a shrine to all those who have been banished from the Empire. Badger samurai always leave offerings here during their monthly visits, praying for those who have passed beyond their watchful eyes into the great wastes of the unknown north.

The City of the Rich Frog

The only other Badger holding of note stands in the City of the Rich Frog. The Kaeru Daimyo allowed the clan to establish a small dojo there, serving as a way station for Badger mercenaries returning to their homeland with funds. True to the clan itself, it is a simple and unadorned

affair, known as the Fallen Mountain Dojo. It teaches the blunt, straightforward martial arts techniques favored by the Badger Clan. Though crude by the standards of many schools, the Ichiro School retains a certain harsh cunning which more rough-hewn samurai appreciate.

Beyond direct combat techniques, the school also teaches survival tactics, instructing its students on how to stay warm in the wilderness, locate potable water, and identify edible plants and fungi. At this time, there is only one full sensei, Ichiro Tashimi, who knows all of the secrets of the Clan's techniques. Unless he can find an heir of similar knowledge to replace him, the Ichiro School may yet wither.

In addition, the Fallen Mountain Dojo has begun to serve as a *de facto* embassy for the Clan. Diplomats who do not wish to make the long trek to Kibukito village will seek out Badger samurai here, asking them to deliver messages to their daimyo in the north. At first, the Badger treated these requests with barely concealed hostility — how dare these southerners intrude upon their sanctuary in such a way? — but the daimyo has begun to see the wisdom in leaving the school open to diplomatic entreaties. A member of the Ichiro Family is always posted here, authorized to negotiate on the clan's behalf with any outsiders who wish it.

Heroes of the Badger

ICHIRO KIHONGO, BADGER CLAN CHAMPION

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 4
Strength 4				
Honor: 3.3		Status: 7.5		Glory: 5.9

SCHOOL/RANK: Ichiro Bushi 4

ADVANTAGES: Bishamon's Blessing, Clear Thinker

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Calligraphy (Badger Clan Cipher) 3, Courtier 4, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Games 2, Investigation 2, Jiu-jitsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Lore: History 5, Spears 2, Tea Ceremony 2

Kihongo never dreamed that he would have to lead the Badger Clan. Indeed, as a young man the notion was quite absurd. He was a distant cousin of the reigning daimyo, and there were dozens of other names in front of his in



the line of succession. He was content to play the part of a minor noble from a minor clan, watching over the tiny mountain village which was his domain, leading the occasional patrol, and generally contenting himself with a simple and unblemished life.

The coming of Oni no Hideo changed all of that. He was on the outskirts of the Burning Sands when it happened, attempting to rescue a recent exile from Rokugan who had become lost in the shifting dunes. He and his patrol saved the man only to return to smoking houses and scattered corpses. The Battle of Sorrow's Road had long since passed and the oni now lay dead with the daimyo's sword in its chest. Every other member of the Ichiro Family's ruling line had been slaughtered beneath its claws.

For a time, Kihongo did not allow himself to contemplate the position he had inherited. There was work to be done and no one else to do it. The surviving members of the clan needed to rally, the dead needed to be cremated, and the Clan needed to get on with the seemingly impossible task of rebuilding. It was weeks before he realized

that he and his young daughter were the only members of the noble family left, and months after that before he permitted anyone to refer to him as Clan Champion.

As befits a Badger, he contemplated his options with dour pragmatism. The clan was all but extinct. The survivors lacked the basic necessities of food and shelter. They needed money. Kihongo gathered his remaining bushi to him and ordered them south to Rokugan, where they would work as mercenaries. Every samurai he had would be utilized for this effort. Every bushi who remained in the Badger lands meant less money for the Clan's rebuilding effort. Kihongo reached an arrangement with the few Brotherhood Monks within his lands to watch the borders and kept a squad of ten bushi to guard the clan's surviving peasants. The rest went south. With the Clan War in full swing, they found work readily, but their modest numbers meant that accumulating funds was slow going at best, and the rebuilding effort went forward at an agonizing crawl.

Kihongo gave no thought to himself during those lean

years. "Not one more death" was his motto, and though things were bad during that first cruel winter, he and his clan fulfilled that oath. They hunted rats in the ruins and stripped the mountainsides bare of edible plants. They looked to the care of their young first, often going without meals for days so their children could eat. It was a harsh and unrelenting time, but it forged in them a newfound strength. Their clan survived and grew stronger; to a man, they credited Kihongo with making it happen.

Thirty years later, he continues to embody the quiet perseverance the Badger Clan values above all else. He has not left the Badger lands in all that time, watching over his people like a protective father and seeking to lead by example. He is now an old man, with a stooped gait and a balding head, his bare scalp surrounded by a fringe of hair as white as the snows of his homeland. But his clear gray eyes belie the cane in his hand, and his movements are strong and precise. He has recently taken up smoking a pipe again — a habit he much enjoyed in his youth, but which he abandoned as frivolous while the clan was rebuilding. With Badger fortunes rebounding, he now sets aside one half-hour every day to sit in front of the palace, smoke his pipe, and watch the sun descend below the mountains. The bushi and peasants of the castle take care to see he is never disturbed during these moments. In their minds, he has more than earned it.

ICHIRO RINKO, BADGER CLAN REPRESENTATIVE TO THE EMPEROR

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

Honor: 3.3	Status: 3.5	Glory: 3.0
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SCHOOL/RANK: Ichiro Bushi 3

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Precise Memory

DISADVANTAGES: Small

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Calligraphy (Badger Clan Cipher) 3, Courtier 4, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Games 1, Investigation 1, Jiu-jitsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Lore: History 2, Spears 2, Tea Ceremony 1

The Badger Champion's daughter was thrust into her current position at a very early age. She was only fourteen when her father sent her south to Otosan Uchi, in order to refute a monstrous lie that had been perpetrated for years. The Imperial Magistrate who discovered the clan's destruction, Kuni Osuki, had claimed that he and his men destroyed the rampaging oni. With the Clan War raging and the Badger all but extinct, his lies went unchallenged.

When word finally reached Kihongo, he was livid, but he did not have the resources to send a delegation to the Imperial City to refute them. Instead, he sent Rinko, his only daughter, along with a nursemaid who had raised the girl from birth.

Their journey was long and perilous, but they eventually arrived at the capital unharmed. The Imperial Court scoffed at the appearance of this disheveled girl claiming to represent an extinct clan and challenging the honor of an Imperial Magistrate. Osuki's reputation had soared following his claim that he had destroyed the demon, and this had helped his family erase some of the taint of their association with the mad Kuni Mokuna. Rinko persisted, however, answering every veiled insult with calm certainty and dogging Osuki at every step. Though many saw her as a nuisance and a pest, she had the right by birth to attend the Imperial Court, and challenging a slip of a girl to a duel of honor was out of the question.

In the end, it was one of Osuki's men, shamed by Rinko's steady accusations, who recanted to the Emperor. The oni was dead when they arrived, he said — killed by the Badger Clan champion, not Osuki. Rinko was vindicated and her clan's honor restored; while Osuki was forced to commit seppuku to spare his family's already tattered honor. Like much of the Badger's history, the incident was lost amid much larger events. But it meant everything to the clan, and helped them to move forward with a newfound sense of purpose.

Rinko remained in court afterward, serving as the Badger Clan's official representative to the Emperor. She gained little more than grudging tolerance from her peers, who referred to her as "the little burrower" behind her back. She never appeared at parties and her list of true allies could be counted on one hand, but the incident with Osuki gave her enough legitimacy to prevent her being ignored outright. She responded the way one might expect — quietly asserting her clan's position in debates, refusing to budge from her convictions, and making sure her people were never completely forgotten.

It was a lonely and unrewarding life, as she slowly grew to womanhood and then to middle age. She fulfilled her duties as best she could, content to be ignored by most of the court and make whatever points the prevailing political winds allowed. In many ways, she resembled the bushi of her clan: moving through a strange land with no one to trust, sustained only by the knowledge that the people back home were counting on her.

She endured partly through sheer stubbornness, as well

as by slowly learning innovative ways to play the political game. She made friends — mostly outside of court, but possessing knowledge not easily obtained through normal channels: washer-women, serving maids, cooks, and tailors were regular guests in her humble quarters. She did not act like a noblewoman and they eventually stopped treating her as one, confiding and gossiping with her as they would a peer. Occasionally, they revealed something of interest, and Rinko knew how to leverage such small tidbits to her advantage.

With the redemption of the Badger, Rinko's stock rose in the courts. She found herself invited to households who never would have touched her before, and gained access to organs of the Imperial government that once treated her as little more than a peasant. She has parlayed this into increased funding for the Badger, as well as food, building supplies, and manpower. Her biggest challenge now is finding a way to deliver those resources to her father, as the way home remains treacherous and few caravan routes extend that far north. She is hoping to strike an alliance with the Great Clans to provide suitable protection for the goods and services the Badger need.

Even in her youth Rinko was never a tall or particularly attractive woman. Her stocky body stands on bandy legs, and though youth gave her some measure of grace, it has slowly vanished with the passing years. She has an understanding of fashion and can dress decently enough for the court, but to more sophisticated eyes she always looks like a peasant girl playing at being a noble. Her eyes are sharp, however, and her mind is even sharper. She has developed a knack for lulling opponents into a false sense of security, then striking when they least expect.

At the same time, she is aware of the toll this has exacted on her, and reflects on how much more closely she now resembles the painted courtiers of the capital than her kith and kin at home. For this reason, she sent her son home at an early age to live with his grandfather. Ryozan is the future of the Badger Clan. He will inherit the mantle of Champion when Kihongo dies, and Rinko wants him to grow up among his people, not stifled in the wasp's nest of court.

ICHIRO NORIAKI, BADGER MERCENARY

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes: 3		Agility: 3	Strength: 4	
Honor: 2.3		Status: 2.0		Glory: 2.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Ichiro Bushi 2

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 1, Hunting 2, Investigation 1, Jujitsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Medicine 2, Spears 2

There is little to distinguish Ichiro Noriaki from any of the hundreds of ronin who ply their trade along the borders of the Great Clans. Like all Badger he is short and swarthy, with great hairy arms from which all manner of weapons seem to dangle. His craggy face looks far older than his 32 years and the cold glint in his eyes speaks to the harsh things he has seen and done. He speaks so rarely that other ronin sometimes assume he is mute, which lends power and authority to the few times he chooses to open his mouth. He never remains in one spot for long, and rarely works for a given employer longer than a single battle. The moment his contract is fulfilled, he moves on to the next hot spot, bringing with him nothing more than he can carry on his back. He travels only in the company of other Badger mercenaries, and even then in groups no larger than four or five. Everything about him says, "go away;" and while he performs his duties effectively, he takes care never to stand out, so that even regular employers would be hard-pressed to remember his name.

All of this is at least in part by design. Noriaki serves a vital role among the Badger mercenaries: maintaining contact between them and their clan to the north. He acts as a messenger, mail carrier, and advisor to other members of his clan. He moves around so often because that is the best way he can reach individual bushi, scattered throughout the Empire on dozens of mercenary campaigns. They can give him money they have earned, letters to their families back home, pertinent intelligence on the other clans, and information on possible work. And he can be trusted to reliably return it all to the Badger lands. Noriaki makes regular stops at the Fallen Mountain Dojo in the City of the Rich Frog, and journeys to Kibukito Village at least once a year to pass on his "cargo." Woe to any bandit who tries to take anything from him.

He fell into these duties informally after spending time with a pair of older Badger samurai charged with the same task. When they were killed, he didn't ask for orders; he just gathered up the letters and coin purses from their bodies and continued on his way. In his mind, there was nothing more vital to the survival and prosperity of his clan. What would formal permission do besides waste time?

Lately, Noriaki has embarked on a new mission, given to him by Fallen Mountain sensei Ichiro Tashimi. The old master is dying and no one stands ready to take his place at the school. Noriaki is keeping his eyes peeled for a Badger samurai possessing the requisite knowledge. It is a difficult task. With the Badger spread across the Empire fighting in dozens of different campaigns, the chances of finding a properly qualified sensei are remote. But Noriaki is the best prepared of all Badger samurai to handle such duties. He has taken to quietly questioning bushi from other clans to see if they can point him to another Badger who can lead the next generation at the dojo.

Playing a Badger

The Badger Clan occupy a strange place in Rokugani culture, at once divorced from it and yet inextricably bound to it. Their duties to the Emperor govern them in all things, and they obey him as any loyal subject would. Yet their lands are so remote and so few other Rokugani ever visit them that the Badger think of themselves as an autonomous people. That fundamental worldview speaks volumes about how Badger characters behave.

Like the Crab, the Badger have little regard for social niceties. Life is difficult in their barren territories — especially after the attack of Oni no Hideo — and one rarely considers questions of etiquette while hunting down rats



for food. Badger Clan samurai bristle at suggestions they should behave otherwise, and often mock the speaker for his twisted sense of priorities. Beyond that, the snickers and insults from other clans usually roll off their backs. They simply have more important things on their mind.

With isolation comes self-sufficiency, and the Badger have learned never to ask for favors from anyone. This is not the same as hate or disdain. For all their gruffness, the Badger don't think ill of the other clans; it simply doesn't occur to them that anyone else may be in a position to help them. No one came during the Battle of Sorrow's Road. No one came during the hundreds of years when they stood watch over the northern borders. It would be folly to assume things would suddenly change. Accordingly, they never even think to ask anyone else for aid or advice... and by extension, they tend to refrain from talking to outsiders at all.

They regard the rest of Rokugan as distant cousins: worthy of respect, to be sure, but different from true family. This did not change when their samurai went south to work as blades for hire. A combination of their own standoffishness and Rokugan's overall xenophobia made them the loners in the proverbial crowded room. They found closest affinity with the Crab, distant relatives whose pragmatism speaks to them on a very deep level, and the Unicorn, who share their status as foreigners in their own home. The rest are either ignored or dealt with in the most expedient manner possible. They can work with other samurai — and indeed are often very effective in that work — but camaraderie is asking a bit much.

The Badger dislike drawing attention to themselves, which fits in well with their concept of Bushido. They uphold all commitments, not only because honor dictates they do so, but also because reneging on an agreement brings unwanted scrutiny and permits other Rokugani to intrude into their lives. "Do your job, keep your mouth shut, stand by your word, and offer absolutely nothing more." This mantra has served the Badger well for hundreds of years, and they see no reason to stop now.

Strength and resiliency mark every member of the Clan. They are skilled in survival tactics and can stay alive for weeks in the wilderness without food or shelter. Their physical strength is remarkable as well. The average Badger can lift as much as any Crab and carry it for a greater length of time to boot. This physical endurance matches well with the Badger Clan's natural stoicism.

They never complain, not even in the most trying conditions. They make do with whatever they have and never take more than they need. Excessive equipment is viewed as a source of shame to the Badger — an indulgence that drains needed resources for selfish ends.

Only among their fellow Badger do they let down their guard, and allow themselves to speak in a relaxed manner. Even then, barring the odd song or story, they talk with each other only slightly more often than they would with anyone else. The difference comes in the ease with which they move among their countrymen, the tension that leaves their faces, and the familiarity with which they address each other. Like siblings who have known each other for so long that their every action becomes second nature, they simply *know* other Badger are to be trusted. This is the case regardless of whether they have ever met the other Badger in question, and clan samurai who have not laid eyes on each other in years will silently slip into comfortable rhythms immediately when they get together. Canny employers recognize this and try to place Badger mercenaries in the same unit whenever they can.

New Mechanics

New Path: Badger Mercenary (Bushì)

For the Badger, selling themselves as soldiers for hire has become an unfortunate necessity, something that must be done for the good of the clan. Fortunately, the Ichiro are determined to survive and committed to a better future, so the shame of fighting in return for pay is something they can shrug off with little effort. The experience Badger mercenaries acquire teaches them flexibility and quick thinking in any kind of combat situation. In this respect, the future strength of the Clan may rest on the expertise gained by those who now sell themselves to other lords.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

REQUIREMENTS: Battle 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Ichiro Bushi School 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Ichiro Bushi School 3



Technique: Read the Battle

Fighting under a variety of commanders in various armies has given you an unusually broad perspective on combat. Raw experience has taught you to think more flexibly in a fight, and exposure to various fighting styles makes it easier for you to anticipate your opponents' moves. You receive a bonus to the total of your Initiative Rolls equal to your Perception + your Insight Rank.

Also, when participating in Mass Combat, you receive a Free Raise on your Determination Roll to see how your character is faring. Once per Mass Battle, you may re-roll your result on the Mass Battle Table.

New Path: Badger Sumai (Bushi)

Historically speaking, Badger samurai have had a fondness for wrestling rivaled only by the Crab Clan. Now that the Badger Clan has had to find unconventional ways to support itself while it rebuilds, it is even more common that it used to be to find Ichiro bushi going abroad to seek fame and fortune as competitive sumai wrestlers.

Note: This path supplements, but does not replace, the Minor Clan Sumai Master Path described in *Art of the Duel*, p. 154. A Badger character may take either, or both.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

REQUIREMENTS: Jiujitsu 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Ichiro Bushi
School 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Ichiro Bushi
School 3

Technique: The Badger Snaps

The Badger Clan's historical affinity with the Crab and your own demonstrated talent for wrestling has gained you a precious opportunity to study at

the Stone Tower Dojo, the Crab Clan's elite sumai training hall in Toshi Ranbo (see *Art of the Duel*, pp. 22-3). Here, you learn Hiruma wrestling techniques that can be used in combat and receive the expertise of Crab sumai masters.

You gain a bonus to the total of your Jiujitsu Skill Rolls equal to your Intelligence or Void, whichever is higher, unless you are using Jiujitsu (Sumai), in which case your bonus is twice your Intelligence or twice your Void, whichever is lower.

Also, whenever you spend a Void Point to gain a Free Raise while attempting to initiate a grapple, you receive 2 Free Raises for each Void Point spent, not 1.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM



THE BAT CLAN

History of the Bat Clan

Discovery of the Isles of Spice and Silk: year 79

Kaimetsu-uo, son of Osano-Wo and his Matsu wife, travels across the seas to the Isles of Spice and Silk to find his destiny. Though the land is rich and full of potential, Kaimetsu-uo and his followers are unprepared for the dangers that stalk the islands. They cannot figure out how to manage a life on the islands, and they begin to die one by one to disease and predators.

However, Kaimetsu-uo meets a race of bat spirits called the koumori. As he approaches their home, one stops in front of him and assumes the shape of a man. Kaimetsu-uo spends time with these noble creatures and learns they are kind souls. The koumori agree to teach him and his students how to survive on the islands if, in return, they pledge to always remain allies of the koumori. Kaimetsu-uo agrees. To prove his loyalty, he hunts down a deadly predator that has killed many koumori.

Kaimetsu-uo and his followers begin to thrive on their islands with the help of the koumori. His followers call themselves the Mantis, though they are not yet officially recognized as a clan by the Emperor. The koumori are pleased with the agreement, and remain in the shadows,

guarding their human allies while remaining unseen. Their existence eventually fades into legend and myth, and few remember them as more than tales told to the young.

Birth of Yoritomo Komori: year 1093

A curious young koumori ventures out to the Mantis cities, taking the form of a human. There he meets a woman who inspires in him affection, adventure, and creation. They fall in love and marry, and their child is told the truth behind his parents' lineage once he is old enough to understand. The boy is enamored by his father's heritage and chooses to inherit that power. As a half-spirit, he is able to call upon many of the koumori's powers. When he passes his gempukku, the boy names himself Komori in honor of his father.

The Clan Wars: year 1120

Komori becomes a shugenja of the Mantis Clan during one of the most difficult eras of the Empire's history. The Clan War provides many opportunities to show one's mettle. Komori proves himself over and over as a resourceful and powerful shugenja. He continues to research ancestral magic that comes from his koumori blood.

The Battle of Kyuden Gotei: year 1132

During the War Against the Darkness, Komori remains at

Kyuden Gotei as part of its defense while the Mantis armies travel across Rokugan. He is one of the senior leaders present when the creatures of the Lying Darkness make their move. The Goju attack the castle, confident that the defenses will fold under the surprise assault. But Komori is ready for them.

Using the koumori magic he has learned, he summons an army of ancestors to defend the palace. The creatures of the Darkness are promptly destroyed and Komori's reputation grows even further.

Komori learns that his half-spirit nature has prolonged his life span. While his colleagues of the Clan Wars are getting older, he feels as young as ever. Those around him do not notice, as his face grows outwardly lined by the years.



The Birth of Yoritomo's Heir: year 1133

Komori marches alongside his lord Yoritomo to the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, and witnesses the great man's death. After the battle is won, Komori helps Yoritomo Wakiza, Yoritomo's wife, give birth in the middle of the Shadowlands. The baby girl is healthy but gains the Shadowlands Taint. Aramasu, Kamoto, and Komori immediately realize the implications of this birth: the rightful heir to the Mantis Clan has the Shadowlands Taint. Rather than kill her immediately, Komori decides to send her to a monastery for the rest of her life.

The Return of Yoritomo Kumiko: year 1159

When Yoritomo Kitao takes over the Mantis Clan after the death of Yoritomo Aramasu, Komori and Kamoto decide her treacherous ways make her unfit to lead their clan, now recognized as a Great Clan by the new Emperor. They travel back to the secret monastery and retrieve Yoritomo's heir. The young lady, Yoritomo Kumiko, has been trained in both spiritual purity and samurai ways by the monks of the monastery, and is ready and waiting for the opportunity to prove herself. Komori is fiercely loyal to Yoritomo's heir and becomes one of her strongest advisors.

The Birth of the Bat Clan: year 1165

Emperor Toturi III summons Yoritomo Komori to the Imperial City. The Emperor knows of Komori's abilities and asks him to render services which only he is capable, due to his koumori ancestry. Komori summons the ancestral spirit of Toturi Tsudao from Yomi and anchors her to Ningen-do long enough for her brother to hold a conversation with her. Toturi III is extremely pleased with Komori's services and names him as the daimyo of the newly formed Bat Clan. He also recognizes the name Komori as the family name of the new Minor Clan.

Komori settles on one of the lesser islands of the Islands of Spice and Silk as the official Bat Clan lands. While it is small and mostly jungle, the new home of the Bat Clan is also home to one of the largest remaining groups of koumori in Ningen-do. Komori makes contact and begins to create ties with the elusive spirits.

The Ancestral Weapon of the Bat Clan: year 1167

Shugenja Moshi Iongi encounters the Tetsubo of Thunder, a weapon infused with the powers of the Thunder Dragon, in the course of his duties aboard Yoritomo Rui's ship. As the weapon can bring great misfortune to its bearer, Rui decides she does not want to take the risk of holding it. She gives the Tetsubo of Thunder to Iongi to get rid of it.

Komori, with the blessings of the Mantis Daimyo, visits Iongi personally to recruit him for the Bat Clan. Iongi accepts the honor and joins the new Minor Clan. Along with him comes the Tetsubo of Thunder. Komori and Iongi spend many days analyzing its powers and nature, and after some deliberation they decide to use it, proclaiming it as the Ancestral Weapon of the Bat Clan.

Customs of the Bat

The Bat Clan is both new and very small. These factors color every facet of the clan, from customs to lands to the schools that are available to its samurai. The Bat Clan does not even number 100 samurai, and their home, Kyuden Komori, is not yet finished. The clan has few strong customs as yet, but nonetheless the people of the Bat share a core identity.

The Bat Clan lives on an island that is separate from both the mainland and the larger archipelago of the Islands of Silk and Spice. Many predators still live in the jungles, so samurai and peasant alike must remain vigilant to survive. This has fostered a sense of camaraderie between all who live on the island, transcending caste and rank. The people of the Bat lands are quite friendly toward each other and in many ways blur the lines which sharply divide heimin and samurai in most other lands. This unusual fact is not widely known outside of their island, nor is it advertised, as it could become another point of derision directed at a Minor Clan, or even provoke ill will in the minds of other clan samurai.

The individual customs that govern the Bat Clan are peculiar. Each birth is celebrated highly as a continuation of the small clan. Peasant and samurai alike receive gifts from a representative of each class. The father

places a lit candle at the edge of the jungle on the night after the birth of the child. The peasants believe this is to appease angry spirits who might appear after the child's birth, but the samurai know the true purpose of the candles. It is to honor the koumori, who help the Bat Clan survive every day.

There are few customs that apply during childhood. Most of the time children help adults in the maintenance of their home, doing whatever chores must be done. They help carry materials to the castle, bring fresh water to the village, and otherwise help with mundane tasks. When they are not working, they most often play along the beach. The waters surrounding the island are clear and fresh and the children never tire of frolicking on the warm sands. However, the clan children are forbidden from entering the jungle for any reason. Naturally, this means the oldest and boldest ones make it a point to approach the jungle at every opportunity. The edge of the jungle is relatively safe, and they goad each other to spend time in the unsettling place.

There is as yet no custom in place for gempukku. No child born into the Bat Clan has yet reached the age to undergo the ceremony. Komori plans to make the ceremony simple but effective by taking the children deep into the heart of the jungle. There he will see if they can make effective decisions while facing the dangers of both the jungle and the visions of the spirit realm. This idea has its disadvantages, as it can be quite dangerous at the heart of the jungle. Komori intends to lessen that danger by taking along several armed samurai. As Komori Junsaku, the eldest of the clan children, grows older, the prospective ceremony grows closer and closer to a reality. Komori hopes it will go as planned, and will be a ceremony both important and uniquely Bat.

Bat Clan samurai are highly focused on the training of their children. Because of the proximity to the Mantis Islands, Komori believes those who do not have the spark to talk to the kami will train with the Mantis in their bushi and courtier schools. To facilitate this, he takes care to maintain the friendship he shares with his former Clan.

Komori acts as head sensei of both the Komori Shugenja School and the Komori Summoner School. However, he does not attend to both schools regularly, since he still travels across the Empire looking for new recruits for his clan. In his stead, Iongi often teaches his students and acts in most ways as the head sensei of the school. The Komori Shugenja School shares most of its roots and rituals with the Moshi School, and indeed most of the teach-

ers originally studied at the Moshi Shugenja School. The focus of the studies is slightly different; however. Komori intends to shape his clan into one that will talk to ancestors. Despite this, a Moshi shugenja would feel right at home at the Komori dojo, since the rest of their techniques and methods are all but identical.

Komori's personal Advanced School, which he created himself from his life of research, is called the Komori Summoner School. He has handpicked his most talented shugenja to learn the secrets behind his magical prowess. Currently the school is very small, with less than five students. Iongi is his finest student, but even his progress has not been promising. Without the koumori blood that flows within their Clan founder's veins, Bat Clan shugenja have had very little success in mastering his methods and techniques, but Komori is not discouraged by the results. After all, he has never seen anyone else achieve the feats he has mastered. It comes as no surprise that normal humans cannot easily grasp these abilities, and Komori remains patient.

The Bat Clan does not have an army, nor is it likely to acquire one any time soon. It will not have the manpower to field any kind of standing military force for several generations at least. However, since Komori chooses the most worthy to join his Clan, many of the new Bat samurai are highly skilled veterans of other wars, and the island can easily deal with any pirates or smugglers who might be foolish enough to threaten it. If the Bat Clan ever does go to war formally, it will most likely do so under the Mantis banner.

Lands of the Bat

The Bat Clan is the smallest Minor Clan by far. This is not surprising, considering that Komori's Clan is also the newest Minor Clan. It has not had the opportunity to grow beyond the current lands to which Komori has laid claim: one small island and their castle.

The Island of Lost Wilderness

When Komori learned he would become a new Minor Clan Champion, he knew the Island of Lost Wilderness was the best location for his new home. The Island of Lost Wilderness is the very southernmost island of the archi-

pelago of the Islands of Silk and Spice. It was considered to be a Mantis holding, but no work had ever gone into civilizing the land. Only a handful of Rokugani had ever stepped foot on the island and no one had ever explored the entire place.

While the island has a suitable cove for safe landings, it has little else in terms of human comforts. It is covered in wild jungle populated by vicious animals and strange spirits. Centuries ago, the Miya Family declared the island to be uninhabitable, and it remained marked that way in the Imperial records. Komori intended to change that. He went to each of the Imperial Families and argued for the right to call the island his home. They were perplexed, but with the Emperor granting him the right to found a Minor Clan, they agreed to his request. With the blessings of the Mantis Clan (who didn't want the putatively cursed land), the island was ceded to the Bat Clan's control.

Komori wanted to settle there for a simple reason: The island was the only remaining land where he was sure to make contact with the elusive race of koumori. He knew the land was dangerous, and only his incredible skill kept his followers alive as they ventured deep into the jungle. It seemed nature itself did not want them there, for the jungle was overflowing with deadly predators and poisonous plants. But Komori and his men finally contacted the tribe of koumori, and the Bat Clan Champion learned the secret of the island that had driven away so many people in the past. The Island of Lost Wilderness, it turned out, provided even more wonders than Komori had anticipated.

The boundaries between each of the Spirit Realms are usually strong enough to keep out unwanted spirits from the other realms. Only those which rest close to each other (like Ningen-do and Chikushudo) could allow their inhabitants to move from one to the other. In the Fox Clan territory, for instance, there are places where one can walk into the Realm of Animals. But on the Island of Lost Wilderness, the boundaries were weak between *all* of the Spirit Realms. Some of the travelers who had set foot on the island had died at the hand of malicious spirits which had crossed into Ningen-do.

Most of the time, the barriers were still strong enough to keep spirits from entering the mortal realm in sufficient numbers to wreak havoc. But visitors could catch glimpses and shadows of the things that lay beyond Ningen-do. These visions were fleeting and never completely corporeal, not to be mistaken for reality, but they offered a constant reminder of the damage that could be done if those

spirits came through to Ningen-do. It was an unsettling sight to the Bat Clan, and Komori's followers were ready to give up on the island and find another home.

Komori, however, was fixed in his intent to make the land his home. Not only was this a chance to finally make an alliance with the koumori, but the weakened wall between the Spirit Realms meant that this island was the perfect place to hone his ability to reach ancestors and animal spirits. He offered a deal to the koumori: He would help protect them from the spirits that might rampage through the boundaries. In exchange, the koumori would allow the humans to create their home on the island. The koumori accepted, and the Bat Clan finally had its homeland.

Kyuden Komori

It has been tough going for the fledgling Bat Clan. Komori and his followers immediately set out to find a water source and clear the jungle of some of its predators, but claiming an uninhabited island as the home of the Bat has offered several problems Komori did not anticipate. The Bat Clan samurai had no support when they arrived at the island. There were no peasants, no merchants, and most especially no eta to perform the most menial and degrading labor. These folk had to be recruited from the nearby Mantis islands to come to the new island and settle. Komori eventually convinced several merchants to settle on the island as well, and created the village that would eventually live under the shadow of Kyuden Komori.

The foundations of Kyuden Komori lie on a hill that overlooks a large natural harbor. The hill is not very steep, and the site allows easy transportation of materials from the nearby beach while giving a commanding view to the garrison. The architects, and the vast majority of the workers, all came from the nearby Mantis islands. It has only been a year since they began construction of the castle and it is nowhere near finished.

The current state of affairs for Kyuden Komori is a mixed bag, to say the least. The castle is less than halfway finished. Bat Clan samurai currently live in several humble buildings adjacent to the uncompleted stronghold. On the other hand, the half-built village is small but lively. Living on the mostly feral island has formed a bond between villager, worker, and samurai that is rarely found in other parts of the Empire. It bodes well for the future of the Bat Clan that the foundation of their Clan is built on such goodwill.

Heroes of the Bat

KOMORI, BAT CLAN CHAMPION

Air: 5 **Earth:** 4 **Fire:** 4 **Water:** 3 **Void:** 6
Awareness: 6 **Intelligence:** 7 **Perception:** 4

Honor: 2.6 **Status:** 7.5 **Glory:** 4.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Moshi Shugenja 4/Komori Shugenja 3 / Komori Summoner 1

ADVANTAGES: Heartless, Magic Resistance (2)

DISADVANTAGES: Can't Lie

SKILLS: Animal Handling 7, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 6, Horsemanship 3, Instruction 6, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Ancestors 2, Medicine 3, Meditation 3, Navigation 6, Spellcraft 3, Storytelling 2, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology (Fortunes) 6

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Aura of Flame, Blessings of Jizo, Burst, Call upon the Wind, Cloak of Night, Essence of Air, False Realm, The Fires from Within, Fist of Osano-Wo, Friendly Swarm, Heart of the Inferno, Heart of Nature, Hurried Steps, Immortal Steel, Jade Strike, Kami's Strength, Katana of Fire, Mists of Illusion, Nature's Touch, Path to Inner Peace, Poison of the Windspider, Power of the Ocean, Purify Water, Regrow the Wound, Rejuvenating Vapors, Shatter, Silent Waters, Slayer's Knives, Speed Growth, Strike of Osano-Wo, Summon Fog, Symbol of Earth, Symbol of Water, Tempest of Air, Tomb of Jade, Wall of Air, Wall of Fire, Walk Without Passing, Wisdom of the Kami, The Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami

Much has already been said about the life of Komori and his exploits. He was born a member of the Mantis Clan, to a koumori father and a human woman, and spent much of his life serving the Mantis Clan. In 1165 he was awarded the right to found his own Minor Clan, complete with an official family name. Though his station has changed many times since his birth, he has remained the same man through it all.

Komori has always been an outcast. Though he served in the Mantis armies, he made few friends. He fought with the ferocity and strength of ten men and carved out a reputation as a great warrior, but most were put off by his abrupt nature and frankness, as he was loath to lie to anyone.

But in one sense, he lied to everyone around him. He knew that others would not understand his half-spirit lineage and kept the secret to himself. He only revealed the secret to the Emperor, when the Son of Heaven asked about his past, and to the tribe of koumori near Kyuden Komori. Most of his followers do not know of his mixed blood and will never know. He has informed Iongi and a few select others, so the knowledge can facilitate their experiments into summoning magic and their relations with the koumori. Those who know still view him with respect verging on awe.

Komori remains loyal to the Mantis Clan, to which he once owed fealty. He recruits most of his new Bat Clan members from outside the Mantis so as to avoid taking advantage of his former clan. In return, the Mantis freely offered him engineers and crafters to help build Kyuden Komori. Komori intends to nurture this connection, since continued friendship with a Great Clan may be the best guarantee of the Bat's future.

He also feels deeply loyal to the race of koumori, as they have served the Empire countless times since its inception. He actively pursues a friendship with the race and hopes to foster a strong alliance. He fought off the predators on their island, gaining a tiny bit of trust, but it will likely be years before any serious progress can occur.

Komori does not know exactly when his mortal body will die. He has already passed the retirement age of most samurai but he feels as sprightly as ever. No half-koumori has ever been documented before, so he does not know what to expect. Komori intends to continue as he always has, traveling across the Empire and meeting those he believes are worthy to bear his name.

KOMORI IONGI, BEARER OF THE ANCESTRAL WEAPON

Air: 3 **Earth:** 5 **Fire:** 3 **Water:** 4 **Void:** 4
Honor: 2.6 **Status:** 6.0 **Glory:** 4.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Moshi Shugenja 2 / Komori Shugenja 2

ADVANTAGES: Great Potential, Precise Memory

DISADVANTAGES: Antisocial

SKILLS: Acting 3, Artisan (bonsai) 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 4, Instruction 3, Lore: Ancestors 2, Meditation 3, Spellcraft 3, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology (Fortunes) 2

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Essence of Air, The Eye Shall Not See, Extinguish, Force of Will, Fury of Osano-Wo, Hidden Vis-

age, Ignite, Jade Strike, Mask of Wind. Lady Moon's Legion, Mists of Illusion, Path to Inner Peace, Purify Water, Sympathetic Energies, Tempest of Air, Way of Deception, Way of Still Waters, Whirlwind, Wisdom of the Kami

Komori Iongi is not one for adventuring. He did it once, and the exciting life did not suit him. He traveled on the seas, fighting pirates and the occasional Crab ship. He found all of it disagreeable and uncomfortable, and far prefers to rest at Kyuden Komori, deep in his magical research. Perhaps others envy him the things he saw while serving in the Mantis military, but Iongi is quite glad all of that is now behind him.

Iongi was born to the Moshi Family soon after the worst of the fighting in the War of the Spirits died down. As a male member of the highly matriarchal family, Iongi was shunned and ill-treated by the other samurai children in his city. Everyone had expected a daughter, for a powerful soothsayer predicted a female child before his birth. Iongi

knew nothing of that; all he knew was there was hostility towards him, and he could not understand the reason for it. His parents were not openly hostile, but did not show him much affection. It was a relief to young Iongi when he discovered he had a natural affinity toward the kami. He left home to train in the Moshi Shugenja School, and never returned.

Iongi was not particularly clever, but he had a knack for remembering everything placed in front of him. The physical application of magic did not come easily but, by sheer will and determination, Iongi pushed through his studies and became one of his school's finest students.

After his gempukku, Iongi joined the Mantis military and was assigned to a ship captained by Yoritomo Rui. Rui was not a friendly captain. She berated Iongi every day, and he could not do anything quickly enough to suit her. Iongi hated every minute he spent on her ship. Still, he did his duty as well as he could, and served at the climactic battle in which the Dark Wave was finally defeated.



Iongi met Komori multiple times during his career. When Yoritomo Kumiko revealed herself to the world, Iongi immediately joined her cause and became part of the group proclaiming her the true Mantis Clan Champion. Iongi spoke frequently to the old shugenja, respectfully attempting to gain his knowledge. After all, Komori was a hero of the Clan who fought through chaotic times. Komori, for his part, found the young man intelligent and welcomed their conversations.

Komori eventually approached Iongi to join his new Minor Clan, the Bat, and Iongi gladly accepted. After all, the Bat Clan did not have an army, nor would it gain one in the near future. His duties would most likely be limited to research in the Bat home, and he would no longer need to travel the seas and fight in battles.

Since he has joined the Bat Clan, Iongi has served as Komori's assistant. He stood by the man's side when they made contact with the koumori tribe. He works today to figure out the mysteries behind the Tetsubo of Thunder, and attends Komori's lessons with the same diligent determination he showed in the Moshi School. Komori considers Iongi one of his greatest students, and believes one day he will take his position as the leader of the Bat Clan.

KOMORI JUNSAKU, PRODIGY

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 2
Intelligence: 5				
Honor: 4.1	Status: 1.0	Glory: 2.7		

SCHOOL/RANK: Komori Shugenja 1

ADVANTAGES: Friendly Kami (Air)

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Health, Small

SKILLS: Calligraphy 1, Investigation 2, Lore: Ancestors 2, Meditation 3, Spellcraft 3, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology (Fortunes) 1

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Biting Steel, Bo of Water, By the Light of Lady Moon, The Fires that Cleanse, Heart of Nature, Hidden Visage, Nature's Touch, Tempest of Air

Komori Junsaku is the eldest child in the Bat Clan. He has yet to undergo his formal gempukku ceremony, but he already impresses his elders with his sharp intellect and remarkable focus. He spends most of his hours in Mantis libraries, awaiting the day when Kyuden Komori can match the knowledge found in the Great Clans. He is kind, affable, and talkative, even to strangers. Many believe Junsaku will rival the strength of the Elemental Masters.

Komori Junsaku was born the son of a ronin bushi and a Moshi shugenja. His mother was stationed in the City of Lies as part of the Mantis embassy. There she fell in love with a rogue who made a living in the many gambling houses that fill the city. Disgraced and berated for her dishonorable attachment, she left the city and her duties behind to roam the Empire beside her ronin husband.

Junsaku was a sickly child at his birth, and his parents feared he would not survive the difficult life of a ronin. He seemed to always be coughing and his health only grew worse over time. His fate changed when both parents joined the armies of the Lion as mercenaries, serving through several battles. They did not want to be drawn back into the politics of the Great Clans, but they felt they did not have a choice – the life of their son was paramount. With the money from the Lion, they were able to supply Junsaku with proper care, and he survived his early illnesses. While his health has never grown to match that of other children his age, he is no longer in danger from any deadly illness.

Junsaku's parents were discharged from the Lion armies following the conclusion of the War of the Rich Frog. They traveled east toward the coast, as Junsaku's mother longed to see her homeland once more. When they encountered a man beset by bandits, they immediately leapt to his defense. Junsaku fearlessly watched the battle in the open, his eyes wide with surprise at the carnage in front of him. His parents sent the bandits running in a matter of moments. The victim, impressed by their selflessness, offered them allegiance to his new Minor Clan. They accepted Komori's offer, and were among the first Bat Clan samurai.

Living in a stable environment for the first time in his life, Junsaku showed himself to be an excellent student. He devoured his lessons and asked for more. However, Junsaku views much of life from a strictly intellectual perspective and has yet to show much gift for practical applications of his knowledge. For example, when he heard of those who claimed to be reaching Enlightenment, he began to research exactly what that could mean from a scholarly view, rather than a practical perspective. Likewise, while he is training to be a priest, the magic of the kami is one mystery he cannot yet quite decipher. Still, his teachers are confident the boy will soon grasp the application of the spells. His visible strengths show he has great potential, and Komori hopes Junsaku will become a great thinker who will shape the future empire.

Playing a Bat

Because the Bat Clan is so new and small, there are few characteristics that encompass the entire Clan. Those who have joined the Clan often retain the characteristics of their former allegiance and their children have not had the time to absorb a uniquely Bat viewpoint. The construction of Kyuden Komori will help in this regard, but it remains unfinished. Thus, being a member of the Bat Clan currently is to witness an exciting time of change.

Every single member of the Bat Clan was personally recruited by Komori himself. This has kept the numbers low but also promises that every member of the Clan meets a certain standard of honor. There are no rogues, no thieves, and no criminals in the Bat Clan. Every single samurai of the Bat Clan has, in Komori's personal judgment, an honorable character, a strong mind and, perhaps most importantly, a spark of destiny within him or her. Each member has the energy to change the world.

This recruitment is a very slow process, and Komori has traveled all across the Empire to fulfill his goals. He has recruited ronin and disaffected samurai from Great Clans other than the Mantis. His recruits are all ready to learn from Komori and interested in the spirit realms. Most of his recruits are shugenja, as he has no time to set up a bushi School. Those few bushi he does recruit generally serve as guards and yojimbo to the others.

So far, out of the dozens Komori has recruited, a few characteristics stand out. Bat Clan shugenja are usually very intelligent, capable of making their own decisions. They are also eager to research a problem with no visible answers. Some of them are timid, perfectly content to remain within the boundaries of their own world – like Iongi, who tired of the adventurous life years ago. But others are adventurous and enjoy the fact that they are training to use a skill that has not been developed by any other Clan in the history of the Empire. These people consider themselves lucky to have a mostly unexplored jungle outside their castle, allowing for exciting journeys whenever they please.

The Bat Clan does not have any enemies as of yet. The Empire as a whole trusts Komori's character, as it is widely known that Komori received his Minor Clan because he rendered valuable service to the Emperor. Toturi III was

not prone to extravagant gestures, and the Bat Clan is the only Minor Clan to be formed during his reign. At worst, samurai from other Great Clans (especially the Crane Clan or the Lion Clan) might view them as less important members of the samurai caste. This view encompasses their attitude toward every Minor Clan samurai, however, and the Bat Clan is not uniquely targeted.

This is not to say that a Bat Clan samurai would not face difficulties outside his lands. The Bat Clan does not have a large income, and many of its samurai are left without much of a stipend. Commerce is generally considered to be something beneath a samurai, but the realities of life means that a Bat must always be wary of situations where he could be left destitute. Also, since the Bat Clan does not have an army, each member must be sure to watch his words to avoid provoking any action from the Great Clans. While war between a Great Clan and a Minor Clan is technically forbidden by Imperial decree, military might often means the difference between being pushed around and being able to stand one's ground.

The Bat Clan can be viewed as having many disadvantages; with no wealth, military might, significant political alliances, or significant magical power. This only means that this is an exciting time to be a Bat. A Bat samurai can be found in almost any portion of the Empire, creating ties in Kudo, searching for worthy new members in the Phoenix lands, or for a dozen other reasons. Whatever the reason may be, Bat Clan samurai are always warned to tread lightly and refrain from making enemies.

New Mechanics

New Path: Komori Summoner (Shugenja)

Because the founder of the Bat Clan was trained as a Mantis shugenja, the Komori Shugenja School shares many of the lessons taught by their Great Clan ally. However, the Komori focus on a new aspect of magic unrefined by the Mantis. Komori, the master sensei of the school, attempted to refine the connection between man and animal. Such abilities come naturally to the venerable half-spirit but are more esoteric to his students. Though they have had little success mirroring their teacher's abilities, the Komori Summoners diligently strive to hone their abilities.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Komori Shugenja 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Komori Shugenja 3

Technique: A Call to Allies

The Komori Summoner School has few students, and so what it teaches qualifies at this point as nothing more than a Path. Perhaps someday it will become a School of its own, but for all practical purposes, it is not one now.

Those who can master the techniques of the school find that the animals will answer to their call more than any other. You may use the Heart of Nature spell on multiple targets. The number of animals affected by the spell is increased by your School Rank.

New Spell: Friendly Swarm (Water)

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DURATION: 2 rounds per caster Insight Rank

AREA OF EFFECT: 20' radius around caster

RANGE: Self

You may only cast this spell if you have taken the Komori Summoner Path. Casting it successfully convinces nearby bats to gather around you; if there are not enough bats in the area, you call upon the bats in Chikushudo to enter Ningen-do. The bats gather around you and attack those you consider your enemies. Those within the area of effect of the spell take 1k1 Wounds each Round that they stay within the area, inflicted at the end of your Turn. Additionally, all ranged attacks suffer a +10 TN penalty if shooting into or out of this area.

You may Raise to increase the area of effect, by 5' for each Raise declared to a maximum of 40'. You may also Raise to increase the damage inflicted by +1k0 for every 2 Raises declared.

New Item: The Blade of Koumori

One of the Bat Clan's greatest successes to date is forging a connection with the ancient race of koumori that live on the Islands of Silk and Spice. The spirits had dwindled in number over the years and did not spend much time interacting with the human world. Komori took it as his duty to treat the elusive spirits as allies, serving them the same way Kaimetsu-Uo did centuries ago.

As a symbol of the friendship between the Bat Clan and the bat spirits, the leader of the koumori gifted the humans with the Blade of Koumori. It is a small aiguchi made of obsidian. The blade was crafted entirely by the spirits and does not follow the crafting standards of Rokugani. The blade is longer than usual, and the hand guard is elaborately sculpted into a double hilt. Komori currently holds the weapon on his person at all times in order to foster trust between the two races whenever they meet.

The Blade of Koumori is an obsidian aiguchi with a DR of 2k1. The bearer of the weapon can understand the native koumori language, though he may not be able to speak it himself.

New Item: Tetsubo of Thunder, the Ancestral Weapon of the Bat Clan

When Osano-Wo was murdered, his sons responded exactly as samurai should. Kaimetsu-Uo hunted down the assassin and meted out justice. Hida Kenzan could not accompany his brother on the manhunt, as the duties of the Crab Clan fell on his shoulders. He regretted the fact that he could not personally deal with the matter and felt he needed to vent his emotions about his father's death.

Osano-Wo ascended to the position of Fortune of Fire and Thunder and watched his son with curious eyes. He sent the Crab Clan a tetsubo infused with his power. Shortly after Osano-Wo's death, Kenzan traveled to an island near the Crab lands. There, he left the weapon as the centerpiece of a shrine dedicated to his slain father. It reached the hands of the Bat Clan a thousand years later via Moshi Iongi, who joined the Bat Clan after he found the Tetsubo of Thunder on the island.

The Tetsubo of Thunder is a large weapon made of strong metals and embedded with pieces of eternal jade, intended to help Ningen-do against the constant threat of Jigoku. The symbol of the Thunder Dragon is imbedded on all sides of the tetsubo.

The Tetsubo of Thunder is considered a jade weapon for the purpose of harming Invulnerable foes. In addition, it grants the following bonuses: a +2k0 bonus to all attack rolls made with it, and a +0k1 bonus to damage rolls made against creatures with the Shadowlands Taint. However, the judgmental eye of the Fortune of Fire and Thunder punishes the wielder of the weapon if he does not act to the Fortune's exacting standards. If the wielder rolls any 1s on any attack or damage roll, he loses 1 Wound.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM

THE DRAGONFLY CLAN



History of the Dragonfly

Marriage of Maroko and Asijin: year 704

Isawa Maroko, a young Phoenix shugenja, was assigned a post at Shiro Mirumoto as part of a diplomatic mission to foster improved relations with the Dragon Clan. She was betrothed to a Lion samurai named Akodo Yokutsu at an early age but she did not let this fact limit her curious and free-spirited nature. She felt at home in the midst of the beautiful mountains of the Mirumoto and explored the lands by herself, content with postponing her future marriage to enjoy her current freedom.

Then she met Mirumoto Asijin.

Asijin was calm, collected, and kind; he was in many ways a polar opposite to her fiery nature. He accompanied her on some of her hikes through the mountains, and within a couple of months of their first meeting, they fell in love.

Maroko gained permission from her Daimyo to break her betrothal to Akodo Yokutsu and marry her true love. Though the Elemental Council was at first wary of the Lion Clan's displeasure, they could not bring themselves

to forbid her the right to marry as she wished. Asijin and Maroko traveled to the south of Dragon lands and settled in a small village on the plains, leaving duty and responsibility behind them.

Battle of Kyuden Tonbo: year 704

Akodo Yokutsu took Maroko's rejection of their betrothal as a grave insult. For him, it was not just a matter of personal honor, for he had been infatuated with Maroko's breathtaking beauty since their first meeting. This mixture of romantic rejection and wounded honor proved an explosive combination. As one of the generals of the Akodo Family, Yokutsu was in a position to quickly mobilize his troops. With the permission of the Akodo Daimyo, he lead his army to Kyuden Tonbo, the site where Maroko and Asijin were building their future residence. Yokutsu was confident his army of 5,000 hardened Akodo warriors would crush the village with little opposition.

But the couple were not without their defenders. Mirumoto swordsmen and Dragon's Flame archers stood between the Lion and the village. Another army of Shiba warriors and Isawa shugenja approached them from behind as if they had divined Yokutsu's plan. Yokutsu would not subject his men to a grueling combat in the face of such overwhelming odds and asked for a parley. Asijin agreed to let the Lion leave without loss of face or casualties if he swore to never approach his lands again. Yokutsu agreed and the Lion retreated.

The Founding of the Dragonfly: year 704

Word of the confrontation reached the Imperial Court. The Lion Clan lost face before the Court for allowing the insult to Akodo Yokutsu to go unanswered. The Dragon Clan representatives did not press the issue, but other opponents of the Lion made sure the event was not forgotten. The Emperor was delighted with the turn of events because it humiliated the Lion Clan. He granted Asijin, Maroko, and the rest of their followers the Tonbo Family name and Minor Clan status.

Maroko began to teach her shugenja students an appreciation for nature. The Tonbo shugenja trained in lessons that emphasized the Element of Earth. Asijin taught the few Tonbo bushi a style very similar to the Mirumoto Bushi School.

Kyuden Tonbo is Built: year 710

Asijin's followers finished construction on the castle that lay at the foot of the Dragon Clan mountains. They christened the castle Kyuden Tonbo and invited representatives from the Great Clans to come stay at the new home of the Dragonfly. Noticeably absent were the repre-

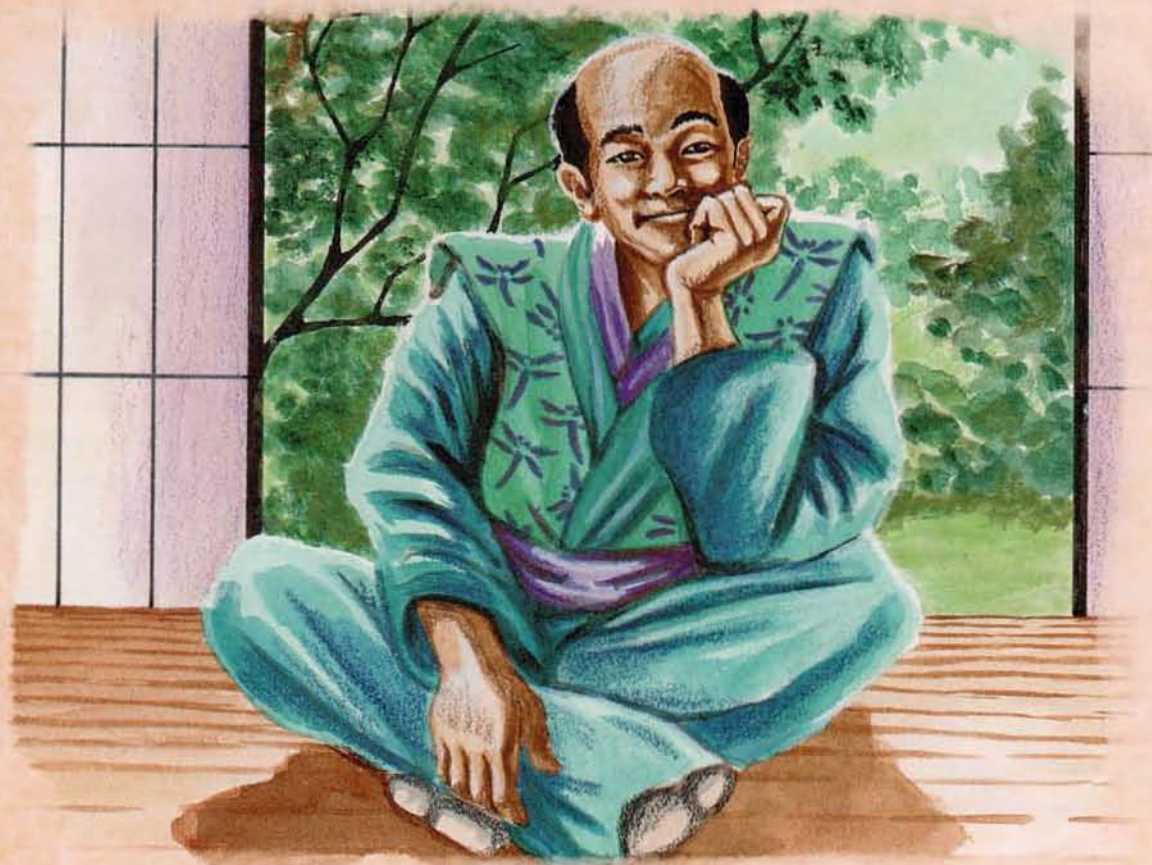
sentatives from the Lion Clan, who were incensed at this reminder of the insult at their very border. The Battle of Kyuden Tonbo catapulted back to the forefront of conversation among the courts, though people were careful to avoid its mention in earshot of the Lion.

Battle of the Great Climb: year 711

Akodo Yokutsu was present at the Imperial Court when an Agasha courtier snidely brought up the Dragonfly incident to his face. Yokutsu was incensed and forced to action by this direct reminder of still-fresh wounds. Ikoma Tanshi, a promising young Omoidasu, made an impassioned speech on Yokutsu's behalf. He spoke of the vile treachery of Isawa Maroko, who broke her vows on a whim. He painted Asijin as a villain who stole Maroko away from her rightful husband, Yokutsu, an honorable man who kept his word even in the face of such a grave insult.

The Emperor, swayed by Tanshi's words, agreed with the Lion and granted them the chance to answer the insult. Tonbo Asijin was the cause of the Lion's shame, he declared. The Lion would have the right to make war with the Dragon until Asijin paid for his crimes.

While Yokutsu wanted to see Asijin fall by his blade,



he would not break his vow to avoid the Dragonfly lands. Instead he lead his army to the gates of Shiro Agasha, the source of the recent insult. The Mirumoto blocked his path, and a battle ensued. Yokutsu had trained his men to fight Dragon tactics, however, and the Mirumoto were forced to retreat to the safety of the palace. The Lion army held the Agasha castle in siege for five days. Then a small unit of Dragonfly samurai arrived at Shiro Agasha.

Yokutsu, eager to gain revenge for the source of his troubles, challenged the Dragonfly Daimyo to a duel. Asijin accepted, and the two fought a duel in front of the gathered soldiers of the three Clans. After nearly thirty minutes of combat, Asijin fell at Yokutsu's feet.

Yokutsu, giddy at his victory, declared himself the daimyo of the Dragonfly Clan. He also claimed Maroko as his bride, as was intended nearly a decade earlier. But a young samurai stepped forward from the ranks of the Dragonfly and challenged Yokutsu's claims. He was Tonbo Kuyuden, son of Asijin, and he was adamant that Yokutsu would not steal his birthright. Yokutsu accepted this duel as well, but the Tonbo warrior defeated and killed him. As his first action as Dragonfly Daimyo, Kuyuden declared that with the assassin of his father now dead, the Lion must depart. With their Imperial mandate now resolved, the Lion army had no basis to remain in Dragon lands, and retreated back to their territory.

The old insult was answered, but a new insult remained, fresh in the minds and hearts of the Lion. They could not directly attack the Dragonfly, because of the Imperial proclamation forbidding war between Minor Clans and Great Clans, but they vowed to never forget.

The Dragonfly Accept their Duty: year 712

With the threat of the Lion gone, Kyuden Tonbo began to receive visitors. Most stopped along the way to Shiro Mirumoto before they climbed the great mountains. Tonbo Kuyuden maintained a strong relationship with the Dragon Clan, and knew when the Mirumoto were ready to accept visitors. When the Dragon Clan was not ready, Kuyuden would entertain these guests in his home until they could travel on. The Mirumoto soon asked the Dragonfly to become their official emissaries, and Kuyuden accepted. The Dragonfly Clan would act in this fashion for the next four centuries.

The Oracle of Thunder: year 1133

Tonbo Toryu, Dragonfly Clan Champion, marched with the armies of the Empire to the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. There he faced a nightmare, fighting monsters that threatened to erase him from existence. Toryu sacrificed his own life to protect those of the men beside him. For his valor, he became the Oracle of Thunder. He rested at Oblivion's Gate, guarding it from those who might attempt to use its magic once more.

Dark Oracle of Void: year 1158

The Oracle of Void is a position generally neutral in the war between Jigoku and Tengoku. Toturi Kaede, Oracle of Void, claimed the throne after her husband's death and upset the balance of the Heavens. Tonbo Toryu voluntarily became the first Dark Oracle of Void, relinquishing his earlier position as Oracle of Thunder, in order to balance the Elements once more.

The Death of Kyuden Tonbo: year 1158

When the Dragon armies warred against the Phoenix Clan, the Lion decided to come to the aid of the Phoenix. Akodo Ijiasu moved a large army of Lion bushi toward the Dragon lands. Ijiasu remembered the ancient insult the Tonbo cast upon his family, and took advantage of the war to attack the Tonbo castle. His men quickly overcame the meager defenses of Kyuden Tonbo, and within a matter of weeks Ijiasu razed the castle to the ground and killed every Dragonfly samurai he could find.

But the Minor Clan was not wholly destroyed. Tonbo Euiko, a shugenja highly skilled in divination, had already sensed impending doom. On her advice, Tonbo Manaka, the Dragonfly Clan Champion, sent abroad as many Dragonfly samurai as he could in the days before the attack. The Lion maimed the Dragonfly, but could not kill them.

Kyuden Sezarū: year 1159

Toturi Sezarū, one of the Four Winds, saw that the Dragon and the Dragonfly Clans were suffering from the recent war and volcanic eruptions. He traveled through those lands, blessing them and healing the damage done to them. The Dragon Clan was grateful for his aid and asked what he wished in return. He decided to take the ruined Tonbo castle as his new home.

Sezaru restored Kyuden Tonbo to its former glory with his powerful magic, and settled in to live there. The peasants who live in the Dragonfly lands dub the new castle Kyuden Sezaru. The next year, however, Sezaru adopted the Isawa name as part of the settlement reached when his brother Naseru took the throne. He departed from Kyuden Tonbo, bequeathing it back to the hands of the Dragonfly Clan.

Though the events were not directly related, Sezaru's actions seemed to create a karmic signal that it was time for the Dragonfly Clan to heal their wounds, also. Tonbo from across the Empire began returning home to help reform their clan once more. Over the course of a decade, the Tonbo slowly and steadily rebuilt their connections and their influence until once again they could act as the Dragon Clan's emissaries.

Customs of the Dragonfly

The Dragonfly have defied convention ever since the inception of the Clan. They were born because an Isawa chose to flout Bushido and Honor to follow the dictates of her heart. While marriages for love are allowed within the Dragon lands, breaking promises has never been a part of any clan's beliefs. The fact that the Dragonfly Clan even survived is a testament to the strong love between Maroko and Asijin – helped tremendously, of course, by the anti-Lion bias held by the Emperor of that time.

The Tonbo continue to defy tradition and definition to the present day. They are a Minor Clan but are intricately connected with a Great Clan. They are members of the samurai noble class, a caste defined by their abilities to wage war, but remain strictly pacifistic. They favor individualism in a society driven by conformity. They have been disappointed time and again by the rest of the Empire, yet remain strong and optimistic. There are more Tonbo shugenja than there are bushi, though the ability to talk to the kami is a rare trait among most Rokugani.

The Dragonfly remain connected to both of their parent Great Clans even to this day. They trade extensively with the Phoenix Clan, and house Phoenix samurai whenever they come to visit the Dragon. The Tonbo offer them opportunities to study the unique manifestations of spirits that occur in Dragonfly lands. The Isawa, in return, share with the Tonbo materials that help fuel research in their lands.

The Dragon Clan still remains the greatest ally of the Dragonfly. When Kyuden Tonbo burned to the ground, many speculated that the Dragon would offer the survivors of the attack fealty as another family of their Great Clan. In fact, the Mirumoto did indeed discretely ask the Tonbo if they wished to find shelter within the Dragon Clan. However, thanks to the vision of Tonbo Euiko, more Dragonfly had survived the attack than the original estimates predicted. The proud Minor Clan chose to rebuild their own home instead of losing their identity. They might not have survived this bold decision, but the powerful help of Toturi Sezaru put them back on their feet.

The Dragonfly hold a number of customs to heart that mimic those found in their parent Clans. Because their numbers are low, even compared to other Minor Clans, the Dragonfly highly value each birth. The entire community helps prepare the parents for the birth of the child, endlessly giving advice and donations. Because the Tonbo are primarily a shugenja family, parents hope their child will carry the blessing of the kami. Before each birth, the Tonbo shugenja visit the mother and pray over her, asking the help of the Fortunes to bless the new arrival and gift it with the power to speak with the kami.

Childhood and gempukku among the Dragonfly is similar to that of other clans. If the child has the talent to speak to the kami, he comes under the tutelage of a sensei at a very young age. It is important to the Tonbo to instill the proper sense of awe and reverence early. The training of the child occurs outside of Kyuden Tonbo at Still Water Temple. This serves two purposes. The child will work hard with chores to help tone his body as well as his mind. Secondly, it keeps him away from the bustle of the clan's small capital, where many outsiders come and stay for weeks at a time. The distance from such distractions helps shape the child into a proper shugenja. The sensei of the dojo also allows the children to roam outside in the wilderness as long as they do not stray too far up the mountains. Freedom associates itself with nature in the child's mind, helping to ensure the Tonbo will have a strong connection with Earth by the time he has matured.

The Tonbo are pacifists despite all the tragedies they have endured. Some individuals go to war alongside their allies, but the Dragonfly Clan as a whole officially stays out of all the wars in Rokugan. Those who wish to follow the path of the bushi must do so in Mirumoto or Shiba lands. This arrangement is somewhat troublesome, but worth the effort for the Dragonfly. Their Clan Daimyo

once said that a Tonbo Bushi School was not the way for them, and the Dragonfly have never attempted to open such a school in the centuries of their existence.

The Dragonfly are surprisingly individualistic for samurai, and when possible, they marry for love over political reasons, honoring the choice Maroko and Asijin made at the beginning of the clan's history. This attitude does not mesh well with that of the other Great Clans, who are suspicious of love as a threat to a samurai's loyalty to his lord. The vast majority of the Tonbo marry within their own clan, though there are exceptions to the rule within each generation.

The superstitions of the Tonbo are extensive, shaped heavily by the phenomena that occur around them. They believe in ghosts, good luck charms, and the power of spiritual trinkets that visitors bring along on their journeys. Tonbo samurai always bow and say a quick prayer whenever they see an apparition or an unidentifiable creature. These visions occur frequently in the Dragonfly lands, so no Tonbo is startled by such sights. They believe a prayer can help guide the spirit back to its proper realm.

The Tonbo have a great, if understated, sense of humor. Tonbo can spend hours exchanging stories with others, laughing appreciatively all the while. They attempt to remain cheerful always, facing whatever life brings with a smile.

Lands of the Dragonfly

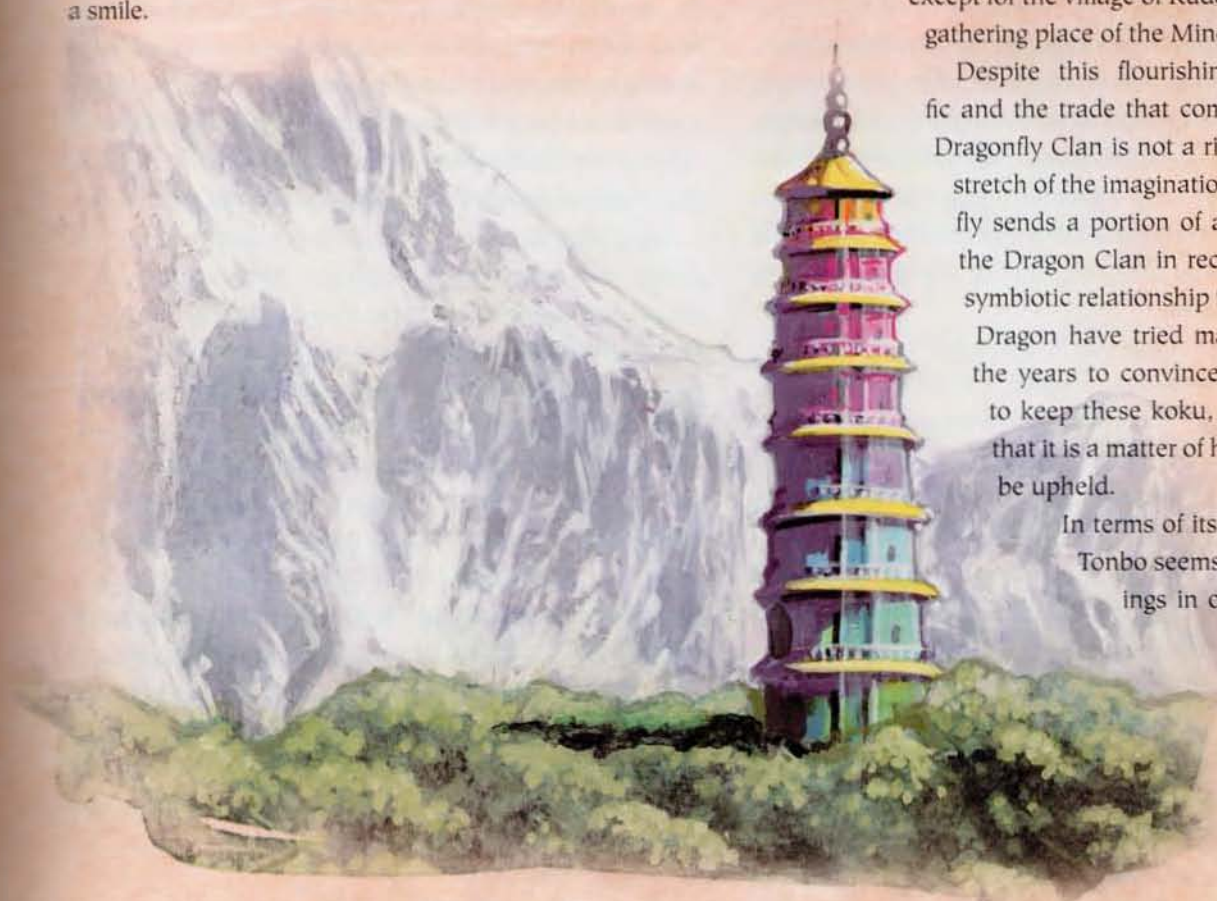
Kyuden Tonbo

Kyuden Tonbo stands today as a proud testament to the resilience of the Dragonfly. It has been beset by invading armies three times, each time at the hands of the Lion Clan. It was completely destroyed once and was even called Kyuden Sezaru for a short period of time. The city does show some of its wear and tear from afar, though most of the damage has long since been repaired.

Kyuden Tonbo is at the very foot of the mountains and is the last hospitable city before the long trek up to the Dragon provinces. Diplomats who wish to gain an audience with the Dragon Clan must wait for approval at this city. Sometimes guests must spend weeks in idleness before they receive word whether they will be admitted or not. Consequently, the Dragonfly palace receives more visitors than any other Minor Clan settlement except for the village of Kudo, the unofficial gathering place of the Minor Clans.

Despite this flourishing visitor traffic and the trade that comes with it, the Dragonfly Clan is not a rich clan by any stretch of the imagination. The Dragonfly sends a portion of all its profits to the Dragon Clan in recognition of the symbiotic relationship they share. The Dragon have tried many times over the years to convince the Dragonfly to keep these koku, but they insist that it is a matter of honor that must be upheld.

In terms of its decor, Kyuden Tonbo seems like two buildings in one. The rooms



meant for visitors are well decorated, and would not feel out of place within a Crane palace. But the rooms that the Tonbo reserve for their own use are humble and basic. The dichotomy is striking, especially since many of these rooms are located next to each other.

The city around Kyuden Tonbo holds a thriving center of commerce. One will not find the latest fashions at these markets, but they do offer everything and anything that can make a stay more comfortable for the visitor. Sake houses, tea houses, and even a few geisha houses line the streets, waiting for bored diplomats to enter. Mature Dragonfly samurai tend to avoid these places, but the clan's youth do not always have such compunctions.

Still Water Temple

Because of the Lion Clan's depredations, there are almost no temples within the Dragonfly provinces. There are no shrines to the Fortunes or the Kami. Once there were many such shrines, but all were destroyed and sacked during the Dragon-Phoenix War, and the Dragonfly Clan simply does not have the resources to rebuild everything that was lost. Thus the paradox that the Dragonfly, a clan of pacifistic shugenja, have fewer temples than almost any other Clan. Today, their only shrine is Still Water Temple.

Still Water Temple was constructed after the destruction of Kyuden Tonbo. Though both Toturi Sezaru and the Dragon Clan offered koku to help furnish a temple worthy of the Celestial Heavens, the Dragonfly refused and insisted on using whatever meager resources they had from their own rebuilding efforts. They found the perfect location for their temple next to a lake bordering the Timeless Plains.

The temple can house nearly a hundred acolytes at any one time, and resembles a small military outpost more than a traditional monastery. Still Water Temple boasts defensible walls, complete with slits for arrows. The Dragonfly intend to be ready if the Lion ever decide to assault their lands once more. Still Water Temple also serves as a dojo for the training of the Tonbo family shugenja. Quite a few older Tonbo shugenja have made this monastery their permanent residence, as the sight of Kyuden Tonbo brings forth painful memories for them.

Despite its functional design, Still Water Temple is a proper monastery, dedicated to the study and worship of the kami and Fortunes. The building is the Dragonfly's first new venture since they rebuilt, and it feels plain and austere. The monks lead a simple life and students of the

shugenja dojo are expected to work alongside the acolytes. This arrangement assures that the Tonbo remain humble and pious despite their formidable abilities.

The Timeless Plains

The Dragonfly lands are home to a peculiar phenomenon. The kami of the Dragonfly lands occasionally manifest in images visible to the naked eye. They reveal themselves as images of spirits that once walked upon Ningen-do. This happens in places in the Empire where the boundaries with other Spirit Realms are weak. In the Dragonfly lands, however, these boundaries hold strong. Instead, these phantom images show spirits of Ningen-do itself, from other periods of time. Dragonfly samurai have sometimes glimpsed their ancestors, friends recently departed, and even the adults their children will one day grow up to be. All attempts to speak to these images, however, have been futile – they do not actually exist in Ningen-do when someone sees them. This fact does not discourage the Dragonfly. Instead, it encourages them to continue their studies of divination, hoping one day they will unlock the secret behind the Timeless Plains.

While these apparitions occur all across the Dragonfly provinces, they are strongest on the Timeless Plains. It is a stretch of land east of Kyuden Tonbo unmarked by any notable landmark. For some reason, these plains have always exhibited an unusually high number of these phantom images. Anyone who remains in the plains for a significant period of time can watch images of samurai fighting from ancient battles, but more often the Timeless Plains shows images of samurai doing mundane actions.

The Dragonfly do not tell outsiders about the Timeless Plains; they believe that though they have had no luck in contacting the spirits of these visions, the spirits should remain undisturbed by those who might not feel properly reverent toward the kami. The Dragonfly will never let the Timeless Plains be exploited in any way.

The only unnatural marking on the Plains is a small shrine carved of stone. It offers a prayer for the dead in simple calligraphy, with no other explanation. Each Dragonfly who visits these lands stops at this memorial. The shrine was constructed in the 900s, but the stone remains unblemished, without any evidence of the passage of time. Some Dragonfly shugenja claim the land has affected the area, infusing the shrine as part of its spiritual power. Others believe the kami who control these visions are comforted by the shrine and protect it from the corrosive elements of nature.

Heroes of the Dragonfly

TONBO DAYU, DAIMYO OF THE DRAGONFLY

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 5	Void: 5
Reflexes: 4	Intelligence: 5			
Honor: 2.4	Status: 7.5		Glory: 2.1	

SCHOOL/RANK: Tonbo Shugenja 5

ADVANTAGES: Friend of the Elements (Water), Heart of Vengeance (Lion)

DISADVANTAGES: Driven (Rebuild the Dragonfly)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 4, Divination 4, Etiquette 5, Medicine 3, Meditation (Zanji) 7, Spellcraft 3, Theology 2, Tea Ceremony 5, Underworld 3

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Castle of Water, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Death of Stone, Divide into Ash, Earth's Touch, Force of Will, Hand of Jurojin, Heart of Nature*, Hidden Visage, Kami's Strength, Nature's Touch, Path to Inner Peace*, Regrow the Wound*, Rejuvenating Vapors*, Silent Waters, Speed Growth*, Summon Fog, Sympathetic Energies, Walk Without Passing, Wave-Born Speed, Wisdom and Clarity, Wisdom of the Kami

Note: Spells marked with an * are Innate Abilities.

When Tonbo Dayu was a little boy, he would have never guessed that one day he would be the savior of his Clan.

Dayu was born in turbulent times. The War of Spirits raged on, involving all the Clans in a conflict that lasted a decade. Dayu stayed at home with his parents while Dragonfly samurai left Kyuden Tonbo to answer the call of the wounded Empire. The times imprinted him with an overwhelming sense of duty and perseverance. To him, every Dragonfly was a hero.

He joined the shugenja school, as do most Dragonfly who are gifted with the talent of speaking to the kami. He found his skills lay in Water magic and healing, rather than Earth, the most typical path traveled by others of his Clan. He knew what havoc war could cause to those caught in the middle of it. He decided to concentrate his studies on healing the wounds inflicted by war. Unfortunately, he got the chance to apply his skills more quickly than he and his Clan would have liked.

When the Dragon declared war against the Phoenix Clan, he asked for permission from his father to join the Dragon armies. He would save lives and help his clan's close ally. Though his father did not approve of the Dragon's attack on the other clan that founded the Dragonfly, he agreed it would do Dayu some good to get out in the world. Dayu left for Dragon lands for training and was soon on the front lines of the conflict. Dayu was near Phoenix lands when word arrived of the Lion Clan's assault on Kyuden Tonbo. He had lost his entire family, and his future.

Dayu served with the Dragon until the war ended, then slowly traveled back to his ruined home. To his surprise, he found others who had been sent away before the destruction of the castle. He vowed to dedicate his entire life to rebuilding the former glory of the Dragonfly. He has done everything in his power in his quest. He has written letters to every Great Clan, worked in the fields alongside farmers, and endlessly beseeched the kami to repair the damage wrought upon the land. It is a testament to his commitment that the Dragonfly have come back so far from the brink of extinction.

Dayu is a pragmatic man who speaks little. Still, he does not forget that the other Great Clans allowed the Lion Clan to nearly destroy the Dragonfly. He does not forgive them, but neither does he forget the realities of the situation. His clan is small and has few resources to pursue any sort of retribution for the near-extermination of its people. He knows the Dragonfly would not survive another military encounter with the Lion. He can only guide his clan and do his best to protect it from those who would threaten it.

TONBO KYUISHI, SKILLED DIPLOMAT

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Awareness: 4	Intelligence: 4			
Honor: 1.9	Status: 3.0		Glory: 5.1	

SCHOOL/RANK: Minor Clan Diplomat / Kitsuki Courtier School 2

ADVANTAGES: Allies (many Kitsuki of varying rank), Multiple Schools, Way of the Land: Dragon

DISADVANTAGES: Greedy

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Commerce 4, Courtier (Gossip, Political Maneuvering) 6, Defense 2, Divination 1, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 6, Investigation (Notice) 2, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 5, Meditation (Zanji) 3, Theology 1, Tea Ceremony 4

Tonbo Kyuishi is in many ways the public face of his clan. He meets all visitors with a cheerful disposition and makes sure their needs are met. He is the liaison to the Dragon Clan and speaks to them on a regular basis. He learned from the best in the Kitsuki lands, and was a boy training at Shiro Kitsuki when the Lion destroyed Kyuden Tonbo. Today, when people come to Kyuden Tonbo seeking an audience with the Dragon Clan, they must speak to Kyuishi.

Kyuishi is quite young for such responsibility. He is in his early twenties, but he holds in his hands one of the most important duties in the entire Dragonfly Clan. Many claim that the clan has few options since the war, but those whisperers do not take into account Kyuishi's skills. The young man is truly brilliant at his job and has a way of making everyone feel at ease while they wait for the word to approach from the Dragon mountains. He has built a vast network of connections and alliances within the Dragon Clan and with the diplomats of the various Great Clans who needed to gain access to Shiro Mirumoto.

Unfortunately, his youth does leave him vulnerable to temptations. It is not easy for such a young man to handle the pressures of such a vital job without folding in some way to the stress. Kyuishi holds power in each and every meeting with a visitor, as he knows whether or not the person will ultimately obtain permission to approach the Dragon Clan. Thus, he has received many gifts from these diplomats, gifts which have given him a taste of luxury. Though worrying about money should be beneath most samurai's dignity, Kyuishi has noticed the benefits wealth can bring to a young man. He has also found the game of Fortunes and Winds, and spends many of his koku rolling the dice.

Kyuishi is always smiling and outwardly pleasant, no matter what his true feelings are at the time. He is very adept at saying what people want to hear without promising anything. His growing addiction to gambling is somewhat troubling to him, but he works diligently to keep that side of himself away from his job. He has been successful so far.

TONBO KETTO, EARNEST DIVINER

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

Honor: 3.8	Status: 1.1	Glory: 0.7
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SCHOOL/RANK: Tonbo Shugenja 1

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic, Soft-Hearted

SKILLS: Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Divination 3, Etiquette 1, Medicine 1, Meditation (Zanji) 2, Spellcraft 1

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Earth's Touch, Force of Will*, Jade Strike, Nature's Touch, Path to Inner Peace, Wind-Borne Slumbers

Note: Spells marked with an * are Innate Abilities.

Tonbo Euiko, sensei of Still Water Temple dojo, is one of the greatest heroes of the Dragonfly. She used her considerable powers of divination to save her Clan from utter destruction. Such is the power of her example that Tonbo Ketto dreams of one day saving his Clan, just as his sensei once did.

Ketto, the son of two Dragonfly samurai, was barely two when the Lion destroyed Kyuden Tonbo. His family survived the tragedy intact, for Euiko ordered both of his parents to flee to Shiro Mirumoto with their young son. Ketto did not even realize the significance of that trip until many years later, when he learned of the utter destruction the Lion had laid upon his home.

Ketto wishes desperately to emulate his teacher and will do nearly anything to make her proud. He pursues the skill of divination with complete abandon, often spending entire nights awake trying to decipher its secrets. He has gained some minor abilities with the skill through this hard work, but he has no natural ability at it. This does not seem to deter the boy. No amount of discipline will curb his excess studying, and his parents have completely given up trying to regulate him.

Playing a Dragonfly

The one fact that remains salient to all Dragonfly samurai is this: The Dragonfly faced the anger of the strongest Great Clan four centuries ago, and they will never forget the experience. The Lion Clan are the nemesis of every Dragonfly samurai, now and always, in every place and every circumstance – for to a Lion, once someone besmirches his honor, he is an enemy until he no longer exists.

Luckily for the Dragonfly, Lion samurai are very honorable and cling to the tenets of Bushido. They will not attack a Dragonfly without immediate provocation. Also, the Imperial mandate against Great Clans declaring war on Minor Clans is very difficult for them to get around honorably. The Lion managed to evade the law once by declaring that the Dragonfly sided with the Dragon in their

war (and many Dragonfly samurai did, in fact, fight in the Dragon armies). Now that the Lion have gotten around the law once, it is unlikely the Imperial Court will allow another similar infraction. However, this does not prevent individual Lion from engineering conflicts that would allow them to act against individual Dragonfly while retaining the appearance of honor.

Apart from the hazards of this ancient feud, Dragonfly samurai enjoy some benefits in terms of their interactions with those outside their Clan. The Dragonfly Clan is widely known for its pacifist views and is respected for them in many corners of the Empire. They enjoy very cordial relationships with the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. Samurai from these clans will likely help Dragonfly if it is within their capacity. Samurai of the other Minor Clans will generally do likewise.

Dragonfly samurai have few options when they reach gempukku. The Dragonfly Clan only has one dojo in their provinces. Their shugenja can learn much about divination and nature at the dojo, but they study few other topics. They have never had the resources to expand, and because of their recent woes they will not have that option available to them for decades, perhaps even centuries. Those who wish to learn other aspects of magic must look outside the Dragonfly lands to do so. Dragonfly courtiers, for example, typically train with the Kitsuki and learn their techniques of investigation and truth-detection.

The Tonbo once briefly had a bushi school, but the second daimyo, Tonbo Kuyuden, disbanded it to guide his clan toward pacifism. Those Dragonfly who are martially inclined can train with the Mirumoto or the Shiba. Some of their members do serve in Dragon and Phoenix armies, but the vast majority choose to remain outside of larger conflicts.

Although the Dragonfly are pacifists, a growing minority of young Dragonfly samurai remain bitter and angry over the Lion's attempt to wipe them off the face of the Empire. The Lion's attack on the Dragonfly was a violation of Imperial Law, they say, but the Great Clan has not suffered for its actions. These new Dragonfly samurai are suspicious not only of the Lion Clan in particular but also of everyone else who allowed the event to occur. Most older Dragonfly are smarter about this issue, and do not express these feelings in public for fear of retaliation from the Lion. However, this undercurrent of negative energy coursing through Dragonfly lands cannot be ignored.

New Mechanics

New Path: Tonbo Mountaineers (Shugenja)

The martial Tonbo study with their brothers among the Shiba or the Mirumoto. Some shugenja take advantage of the opportunity to work with the Tamori. They return to the Dragonfly lands with an appreciation for the mountains that cannot be met by anyone who has not hiked treacherous peaks and windy, narrow paths. The Tonbo mountaineers take many trips through the rugged provinces of the Dragon, mastering the dangers that face them. They find themselves more in tune with nature as a result of their adventures.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Tonbo Shugenja 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Tonbo Shugenja 2

Technique: The Beating Heart of Nature

The Tonbo Mountaineers are able to sense the ebb and flow of life when out in the wilderness. You gain a bonus equal to twice your Earth Ring to the total of all Hunting Skill Rolls made while in mountainous terrain. Additionally, while traveling in the mountains, you reduce Skill Roll TN penalties for being on uneven terrain by 10.

New Path: Tonbo Diviner (Shugenja)

Tonbo Euiko prophesied the destruction of the Clan and took steps to prevent it. Because of her efforts, the Dragonfly Clan continues to exist to this day. After the Clan got back on its feet, the Dragonfly Clan Champion ordered Euiko to establish a dojo to teach her methods to the Dragonfly of tomorrow. Her school of Tonbo Diviners attempt to hone in on the fickle nature of divination, incorporating the kami into these traditionally non-magical rituals. The Diviners have had mixed results, but Euiko and her students continue to persevere.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 4**PATH OF ENTRY:** Tonbo Shugenja 3**PATH OF EGRESS:** Tonbo Shugenja 4**Technique: To See the Future**

The Tonbo know that proper divination can be the key to prophecy and a way to unlock one's very survival. They need only look at events a decade old to see the truth in the matter. You gain the Astrology, Kowaru, and Omens emphases of Divination for free if you do not already have them. Additionally, you may spend a spell slot of any Element to attempt to enhance a Divination Skill Roll with your magic. You may ask a yes or no question regarding the future, and if you roll 35 or higher on the Skill Roll, you will receive a clear answer.

You may only use this ability once per day.

New Item: The Wolf's Wakizashi

When Sezarü changed his residence to the ruined castle of Kyuden Tonbo, the Imperial heir had no authority to do so. The Dragonfly Clan was well within its rights to ask him to leave. After all, the Dragon Clan had offered him a choice of one of the Dragon strongholds to make his home, but Kyuden Tonbo did not belong to them. However, the Dragonfly simply accepted Sezarü's desires and welcomed him to their home. They were genuinely pleased that he would grace them with their presence and did everything they could to accommodate his needs. The powerful shugenja could detect no malice or ill will – he was at home.

Isawa Sezarü eventually left for the Phoenix lands when he changed his fealty at the behest of the new Emperor, but he never forgot the kindness of the Dragonfly. He gifted Tonbo Dayu with his wakizashi, a beautiful blade that had been crafted by the finest Kaiu weaponsmiths. The hilt is decorated with symbols that evoke the magic of the Kitsü, Isawa, and Tamori Families. The blade itself is razor sharp and those who have seen it swear they saw flames dancing within the steel.

The Wolf's Wakizashi grants a +2k0 bonus to all attack rolls made with the weapon. In addition, the bearer gains a Free Raise on all Fire, Earth, and Void spells that he casts while holding the weapon in his hands.

The Wolf's Wakizashi currently rests on the wall in Kyuden Tonbo's main audience chamber. It has never been wielded by anyone other than Sezarü himself. Tonbo Dayu does not believe he is worthy to use the weapon, and after the Wolf's untimely demise he has vowed to never take the blade from its honored spot.

New Item: Fan of Void

When Kyuden Tonbo was destroyed by the Lion, few believed the Dragonfly Clan would recover. Many assumed the Dragonfly would follow the Boar Clan or the Snake Clan, banished to the annals of history, or emulate the Falcon by becoming a family in a Great Clan. To everyone's surprise, the Dragonfly Clan has flourished and returned to its duties serving the Dragon Clan. No one was more surprised than Tonbo Toryu, Dark Oracle of the Void. He did not see a way for his former Clan to navigate through the perils it faced, but the efforts of Tonbo Dayu and Toturi Sezarü were unexpectedly effective. Though he could no longer visit his old clan without consequences, he left a token of his pleasure at the newly refurbished castle's doorstep.

The Fan of Void is a tessén that glows with a dark and otherworldly light. Though the nemuranai was crafted by the Dark Oracle of Void, it contains no Shadowlands Taint and does not house any sinister kansén. Many shugenja have communed with the spirits about this item, but none have solved the mystery of who gifted it to the Clan. Tonbo Dayu wears the Fan at his side, unaware of the troubles the item may one day cause him.

The Fan of Void activates only when its bearer spends a Void Point. He gains benefits as if he was spending 2 Void Points instead of just 1 (if applicable). This effect can only occur a number of times per day equal to the bearer's highest School Rank. Unfortunately, the fan does not come without a price. The one who holds the Fan of Void suffers a penalty to all Social Skill Rolls equal to 5x the number of times he has gained the benefits of the Fan of Void that day.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM



THE HARE CLAN

History of the Hare

The ronin Reichin fights against the Bloodspeakers: year 750

A cunning warrior and substandard gambler, the ronin Reichin is among the first to detect the advancing forces of Iuchiban, and warns the Scorpion magistrates. Over the next few weeks, Reichin becomes one of the most prominent figures in the fight against the Bloodspeaker army, culminating in Iuchiban's capture. A leader among the survivors, Reichin volunteers when the Emerald Champion asks for someone to lead the charge to recover Ryoko Owari from Iuchiban's lieutenant Jama Suru. Reichin does so, and succeeds at harassing and weakening the Bloodspeaker forces. When the Emerald Champion's army arrives, Reichin throws himself in front of an arrow meant for the Champion and nearly dies. In recognition of his heroism, the Emperor rewards Reichin with the family name Usagi, the right to create a Minor Clan, and lands to govern in the Emperor's name. Many ronin who fought in the battle for the City of Lies flock to Reichin's banner, and the Hare Clan is created.

The Hare Clan is destroyed: year 1123

During a visit to Ryoko Owari Toshi, Usagi Ozaki and his sister Usagi Tomoe, the children of the Hare Clan Champion, inadvertently come upon a meeting between Kolat agents. Ozaki is forced to kill one of them to defend his sister. In the process, the two gain possession of an encoded Kolat scroll, which Tomoe is eventually able to decipher. Uncertain what is happening, the two return to Shiro Usagi. Shortly thereafter, however, Kolat agents manipulate the Scorpion into laying siege to the castle and destroying it, capturing Tomoe and slaying the Hare Daimyo, Usagi Oda. Ozaki is driven into hiding and testimony is offered before the Imperial Court shortly thereafter indicating that the Hare were practicing maho. The Clan is formally dissolved and an edict is issued forbidding any reconstruction on or near the ruins of Shiro Usagi.

The Hare Clan is reborn: year 1125

As the fugitive Usagi Ozaki scours the Empire in search of his sister, who disappeared from Scorpion custody, he is aided by a group of samurai from different Clans who, unbeknownst to him, become embroiled in his quest. Together the group confronts a dangerous splinter cell of the Kolat, a cell intent on harnessing the essence of an incredibly powerful evil spirit called the Shimushigaki and using it to take control of the Empire. Ultimately the splinter group of the Kolat is destroyed, the Shimushigaki vanquished, and one

of the witnesses who offered testimony concerning the Hare's use of maho recants. This results in the reestablishment of the clan with Usagi Ozaki as its Champion. Deeply scarred by his experiences, Ozaki begins rebuilding his clan, intent on destroying all who would use secrets against the people of Rokugan, including the Kolat and the clan's traditional enemies among the Bloodspeaker cult.

The Ujina Family is created: year 1132

The Hare Clan Champion Usa-Ozaki arrives in the Imperial search of a cell of Bloodspeaker cultists. There, he discovers a serial killer plaguing the city, one with a greater number of victims than perhaps any in history. With the unsolicited aid of a mysterious ronin named Tokimasa, Ozaki tracks down the Bloodspeaker cultists and penetrates their hidden temple. There, he and Tokimasa save one another's lives more than once, and Tokimasa fights with both incredible stealth and a brutal knife technique that strangely mirrors those used by the serial killer. Near the end of their battle, the two face the cult's leader and the murderer himself—Tokimasa's twin brother, as skilled as Tokimasa, but twisted and sinister where Tokimasa is honorable. When Tokimasa cannot bring himself to end his family's horrible shame, Ozaki does it for him and beheads the monstrous murderer, earning Tokimasa's gratitude and loyalty. As a result of their heroism and their mutual refusal of reward, the Imperial Regent Takuan grants Tokimasa the family name Ujina, and Ozaki offers him fealty as daimyo of the second family within the Hare.

Kudo lost to the Lion: year 1170

Between the end of the Hantei Dynasty and the official establishment of the new Imperial line, the Great Clans race to seize as many assets as possible, and anything that appears to possess resources is a suitable target. The Lion Clan sends forces to the Hare village of Kudo, declaring it occupied to ensure it does not fall into the hands of others. When the ranking Hare samurai objects, she is challenged to a duel and killed by the Lion officer in



command of the occupying forces. The Lion continue to occupy Kudo for several months until the new Emperor, Toturi I, commands all Great Clan forces to withdraw from occupied unaligned lands, at which point the Hare resume control of the village.

The Kolat are destroyed: year 1170

The Scorpion launch an assault on the Kolat in their Hidden Temple and virtually wipe them out. Hare Champion Usagi Ozaki is approached by the new Ox Champion, Moto Garen, and informed that one of his men, Usagi Heiji, had apparently been found among the Kolat. A tremendous admirer of Ozaki's, Garen only wishes to alert the Hare that there may be others among his ranks. As a result, Ozaki closely examines all of his followers, searching for any signs they may have been compromised.

Threat in the mountains: year 1170

A Badger ambassador arrives at the Emperor's Winter Court and informs the Court that a massive army of Yobanjin is preparing for invasion in the north. Allegations that these barbarians may be using some form of potent fire magic are made as well, and the Dragon are quick to confirm that such a thing is indeed possible. When the Badger ambassador leaves to return home, Ozaki sends an entire legion of Hare with him, led by the infamous inquisitor Usagi Genchi.

Customs of the Hare

The Hare Clan has a history of producing bold heroes. They have been the subject of many plays and folk tales since the time of their creation, and in particular they are beloved by peasants who have benefited from their actions. More so than most Clans, the Hare are associated with the animal, and animal spirit, whose name they bear, and in particular, it is widely believed that they have a rabbit's luck. Whether or not there is any truth to such claims, the Hare themselves believe that fortune smiles on them, and they hold various strange superstitions in order to maintain their luck.

As with most Minor Clans, births are celebrated universally among the Hare due to their relatively small numbers; any addition to the ranks is a reason to rejoice. Marriage among the Hare, particularly the Usagi, is atypical of most marriages in Rokugan because the family believes strongly that fate guides the heart, and as such young people should marry for love rather than for politics or material gain. This is not to say that arranged marriages do not occur, for they do when it can greatly benefit the Clan or when a match between two individuals of great skill would produce particularly powerful, strong, or skilled children. The Ujina are more conventional, however, and care relatively little about such things.

The Usagi celebrate the birth of a new child in a unique manner. While the mother and child recover from the ordeal, the father meditates in a location that is somehow strongly tied to the child, such as the home in which the parents live, the room in which the child was born, or something similar. The hope is that the father will receive a vision or some flash of insight that allows him to identify an object within the room that will bring good fortune to his new child. These talismans are carried by all Hare children until such time as they undergo their gempukku, at which time they are put aside.

The Ujina have a similar ritual, but the talisman is always a knife. The father of a new Ujina child crafts a knife over the course of seven days, beginning on the day of the child's birth. That knife is given to the child when he is old enough to carry it responsibly, generally around the age of seven. An Ujina usually carries the blade he receives from

his father until he dies, although a few choose to melt theirs down to forge a blade for their own children. Both methods are acceptable to the Ujina Family.

Deaths are felt deeply by the Hare, and oddly enough, death rituals are one of the few traditions in which both the Usagi and Ujina Families react identically. In both cases, the deceased samurai's family investigates the circumstances of death to ensure that it was not the result of foul play, whatever the apparent cause. If there is enough evidence to suggest murder, the Clan Champion may grant one member of the deceased's family one year in which to make a case for foul play. If the Champion ultimately finds the evidence compelling enough, he will officially devote the Clan's resources to avenging the murder. This rarely occurs, however, as the Hare generally have more important business to attend than the settling of personal scores.

The Ujina have a similar tradition of investigation, but are extremely practical about it and will not conduct an investigation unless there is ample evidence to suggest murder. In such cases, however, the Ujina spare no expense to identify, locate, and kill whoever might be responsible. The family regards its reputation for brutality to be important in maintaining the security of its holdings.

For a people with such a carefree nature and reputation, the gempukku ceremony of the Usagi Family is a surprisingly somber occasion. It is an exciting time for any young samurai, to be given his daisho and told to take his place among the ranks of his family, but for those who rule the clan, it is a time of sadness. When a child must shed his innocence and be brought into a world of secrets and hidden conspiracies, it is a day to mourn.

The Ujina are likewise dour in their ceremonies, albeit for different reasons. To become a full member of the Ujina Family and serve the Hare is to embrace a path of questionable honor. It is not the life any virtuous parent would desire for their child, but it is better than the life of a wave man, which is what the majority of the Ujina's forebears once faced.

Both Hare families hold a variety of superstitions. For example, the Usagi believe that when only one star is visible in the sky, it represents the vigilant eye of an enemy watching you closely. They further believe that to stay out underneath the open sky under such circumstances invites your own death.

The Ujina believe that a knife that has tasted an enemy's blood cannot be returned to its sheath unless the enemy has been defeated, or the Ujina has acknowledged the en-

emy defeated him. Given the tenacity of most Ujina, it is not uncommon to find one carrying an unsheathed knife attached to his belt or clothing with a string tied around the hilt. The Ujina likewise consider it extremely rude to inquire as to the reason behind the blade's steel being left open to the air in such a manner.

Lands of the Hare

The lands controlled by the Hare Clan are not particularly ample, although they have noticeably more land under their control than most Minor Clans. The entirety of their holdings would constitute perhaps two provinces in the lands of a Great Clan, but because they are relatively light in resources, the Hare continually struggle to eke out an existence.

Shiro Usagi

The ancestral estate of the Hare Clan is by a wide margin the largest and most lavish holding the Hare possess. It was constructed shortly after the Clan was formed centuries ago, but it was razed to the ground just before the Clan War, and was not reconstructed until years later. The more recent Shiro Usagi is significantly larger than its predecessor, due in part to the funds provided by the extraordinarily wealthy Yasuki Taka as compensation for the "unfortunate misunderstanding" that led to his role in the Clan's dissolution. Because of the nature of Usagi Ozaki's experiences following the castle's destruction, he saw to it that it was rebuilt not only as a familial estate, but as a formidable fortress.

Shiro Usagi is in a very real way the center of everything of importance that the Hare Clan does. It is the home of the only significant court chamber within the Clan's domain (the only other Hare court chamber is located at Kudo, where Minor Clan Alliance functions are hosted). The castle is also the single largest concentration of Hare resources and military might, but numerous contingency plans exist to ensure that, should the unthinkable happen and the castle fall to enemies, the Hare would be able to wage a guerrilla war against the invaders. Ozaki firmly believes that if such tactics had been in place during his father's day, the Hare might never have fallen in the first place.

Naturally, Shiro Usagi is home to the principal dojo of the Usagi Bushi School, which is in turn the principle dojo for all Hare samurai. Although other, smaller Hare dojo exist elsewhere, the Hare Daimyo has very deliberately prevented any of the Clan's elder sensei from establishing learning centers anywhere else, even within the Hare provinces. This apparently stems from a fear on his part that the sensei might be co-opted or coerced into revealing the family's secret techniques, which Ozaki regards as the one true advantage that the Hare have over their enemies.

Meidochi

A small farming village located in the remotest part of the Hare Clan lands, Meidochi is unremarkable in virtually every respect. Although the hard-working villagers there manage to sustain themselves while paying their Imperial and clan taxes, they have little to spare after all of these obligations are met. The town is far removed from virtually every major trade route. In short, Meidochi is the sort of village that typically suffers greatly from bandits, simply because it is remote and not valuable enough to warrant a significant defense. This was in fact true of Meidochi in previous generations, but no longer. No bandit ever travels within a day's ride of this village if he has any sense at all.

Shortly after the establishment of the Ujina Family, the ronin Tokimasa sought permission from Usagi Ozaki to establish his own holdings within the lands of the Hare, where he might train his students in relative seclusion. Ozaki gladly granted Tokimasa governance over Meidochi, a problematic village that he had considered dissolving altogether because of the expense of trying to protect it from bandit attacks. Tokimasa eagerly agreed and traveled to the village with the students he had accumulated in the few months since his elevation to Ujina Tokimasa, Daimyo of the Ujina Family.

They were only ten samurai in all, but upon their arrival, Tokimasa declared the village under his protection and ordered the local garrison back to Shiro Usagi. The villagers were terrified to see nearly three dozen guardsmen replaced by a much smaller force of ragged-looking bushi, but even if any had possessed the spirit to question a samurai, the terrifying presence of Tokimasa would have cowed them.

Three weeks after Tokimasa and his men took up residence in the village, a group of bandits attacked at sunset. They came into the village on horseback, eager for carnage and pillaging. They set fire to three buildings and



killed four men as they rode into the village. The leader had only enough time to demand that the villagers submit and obey his every command, and then Tokimasa and his men were among them.

The Ujina moved through the twilight like ghosts, darting from one bandit to another in the failing light. None of the bandits survived contact with the Hare warriors. In a matter of minutes, nearly two dozens bandits were dead, each of their throats slit with perfect precision, just as Tokimasa had taught his students. Tokimasa took the leader himself, and ensured that the brutal criminal suffered before he died. The heads of the bandits decorated the village perimeter on pikes; the weapons they left behind were sold by Tokimasa, and the funds used to compensate all the villagers who had ever suffered from previous bandit attacks. Less than a month after his arrival, Tokimasa had ensured the village was safe, and that the villagers revered him as a savior.

Modern Meidochi remains the product of Tokimasa's particularly brutal form of reasoning. The villagers no longer fear bandits, and while some still fear the sinister demeanor of their Ujina patrons, most are fiercely loyal and eagerly work extremely long hours most of the year in order to ensure that their lords have all the resources they require.

There is little of note in the village, but the largest building is a dojo that also serves as the principle holding of the Ujina Family. Formal business is conducted in the family's chambers at Shiro Usagi, but most Ujina actually live in the village in homes that appear to be nothing more than particularly large peasant buildings. The Ujina Dojo is unusual in almost every respect. Although a number of skills are taught to the students there, and at least one member of the Ujina Family is always trained as a sensei of the Usagi Bushi School, the focus of the dojo is almost exclusively on the use of the knife.

Kudo

Kudo is likely the most significant Hare holding outside of Shiro Usagi, and it is the source of much of the Clan's agricultural resources. The area around Kudo is extremely fertile, and it produces well over half the food consumed by the Clan, plus a small surplus that is generally sold to the Hare's allies in Minor Clan Alliance. Unfortunately, the recent history of the village has been a difficult one.

Because of its history of abundant harvest, as well as its relatively minimal defenses, Kudo was among the first Minor Clan holdings that were forcibly annexed by the Great Clans during their struggle to determine the successor to Emperor Toturi III. This was a particularly difficult offense to endure because the Lion commander in charge of securing Kudo had an ongoing quarrel with a former Hare turned ronin, and used the incident to avenge whatever insult he had perceived. When the Usagi in charge of defending the village objected to the Lion's impending occupation, the commander took the incident as a challenge and killed her in a duel. This single incident undid centuries of good relations between the two clans, and plunged the Hare into an anti-Lion frenzy.

The occupation of Kudo lasted for several months, during which time the Lion severely looted the village. Usagi Ozaki considered military action, and even entreated the Minor Clan Alliance to intervene on behalf of the Hare, but ultimately there was little that the Minor Clans could do against the might of a Great Clan. Shortly after the ascension of the new Emperor, however, the Imperial decree to halt all conflicts between clans and return to previously established clan boundaries resulted in a Lion withdrawal.

Since the Lion withdrawal, Kudo has been a haunted place. The people who call the village home live in constant fear of another occupation, despite Ozaki's assurances that the Emperor would not permit such a thing to occur. The mere mention of the Lion can cause many in the village to invoke the Fortunes and beseech them for mercy. Should a lone Lion appear in the village for any reason, reactions would doubtless vary between panic and open hostility. It is a situation that the Hare rulers are gravely concerned will result in further difficulties between the two clans, especially now that the village serves as the central meeting place for the Minor Clan Alliance.

Heroes of the Hare

USAGI OZAKI, HARE CLAN CHAMPION

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

Honor: 3.6	Status: 7.5	Glory: 6.1
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SCHOOL/RANK: Usagi Bushi 5 / Hare Truthseeker 2

Advantages: Balance, Daredevil, Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Missing Eye

KATA: Striking as Air, Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Athletics (Running) 4, Battle 3, Defense 6, Hunting 5, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 7, Jiu-jutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Bloodspeakers 5, Lore: Kolat 6, Spellcraft 3, Stealth 4

Even among Great Clan samurai, who rarely give any consideration to the Minor Clans of Rokugan, Usagi Ozaki is a hero. With the exception of his late colleague Toku, founder of the Monkey Clan, Ozaki is the most celebrated hero born to the Minor Clans in the past three generations. He defied the Kolat, fought against the Bloodspeakers, survived as a fugitive in an Empire that believed he was a traitor, and rebuilt his clan from the ground up, not to mention many other exploits over the course of his long and illustrious life.



Long ago, Ozaki was a carefree young man who had little interest in the day to day minutiae of overseeing the Hare Clan. His father, the venerable Usagi Oda, often wondered if Ozaki would ever prove suitable to replace him. If he could have, Oda would likely have looked to his younger child Tomoe as a replacement, but the Hare's fortunes were not good during those days, and his best hope for Tomoe was to marry her off to someone who could provide allies and resources that his people desperately needed. Fortunately for Oda, his critical assessment of his son was completely in error. Unfortunately for the Hare Clan, it was only through the death and disgrace of the Usagi Family that Ozaki could prove himself the greatest daimyo the clan has ever known.

The horror that was visited upon the Usagi Family because of Ozaki's actions haunted him during his time as a fugitive. Although he was well aware of the Kolat's role in the matter, he could never completely forgive himself for attracting their attention in the first place. Despair threatened to overwhelm him, but even greater than the despair was his desire to see those who had ruined his family punished, and even greater than that, his desire to find his sister and secure her safety at all costs.

Upon rescuing his sister and destroying the Kolat — or at least the men who professed to be the Kolat and who were responsible for perpetrating the crimes against the Hare — Ozaki should have been able to rest easy. Unfortunately for the young Hare Champion, he could not. The things he had seen during his time as a fugitive, the enemies he had faced and the scope of the secrecy that he had discovered shrouding the Empire was enough that he was forever changed. For the first few years of his Championship, he suspected virtually everyone of duplicity in some manner. Even his closest advisors were not exempt from his paranoia. But fortunately Tomoe was able to curb his excesses and keep him anchored in reality. Her death a few short years ago was a devastating blow from which Ozaki has never truly recovered.

UJINA YOSHIMITSU, UJINA FAMILY DAIMYO

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 4
	Stamina 5	Agility 5		
Honor: 2.1	Status: 6.0		Glory: 3.3	

SCHOOL/RANK: Ujina Tantojutsu Specialist 1 / Usagi Bushi 4

SKILLS: Athletics (Climbing, Running) 5, Defense 4, Hunting 4, Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu 2, Knives 7, Lore: Kolat 2, Spellcraft 1, Stealth 6, Underworld 4

ADVANTAGES: Bishamon's Blessing, Great Potential (Knives)

DISADVANTAGES: Benten's Curse

KATA: None

The Ujina are a small family, frequently maligned by those few who know of them at all. There are none outside of Tokimasa's direct descendants, other than Usagi Ozaki himself, who know that the family founder's brother was a Bloodspeaker and a mass murderer, but something about Tokimasa's demeanor always concerned others. His reputation was terrible outside the clan while he was alive, and the few who remember him at all since his death recall him as a menacing figure.

Yoshimitsu is Tokimasa's grandson, and many believe he may be the old ronin reincarnated. Certainly none among the Ujina have ever mastered their founder's ability to generate unease in everyone around him, at least not until Yoshimitsu. It seems that the current Family Daimyo enjoys the discomfort he creates in others, as he frequently wears a very menacing metal mask, complete with a jingasa that casts his features in shadow much of the time. The only person whose unease he does not seem to relish is his lord Usagi Ozaki, to whom Yoshimitsu demonstrates absolute respect and devotion, without exception. For his part, despite his raging paranoia, Ozaki appears completely comfortable with the company of a man some have quietly referred to as a twisted assassin more reminiscent of the minions of the Lying Darkness than a proper samurai.

As the Ujina Daimyo, Yoshimitsu has a number of duties that he must oversee on a nearly daily basis. First and foremost, his family's duty is to protect Meidochi, the village where their meager holdings are located. Meidochi is not an essential holding by any means, but the Ujina's occupation keeps it safe from the bandit attacks that used to plague it, and its protection remains one of their principle duties. A less well-known duty is for Ujina samurai to monitor any bandit activity within the entirety of the Hare lands and respond to any large-scale attack.

The tragedy of Ujina Yoshimitsu is that, while he does have a great number of his grandfather's characteristics, he is a simple man who would like nothing more than to cast aside his façade of menace and gain easier acceptance not only in Hare Clan society, but the Empire as a whole. Unfortunately, he feels inept in social settings and tends to mask his discomfort by emulating his grandfather as much as possible.

USAGI TOMIOKO, HUNTER OF BLOODSPEAKERS

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

Honor: 2.8 Status: 1.1 Glory: 2.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Usagi Bushi 2

ADVANTAGES: Absolute Direction, Clear Thinker

DISADVANTAGES: Driven (Hunt Bloodspeakers)

KATA: Striking as Air

SKILLS: Athletics (Running) 2, Defense 2, Kenjutsu 3, Jiu-jutsu 1, Hunting 3, Investigation 3, Lore: Bloodspeakers 4, Lore: Kolat 1, Spellcraft 1

In the eyes of the Empire, the threat of the Bloodspeaker cult ended with the death of Iuchiban, the cult's founder, and the purge of his followers by Sezar and the Shogun of Rokugan. Even among the Hare, who are perhaps the Bloodspeakers' most hated enemies, many believe the cult is finally dead, after centuries of menace. Many have finally put their Clan's hatred behind them.

Usagi Tomioko is not among those Hare.

Tomioko is an anomaly among her branch of the Usagi. They have a long and illustrious history as scouts and diplomats, often spending months or even years far from home serving the Hare in the lands of other clans. It is their calm spirit and quiet stability that has allowed her bloodline to ascend to a high station within the Usagi Family. Unfortunately, those qualities appear to be completely absent in the young woman, who is the youngest of her parents' four children and the only one to fail to follow in their footsteps.

As a child Tomioko was enraptured with tales of the Toturi Dynasty. When Toturi Tsudao became Toturi II, and later when Hantei Naseru became Toturi III, she sent lengthy letters to the Imperial City declaring her eternal devotion and allegiance, offering her service to the throne. Tomioko's sensei punished her for these actions, hoping to teach her some semblance of decorum, but without success. She remained a zealous supporter of the throne up until the Toturi line was ended.

Perhaps because of her complete devotion to the Toturi, Tomioko never trusted Kaneka, the Shogun. His claims to have purged the Empire of the Bloodspeaker cult during the so-called Blood Hunt seem ridiculous to her, even to this day, after the deaths of both Iuchiban and Kaneka. She remains certain that the cult is in hiding, concealed more thoroughly than ever before, and they must be rooted out before they can become a threat again.

Playing a Hare

The samurai of the Hare Clan are, along with the Monkey Clan, the quintessential heroes of the Minor Clan Alliance. In perhaps no other Minor Clans is the spirit of what it means to be an honorable underdog in the Emerald Empire so aptly embodied.

The principle family of the Hare Clan is of course the Usagi Family. The Usagi are a divided family, with two radically different philosophies and patterns of behavior, both of which can be attractive (and rife with role-playing opportunities). On the one hand, a great many Usagi are idealistic young bushi with a desire to travel the Empire and experience the type of adventures their parents enjoyed in their youth. They are the typical heroes of Kabuki plays and pillow books, embodiments of a heroic ideal that many samurai children dream of following themselves, but which is typically purged from them by years of rigid instruction at the dojo.

On the other hand, there is a distinct element within the Hare Clan, typically older and more experienced samurai, who have seen during their lifetimes the terrible devastation that can be wrought upon even the most honorable samurai by conspiracies and hidden secrets. Some of the eldest among them saw the Hare destroyed by the machinations of the Kolat, or at least heard of such events firsthand from their parents. This group of the family is paranoid, and sees evil everywhere. Everything is suspect, as is everyone they meet. Once the loyalty of such individuals is earned, however, it is unquestionable and eternal.

The Ujina Family, vassals of the Usagi, are significantly less well known and far fewer in number than their lords, and they have a significantly different character. They are not an idealistic group; indeed, one might characterize them as pragmatic almost to the point of nihilism. Descended recently from ronin, they are acutely aware of the hardships their ancestors faced and they could very easily face again. As a result, they have a single-minded devotion to fulfilling whatever duty the Usagi set before them, and they will go to any lengths to complete it. While an Ujina samurai will never risk disgracing his Usagi masters, the honor of an individual Ujina means nothing weighed against the greater good of the Hare Clan.



Generally speaking, taking on the role of a Hare Clan samurai places you in a comfortable position as a well-liked everyman. The Hare enjoy a positive reputation throughout the entire Empire, with only the recent unpleasantness with the Lion staining their name in those lands. Even then, there are some among the Lion who regret what happened in Kudo and, when the subject comes up, are as close to apologetic as a Lion can be to a samurai of obviously lower station.

New Mechanics

New Advanced School: Hare Truthseeker

The Hare Clan was founded to combat the Bloodspeakers, and it was once literally destroyed by the machinations of the Kolat. That the Clan was ever reformed in the first place is nothing short of miraculous in a society as rigid and inflexible as Rokugan, and its leaders are acute-

ly aware that they have every bit of luck that their animal namesake is supposed to confer. Despite this, the Hare as a whole have never shirked from the duty they perceive as theirs: to combat the individuals and organizations concealed in the shadows that threaten the stability and prosperity of the Empire. The greatest among these Hare are the individuals known simply as Truthseekers, the most skilled investigators of the Hare Clan.

Truthseekers are not chosen by the Hare; instead they take up the most sacred cause of the clan by their own volition.

Some are inspired by the clan's history, while others are driven by personal loss or other experiences with the Empire's well-hidden enemies. Whatever the reason, these samurai choose to pursue foes with greater power and resources than they will ever know, placing themselves in incredible danger in the process.

Those who the Hare's leaders believe have the potential to become Truthseekers are watched very carefully, and given all opportunities for additional training that may help them once they begin their quest.

REQUIREMENTS

RINGS/TRAITS: Agility 3, Reflexes 5

SKILLS: Athletics 5, Kenjutsu 5, and any one Lore Skill related to a hidden group (Bloodspeakers, Kolat, Lying Darkness, Maho-tsukai, etc.) at Rank 5

OTHER: Driven Disadvantage for an appropriate goal

Techniques

RANK 1: SEEKING THE TRUTH

The first talent of the Truthseeker is in seeking the secrets that lie hidden in shadow, and bringing them into the light of the Emperor's judgment. You gain a number of Free Raises on all Investigation and Hunting Skill Rolls equal to your Truthseeker School Rank +2.

RANK 2: PUNISHING THE WICKED

A Truthseeker punishes those who plague the Empire with their dark and sinister secrets. You gain an additional attack per round against any opponent whom you know for certain is a member of any criminal conspiracy, including the Bloodspeaker cult or the Kolat, as well as foes who are corrupted by the Lying Darkness or the Shadowlands in any way.

RANK 3: FATE OF THE HERO

The Truthseekers are the greatest heroes of the Hare Clan, and in no one else is the good fortune for which the clan is legendary better exemplified. You may spend a Void Point to immediately re-roll any Skill Roll, and keep the better of the two results. You may do this multiple times per Round as long as you have Void Points to spend, but cannot do it more than once on the same roll.

New Path: Ujina Tantojutsu Specialist

The ronin who created the Ujina Family was an enigmatic man named Tokimasa, a highly skilled warrior whose past before meeting Usagi Ozuki was never revealed to anyone within the Hare Clan. Even among the closest of his followers, even to the Usagi woman he married, he was a complete mystery. All that could be known for certain was that he possessed a talent for stealth that was nearly superhuman, and his ability to wield a knife was unique. Fortunately, Tokimasa was also a passable sensei, and even if he was not able to teach others to attain his own prodigious skills, he was at least able to make them exceptionally skilled with the knife.

Students of the Ujina Dojo are easily among the most skilled wielders of the knife in the entire Empire. Even their youngest students can accomplish things with a knife that the most skilled warriors among other clans would envy. There are clear deficits in their training otherwise, of course, as most Ujina are nominal students of the katana at best.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 1

PATH OF ENTRY: None; this is an entry-level Path

BENEFIT: +1 Agility

HONOR: 1.5

SKILLS: Athletics, Hunting, Investigation, Knives 2, Stealth, Underworld

OUTFIT: Katana, wakizashi, two knives; light armor, traveling clothes, travel pack, 1 koku.

PATH OF EGRESS: Usagi Bushi 1

Technique: Master of the Quick Blade

No family in the Empire is as skilled with a simple knife as the Ujina, and they are rightly acknowledged as its masters. You gain a +1k1 bonus to all damage rolls made with any weapon governed by the Knives Skill. Additionally, you gain 1 Free Raise on any roll in which you attempt to use a special maneuver (Disarm, Extra Attack, Feint, Knockdown, etc.) with the Knives Skill.

New Path: Usagi Woodsman

For all those among the Hare who have a rebellious nature and wanderlust in their hearts, there are just as many who enjoy stability and communing with the wilderness. The true strength of the Usagi Woodsman is his state of complete relaxation while in the wilderness. Some monks who have interacted with these individuals claim they may have discovered the path of their own Enlightenment without realizing it. They exist in a state of nearly perfect harmony with their surroundings, and as a result they are capable of unlocking their true potential despite all odds.

TECHNIQUE RANK: Variable

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Usagi Bushi Rank

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the Usagi Bushi School at the next Rank

Technique: One with the Wild

The Usagi Woodsman is never so much at home as in the wilderness he loves so dearly. While in the wilderness, you gain a +1k1 bonus to all non-Weapon Skill Rolls.

New Advantage: Ujina's Legacy (5 points)

The Ujina are rightfully feared by bandits throughout the Empire because of their reputation for brutally destroying any threat to their home provinces. You have learned to draw upon that reputation to ensure others have a healthy fear of you. When confronted by any ronin of Honor Rank 1.5 or lower, or with any criminal not affiliated with a Great Clan, you are considered to have Fear 2 against those opponents (only).

FEALTY AND FREEDOM

THE MONKEY CLAN



History of the Monkey

Founding of the Monkey Clan: year 1129

Yodness was the Captain of the Imperial Guard, Seppun Ishikawa. The new Emperor, Toturi I, offered the position to his most loyal and steadfast follower, a ronin named Toku who served in his army.

Toku declined the appointment three times, claiming on the third time that he could not accept such an honor because he was not in fact a samurai, but rather a heimin who took the armor and steed of the samurai who fell defending his village, and the swords of the bandit who menaced his family. He offered to commit seppuku to atone for his crime, but Toturi I stayed his hand. Moved by his friend's honesty, the Emperor pardoned him of his crime and offered him the position a fourth time, this time with the additional promise that he would be made champion of a new Minor Clan – the Monkey. Toku, equally moved by his lord's mercy, gratefully accepted both positions.

While Toku became Captain of the Imperial Guard, the ronin of Toturi's Army who had now sworn fealty to him needed their own purpose in Toturi I's eyes, and he did not need to look farther than his Chancellor to find it.

Takuan suggested that the newly formed Monkey Clan, filled with ronin who owed their fame and respect to Toturi I, would make an excellent pool of apolitical Imperial Magistrates. This met with the Emperor's approval, and the Monkey Clan was given its first purpose: keeping law and order in the empire. Unlike the Unicorn, who served as more general magistrates and peacekeepers, and the Emerald Magistrates, who handled larger disputes, the Monkey Clan's purview would be conflicts that arose from laws broken between classes – samurai who abused peasants would find themselves facing warriors in beige armor, as would peasants who fomented insurrection against the samurai.

The Monkey receive their lands: year 1130

After the banishment of the Scorpion Clan to the Burning Sands, the new and growing Monkey Clan was given land to call their own, a stretch of valley in the former Scorpion territory. The first castle the Monkey Clan occupied was built there.

After Emperor Toturi was recovered from his captivity by the Goju during the War Against the Darkness, he ordered Toku to take the Imperial Guard into the Dragon mountains to quell the attacks of the Naga against the Empire. Though Toku returned alive from the perilous venture, he began to harbor doubts about his friend and mentor's sanity.



Shortly after the Darkness-corrupted Emperor returned, so too did the Scorpion Clan, eager to lay claim to their lands, which Bayushi Aramoro had won for them at the Gift of the Emperor tournament. Seeing an opportunity to build alliances, they permitted the Monkey to keep their lands, beginning a long-term and largely successful diplomatic relationship between the two Clans. Soon, Toku was honored with a Shosuro wife, Shosuro Inao, the first of several political marriages to cement positive ties between the Scorpion and Monkey.

The Siege of Hidden City: year 1165

After Iuchiban's third reign of terror began, Toku, now an old man, left the Vigilant Keep with his son, Toturi Kyoji, and all the ready bushi his Clan could muster, to assist in the defense of Gisei Toshi against the Bloodspeakers. Kyoji fought alongside the Imperial Legions, while Toku distracted Yajinden, drawing the terrible Bloodsmith away from the main battle and trapping him under an avalanche. This tactic cost the first Monkey Clan Daimyo his life, however, and the Clan Championship passed to his eldest son, Kyoji. Toku was further honored, posthumously, by an Imperial decree allowing his bloodline and followers to take his name as their own. Moreover, he was elevated to the status of Fortune of Virtue by Emperor Toturi III.

The Race for the Throne: 1170

Currently, the Monkey Clan is enjoying its temporary respite from several years of quelling peasant rebellions. The focus of their efforts these days is to make certain the opportunistic land seizures that have come in the wake of the Race for the Throne do not result in further unrest. Towards that end, the Monkey Clan have been extraordinarily generous to the Minor Clan Alliance formed by Kasuga Taigen, hoping that the other Minor Clans can be convinced to assist them in keeping the peace. The current Champion, Toturi Kyoji, is also concerned about a new force moving the ronin of the Empire, a man calling himself Tamago. Where once ronin might look to the Monkey Clan for aid when in doubt and need, now they seem to look more readily to one of their own. While the Monkey would not think about interfering with the freedom of these ronin to choose their own paths in life, they are concerned that this Tamago may not be what he appears. The Emerald Champion, Shosuro Jimen, refuses to investigate the matter himself, which means it falls on the shoulders of the Monkey to examine this new shift in the political landscape of the Empire's wave-men.

Customs of the Monkey

The Monkey Clan, a very young clan in the Empire's long history, has had little time to establish itself as a unique culture. However, it has existed just long enough for some trends to emerge and take shape as distinctive customs and traditions.

Birth in the Monkey Clan is just as celebrated as it is in any clan's lands, though perhaps with a bit more enthusiasm since so many members of the Monkey Clan are former ronin or the children of former ronin. One thing that is not present at any birth is divination. The clan's founder was living proof that a man's destiny is not set in stone, so most Monkey samurai believe that attempting to divine a child's fate at birth or any time during childhood is pointless frippery.

Childhood offers slightly more esoteric lessons for the children of Monkey samurai. The Monkey Clan values justice, particularly justice that also encourages order, and so the children of the Monkey Clan are tested with great subtlety and surprising ruthlessness about their developing concepts of right and wrong. Their first sensei often formulate the rest of their training based on the answers given to questions asked when they are as young as three years old. To the Monkey, no piece of information is entirely irrelevant.

Gempukku for Monkey Clan samurai is often a test of wit and judgment just as much as martial skill. A future Monkey samurai may be presented with situations where a discerning mind and an able set of problem-solving skills are crucial to success.

Monkey bushi are generally expected to serve as magistrates, local or Imperial, or to volunteer for service in the Imperial Legions. Many do serve as Legionnaires, and this is considered a worthy path in life, especially since Toku's eldest daughter served as commander of the First Legion for a time. When serving his clan as a bushi, a Monkey is expected to explain his actions but not his reasons to the rest of his clan. If his clansmen cannot divine the purpose behind his actions, a deeper examination may be required, but it is generally considered an admission of weakness for a Monkey to say that he doesn't understand a decision.

Monkey Clan samurai retire from service at the same rate as other samurai. Most often, they opt for the Order of Heroes or the Order of Tengen, depending on personal taste. One tradition that is gaining popularity is the bequeathing of journals and books to grandchildren. The founder of the Monkey Clan was illiterate for most of his life, but he was able to convince his fellow samurai to read his copy of Akodo's *Leadership* to him. Shortly after he began learning to read, Toku made it known that he wished the samurai under his command to make detailed reports of their duties, to be turned over to him. Toku didn't actually believe detailed reports were necessary, but he used them to practice his newly learned skill, and he never bothered to repeal his edict after he finally attained proficiency. Thus the samurai of the Monkey Clan found their professional lives extensively documented, but with no one to read these works. Some began passing on these journals to their sons and grandsons at retirement, and the practice has gained such popularity that it is rare to find a Monkey who does not have a collection of hand-written scrolls given to him alongside his father's or grandfather's sword. Some read them, some keep them in their ancestral shrines, but they are never intentionally abandoned or destroyed.

JUSTICE FOR ALL

At its core, the Monkey Clan is about a paradox. The edict which created them charges them with maintaining the natural social order of the Empire, but their founder and first Champion was himself a perversion of that natural social order. The philosophers who have arisen within the Monkey's ranks believe this is not a contradiction, but rather an expression of a deeper truth: the Monkey are to support a functioning order, but not necessarily the existing one. Defiance and rebellion can be in service of the Empire, if they are against systems and establishments that are not functioning correctly. To these samurai, Toku's near-unprecedented promotion from peasant to samurai was the lesser of two evils; much worse would have happened if he had chosen to remain where the Fortunes first placed him.

The justification for this perspective is that man — any man, even the Emperor, who has the favor of Heaven — is fallible. Life is a constantly shifting body of many forces, and injustice can arise from one force pushing another off course. It is the duty of the Monkey Clan, as mandated by Toturi I, to make certain the forces that act upon the Emerald Empire do not shift to the point where the Empire could be destroyed.

This is a sweeping generalization, of course; most of the actual practice of Monkey philosophy is in the fine details. When the Monkey are called upon as magistrates to restore order in the Empire, they are usually quite careful to weigh all the implications before rendering a verdict. If a group of Monkey *yoriki* round up a smuggling ring, they look at the criminals' intent as well as whether or not they broke any laws. If the ring was looking to line its pockets with tax money that rightfully belongs to the Emperor, they can expect the prescribed punishment for flouting the Empire's laws. But if they were smuggling to avoid an unfair tariff placed upon the goods in question by a local lord who wishes to choke his competition out of the region, their punishment is likely to be considerably lighter – and said lord will probably receive a visit from the Monkey magistrates soon after. Further yet, if they were smuggling because a disaster destroyed their livelihood and they needed some way to feed their families, they may escape with a wrist-slap and a private warning to be more circumspect.

To the Monkey way of thinking, punishing the perpetrators for trying to survive can only harm the Empire, not help it. They believe the laws need compassionate interpretation in such an instance. The Monkey are thus more concerned with the ultimate health of the Empire than with enforcing the letter of its many laws.

This view has brought the Monkey into some conflict with the Great Clans. The Kitsuki Family of the Dragon Clan, for example, is much more concerned with truth than with politics, and views the Monkey Clan's practices as playing fast and loose with the well-being of the Empire. To their minds, the way to handle situations such as the aforementioned steal-or-die scenario would be to go through the proper channels. If the peasants are starving, they should appeal to their lord for relief, and if he does not provide it, then the matter should be taken to his superior in turn. In the Monkey Clan's eyes, however, this approach puts too much faith in the empathy of others, and takes far too long to be expedient.

The Lion Clan also disagrees with the Monkey Clan's policies, which they consider less than honorable and a regrettable result of the Scorpion Clan's influence on them. The Lion Clan does not believe the Emperor's laws should be flouted for any reason. If adherence to the law has created a difficult situation, then it is the duty of those suffer-

ing to endure, and if they don't, they can look forward to trying to improve their *kharma* in their next reincarnation. In the Lion view, mollicoddling people because they've been dealt a bad hand is no better than spoiling children rotten.

THE RONIN CONNECTION

While the various Clans, Great and Minor, have differing views of ronin samurai, the Monkey Clan is the only one to have both public and private opinions that are positive. Their founder was once a ronin, after all, as were many of the senior members of the clan, as well as a disproportionately large number of those who have joined it in recent years. The Monkey Clan is very familiar with wave-men in all their forms, and is far more tolerant of them than most clans. If a daimyo notifies a Monkey magistrate that there are one or more ronin in his lands without the proper documentation, the Monkey magistrate's solution is most likely to travel there as swiftly as he can, round up the ronin in question, and give them traveling papers that will keep them out of trouble until they can reach the Vigilant Keep or the Monkey Clan's embassy in Toshi Ranbo.

While some clans, namely the Crab, don't make any secret of recruiting ronin to bolster their ranks, the Monkey Clan is the only one that makes a point of actively seeking them out. While an introduction into the Monkey is rarely smooth, especially if the ronin in question previously led criminal lives, the Monkey are nothing if not resolute in their beliefs. They hope that even the vilest ronin scum can potentially be rehabilitated. The key is finding how it can be done.

Many ronin, hearing of the opportunity to gain fealty with the Monkey Clan so readily, seek the clan out for themselves. While the experience is rarely what they expect, many ronin – especially those who were formerly clan samurai – are willing to submit to the endless series of tests and tasks that the Toku lay before them. Being a member of a clan, even a minor one, has many benefits. Although few of these ronin advance far in the Monkey Clan's ranks, their sons and daughters are raised as members of the Monkey in every sense of the word, and some of the Monkey's most ardent samurai are the children of former ronin.

Lands of the Monkey

Almost all of the Monkey Clan's holdings lie in a single valley, the Vale of the Monkey. Previously known as the Vale of Father and Daughter, this fertile valley at the extreme eastern edge of the Shosuro lands was once Scorpion territory, but was ceded to the Monkey after the Scorpion Clan's banishment to the Burning Sands. The farmlands of the Vale produce more food than is necessary to sustain the Monkey Clan, and each leader of the Monkey has made use of the surplus as a bargaining chip to strengthen external relations, especially with the other Minor Clans.

Before it was Monkey Clan territory, the Vale of Father and Daughter was famous for hosting Bayushi and his most ardent disciple, Shosuro, during their journey to find other suitable followers for the Scorpion Kami. Shosuro recommended building their home there, but Bayushi claimed he could not live in such a beautiful, idyllic place, since he would forget his duty amidst such peace. The story is widely considered apocryphal, since official historians hold that Bayushi only admitted weakness once in his life, but the tale is popular with the peasants of the valley.

Toku Torid-e

The Vigilant Keep of the Monkey is a modestly sized castle near the center of the long valley that composes the majority of the Monkey lands. While not an impressive structure when compared to the keeps of the Great Clans or even the older Minor Clans, the Vigilant Keep is a sturdy and serviceable structure, the result of not one but two reconstructions in its short history. Shortly after it was built, it was besieged by the forces of the Lying Darkness, and barely a decade later it was assaulted by the armies of the reborn Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum. Both times Toturi I came to his old friend's aid, ordering the castle's

reconstruction and funding it with Imperial resources. The Keep as it stands today is clearly designed with defense in mind, much like one of the smaller Crab castles. It also houses the largest of the three Monkey dojo, and recently has become the home of the Temple of the General, the first shrine to honor the clan's founder as a Fortune.

Vigilant Keep Dojo

The majority of the Monkey Clan's young samurai are taught here, within the Vigilant Keep itself, while the other two dojo serve primarily as advanced training sites for post-gempukku Monkey. The Vigilant Keep's senior sensei is Toku Doppo, an aging samurai who served with Toku during the Clan War and the time of the War Against the Darkness. Doppo, though well past retirement age, shows no signs of putting an end to his duty to the clan, a



fact that greatly annoys his twin sons, both eager to hear which of them will inherit their father's position as senior sensei at the dojo. Doppo prefers to teach his students by slow degrees, gradually increasing the difficulty of tasks until they are impossible, and then later revealing to surprised students that they have actually succeeded in their tests because they refused to quit. This has earned him a reputation as deceitful and mean-spirited, but no one denies the efficacy of his method.

The Diligent Estate of the Monkey

The first holding of the Monkey Clan was an abandoned Imperial Legion barracks complex in Otsan Uchi. After the creation of the Monkey Clan, Toturi I decreed the Monkey would reside in the barracks until more suitable lands could be found. The Monkey operated out of this complex for two years, until they were given the Vale of Father and Daughter. The clan maintained a presence in the capital via the Diligent Estate right up until Daigotsu's destruction of Otsan Uchi. Abandoned now, like the rest of the fallen city, the Diligent Estate sees no further use by the Monkey Clan, though if the city were to be rebuilt, the Clan would almost certainly be interested in reclaiming their first home.

Heroes of the Monkey

TOTURI KYOJI, MONKEY CLAN CHAMPION

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

Honor: 4.2 Status: 7.5 Glory: 4.5

ADVANTAGES: Social Position (Minor Clan Daimyo), Kharmic Tie (Toku Koto), Leadership

SKILLS: Athletics 5, Defense 4, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 1, Investigation (Search) 5, Jujutsu 1, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Bushido 4, Lore: History 5, Lore: Ronin Organizations 4

The eldest son of the Monkey Clan's first Champion, Kyoji has labored under the shadow of his famous father for much of his life. There was some question as to whether



Kyoji or his elder sister would inherit the championship, but Miyako's choice to swear her service to Toturi Tsudao and command the First Legion took her to a different career, and placed Kyoji in the position of heir apparent.

Kyoji has had a reputation as something of a prodigy since his gempukku, where he defeated a far superior opponent, the bandit lord Hayaku, a situation engineered by his father to test his mettle. He has few enemies in the Empire, for he is most commonly known for his valiant service in the Imperial Legions and the part he played in mitigating the damage the Bloodspeakers did to Gisei Toshi. His recent elevation to the status of Clan Champion, and his marriage to Akodo Minako, has brought him to the world of politics faster than he was perhaps ready, and he worries almost constantly about his lack of aptitude in the courts. This concern is perhaps colored by his mother Inao's vivid descriptions of her youthful days in the Imperial Court, serving the Scorpion Clan as a courtier.

Kyoji is capable and confident on the battlefield or in the magistrate's office, but he is reserved and silent when facing matters beyond his ken. He relies increasingly on his karo, Toku Kaoba, to guide him through any proceedings that seem dangerous. Kaoba has noticed his daimyo's discomfort, and has begun to take advantage of his lord's doubt. While loyalty prevents Kaoba from abusing Kyoji's trust too far, there may come a day when he will be unable to resist advising in his own interest before anyone else's.

TOKU BUTAKA, CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD AT THE VIGILANT KEEP

Air: 3 **Earth:** 4 **Fire:** 4 **Water:** 3 **Void:** 3
Honor: 3.2 **Status:** 3.0 **Glory:** 3.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Toku Bushi 3 / Emerald Magistrate 1

DISADVANTAGES: Dark Secret (Kolai), Idealistic

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Courtier 2, Deceit 3, Defense 3, Hunting 1, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Search) 4, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: History 4

By all appearances, Toku Butaka's star is rising. Recently appointed Captain of the Guard at the Vigilant Keep of the Monkey, he is also the Toku who has performed best on his admission exams for the Emerald Magistrates. He is the picture of the modern successful Minor Clansman, a smart and capable samurai who performs his duties well and has enough glory and land to take his pick of potential brides.

Butaka owes a great deal of his success to discriminating advice from others. Ever since his gempukku, it seems, Butaka has always made the right choices regarding his duty and career, but this is because he has always had good counsel passed to him by his father and friends. He trusts his father implicitly, because he knows the truth regarding the Emerald Empire: it labors under the tyranny of a fear-based autocracy that uses the threat of demons and judgment from on high to keep both samurai and peasant in line. Butaka and his father, and no doubt soon his younger brother, are all members of the only organization that will stand up to the celestially-mandated injustice of rule by the Kami's descendants: the Kolat.

While Butaka is aware of the Kolat cult's secret nature and knows his membership would spell his death if it were ever revealed, he is good at keeping secrets, and believes the cause of the conspiracy is ultimately just, even if it does require significant sacrifice and underhanded tactics. His father is a veteran of the Tiger Sect who came to the Monkey Clan as a ronin, winning a position of respect due to his formidable skill at arms and almost encyclopedic knowledge of the laws of the Scorpion lands – knowledge learned with the aid of Dream Sect magic. Butaka himself is being groomed for a position with the Lotus or Tiger Sect, and he has not even allowed the conspiracy's recent defeat by the Scorpion to shake his faith in its goals and ultimate victory.

TOKU KOTO, MINOR CLAN OFFICER

Air: 2 **Earth:** 3 **Fire:** 2 **Water:** 2 **Void:** 3
Willpower: 4 Agility: 3
Honor: 2.8 **Status:** 6.0 **Glory:** 2.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Toku Bushi 1

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Togashi Jusai, 1/2 and Togashi Teijo 1/2), Great Destiny, Kharmic Tie (Toturi Kyoji), Social Position (Shireikan in the Army of the Alliance)

DISADVANTAGES: Gullible

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Battle: 1, Defense 1, Games: 1, Hunting 1, Investigation (Search) 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Bushido 1, Lore: History 3

Of the four children the great hero Toku fathered, all are remarkable in some way – Kyoji for inspiring his fellows to greatness, Miyako for her loyalty and honor, Kiyuko for her startling insight for one so young, and Koto for being so much like his father. When they were younger, Kyoji and Koto were inseparable, and although they

fought like many brothers do, in the end they always stood beside each other. When Kyoji went with their father to defend Gisei Toshi, Koto was left behind, deemed too young (and too valuable) to risk on the conflict. He was angry that he was not allowed to aid his father, but also very aware of why, and he did as he was told. And because of this, he met a pair of monks.

Togashi Teijo and Togashi Jusai were mendicant monks, traveling the western Empire. When they arrived in the Monkey lands, they stayed for quite some time, apparently believing they would soon find something or someone of great note. It wasn't until they'd met Koto that they were certain. Togashi Teijo has always known he has a unique ability to sense people whom Fate has chosen for greatness, and he instantly lighted on the new Monkey Clan Champion's younger brother.

The two monks are now never far from Koto's side. It unnerves the young bushi that these two ise zumi won't leave him alone, but they are usually harmless and have provided sterling advice to him on a number of occasions. Other Monkey samurai wonder why the two monks are never far from their daimyo's brother, and whispers are beginning to circulate. Some say they're a gift from Togashi Satsu, payment for a favor done the Dragon Champion.

Since Koto's promotion to shireikan in the Army of the Alliance, he has been thrust into the spotlight, since he is the youngest shireikan currently serving active duty in the Empire. His monk followers have made him something of a celebrity there, too, and more experienced commanders in Koto's unit grumble that it is his brother and the monks who are to blame for his prestigious appointment, not any ability of his to command on the field of battle. Koto knows there are many who are dissatisfied with him. He studies his father's copy of *Leadership* day and night, hoping he won't make a fool of himself on the battlefield, and consults the two monks to make certain he won't make a fool of himself when speaking to his elders.

He has yet to do any such thing, nor does he appear to be in any danger of doing so. If the Army of the Alliance is ever mobilized, though – that might be a different story.

Playing a Monkey

The Monkey Clan occupies a strange place in the Emerald Empire. They are Imperial Magistrates entrusted with considerable power — in this respect, a Monkey samurai has even more authority than a typical Great Clan samurai — but their position as the favored sons of a dynasty now dead puts them on much shakier footing than they had at their creation.

Currently, no Great Clan or Minor Clan calls the Monkey an enemy, since the samurai of the Monkey conduct themselves with exceptional care in public. All three daimyo in the clan's short history have had the benefit of good counsel from the Otomo and the Scorpion regarding politics. The peasants of the Empire are also generally friendly to them, as one of the Monkey Clan's purposes, apart from enforcing the laws of the Empire, is to watch for exploitation of the peasantry by the samurai caste.

Most samurai in the Emerald Empire think of the Toku Family when they think of the Monkey Clan, and they think of the great force of ronin and Imperial Guardsmen that Toturi I commanded before he became Emperor. While there are many in the Empire that may find the Monkey distasteful professionally or personally, the sensible always step lightly around them. They may not be fearsome as a clan, but they do represent Imperial authority, and today's dismissal of a Monkey magistrate may bring tomorrow's Imperial Legion to occupy one's territory. If a Monkey believes that an action is necessary, he will take it. There are few things in Ningen-do that will stop a Toku who has set his mind on something.

The Fuzake Family, while completely inextricable from the Monkey, occupy a very different place in the minds of the other samurai families of the Empire. Founded by a former Crab who sought to bring peace, harmony, and healing to the Empire, the Fuzake rarely find a negative reputation preceding them. They most often show up as attachés of the Imperial Legions or Imperial Magistrates, acting to help heal the land and people of the ills of war and lawlessness. Consequently, they enjoy welcoming receptions where they go — after all, they save the peasants heartache and the daimyo time and money. Very few samurai would interfere with a Fuzake performing his duties — even if he is dead



set against the Fuzake's stated goals, the interference is likely to prompt an investigation from Monkey magistrates, which is almost always more trouble than it is worth.

The Crab Clan views the Monkey through the lens of their duty to the Empire. Thus, the Crab are generally in favor of the Monkey, since their duties rarely intersect and when they do, the Crab and the Monkey are usually on the same side. The Crab Clan rarely comes into conflict with the Monkey, and nine times out of ten, the Monkey are fully welcome in Crab lands, provided they have the right papers.

The Crane Clan has a rockier relationship with the Monkey, since they are aware it is their koku that funded the establishment of the Monkey in the Scorpion lands, taken from their coffers by the Darkness-possessed Toturi I. Some members of the clan have poorer fathers because of the Emperor's fiat, and the presence of a Monkey magistrate can serve as a reminder of that fact. The Crane also believe they take good care of the peasants in their lands, and dislike having Monkey magistrates looking into their

heimin affairs. Thus, every aspect of the Monkey Clan's charter is slightly harder to pursue in the Crane lands.

The Dragon Clan has little to do with the Monkey due to the bad blood between the Toku Family and the Kitsuki Family. The Kitsuki, the diplomats of the Dragon, look down on the Monkey's belief that the goodwill of the common people should come before all else. They view the Monkey as a tool of the Imperial Families in keeping Rokugan complacent, and their willingness to provide pleasant fictions rather than the truth is anathema to Kitsuki philosophy. This disagreement has so far only resulted in frosty stares across the room, but a precipitating event could happen at any time.

The Lion Clan looks with mixed feelings on the Monkey. Though most find it distasteful that the Monkey Clan was founded by a heimin pretending to be ronin, it was also formed by Toturi I's order, and so their existence is entirely lawful and honorable. The Akodo Family is particularly warm with the Monkey, since many Akodo are the sons or

grandsons of ronin who marched with Toturi I and were raised on stories of valiant redemption, not to mention the marriage of the current Toku Daimyo to an Akodo. However, the Lion dislike the Monkey Clan's tendency to interfere in relations between samurai and peasant. To the Lion, it is the duty of the peasants to labor, and they should endure any suffering with the same stoic dedication to duty as the samurai who rule over them and protect them. Excessive Monkey compassion can thus sometimes lead to friction with a clan with whom they otherwise should enjoy good relations.

The Mantis Clan is as about as far as one can get from the Monkey and still be in the Empire, so the two have little contact outside the wandering bounty hunters of the Tsuruchi, who maintain a diffident silence toward the Monkey and their methods. Whether this stems from

disagreement, as it apparently does with the Dragon, or simple indifference, only the Tsuruchi can say.

The Phoenix Clan also has few dealings with the Monkey. Most often the two clans meet when a plea reaches Imperial ears, and the Imperial Court dispatches a Monkey magistrate to investigate claims in the Phoenix lands. These sorts of problems have been much rarer in recent years, however, now that the City of Blood has been cleansed.

The Monkey's relations with the Scorpion have always been defined as tenuously friendly. The Scorpion are well aware that the Monkey Clan lands were once theirs, but as they were banished from the Empire at the time, they do not generally hold this against the Monkey so much as they held it against the Imperial Chancellor Takuan (whose seppuku ended the matter for them). The Monkey



Clan is dedicated to justice and harmony, but they are willing to bend or break laws to achieve it, much like the Scorpion Clan's own approach to its duties. Consequently, the two Clans find themselves agreeing philosophically if not methodologically. Several political marriages between the Monkey and Scorpion have cemented their peaceful relations, including Toku's marriage to Shosuro Inao and Toturi Miyako's marriage to Bayushi Paneki.

The Unicorn Clan have a quiet but tense relationship with the Monkey. The Unicorn received numerous prestigious appointments in the Emerald Magistrates in the first year of Toturi I's reign, and their new clan charter named them as enforcers of the Empire's laws, but a great deal of their thunder was stolen by the creation of the Monkey. While professionally quite cool towards the Monkey, all other aspects of their relationship are healthy, as the Unicorn are a clan with a very low incidence of peasant exploitation.

New Mechanics

New Path: Fuzake Diplomat

The Fuzake are a former vassal family of the Monkey, and while they were elevated to full family status by decree of the late Empress Kurako, they still play a specialized role in support of the clan's activities, much like the vassal families of other clans. In the Fuzake's case, they accompany Monkey magistrates into delicate situations where negotiation and healing the consequences of conflict are likely to be just as useful as righteous force.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 1

PATH OF ENTRY: None. This is an entry-level Path

PATH OF EGRESS: Minor Clan Diplomat 1, Traditional Priest 1

BENEFIT: +1 Awareness

SKILLS: Courtier (Political Maneuvering), Deceit, Lore (History), Medicine, Storytelling, any two High or Bugei skills

OUTFIT: As School of Egress

Technique: Cheer and Calm

The Fuzake Family is composed of samurai who seek justice as all Monkey do, but their methods focus on more

creative solutions and on ending disputes before they can escalate. Their self-effacing techniques disarm opponents by their choice rather than through skill of arms. You gain 1 Free Raise on all Courtier Skill Rolls (unless you are using the Political Maneuvering Emphasis, in which case you receive 2 Free Raises). You also gain a +2k0 bonus to the number of Wounds you heal with Medicine Skill Rolls.

New Item: Armor of Light

It is unknown where the ronin Tsujin acquired this wondrous nemuranai, and it is also unknown why he offered it to Toku after being accepted into the Monkey Clan in the year 1157. But the first Champion of the Monkey accepted the gift gratefully, and he put the armor to good use whenever the Monkey took to the battlefield.

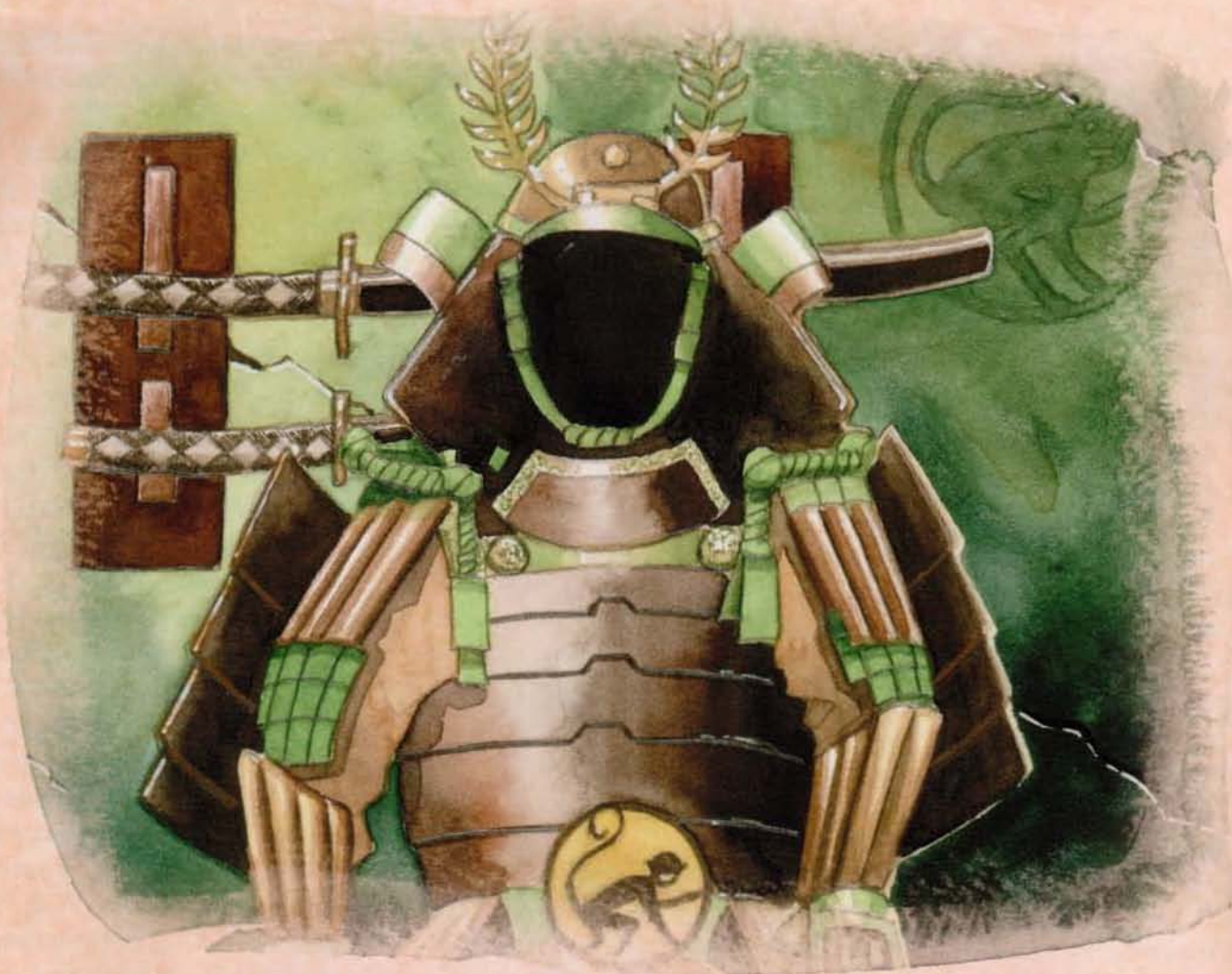
The Armor of Light is a suit of predominantly yellow armor, nicked and dented from many battles, but still very serviceable. Only when it is worn does its power truly shine. When worn during a skirmish, it glows faintly (just barely enough to read by at night), and seems to constrict around its wearer slightly more snugly than proper Heavy Armor should. Though a tight fit, it is remarkably flexible.

When you wear the Armor of Light, you gain the normal protection of Heavy Armor, but suffer none of the Skill Roll penalties normally associated with Heavy Armor. You also gain two Ranks of Magic Resistance (this does not stack if you already have the Magic Resistance Advantage). Finally, all successful attacks against you and all damage-dealing spells cast against you suffer a -1k0 DR penalty.

New Item: Armor of the Monkey Clan

By Imperial order, a dozen suits of armor were forged as gifts from the Great Clans for the newly formed Monkey Clan. Now in the custody of the twelve most important members of the Clan, the Armors of the Monkey Clan are seen as universal symbols of the authority given to the Monkey by the Toturi Dynasty. Though most often on display as ancestral treasures in the Vigilant Keep, they are occasionally worn into battle or used when the clan needs to emphasize its authority as Imperial Magistrates.

Wearing a suit of the Armor of the Monkey Clan grants you a +2k0 bonus to all Courtier Skill Rolls, as the prestige of the Toturi Dynasty all but radiates from it.



New Item: Magistrate's Blades

The companion pieces to the Armors of the Monkey Clan, the Magistrate's Blades are a set of a dozen katana forged in the Kakita smithing tradition, created as mandatory 'gifts' to the Monkey by Toturi I's edict. They have a monkey motif on their tsuba, making them easily identifiable as belonging to Monkey magistrates.

The Magistrate's Blades are fine quality katana which grant the wielder a Free Raise on the Awareness/Jaijutsu Roll made during the Assessment phase of a duel. However, this effect only works if the opponent's Honor is lower than the wielder's Honor.

New Kata: Body Clears Mind

PREPARATION TIME: 15 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

Similar to the ritualized mind-focusing Watchful Falcon employed by the Crane Clan, Body Clears Mind is a technique developed by Toku Mokoto, one of the most diligent followers of Toku during the early days of the Mon-

key. Mokoto was familiar with many kata, and he was among the first to grasp the full curriculum of the Thousand Years of Steel. His own creations see frequent use in the Monkey Clan and with the Emerald Magistrates. The constant repetition of motions necessary for the kata tells the mind that the body is busy elsewhere, and so the mind can devote its resources to the senses. The unfortunate downside of this focused state of mind is that it makes the performer much slower to act, as he must break out of the repetitive patterns in which his body now moves.

RANK: Toku Bushi 2 or Emerald Magistrate 1

COST: 4

SPECIAL: None

EFFECT: For the kata's duration, you gain the benefit of the Clear Thinker Advantage. If you already possess the Clear Thinker Advantage, you are not limited by your Void or Skill when making Raises on Perception Raw Trait and Perception-based Skill Rolls. However, you suffer a -10 penalty to your TN to Be Hit for the duration of the kata.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM

THE
ORIOLE CLAN

History of the Oriole

The newest of Rokugan's clans has not had much time to make its mark, and its history is best told not as a timeline of events, but as a story. The Oriole were created in the year 1167 by the grateful Toturi III, elevating a family of noble blacksmiths. Before that time, they were considered members of the Emperor's Family, and really more like servants of the Emperor than nobility of their own. Indeed, they did not even begin as a family, merely as a smith who passed his name on to all of his apprentices. From those humble beginnings, the fortunes of the Oriole were made.

The clan founder — if he can be described as such — lived during the time of Hantei XXX, working as the unassuming servant of a Crane artisan named Kakita Harunobu. His name was merely Tsi, and he was a ronin from a long line of ronin. He claimed some Kaiu ancestry, which may have explained his skill at the forge, but any pretense to rank or nobility was long gone from his line. He was working in a peasant village, forging plows and keeping the farmer's tools in order, when Harunobu came upon him during a journey to Otsan Uchi. Harunobu was no warrior, but he had a deep affinity for the artistry

of blades, and as he watched Tsi he was struck by the immense skill with which the man worked the metal.

Several years later, Harunobu encountered a samurai from the Lion Clan who aided his entourage in fighting off some bandits. As the Lion cleaned the blood from his blade, Harunobu recognized the work of the humble smith he had witnessed so long ago. He asked the Lion where he had gotten the sword. The Lion replied "some ronin" had forged it for him when his first katana had shattered in battle, and then proceeded to describe Tsi exactly. Harunobu was so excited that he and his entourage turned around and immediately made for the village where he had first met the smith. He found the man calmly repairing a pair of hoes and asked immediately if he had ever forged any weapons.

"Yes," Tsi answered, bowing low. "This humble one once served the Lion Clan, and forged katana for them." Stunned, Harunobu asked why he hadn't mentioned this the last time they met. Tsi replied that the Lion did not consider his work worthy since he was a ronin. He did not feel it was proper to "burden" the Crane with his "dishonor." Harunobu immediately offered to make the man his apprentice, set him up in the Kakita palaces, and ensure that he never had to touch a farming tool again. Tsi agreed, but only if the Crane paid the villagers a stipend for the services they would lose.

Initially, the rest of the Kakita Family thought their cousin had gone insane when he brought this grubby ronin home to forge swords for him. Their scorn soon

vanished, however, when they saw the weapons produced. Tsi's skills at weaponsmithing were initially rusty from misuse, but with Harunobu's guidance, they soon equaled those of any Crane smith. His weapons were designed primarily for ceremonial use, but they had a heft and balance that rivaled the best of the Crab and Lion Clans. Tsi approached each one as an individual work of art, adding nearly invisible touches that marked the weapon like a fingerprint. Under Harunobu's tutelage, his work was soon in demand by the entire family, and then by all of Rokugan.

Ironically, the man who discovered Tsi had only a few months to enjoy his new apprentice before Hantei XXX himself swooped in. Hearing of this wondrous new smith, the Emperor commissioned the creation of a blade for his son, and Harunobu dared not give the task to anyone but himself and Tsi. The resulting katana and saya were a masterpiece, and the Hantei was so taken by them that he immediately ordered Tsi to the Imperial Palace, where he would work only for the Imperial Family from that moment forth.

His descendants were permitted to keep the name of Tsi so long as they served the Emperor. However, because his duties were so specific, the name was not merely a matter of birth. Instead, it went to smiths of proper skill who worked for him — the aides and apprentices whose abilities matched his own. The tradition continues to the present day: Those chosen to work for the Tsi Family have the honor of taking the name, while those of the family by birth who do not display sufficient skill with weapon-making become bodyguards, managers, and household diplomats.

The Tsi Family continued to work exclusively for the Emperor for many years, forbidden to create weapons for anyone else without the ruling Hantei's explicit permission. Many Tsi blades were given out as gifts, but none could be forged without the Emperor's decree and every blade needed to pass through a Hantei's hands before it could touch any others. To receive a Tsi blade was an incalculable honor, and even the Kaiu blacksmiths admitted the family's undeniable skill. At the height of the War in the Heavens, the greatest among the Tsi — an apprentice to the daimyo named Tsi Xing Guo — was permitted to ascend to Tengoku, and became the Fortune of Steel. He created the Celestial Swords, which replaced the Ancestral Swords that Shinjo had taken to the Heavens. This marked a high point in the family's history, and many Oriole still revere Tsi Xing Guo as the greatest in their line.

But as precipitous as the family's rise in fortunes was, they were still inextricably bound to the Emperor — and

by extension to Ootosan Uchi, which was then the Imperial City. When Daigotsu attacked the city, the Tsi were among his targets, and the family suffered grievously at the hands of his frightful oni. The Tsi Family Daimyo was slain in the destruction of Ootosan Uchi, but his nephew Tsi Zutaka quickly organized the survivors.

A few years afterward, a sect of Ninube ninja kidnapped Zutaka along with many of those who had survived Daigotsu's onslaught, holding them prisoner in the ruins of Ootosan Uchi. There, the Ninube instructed them to create new weapons — weapons which the ninja would wield against their enemies as a part of their sinister scheme against the Empire. The gambit served two functions: Not only would the new katana be the finest ever produced, but the sight of the Emperor's favored blades held in the hands of the Ninube would fill the people of Rokugan with despair. They believed the Tsi Family to be weak and helpless — coddled by centuries of life under the Emperor's protection and too afraid of the Ninube to fight back. Their beliefs proved disastrously unfounded.

From the beginning, Zutaka planned to resist, but he did not dare reveal this openly to his family members, lest the Ninube overhear it. Instead, he did what his family had always done — let his work speak for him. He forged the first sword as asked by the Ninube leader. The katana was a product of infinite cunning... though not in the way the ninja believed. On the surface, it appeared unmatched, but the blade was deliberately weakened in several key points. None but the Tsi could detect the flaws, and when Zutaka handed it to the ninja leader and pronounced, "This is my finest work," they understood what needed to be done.

For the next year, the Tsi were forced to make weapons for their masters: each one subtly flawed despite its surface appearance. Their efforts quietly sabotaged the Ninube's efforts, foiling a number of operations when the ninja's weapons were unable to counter proper Rokugani blades. Zutaka knew they ran a terrible risk in doing so — if the Ninube ever found out, the family would be killed to a man — but he refused to let his life's purpose be turned against the Empire.

He took another chance as well, one which appeared even more foolish. Among the booty the ninjas seized from Ootosan Uchi was the sacred blade of Toturi I — the weapon that pierced the heart of Fu Leng at the end of the Second Day of Thunder. The Ninube intended to reveal it at a time conducive to their plans. But working in secret and at great personal risk, Zutaka forged a copy of



the weapon and switched it with the real one. The actual sword was hidden beneath his anvil and once again, the Ninube never noticed the difference.

Respite came when several groups of samurai, including Scorpion, Unicorn, and the Jade Champion Asahina Sekawa, tracked the Ninube to their lair in the ruins of Otsan Uchi. They found Zutaka a prisoner, and quickly located the rest of the Tsi Family in their smithy. The Tsi had been thought dead and their survival came as a pleasant surprise. When Toturi III heard about how they had sabotaged the ninja's weapons — and even better, secured the sword of his father from corruption and dishonor — he immediately issued a decree. No longer would the Tsi Family serve the Emperor alone. No longer would they be the sole relations of the Imperial Family. They had done much for the Empire, even with the threat of death looming over their heads, and thus their services should belong to all of Rokugan. He elevated them to the status of a Minor Clan, with Zutaka at its head, and gave them the name of Oriole.

Customs of the Oriole

The Oriole Clan is such a new entity that it has hardly had any time to develop any customs or traditions of its own. It was originally, at least in theory, a part of the Hantei Family — recognized as the Emperor's kin despite the Tsi name — and its customs always reflected those of the Imperial Court. They were servants, pure and simple, charged with creating the best swords they could and rewarded with money and fame to benefit their craft. Beyond that, the family simply didn't require anything. They didn't even have a fortress of their own: just a series of households in Otsan Uchi where they could meet with each other and discuss their craft.

Their sudden Minor Clan status has forced them to adjust in a hurry. Kakita artisans designed a mon for them, and tailors were summoned to provide a distinct set of clothing to wear on public occasions. They have a clan stronghold of sorts—a hastily converted family household in the heart of the new capital, Toshi Ranbo—but have barely had time to lay claim to their new lands, much less build anything upon them. Everything about their culture feels a little cobbled together, waiting for time and tradition to slowly cement themselves.

Accordingly, many Oriole Clan members embrace themes of change and transition. Though their mon represents a bird, a number of Oriole have adopted a butterfly motif in their clothing and décor. They use it to emphasize their gradual transformation from unassuming servants into a full-bore clan. The cocoon rarely looks impressive, they remind outsiders, until the beautiful creature emerges from within. In time, they believe their clan's achievements will stand among the greatest in all of Rokugan.

The Great Clans still don't know what to make of them. Unlike the Tortoise and similar "dishonorable" groups, however, this dismissal stems not from condescension or disapproval. Indeed, the Oriole are held in high esteem by the majority of Rokugan, and their fortunes only rose further when word of Zutaka's heroism spread. But many still think of them as members of the Imperial Family, and treating them as a Minor Clan all their own will take some getting used to.

The clan's oral history and tradition consists largely of stories about fantastic weapons—forging the katana that some hero used in a great duel, or creating the tetsubo that crushed the skull of an infamous oni. The clan founder, Tsi, was noted for his humility and attention to detail, and the Oriole strive to live up to his example. The ascension of Tsi Xing Guo is a matter of considerable pride among the Oriole, and almost all of their households have a shrine devoted to the Fortune of Steel. Blacksmiths say a prayer to him before beginning any work, and the shavings and cast-off steel from any katana they forge are left at one of his shrines as an offering.

Swords and weapons are all the Oriole live for. They view the katana the way other artisans view a poem or a piece of calligraphy. It exists not as a tool or a weapon, but as a work of art. Many of them shudder to think of their blades being put to any practical use, the same way a painter would cringe to see one of his works used as a window shade. Accordingly, much of their work serves strictly ceremonial purposes, which they often stipulate

before they will accept a commission. The few weapons they do consent to forge for warlike purposes are only given to the greatest heroes and daimyo—those who have proven their worth in battle and who will (hopefully) bring great honor to the Oriole through their deeds.

Clan members who lack the talent for blacksmithing are treated as second-class citizens. Daimyo shunt them off into unimportant duties or demand they serve their brothers and sisters as yojimbo. Some of them take to the way of the bushi with gusto, hoping to earn respect by wielding weapons which they could never gain by forging them. Others follow different forms of creative expression, learning music or calligraphy from the Kakita and adopting their house style. Either way, their path is long and often frustrating. Other clans view them as (at best) second-rate successes, while their fellow Oriole continue to deride them for their lack of weaponcrafting skills. Resentment has a tendency to build in such circumstances, and with their status as members of the Imperial Family gone, some "lesser" Oriole have joined other clans rather than submit to the jeers and insults of their brethren.

That situation may slowly be changing. Tsi Zutaka realizes that the new clan needs to fill a number of important positions which a mere noble family does not. If the Oriole Clan is to thrive, it will require skilled diplomats, brave warriors, and wise shugenja, not merely blacksmiths. He has taken steps to fill such positions within his clan, and believes the imbalance will be corrected in the long run. Until then, however, the Oriole will continue to endure certain growing pains... and a number of otherwise skilled clan members may depart because they do not feel that they receive any respect from their peers.

Craftsmanship remains the central part of the Orioles' nascent culture. They hold a number of fairs every year allowing smiths from different clans to display their work. Contests are held to see which blade is the sharpest, which axe the strongest, and so on. A fierce but moderately friendly rivalry with the Kaiu Family has sprung up around these festivals, and many Crane and Lion artisans are eager to demonstrate their prowess as well. The Oriole have only held a few fairs thus far, but they believe it holds great promise for future good relations with other clans.

Lands of the Oriole

The Oriole lands consist of tiny territories scattered across Rokugan. The majority lie close to Toshi Ranbo, converted from family holdings and nearby lands of the Imperial Families. But they also hold ceded lands as far south as the Kaiu Wall and as far north as the Unicorn plains. None of their holdings are particularly large, and most are completely surrounded by the holdings of some greater entity. When taken together, however, they constitute a fair amount of land.

In some ways, this suits the Oriole extremely well. Their weapons are in demand all across the Empire, and a large number of tiny territories means that they can deliver them anywhere with speed and efficiency. Every Oriole province has at least a few forges, and the smiths who work them invariably live up to their clan's reputation. Payment comes quickly, and the Oriole have proven extremely adept at conferring it to their clan's coffers with a minimum of fuss.

On the other hand, their scattershot territory has created new problems which few of them considered when the clan began. Many of their provinces are difficult to defend, and the Oriole currently lack the manpower to provide adequate guards. Communication is a problem as well, since individual messengers must spend weeks traveling from spot to spot. Should one province come under attack, it will be extremely difficult for their kinsmen to deliver aid, and with the Oriole's emphasis on smithing over fighting, the number of loyal bushi in their ranks remains dangerously low.

For now, their Clan Champion has taken to hiring ronin to protect their borders — with promises of allowing them clan membership if they do their jobs well. At the moment, the risks are modest, for the Tsi retain the sheen of the Imperial Family, and other clans have not yet truly separated them from the Emperor in their minds. But as time goes on and the Empire accepts the notion that they are no longer truly Imperials, their checkerboard holdings may come under considerable threat.

Most pieces of Oriole territory comprise a few peaceful villages situated along a major road. Commerce is of great importance to the Oriole, and the further they get

from well-guarded trade routes, the more precarious their position becomes. Furthermore, it suits the entire Empire to have ready access to their forges, so the Emperor wisely chose territories that would be comparatively easy to reach.

Beyond the smithies, the most important Oriole holdings are its iron mines — granted to them by both the Emperor and the Crab Clan — which lie along the Spine of the World Mountains. In the past, they needed to rely on Yasuki traders and other merchants for their raw materials. But as they are thrust into the complexities of clan politics, they dare not trust outsiders with their livelihoods. The mines are closely guarded and caravans containing raw iron are watched by the clan's elite.

The Oriole's most notably unique holding is the temple to their patron Fortune, located on the outskirts of one of their new mines. The monks who live here are an offshoot of the Order of Osano-Wo, and apply their insight towards developing new and harder forms of steel. They live here at the behest of the Oriole, who took over the territory from the Emperor, and were happy to let the monks stay so long as they shared their techniques with them. The arrangement has proven quite beneficial, and the monks expect to receive a number of retired Oriole samurai into their ranks as the clan matures.

Tsi Uchi

The Clan headquarters is in Toshi Ranbo, and is really more of a prosperous merchant house than a true fortress. Indeed, the Oriole refer to it as a house, not a castle. The large building is surrounded by a high gated wall, and the grounds are dominated by rock gardens decorated in shades of gray. The stones on the walkways have a steely consistency to them and the interior of the building is decorated with weapons and katana motifs. A number of stunning swords hang carefully from the walls, and the Champion's private rooms contain an elaborate shrine to the Fortune of Steel. The central courtyard is devoted to elaborate testing mechanisms used to gauge a given weapon's strength, and the clan often throws parties here to demonstrate the beauty and reliability of their blades.

Yet for all the overt military motifs of the place, it lacks certain protective fundamentals. The soldiers on duty are well dressed and drill smartly, but understand little of combat. The house is organized with aesthetics in mind, rather than protection. A number of samurai (mostly Lion and Crab) quietly comment on how easy it would be to seize it, and how the Oriole have failed to realize certain

basic notions of defense. That is hardly a big concern in the heart of the Imperial City, of course, but given the clan's militaristic decorations, it does seem odd.

Zutaka has plans for a new clan stronghold — Kyuden Tsi — located a short distance away from the Imperial City. The ground has been chosen and architects engaged, but it may be years before the fortress is finally built. Thankfully, resources don't seem to be a problem. Commissions from the clan's work have given Zutaka quite a bit of financial leverage and he intends to create his family's new home in a manner worthy of the greatest of clans.

The Ruins of Ootosan Uchi

The Oriole also maintain a presence in the ruins of Ootosan Uchi, though only in very small numbers. The city was their home for many years and some of them returned to it after their ordeal with the Ninube ninja. It remains a dangerous place, and they have had to dwell in refurbished peasants' huts, but they consider it a point of honor to be there. They are a clan now, and Ootosan Uchi was the closest thing to ancestral lands they ever had.

The weapons they forge here go exclusively to the Yotsu Family, protecting the residents against oni incursions. The Tortoise Clan has quietly protested the monopoly — they would dearly love to acquire some Oriole blades of their own — but the Oriole have demurred and the Emperor has backed them. Oriole Clan weapons in Ootosan Uchi are always made with jade in the hilt.

Ninube Stronghold

There is one more place which the Oriole claim as their own, though it is quite remote and holds little strategic value. It is the abandoned hideout of the Ninube ninja, where most of the clan's surviving members were held hostage for over a year. Zutaka requested it specifically from the Emperor and erected a shrine there dedicated to the family members who died during their captivity. An inn has been erected a short distance away, catering solely to pilgrims who come to make offerings at the shrine. Oriole Clan members are admonished to journey here at least once every five years and pay homage to their fallen brethren. A fair number of Scorpion shugenja journey here as well, looking for any lingering signs of the Lying Darkness.

Heroes of the Oriole

TSI ZUTAKA, ORIOLE CLAN CHAMPION

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

Honor: 4.9	Status: 7.5	Glory: 6.1
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SCHOOL/RANK: Tsi Blacksmith 5

ADVANTAGES: Ebisu's Blessing, Leadership, Strength of the Earth

DISADVANTAGES: Lechery 1

SKILLS: Anatomy 2, Athletics 3, Calligraphy 3, Commerce 5, Craft: Armorsmith 5, Craft: Weaponsmith (Katana) 5, Etiquette 3, Instruction: Weaponsmith 4, Jiu-jitsu 2, Ken-jitsu 3, Lore: History 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4

Zutaka was an honored member of the Tsi Family and a blacksmith without peer, but he never aspired to become the head of his Family. His uncle Matsuo was a fine leader and his son stood to inherit the family mantle when he died. For Zutaka, it was enough simply to work at producing the finest weapons he could while enjoying life in Ootosan Uchi.

Then the attack from Daigotsu came. In an instant, everything Zutaka knew was wiped out. Matsuo and his family died screaming as a gibbering oni rampaged through their home. The surviving members of the Tsi were left panicked and terrified, helpless to do anything but watch as the city burned to the ground. It was Zutaka who took the initiative: gathering the survivors around him and handing out the weapons for which his family was renowned.

"We made them," he told his brethren. "Now we have to use them."

Under his guidance, they were able to fight their way clear of the city and move towards what they hoped would be safety.

It was not to be. A few years later the Ninube hunted down the refugee Tsi and took them to a remote fortress to make swords for them. Once again, Zutaka's courage and resourcefulness saved them from death and dishonor. He conceived a plan to dupe the ninjas by forging standard weapons for them, while keeping several valuable heirlooms out of Ninube hands. When they were finally rescued a year later, there was no question who should lead their newborn Clan.

But Zutaka has found the burden of leadership much more difficult than he did in his early days. Those first few gambits were moments of desperate ingenuity, designed to save his people from an immediate threat. Now the problems are far more complex. The new clan is scattered across dozens of tiny territories, and can only coordinate activities with difficulty. Social schisms have lingered as well. Clan members unskilled in the blacksmith's arts have been relegated to second-class status, and many of them resent it. Zutaka realizes that the Oriole require a well-balanced mixture of skills, but getting others to see that has been hard.

To top it all off, the clan no longer has the status of Imperial Family members, and while a residual glow remains from that association, the Great Clans are beginning to realize that the Oriole are now just another Minor Clan to be moved about like a pawn on a shogi board.

Zutaka has answered these challenges as best he can. He accepted the Tortoise's invitation to join the Minor Clan Alliance, which has given him some political stability, and parlayed the Oriole's smithing skills into a financial windfall. Ronin have been hired to secure the clan's checkerboard territories, with promises of membership in the Oriole should they perform their duties with honor. For the moment, at least, he has achieved a modicum of security, within which his new clan can cement its identity. Still, there are days when he longs for the peace of his old life, when forging the next katana was his greatest concern and the burden of responsibility was left to better men than he.

Zutaka is middle-aged, but as yet shows little sign of losing the strength of his youth. His fine-boned features betray a hint of Crane blood, and though his muscles are strong, they also hold the delicacy of a true artisan. His hands move with swift assurance and his features never waver, even when faced with the thorniest of problems. Only when he is alone does the mask drop and lines of worry appear on his smooth face. He has few people in which to confide, for he must remain strong in front of his fellow Oriole and he dare not trust outsiders with his concerns.

He remains unmarried and knows that must change soon. The new Clan needs an heir and he needs someone to share the burden of leading the Tsi into the future. Until a bride can be arranged for him, he indulges in the geisha of Toshi Ranbo, who at least listen sympathetically and help ease his mind. Should spies ever learn which geisha he sees, however, they could learn a great deal about the new clan.

Tsi "YAJUU" YORITOKO, ORIOLE CLAN SAMURAI

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

Honor: 2.8 Status: 2.5 Glory: 2.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Tsi Blacksmith 2

DISADVANTAGES: Brash

KATA: Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Anatomy 2, Commerce 3, Craft: Armorsmith 2,

CRAFT: Weaponsmith 2, Etiquette 2, Heavy Weapons 3, Jujitsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: History 2

Tsi Yoritoko shares a birth name with the great Hida O-Ushi — heroine of the Clan War and former Crab Clan Champion. Like her namesake, she is fearless and headstrong, happy to provoke a fight with anyone for any reason. She also knew at a very early age that blacksmithing was not the life for her. She would far rather stand on the Kaiu Wall, fighting back oni with fire and steel, or standing watch over peasant villages in the face of a bandit attack. Her parents tried to dissuade her of these dreams, but frankly, they had only themselves to blame. Raised on tales of her heroine O-Ushi, Yoritoko would not be pulled from the path of the samurai.

The stars in her eyes faded when she got a taste of adulthood. Her family had been away from Otosan Uchi on a buying trip when the city fell to Daigotsu's legions. She spent the next few years searching without success for some sign of the surviving Tsi. While she never gave up hope, the fact that those from other clans ultimately rescued them weighs heavily in her mind. To others, it only proved the Tsi weren't cut out to be bushi. No matter what great deeds she accomplished, they could never erase the failure of not being there when her clan needed her.

The guilt and resentment have left an enormous chip on her shoulder, which she takes out on fellow Oriole as much as outsiders. Her fistfights with various cousins — mostly blacksmiths who made the mistake of treating her as hired help — became a scandal in Toshi Ranbo, and while she never actually killed anyone in a duel, observers believed it was only a matter of time. Her daimyo solved the problem by finding new duties for her — guarding the caravans which escorted payment from outlying Oriole territories to the clan's headquarters in the Imperial City. He allowed her to choose her own bushi to help in this assignment, and kept her responsibilities simple. Get the gold and anyone accompanying it to Toshi Ranbo safely. All other concerns are secondary.

It was a shrewd move on Zutaka's part. Not only did it get Yoritoko out of the courts (and away from potential scandal), but it placed her in a situation where her abrasiveness was a tangible advantage. She journeys across the Empire to any province needing an escort. On the road, her authority is absolute, and she never lets anyone forget it. To those Oriole traveling with the gold, she barks contemptuous orders which she expects them to obey to the letter: Sit down, shut up, and don't get in the way. Your comfort is secondary. Your problems are none of my concern. The only thing that matters is getting you and the money to safety... and when push comes to shove, the money gets a better seat in the cart.

She has been known to tie fellow clan members to the backs of pack animals rather than put up with condescension or complaint. The bushi beneath her all have similar attitudes — they too have felt the scorn of their clan — and make great sport out of mocking merchants and moneylenders every night on the road. The practice has made them few friends in Toshi Ranbo, and newly arrived Oriole complain at length about the indignities they suffered on the road. The practice has earned her a new nickname, one her heroine O-Ushi would definitely approve of — Yajuu, "the Beast."

Tsi Yajuu is a smallish woman, with a lithe athletic body more appropriate to a dancer than a samurai. Her limbs are extremely strong, however, the result of hours upon hours of unending practice. She wears her katana easily at her belt, and an axe or tetsubo is always slung across her back. She can dress appropriately for court if she needs to and has been educated in etiquette, which she grudgingly applies while in civilization. It allows her to detect veiled insults more easily. She invariably responds with threats of physical violence, shattering her thin façade of propriety like a china cup. She is much more comfortable on the road, where she spends eleven months out of the year. All the slights and stigma melt away out there, where the apparatus of social propriety has no hold over her. She has her job and the authority to do it as she sees fit. She still resents those in her clan who feel her unworthy of their mantle, but at least out there, they cannot harm her. She could hardly ask for anything more.

Playing an Oriole

The Oriole Clan hasn't been around long enough to give its members a strong sense of who and what they are supposed to be. They exist in a state of transition, neither the Imperial artisans they once were nor the clan they hope to become. Their attitude is often a mixture of old and new, gifted entitlement combined with a tremendous amount of uncertainty.

As honorary members of the Imperial Family, they expected a certain amount of deference. Others spoke to them with humility and respect, which bred a strong sense of entitlement over the years. At the same time, however, they were not strictly noblemen, but craftsmen, and their comparatively humble station helped curtail their more arrogant extremes. Their pride appeared most predominantly in their work, which they viewed as the culmination of their family's purpose. Insulting a Tsi sword is the same as insulting them, and in the past they could cause quite an uproar if they felt their work to be unappreciated. Beyond that, they expected to be treated as valued servants of the Emperor — mindful of their place in the hierarchy, but constantly exhibiting a certain smugness. It was a craftsman's station, to be sure, but none could fill it quite as well as they.

Their sense of security took a fatal blow with the destruction of Otosan Uchi and their subsequent kidnapping. Most of the Oriole's lords and daimyo were held captive by the Ninube, an experience which ripped the scales from their eyes and revealed what a façade their privileged existence had been. They emerged from the ordeal shaken and humbled, but also wiser as a result. From this position, they hope to build their new clan stronger than the Tsi ever were before.

The precise means of doing so remains a bit of a sticking point, however. Most of the clan leadership believes that they should focus solely on blacksmithing. Others, however — including the Clan Champion — understand that they must become more diverse if they hope to thrive. The status of clan members unskilled at the forge — and the fact that they may need to act as something other than servants — has become the source for heated debate within the Oriole territories. Traditionalists believe that doing so would sacrifice the very core of who they are, while more forward thinking Orioles maintain that they cannot survive without a better balance of skills.

New Mechanics

The clan takes steps to shield these debates from outsiders, but they lend a tentative and uncertain nature to many of its members. Oriole samurai are never sure just how they will be received when they visit other clans, or what posture they should adopt in Rokugan's complex social order. Their membership in the Minor Clan Alliance helps alleviate this somewhat, but they still move with excessive care through the ranks of the other nobles.

Oriole bushi, and those artisans not connected to blacksmithing, are even more insecure. They tend to cover it up with an undue sense of aggressiveness, seeking to prove to themselves that they are worthy of the weapons that ride on their hips. This insecurity belies the fact that many of them are very effective samurai and serve with honor and skill. They tend to prosper more the further away they are from Toshi Ranbo. In the outlying territories, the social contract changes, and they can demand equal treatment from clan members who presume to act as their betters.

In time, they believe that their early dysfunction will sort itself out. Once their identity catalyzes, they have every confidence in their ability to prosper, and even those who chafe under perceived slights from their peers express optimism about the future. Friends they have made outside of the clan speak of this as their most endearing quality, allowing them to easily overlook some of the Oriole's more exasperating quirks.

New Basic School: Tsi Blacksmith School (Bushi)

The Tsi are unparalleled blacksmiths and know swordcrafting like no one in the Empire save perhaps the Kaiu. Their skill has evolved from centuries of intense specialization, and indeed it is safe to say that the Oriole Clan would be nothing without it. Their traditions give them remarkable insight into weapons of war, and their blades can often translate into a tactical advantage on the battlefield.

BENEFIT: +1 Intelligence

HONOR: 2.5

SKILLS: Anatomy, Commerce, Craft (Armorsmithing), Craft (Weaponsmithing), Etiquette, Kenjutsu, Lore: History

OUTFIT: Katana, wakizashi, forging tools, blacksmith's hammer, blacksmith's apron, 2 kimonos, 2 pairs of sandals, traveling pack, 8 koku.



Techniques

RANK 1: HAND OF THE WEAPON

You gain the ability to forge Tsi blades (see below). Each blade takes between 1-10 weeks to create and you must perform no other activities during that period. In addition, Tsi training gives you an unusual instinctive feel for the heft and strength of any material object. You gain a bonus equal to your Ranks in any one Craft Skill to all Perception-based Skill Rolls involving an object that you currently hold in your hand.

RANK 2: EYE OF THE WEAPON

A Tsi blacksmith can tell at a glance which weapons are worth using and which have been unduly damaged. You may add a bonus equal your Weaponsmithing Skill to the totals of attack rolls made by a number of allies equal to your School Rank for the duration of a single skirmish combat. You must be within speaking distance of those allies to use this ability, and they must be capable of hearing you.

RANK 3: MIND OF THE WEAPON

Your knowledge of swordsmanship makes you very difficult to be hit, for you can spot the methods by which the wielder moves his blade. You gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to twice your Fire Ring whenever you are attacked by a melee weapon. This ability does not work against ranged weapons, nor will it work against the natural weapons of animals and creatures (including oni), such as claws and teeth.

RANK 4: HEART OF THE WEAPON

By watching your opponent, you can learn all there is to know about him: his past, his passions, his strengths and his weaknesses. During a skirmish, you may make a Contested Raw Perception Roll against any opponent who has engaged you or an ally in melee combat. If you succeed, the opponent suffers a penalty equal to twice your Perception to the total of all attack and damage rolls he makes against you or your allies for the duration of the skirmish. You must be within sight of the target opponent for this ability to work, and any allies benefiting from it need to be within earshot. However, if an affected opponent subsequently passes out of your sight for any reason, the penalty is still in effect.

RANK 5: SOUL OF THE WEAPON

Your skill at crafting weapons is now among the greatest in all of Rokugan. You gain a number of Free Raises to any Craft Skill Roll equal to your Insight Rank.

New Item: Tsi Blades

Tsi blacksmiths never create weapons in bulk. They accept commissions for one blade at a time and approach the task like a painter or a sculptor. They endeavor to learn all they can about the owner of the new weapon: his family history, his upbringing, his temperament, and his reasons for desiring one of the Tsi Family blades. A measurement will be taken of the wielder's hands, and the blacksmith will observe his or her fighting techniques at length. He will also gather pertinent materials to form the scabbard and hilt: silks from the owner's family, precious stones from his native province, and the names of Fortunes he holds as particularly sacred. The process can sometimes take months.

When the smith is ready, he begins work, spending all of his waking hours in devotion to the craft. He uses only his own forge, and works with metals of only the highest grade. He does not stop once he has begun, pausing only to rest and take nourishment. The resulting weapon is often perfect in its form and function, and its decorations reflect the unique soul of the owner. Tsi blades remain within individual families for generations and losing one is considered a great dishonor.

When wielded by the person for whom it was forged, a Tsi blade grants a +2k0 bonus to DR. In the hands of anyone else, it acts as a mundane katana, albeit one of Excellent item quality.

Tsi Blades in Your Campaign

Although anyone can ask an Oriole Clam smith to craft a katana, they must receive permission from the Emperor before starting work. It is a Tsi Family tradition and no Oriole Clan member will dare violate it. GMs can use this caveat to stop Tsi characters from turning into instant weapon factories.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM



THE OX CLAN

History of the Ox

Morito is cast out from the Unicorn lands: year 1124

A young samurai named Utaku Morito, frustrated by the restrictions placed upon male samurai by his family, attempts to prove his worth by illegally gaining entrance to a stable belonging to the famed Utaku Battle Maidens. Unfortunately, there is a terrible accident, and the stable catches fire. Many horses have to be put down in the aftermath, and Morito narrowly avoids execution. Instead, he is cast out as ronin, and followed by his brother Tokei.

Morito joins Toturi's Army: year 1126

During his time as a ronin, Morito loses a great deal of his idealism and becomes a hardened realist, as well as considerably more self-centered. He becomes embroiled in a number of criminal pursuits and eventually joins the Kolat organization. Despite this, he is still enough of a patriot at heart to join Toturi's Army, and to genuinely believe in the mission set forth by the former Lion Champion. As a result of his service in Toturi's Army, Morito is offered fealty to the Shinjo Family upon the conclusion of

the Clan War, and he rejoins the Unicorn Clan with great enthusiasm.

Shinjo Morito and his forces abandon the Unicorn lands: year 1131

Disenfranchised yet again by the Unicorn Clan, the increasingly ambitious Shinjo Morito gathers a large group of Unicorn samurai and ronin loyal to his cause and departs the clan's provinces without announcing his intentions. The sizable force travels to the distant Dragon Heart Plain, which borders the Phoenix provinces. Here Morito declares his intention to hold and defend lands in the region due to the decimated Phoenix Clan's inability to defend the lands themselves. The Phoenix vehemently disagree, but among Morito's followers are a number of talented siege engineers, and they resist the Phoenix's best efforts to crush them. Morito declares that he and his followers are to be known as the "Ox Clan."

The Ox Clan is formally inducted into Imperial records: year 1145

Seven years after the start of the War of Spirits, Emperor Toturi I rewards Morito and his followers for their tireless defense of the throne and harassment of the forces of the Steel Chrysanthemum, and formally recognizes their claim to Minor Clan status. The holdings the clan has occupied for more than a decade are formally ceded to the Ox. In restitution, and to avoid hostility between the Ox and Phoenix Clans, Morito quickly offers a number of rare artifacts to the Phoenix as partial compensation for the

loss of their lands. Although ostensibly rescued from the storehouses of the Steel Chrysanthemum's armies, the artifacts are actually supplied by the Kolat in the hopes that they can be traced to the Phoenix Clan's suspected troves of powerful items.

Gusai destroyed: year 1159

During the dispute between the four children of Toturi I, Hantei Naseru gathers a group of samurai and grants them status as Imperial magistrates in order to investigate a troubling series of murders. Among these samurai is Kijuro, a boisterous Ox samurai. The group travels across the Empire investigating the deaths of various heroes, and eventually exposes the treacherous spirit Gusai, returned through Oblivion's Gate decades earlier. Kijuro dies stopping the spirit from killing Naseru, and he is hailed as a hero for his actions, gaining the Ox Clan much recognition in the process.

The Morito Family created: year 1166

After formally creating the Toku Family, Emperor Toturi III realizes that among all of the Empire's Minor Clans, only the Ox lack a formally recognized family name. Rather than slight Morito, who had always been a zealous supporter of the Toturi Dynasty, the Emperor quietly grants them a family name as well. There is little fanfare, as the Emperor does not wish to take away from the recognition heaped upon the Monkey Clan, but the Ox are grateful all the same. All existing Ox samurai are retroactively granted the name through a large-scale oath of fealty conducted simultaneously at different locations throughout the clan's lands.

Minor Clan Alliance formed: year 1167

Seeking the power that the Minor Clans had under the leadership of Yoritomo during the Clan War, the various Minor Clans of the Empire come together and agree to form an alliance for mutual gain. The Ox are among the clans that initially agree, and representatives from the clan work to gain the cooperation of other, less enthusiastic Minor Clans.

The Hidden Temple is destroyed: year 1170

Operating on clues supplied by Togashi Kaelung, a former Kolat operative, Scorpion Clan Champion Bayushi

Paneki launches a covert force against the Hidden Temple, razing the Kolat's greatest stronghold to the ground and eliminating a large number of Kolat-affiliated Ox Clan samurai in the process, including Morito himself. The Ox are dramatically weakened, but the Scorpion agree to conceal the extent of the organization's infiltration of their ranks. The great-nephew of Morito's wife, Morito Garin, takes the reins as the new Ox Clan Champion, and shortly thereafter he sends a discreet request to the Unicorn Clan Khan, Moto Chen, asking for assistance in rooting out the Kolat from his clan.

The Yobanjin tribes attack: year 1170-1171

An attack of unprecedented scale is launched against the Empire by the Yobanjin tribes to the north, united in fear and slavery to the Dark Oracle of Fire. The desperation of the tribesmen, combined with the power of the Dark Oracle's magic, allows them to make considerable headway into the Empire, and the Ox lands are threatened, as is the entire north of Rokugan.

Customs of the Ox

No one in Rokugan who has ever met a member of the Ox Clan would make the mistake of thinking they are a particularly deep or sophisticated people. The Ox tend to wear their hearts on their sleeves, and they are not shy about sharing their thoughts or even their feelings, no matter how uncomfortable it makes others, or how improper it seems for the situation. This quality reflects the character of their founder, Morito, who was never a properly behaved samurai in the first place, and whose sensibilities degraded even further after his time spent as a ronin.

The Ox are not a particularly religious people when compared to the other clans. However, all things are relative, and the Ox are not so foolish as to deny the validity of Rokugan's religious beliefs. Even the Kolat among their ranks have no choice but to admit the Heavens are real and take a very active role within the Empire when the need arises. Thus, the Morito Family and their vassals pay homage in the appropriate manner, although rarely more than the bare minimum that is acceptable to the priests of the kami.

Given the clan's historic ties to the Kolat, it is ironic that Fortunism is much more prevalent throughout the Ox ranks than the study of the Tao. The concept of powerful, primal beings who reward the worthy and punish the weak appeals to the boisterous nature of most Ox samurai, whereas introspection and time spent studying musty old tomes is something that most consider anathema. Morito and the other Kolat never objected to this despite their disdain for the Celestial Order; in fact, it was a considerable boon in throwing off the scent of those who hunted the Kolat.

The Ox gempukku ceremony is in many ways the most important day of an Ox samurai's life. It is the day he becomes an adult and joins the community of his peers in service to the Morito Family. It is also quite a surprise for most undergoing the ceremony, as the Ox tend to be quite hard on their samurai in training. Once they have sworn their oaths of fealty, however, all hardship and difficulties are forgotten, and the new samurai is swept up into celebration with his new comrades in arms.

In previous generations, the gempukku ceremony was often followed only days later by oaths of service to the Kolat for many young Ox samurai. This was only done for those who had been identified early as suitable candidates, usually the children of existing members. Others considered suitable but unrelated to the organization by any other means were usually given at least an extra year of observation before they were approached about membership.

The traditions of births, weddings, and funerals are somewhat atypical in the Ox provinces, which should come as no surprise. Most of the first generation of Ox samurai were either disenfranchised Shinjo — individuals already accustomed to following their own traditions over those of the Empire and made even more prone to disregarding convention by their family's disgrace — and ronin, who had little interest in such matters to begin with. To say the least, it was a unique environment that created unique traditions.

A birth is a major celebration for any member of the Ox Clan. The clan is small, although respectable by Minor Clan standards, and any additions to the ranks are considered a major event. There is little opportunity for the new parents to reflect upon the nature of parenthood, however, as all their friends and colleagues host a massive celebration in their honor. This is equally true of the peasants who call the Ox lands home, although obviously their celebrations are considerably less lavish and shorter in duration; they all have work to do on behalf of their masters, after all.

Ironically, weddings are one of the few occasions when the Ox are somber. The act of marriage means the acceptance of new responsibility by both participants, and thus less time for the celebration of life that the Ox continually maintain. For this reason, the family and friends of the new couple hold a dinner in their honor, far more subdued and less raucous than the average Ox gathering. The groom and bride are expected to spend the time surrounding the marriage in contemplation of their new duties, an expectation that is strangely consistent with those of the Empire at large.

Funerals are among the largest celebrations that the Ox throw. The loss of any Ox samurai is a blow to the clan, as it would be for any Minor Clan. Thus, any death is an opportunity for those who knew the deceased to gather, remembering him and all that he contributed to the Ox during his lifetime. While some might think this ought to be a somber occasion complete with rituals to remember the departed, in practice it often becomes a drunken celebration like almost everything else with the Ox. For many, however, this is merely a means of hiding the pain of losing a friend or loved one, and the mood can just as easily turn melancholy as the event goes on.

Lands of the Ox

Some of the Ox Clan's lands once belonged to the Phoenix, and while the Ox Champion made a gesture of restitution when those lands were formally ceded to him by Imperial decree, there remains some degree of animosity between the two clans even today. Despite this, the Phoenix have never made any effort to reclaim their lands, even when the entire region was being contested during the Dragon-Phoenix war a decade ago.

In general, the Ox lands exist where the Dragon Heart Plain meets the Northern Wall Mountains, providing a rather stark contrast between the two terrain types. It also presents the Ox with the challenge of patrolling a vast, open southern border as well as a northern border that is virtually impossible to fully secure from Yobanjin attack. If one can look past the strategic difficulties of such a place, however, the Ox lands are quite beautiful, and it is likely that if the Morito Family were not so off-putting, they would receive many more visitors.

Shiro Morito

The Ox Clan Castle is the oldest structure in their lands, save for some small peasant villages and a few outposts that were built by the Phoenix. The first stones of the castle were laid the day that Morito and his first followers arrived and claimed the lands for their own, although it would not be completed for some years.

Shiro Morito is a fortress more than anything else, and one so well designed that any Crab or Lion would be duly impressed with it. Morito cared very little for the notion of form over function, and so the castle is very stark and foreboding in its appearance. It is quite large for an installation of its nature, well beyond anything constructed by the other Minor Clans and larger even than some comparable structures in the lands of the Great Clans. It is said that, should the need ever arise, the whole of the Ox Clan could be housed within its walls, and that may not be an exaggeration.

The castle contains the clan's primary court chambers, such as they are, as well as its largest and most illustrious dojo. There is a large stable as well, the sheer size and appointment of which is a clear indicator of the Ox Clan's roots within the Unicorn Clan. There are also enormous granaries and armories. In fact, were outsiders privy to the stores kept at Shiro Morito, they might inquire as to why the clan's masters seem to have been preparing for a massive siege from the first days of their creation.

Shiro Morito is also home to a small set of chambers that serve, essentially, as the embassy of the Minor Clan Alliance in the Ox provinces. Anyone stationed within the clan's lands for such a purpose has traditionally been very closely monitored for any indication that they might have an ulterior motive. Morito was hesitant to allow such an intrusion into his home, but he feared that not doing so would arouse more suspicion, and he wished to monitor the activities of the alliance for potential use by the Kolat.

The Kaneko Estate

Far and away the largest private residence within the Ox lands, the so-called Kaneko Estate is relatively secluded, as it is not located within any town or village, and does not lie upon any readily traveled route. Few know that it even exists, and even then, it is impossible to locate without precise information about its location. It was constructed by craftsmen whom Morito trusted absolutely, and offered as a gift to Yasuki Kaneko, one of the spirits who

returned through Oblivion's Gate at the conclusion of the War Against the Darkness. Kaneko was a spirit, but she retained her loyalty to the Toturi Dynasty, and as such she was permitted to remain within the Empire after undergoing the Phoenix ritual that fully expunged her spiritual nature. Kaneko wanted little to do with the politics of the Empire a second time, however, and was granted leave to live quietly in the lands where her mother's mother had once lived. The Ox Champion obliged, and built for her a lavish estate where she could dwell in obscurity.

Or at least that is the story that those few who know of Kaneko have heard.

The truth, as with so much about the Ox Clan and their former Champion, is far more sinister. In her first mortal lifetime, Kaneko was a Kolat Master, and one of their greatest assassins. After her return, the organization was uncertain as to whether or not she could be trusted, so she simply had a house built and waited until the Kolat had a task only she could perform. Of course that day eventually came, and since her return Kaneko has taken several high-profile lives for the Kolat, each replaced with one of their doppelgangers after the fact.

Since the Scorpion purge, the Kaneko Estate has remained vacant. Morito Garin has left it alone until such time as he can confirm whether or not Kaneko was killed in the purge. Once he knows for certain, he believes the estate will make an ideal base of operations for his hand-selected Vigilant operatives.

The Western Keep

Although it has no formal name, this small castle is the base of operations for the sentries who protect the western and southern borders of the Ox provinces. It is also effectively the seat of power for the Kijuro vassal Family, and it is where Morito Kitaji oversees the protection of his Clan's borders. The keep is little more than a stable and barracks combined, but does have a few amenities that are most welcome to men who have been on extended patrol for days or weeks at a time. Six squadrons are stationed here, about 120 soldiers in all, with four squadrons out on patrol at any given time. There is no formal dojo or sensei, but there is an informal training ground that the men have fashioned in order to spar and practice kata during their down time. Beyond that, the only real pleasurable distraction afforded to the men stationed here is an ample supply of sake. Kitaji does not enjoy providing it for his men, but he understands it is a necessity in order to maintain morale.

Mountain's Bounty Village

This small settlement is nestled within the Northern Wall Mountains, one of the relatively few Ox holdings actually built within its craggy boundaries. The village was built around a mountain river that, while not overly large, feeds directly into the vast lake to the southeast of the Ox provinces. The water is fresh and crystal clear, and is bottled for use throughout the Ox lands, both for drinking and for brewing of various preferred beverages. The village also harvests a respectable amount of fish from the river, some of which is supplied to Shiro Morito in order to supplement the crops grown in the northern plains regions.



The Ruins of Shiro Chuda

Although these ruins are not located within the Ox lands, the Ox are the clan whose holdings lie closest to the remains of Shiro Chuda, the former ancestral estate of the Snake Clan. The castle was destroyed by the Phoenix Clan during the infamous Five Nights of Shame centuries ago, when they purged the Snake from the Empire because of the threat posed by their sinister magic and the evil spirits with which they held parlay. From the first days of the Ox Clan, Morito commanded his long-range sentries to keep a close eye on the ruins, and to inspect them at least once a week to ensure that nothing unusual was happening there. Because of their isolation, the protection they afford from the elements, and the fear with which most regard them, the ruins are often a hiding place for bandits or fugitives from justice. Unfortunately for them, the Chuda Family of centuries ago practiced an esoteric, experimental form of maho that resulted in rituals that even the modern age's most powerful maho-tsukai do not always fully understand. There are forces that sleep within Shiro Chuda, forces that can be awakened and unleash terrible power if the ruins are disturbed, and the Ox Clan takes great care to ensure they are left very much alone.

Heroes of the Ox

MORITO GARIN, OX CLAN CHAMPION

Air: 3	Earth: 5	Fire: 4	Water: 4	oid: 3
Reflexes: 4			Strength: 6	

Honor: 3.3	Status: 7.5	Glory: 4.2
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SCHOOL/RANK: Morito Bushi 3 / Garin's Vigilants 2

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Scorpion, Unicorn), Ebisu's Blessing, Great Destiny, Social Position

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation, Driven, Sworn Enemy (the Kolat)

KATA: Striking as Fire, Striking as Water

SKILLS: Animal Handling (Horses) 6, Athletics 4, Calligraphy 1, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 4, Horsemanship 6, Hunting 6, Instruction 2, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 5, Knives 2, Kyujutsu (Yomanri) 4, Lore: Kolat 4, Underworld 3, War Fans 2

Morito Garin never imagined the sequence of events that would lead to his recent appointment. Although his mother was the sister of Morito's wife, he had met his Clan

Champion only rarely, and the man apparently had little use for extended family. Garin was one of the few Ox not selected to join the Kolat, perhaps because Morito wished to keep his family at arm's length. Unlike the other uninitiated Ox samurai, however, Garin suspected what was happening within the ranks of his clan. He struggled with the balance of loyalty to his clan and family, all the while carefully monitoring his orders and those of his comrades for any indication of disloyalty to the Empire. It was a torturous existence, and Garin was in constant fear for his life and the lives of his family.

Recently, during the aftermath of the Scorpion Clan's decimation of the Kolat and, as a result, a large portion of the Ox Clan's high-ranking samurai, an emissary of the Scorpion came to visit Garin. Garin, the Scorpion claimed, was perhaps the only samurai with the will and the vision to redeem the Ox. In exchange for his vow that the Ox would never betray the Scorpion, they would ensure that he would assume the position of Champion, and the clan's affiliation with the Kolat would never become public knowledge. Completely surprised and unsure of how else he could help save his clan, Garin agreed. The next day, the Emerald Champion proclaimed Morito Garin the new Ox Clan Champion, in the aftermath of Morito's death during a massive bandit attack.

As it turned out, Garin's appointment to the position of Ox Champion was equally surprising to those around him. Garin had never distinguished himself among his peers, primarily because he had chosen to keep a low profile. He quickly raised even more questions about his appointment when he replaced key vacant positions with other, equally unknown individuals, all men that he knew and trusted. Together they created a complex web of lies that explained the deaths of so many Ox without incriminating the Scorpion, instead painting them as allies. Then, much more discreetly, Garin made contact with the Unicorn Clan Khan, Moto Chen, who unexpectedly arrived in the Ox lands shortly thereafter.

Garin knew from his subtle knowledge of the Kolat that Moto Chen was an ardent opponent of the organization, and had thwarted their schemes on more than one occasion. He implored the senior man to help him ensure that his clan could never again be compromised. Chen, however, was unsure of Garin's sincerity, and demanded proof that he was free of Kolat influence. Uncertain of anything

else to do, Garin told Chen that he could select the next Champion if he would only make certain that the Ox were free. He then knelt, drew his wakizashi, and prepared to commit the ritual of seppuku. When the steel first bit into the flesh of Garin's abdomen, Chen finally stopped him, convinced of the man's sincerity. At Garin's request, Chen placed one of his advisors with the new Ox Champion, a seasoned Shinjo veteran and sensei, and Garin's new advisor began instructing him in the techniques of the Vigilant, an arm of the Unicorn Clan devoted to resisting and destroying the Kolat.

Garin's reign as Champion can thus far be measured in months, and to the best of the knowledge of his people, he has accomplished very little other than rebuilding in the aftermath of his predecessor's death. Unknown to them, however, he has begun an extensive training program with his trusted few, building them into an elite unit of men who will never be compromised by the Kolat. When that is done, he is unsure what he will do next, but for now, he has time.

MORITO KITAJI, DAIMYO OF THE KIJURO VASSAL FAMILY

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes: 3		Agility: 4	Strength: 5	
Honor: 2.7		Status: 4.4		Glory: 2.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Morito Bushi 2 / Ox Sentry 1

ADVANTAGES: Leadership, Magic Resistance (4 points), Social Position

DISADVANTAGES: Antisocial (2 points), Sworn Enemy (several Utaku)

KATA: Striking as Earth, Striking as Water

SKILLS: Animal Handling (Horses) 4, Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Heavy Weapons 2, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 6, Investigation 3, Jiu-jitsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Yomanri) 3, Lore: Kolat 1, Polearms 2, Spears 3, Underworld 1

More so than even the most traditional samurai children, Morito Kitaji idolized his father. To little Kitaji, his father was larger than life, the greatest warrior ever known, and beloved by all who knew him. While many children held their father in similar esteem, the difference in Kitaji's case was that his childlike wonder corresponded quite well with reality.

Kitaji's father was the Ox samurai known as Kijuro. Kijuro was a sentry in the western provinces, and was chosen by Morito to accompany the Ox Champion on bandit-hunting expeditions on many occasions. He was the life of any party he attended, and though he had dozens of friends and hundreds of admirers, none were greater than his eldest son. So when Kijuro was chosen to accompany one of the Imperial Heralds, Miya Shoin, to act as a magistrate on behalf of the Emperor's son Hantei Naseru, no one was prouder than Kitaji. And when Kijuro was slain in battle stopping the inhuman murderer that sought to kill the Emperor's son, no one was more devastated than Kitaji.

Throughout his studies at the dojo and his first years as a samurai, Kitaji pushed himself to live up to the impossible ideal with which his father's memory had left him. This made him something of a problem for his sensei and daimyo. Kijuro had also been a loyal Kolat agent, but his son was far too idealistic to consider ever joining the conspiracy. Not only would the clan's involvement with the Kolat be difficult for him to believe, but he would never accept the notion that his father had been a traitor to the Empire.

It was decided that Kitaji would not be inducted into the ranks of the Kolat, but this presented another problem for Morito. The Ox Champion had considered Kijuro a true friend and valued vassal, and he desperately longed to reward the family of the clan's first true hero. Thus he created the Kijuro Vassal Family, and Kitaji was to become daimyo upon his gempukku. The Kijuro were celebrated throughout the Ox lands, and tasked with protecting the western provinces. It was a largely ceremonial duty, and one that would keep Kitaji from becoming a problem to the Kolat within the Ox Clan.

Kitaji is a good and honorable man, if a bit ruthless with his enemies. He considers his duty to be a sacred task, as if given him by the Fortunes themselves, and will fulfill it an intensity strangely out of character for one so young. He considers any debt, particularly one involving his family, a significant matter. Recently, he initiated a blood debt with a branch of the Utaku Family when the nezumi pack the Unicorn were hunting saved his son and his yojimbo from bandits.



MORITO TORAO, SUMAI ENTHUSIAST


Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 2
Agility: 3				
Honor: 1.6	Status: 1.1		Glory: 1.4	

SCHOOL/RANK: Morito Bushi 1**ADVANTAGES:** Hands of Stone**DISADVANTAGES:** Brash, Overconfident**KATA:** Striking as Earth**SKILLS:** Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Jujitsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu (Yomanri) 1, Lore: Kolat 1, Underworld 1

There is likely no samurai in the Empire who relishes the sport of sumai more than young Morito Torao. He lives and breathes for the sport, and has ever since the earliest days of his childhood. When other young children wanted to run and play, Torao wanted to go to the dojo and watch the sumai practices. He would sit for hours, transfixed, and when he was not permitted to observe, he was practicing their training exercises by himself somewhere. Sometimes other children would join him for a time, but inevitably he drove most of his childhood friends away by insisting they wrestle with him. Of course, he always won.

Since he graduated from the dojo, Torao has actively pursued assignments that would allow him to travel to other parts of the Empire, preferably the Badger or Crab lands, so he can observe the sumai tournaments taking place in those areas as well. Currently he is assigned as yojimbo to a minor functionary, and he has been fortunate enough to spend one month in the Crab lands and a glorious three months in the Moto provinces, where he learned all he could about the Moto wrestling style.

For now, Torao is content to observe. He is planning to try and pull some favors in order to gain entrance into the clan's meager sumai training dojo, hoping one day to participate in the Empire's tournaments himself. He is absolutely certain that one day he will win the Kumitae tournament hosted by the Brotherhood of Shinsei. On that day, the name of Morito Torao will be on the lips of the entire Empire.



Playing an Ox

Playing a member of the Ox Clan in a Legend of the Five Rings campaign can present a number of unique opportunities for role-playing and character development. Like other Minor Clans, Ox samurai characters have certain freedoms that are not available to characters aligned with one of the Great Clans. Unlike other Minor Clans, however, the Ox have an additional plot point that can make for interesting and unique characters: the clan's lengthy, close-knit involvement with the Kolat.

The Kolat's close relationship with the Ox Clan can be a defining point in a character's background and personality. By the time the link between the two was severed, nearly one half of the Ox Clan was involved with the organization in some way. The vast majority of those with no link to the organization were completely unaware of the association between the two, but there were a handful of those who knew that the Kolat had deeply infiltrated the clan and worked very quietly to combat their subversive influence. With the death of Morito and the ascent of his nephew Moto Garin to the position of Ox Clan Champion, those anti-Kolat operatives have risen to the fore as the new leaders of the clan. The niche they once occupied is now filled by a handful of Ox who managed to conceal their involvement with the Kolat from their kinsmen, and who now only pray no one ever discovers the sins that they are hiding.

Regardless of their organizational affiliations, the Ox are a unique group of samurai with interesting play opportunities. In many ways, they share a number of characteristics normally reserved for the Crab and Unicorn. Like the Crab, they tend to be muscular and extensively trained in martial areas. They also tend to have a general disdain for polite behavior, preferring to state the obvious rather than dance around it. Unlike the Crab, however, the Ox are not generally a beligerent people (although any threat against them or what they perceive as theirs will be met with open, unrelenting aggression). In that regard, the Ox favor their Unicorn cousins, as they embrace life and all its rewards with extraordinary gusto. In any given situation, an Ox will likely be the loudest one present, and certainly the samurai enjoying himself the most, even — or perhaps particularly — in combat.

Physically the Morito Family most closely resembles the Moto Family, from whom many of Morito's original followers originated. They are slightly shorter than average, and squat, but powerfully built. But because Morito also had a significant number of ronin followers, there are a number of other bloodlines within the Clan, each with its own unique appearance.

New Mechanics

New Advanced School: Garin's Vigilants

A very recent addition to the Ox Clan, the men and women who call themselves the Vigilants meet in secret, usually convening in the middle of the night at the Ox Clan Champion's private dojo at Shiro Morito. The group consists of less than two dozen samurai, each hand-picked by Morito Garin. The group answers to their sensei, a scarred old Shinjo assigned to the task personally by his Khan, and they exist for a single purpose: to ensure that the Kolat has no lingering presence within the Ox Clan.

The individual members of the Vigilants are well known to most Ox samurai, but not for their membership in the group. They are officers, governors, and other individuals of high station, each given their duties by Garin. Each was chosen, both for their official positions and their membership within the Vigilants, because Garin knew them from when he was just a distant cousin of Morito, and he knows they are free from Kolat influence. Some of them had worked with him previously in trying to discover more about how badly their clan had been compromised, while others he only knew by reputation. All of them are now Garin's chosen few, his shock troops in his battle against the Kolat.

The Ox Vigilants take after the group of the same name that exists within the Unicorn Clan, but whereas those samurai tend to be low to mid-ranking members of the Shinjo Family, the Ox Vigilants are high-ranking, each with dozens or hundreds of other samurai under their personal command. These individuals are constantly scrutinized for any sign of disloyalty or corruption, and

those who appear compromised are shunted to unimportant assignments where they can be more closely monitored and, if necessary, quietly eliminated.

Because the Vigilants are such a recent creation, there are as yet none who have mastered all their Techniques. Garin and his closest advisors are the sect's most devoted and gifted students, however, and it is only a matter of time before they master all the lessons their Unicorn sensei has to offer.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAIT: Fire 3, Willpower 4

SKILLS: Lore: Kolat 4

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES: Allies (Unicorn) (any level), Social Position / Driven (Oppose the Kolat)

OTHER: Members of the Garin's Vigilants are hand-chosen by Morito Garin or one of his closest advisors. No others are accepted into their ranks, and no one outside the organization knows that it exists.

Techniques

RANK 1: STEEL THE SOUL

A Vigilant must first steel himself against corruption and manipulation before he can learn to hunt his enemies. On any roll made to resist any effect that would cause the Vigilant to be manipulated or deceived, including spells that cause confusion or create illusion, every Void Point that you spend to influence the roll counts as you were spending 3 Void Points. You also gain a bonus to all Tests of Honor equal to 5x your Insight Rank.

RANK 2: SHEPHERD THE WEAK

A Vigilant seeks signs of corruption in others, so they might be eliminated before they pose a threat to the innocent and the defenseless. A number of times per day equal to your Void Ring, you may make a Test of Honor in the place of someone else who has failed a roll to resist corruption or manipulation. You must be within 20' of the person in question at the time the roll is failed in order to use this ability.

RANK 3: PUNISH THE WICKED

For the wicked, there is no escape from the truly Vigilant. In a skirmish, you gain an extra attack per round against any opponent who possesses an Honor Rank of less than 2, or who possesses the Perceived Honor Advantage.

New Path: Morito House Guard

Almost every major bushi family in the Empire maintains an elite guard, a chosen group of exceptionally skilled soldiers who protect the clan's Champion and its most important personages. Within these groups, there are smaller divisions who are assigned to protect specific and important locations, typically ancestral estates and key military installations. This subgroup is referred to as a house guard. The Morito are an atypical family in many ways, and Morito never bothered to create an elite guard unit. He felt he had no need to be protected, and any of his chosen followers who could not protect themselves were certainly undeserving of protection. He did, however, form a house guard, albeit for decidedly atypical reasons.

The entire purpose of the Ox Clan's formation was to protect the Kolat's Hidden Temple, and the clan's house guard was created as the final line of defense in the event that the clan as a whole should fall. They were originally simply called the Ox House Guard, of course, but the name was changed once the Morito Family was created by Imperial decree. As might be expected given their purpose, the house guard consisted of Morito's most trusted and experienced men, absolute devotees of the Kolat one and all. While they made a show of their training to defend Shiro Morito, their true charge was the Hidden Temple. Only Morito and two of his most trusted lieutenants knew its precise location, but they practiced numerous defensive strategies to protect it.

Since the Kolat was purged from the Ox's ranks, Garin has had to repopulate the entire Morito House Guard. Every previous member died in defense of the Hidden Temple, except for a few stragglers who fled and were summarily hunted and killed by the Scorpion Clan. The newly recreated unit is now filled with relatively untested warriors, but Garin is at least assured of their loyalty to the Empire and their understanding that their true and sole mission is to guard Shiro Morito with their lives.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 4

PATH OF ENTRY: Morito Bushi 3

PATH OF EGRESS: Morito Bushi 4

Technique: The Steel Shield

The House Guard fight fiercely to defend what is theirs. If you are on horseback, and fighting to defend land, structures, or objects belonging to the Ox Clan, you may spend a Void Point to gain an additional melee attack. This may only be done once per round, but it may be done in consecutive rounds as long as you have Void Points to spend.

New Path: Ox Sentry

The Ox provinces exist on the edge of the Dragon Heart Plain, the largest uninhabited fertile plain in the entire Empire. Because of the openness of the region, the Ox's border has proven difficult to maintain and impossible to secure with a series of fortifications. Toward that end, Morito created the Sentries, a group that combines the functions of scouts, guardsmen, and magistrates into a single occupation. Traditionally a position as a sentry indicated one of two very different things for an Ox samurai: Either he was a trusted Kolat agent tasked with securing the provinces around the Hidden Temple, or he was an idealist who had not been recruited, and thus was assigned to a region far away from any of the Ox's more valuable holdings, ensuring that he remained ignorant of the Clan's true activities.

Like so many other aspects of the Clan, the Ox Sentries have been revitalized by Morito Garin. He has appointed Morito Kitaji, daimyo of the Kijuro vassal family, as head of all the Sentries, and has instilled in them an undivided sense of loyalty to the clan regarding their duty. They are the first line of defense against a wide array of enemies who wish the Ox Clan harm.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Morito Bushi 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Morito Bushi 2

Technique: Blade of the Western Wall

The defense of the western Ox provinces are the Ox Sentries' first duty, and they hunt all who attempt to invade the clan's lands with dogged determination. You gain a bonus equal to twice your Insight Rank to all Perception-based Skill Rolls except for the Hunting Skill, for which you gain a bonus equal to 3x your Insight Rank.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM

THE SPARROW CLAN



"The truest test of honor is to see your heart's desire every day, and every day to turn it aside in favor of your duty."

— Sparrow Clan saying

History of the Sparrow

Founding of the Sparrow Clan: year 400

The other Clans view the Sparrow as a bit of a joke, and their origins certainly lack the dignity one expects. Their founder, Doji Suzume, was one of the diplomats negotiating a peace treaty with the Crab Clan near the end of the First Yasuki War. His father Onegano had long considered his son a worthless buffoon. He believed in the economic necessity of the Yasuki War. The Crab could not be allowed to intrude so far north, and sharing the disputed territory with them was beyond acceptable. He flattered the Crane Clan Champion with honeyed words, and the Champion responded by awarding him a seat at the negotiating table. After all, Onegano had fought the Crab on the field of battle. Their tempers were legendary and they respected only strength, which is one of the reasons why he had been placed at the head of the negotiating team. The Crab respected his warrior prowess and he would be

able to bargain with them as equals. His inexperienced son's presence was... unfortunate, but should be no great problem as long as Suzume kept his fool mouth shut.

Suzume didn't. In the midst of a tense and exceedingly delicate portion of the talks, Suzume let a sarcastic quip fly: "Maybe the world would be a better place if samurai just gave their wealth to the peasants and let them rule." It was intended to ease the tension, or perhaps to score points with his fellow Crane and undermine the foolishness of the Crab's arguments. A few other Crane snickered at the remark. The Crab did not. As the color drained out of the Hida Daimyo's face, Doji Onegano saw weeks of hard diplomatic effort washed down the drain. He immediately called a halt to the proceedings and departed with the remainder of the Crane contingent.

The results were disastrous. The Crab sensed division and weakness in the Crane ranks and began pressing for more concessions. The Crane bristled at the suggestion they were beset by infighting (the departure of the Yasuki Family, the proximate cause of the war, was still an open wound). The situation rapidly deteriorated and bushi resumed clashing along the disputed border between the two Clans.

Disgusted by this turn of events, the Emperor was forced to directly intercede. He sent his own Imperial diplomats, who spelled out final terms for both sides in sharp and unsympathetic tones. The disputed lands would be divided equally between the Clans; both sides would agree to a set number of troops on either side of the border. Furthermore, the Emperor decreed that henceforth no

other Great Clan could war with its full strength against another. Any Clan which broke the peace on a large scale would find itself confronting the whole of Rokugan united against it. The small, limited wars which characterized the remainder of the Hantei Dynasty's history were a direct result of this decree.

As further punishment — ostensibly for starting the war in the first place, but really because they forced the Emperor to intervene like a parent among squabbling children — he decreed that both Crab and Crane would have to concede territory to the Emperor, creating a buffer zone between their lands. The honor of ruling these lands as the daimyo of a Minor Clan would go to Doji Onegano, as a reward for his honorable leadership, and to “help him on the path of enlightenment.” Canny diplomats saw the genius of this “reward,” which removed Onegano — and more importantly, his nitwit son — from the Crane political structure. The two Clans quickly and mutually decided to concede the worst of the lands on both sides of the border: harsh, barren territory where little could grow, and which Onegano could now manage instead of the fertile farmlands which his family had held for centuries. The gesture both punished the cause of this diplomatic blunder and made further bloodshed exceedingly unlikely. The Emperor demonstrated his wisdom to Rokugan, and Onegano was forced to endure the consequences of his son's idiocy.

It was more than Onegano could bear. Rather than accept the “honor” of leading this new clan, he announced his retirement to a monastery, there to make peace with the disastrous final act of his life as a samurai. Stewardship of the new clan thus fell to his son Suzume, barely seventeen years of age, who went from the comforts of the Doji Family to life on a harsh frontier devoid of pleasure or beauty. He had little skill in practical ruling, and his attempts to gain fertile land that would support his followers failed. For followers he had; word of his “enlightened” comments on peasants and samurai had spread like wildfire, and people traveled for miles to follow and learn from him.

Fortunately, he was not alone. His aunt, Doji Masako, journeyed to the lands which would soon be named to the Suzume Hills to be at his side. She was unusually thoughtful, even by the standards of the Crane, having spent much of her life in seclusion contemplating the wisdom of Shinsei. She viewed the situation not as a punishment, but as an opportunity to find the true value of life. Her nephew — disoriented and frightened by his new duties — was eager to find an ethos that could see him

through it all. While his remark had been made flippantly, Masako gently lectured him on the true wisdom found in his words. Wealth was an illusion, she argued, and it distracted too many Crane from the true virtues of honor. Here in these barren lands, the new Sparrow Clan could purge this corruption from their souls and live as humans were meant to live.

Her words had a transformative effect on Suzume. He came to view his earlier life as a waste and his humiliation at the negotiating table as a blessing in disguise. He had initially been working to try to gain control of the Golden Sun Plains for the new Sparrow Clan, but as Masako's words began to take hold, he saw them not as a resource but as a dangerous temptation. The path to wisdom lay in poverty, and poverty could strengthen a samurai as nothing else. If they could survive in such a barren land — and with the wealth of the Empire spread out before them — they could remove all hint of decadence and live as Shinsei truly wished.

Inspired by his aunt's teachings, Suzume emerged from his frivolous youth to become a charismatic and benevolent leader. His cousins were practiced storytellers and they soon spread far and wide across the Empire, relating the Sparrow philosophy to whomever they could. It proved a powerful draw, and Suzume's followers continued to grow in number. Honorable poverty allowed samurai to embrace the teachings of Shinsei without retiring to a monastery. In such a state, they could affect the world and yet still maintain the purity of their souls. Within a few years, the Sparrow Clan had cemented itself among the hills, and set itself to humbly fulfilling the duties the Emperor set forth.

The Sparrow join the Three-Man Alliance: year 1121

The Sparrow lived quietly, mostly unnoticed by the Great Clans, until the early years of the Twelfth Century. To the north, the Scorpion cast a covetous eye on their border with the Sparrow, which held some of the Minor Clan's few pieces of arable land. Without them, the Sparrow might not be able to survive, but the Scorpion felt the lands rightfully belonged to someone better able to defend them. Arguments played out in court, as the Scorpion tried unsuccessfully to bully the Sparrow into conceding the territory. When tensions escalated, the Clan Champion dispatched Bayushi Tomaru to “deal with the dirt farmers.” He assumed the Sparrow would be no match and that the Minor Clan would easily be absorbed into the Scorpion's holdings.

He was in for a rude surprise. Other Minor Clans in the vicinity — especially the Wasp and the Fox — were outraged at the Scorpion's efforts to force the Sparrow off their land, and arrived in force to help defend it. The Sparrow were keen survivalists who knew the terrain well, and harried the Scorpion constantly as they sought to claim the disputed territory. In a catastrophic tactical blunder, Bayushi Tomaru was drawn into open combat before his troops were properly deployed. Aided by Wasp archers and Fox shugenja, the Sparrow counterattacked and cut Tomaru's forces in half. The Scorpion army broke and did not stop retreating until they had crossed back into their own lands.

The Battle of Mitsu Otoko Rengo Heigen, as it became known, had much farther-reaching implications than initially appeared. A Minor Clan had asserted itself against a Great Clan and prevailed, demonstrating its ability to defend itself if provoked, a fact that in and of itself marked it as worthy of respect. Among those who took note was the Mantis Champion Yoritomo, who viewed it as a great victory and began to contemplate whether similar victories might be possible in the future.

The Sparrow join Yoritomo's Alliance: year 1122

The Sparrow's next great test came during the Clan War, which tested all Rokugani beyond any previously conceived limits. They were uniquely suited to weather the storm, accustomed as they were to surviving on next to nothing. A number of factions coveted the Golden Sun Plains to feed their troops and provide a fresh influx of wealth. The Sparrow Clan held off every attack, from the forces of Hida Kisada, desperate for arable land, to the Sparrow's distant cousins in the Crane, who tried to manipulate the dying Emperor into ceding the lands to them. Aided by the other two members of the Three-Man Alliance, they fought off every incursion: using their knowledge of the terrain and their immense tactical skills to defeat numerically superior foes.

Yet even as they fought to secure their tiny strip of land, they realized that they could not simply worry about their own problems. The conflict loomed far larger than they could have ever anticipated, and when the Emperor himself was corrupted by Fu Leng, even his orders needed to be questioned. When Yoritomo called upon all the Minor Clans to join him in alliance, the Sparrow Clan Daimyo, Suzume Mukashino, dispatched his grandson Yugoki to answer. The Fox and the Wasp had already joined, and Mukashino could not leave his longtime allies to fight with-

out him. By joining the alliance, he signaled a shift in the Sparrow's outlook, and from that day forth, they resolved to take a greater hand in events outside their territory.

The Sparrow join the Minor Clan Alliance: year 1165

Memories of the Three-Man Alliance and Yoritomo's Alliance and the security that both provided them remain fresh enough in the Clan's memory that they did not hesitate to join the Minor Clan Alliance during the reign of Toturi III.

Memories of old fellowship with the Fox and Wasp Clans also remain strong. Although both are now part of the Mantis Clan, the Sparrow try to keep close and friendly ties with both the Tsuruchi and Kitsune Families.

Customs of the Sparrow

Sparrow culture revolves around simple pleasures, for it is all they can afford. They have no time for painting and calligraphy and their territory is too poor to support any elaborate forms of craftsmanship. Yet they maintain the creative proclivities of their Crane ancestors and yearn for a means to express the emotions in their heart.

They use poetry and storytelling. Words cost nothing and yet a well-told story can engage an audience more than the most beautiful painting. It can distract hungry samurai from the growling in their bellies and transform a barren landscape into a wonderland of danger and excitement. From the earliest days of their existence, the Sparrow mastered the art of storytelling, and today rank among the greatest storytellers in the Empire.

They practice their skill every evening around the campfire, learning their clan's tales so well that they can recite them in their sleep. New stories are always welcome, and those among them who can remember the most are held in the highest regard. The Sparrow extend this oral tradition to their history and philosophy, passing knowledge on through the spoken word rather than writing anything down. On the one hand, this appears supremely impractical. On the other, it serves to bind them together far closer than many other clans. The simple act of passing information to someone else creates a feeling of camaraderie which has strengthened their samurai over many centu-

ries. Sparrow are always eager to hear news from their brethren, or listen to someone's fresh variation on a well-loved fable.

Their emphasis on conversation tends to make them extremely long-winded, a fact which has not always endeared them to other clans. Though many Sparrow can hold listeners enraptured with their orations, others will drone on and on about nothing in particular. The worst of them become so enamored by the sound of their own voice that they never pause to let anyone else speak. When approaching a Sparrow for the first time, you never know whether his clever tales will enthrall and enchant you, or whether you will be stuck for hours listening to endless narrations about stultifying topics.

Besides their verbal skills, the Sparrow are best known for their survival abilities. Not only must they find sustenance among the parched hills of their own lands, but they are charged with patrolling the Plains of the Golden Sun to the east. Though they may take enough to survive on the Plains, they must not betray any signs of their presence, and leave the area as pristine as when they arrived. All of this requires superb knowledge of the outdoors and an ability to move at will through extremely difficult terrain. Their hunters can track a single rabbit for days without stopping, and live on a few precious cups of water a day. They can stretch one meal into three without pausing, and endure in places where even the toughest Crab would perish of starvation. Unlike their storytelling skills, they take no pride in this ability. It is simply what must be done.

Like the Badger, their tenacity appears in many of their common customs. Children always eat first at any meal, and adults wait until the young ones have had their fill before beginning. In tight circumstances, food is served blindfolded, so as to avoid any claims of bias by the server. The Clan Champion controls almost all of the clan's collected wealth, doling it out only in circumstances when he feels it absolutely necessary.

Acts like these go beyond simple necessity. To the Sparrow, they represent the embodiment of Bushido, and the culmination of Shinsei's teachings. Existence is suffering, they say, and suffering is caused by want. The more luxuries you can strip from your life, the more you eliminate that burden. The path makes you strong as well, for you can subsist on far less than other samurai and press your advantage when they are too tired to respond. The Sparrow view any and all adversity through the prism of this lens, welcoming harsh times as a challenge to be confronted and eventually overcome.

Lands of the Sparrow

The Sparrow lands are divided almost precisely in two. The eastern half contains some of the most fertile territory in the Empire, while the western half ranks among the most barren. They are forbidden by Imperial decree to touch the former and have done an outstanding job developing and exploiting the latter.

Plains of the Golden Sun

The Golden Sun Plains stand untouched in the midst of the Empire's fertile center. They do not technically belong to the Sparrow, but only they and the Imperial Magistrates have authority here. Travelers are allowed to pass through the Plains — to better appreciate the Empire's natural beauty — but they may not linger for longer than a few days and they are forbidden from building anything larger than a campfire. Sparrow bushi observe anyone who enters the territory and surreptitiously follow them. If they appear to be causing mischief or do not move with what the Sparrow consider to be proper speed, a squad of samurai will appear and offer to provide an "escort" through the Emperor's lands. In this way, the Sparrow keep the Plains free of excess traffic without offending anyone's sense of honor.

The Plains themselves are an unspeakable temptation. The green meadows and rolling fields seem tailor-made for the cultivation of grain, while gorgeous woodlands house all manner of flora and fauna. A number of lakes and streams dot the countryside — teeming with fish and unmarred by rapids or dangerous falls. When the sun sets, it appears to light the entire province with a heavenly glow, and travelers who pass through it speak of being filled with a sense of profound harmony. Should the Crane ever claim these lands, they would increase their existing wealth by half. Should the Sparrow ever do so, they would become one of the largest and most powerful Minor Clans in the Empire. But the Plains belong to the Emperor and he wishes them to remain as they are: an eternal offering to Amaterasu, the first Sun, for the many blessings she bestowed on Rokugan.

The Sparrow take great pride in maintaining the Plains as they are without once dipping into their bounty. For

them, the Suzume Hills provide them with everything they need... and absolutely nothing more. The rocky vales and steep ravines are scoured bare by the same elements that make the Plains of the Golden Sun so bountiful. The pathways are treacherous and can fatally punish any missed steps, while the number of developed roads can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Farmland appears only on the extreme western edge, bordering the Scorpion lands. The Sparrow have feverishly worked every square inch of it, for it must provide enough sustenance to feed the entire clan. The remainder of their bounty must come from the hills, either through hunting, foraging for plants, or working the few iron and copper mines they have been able to find.

Kyuden Suzume

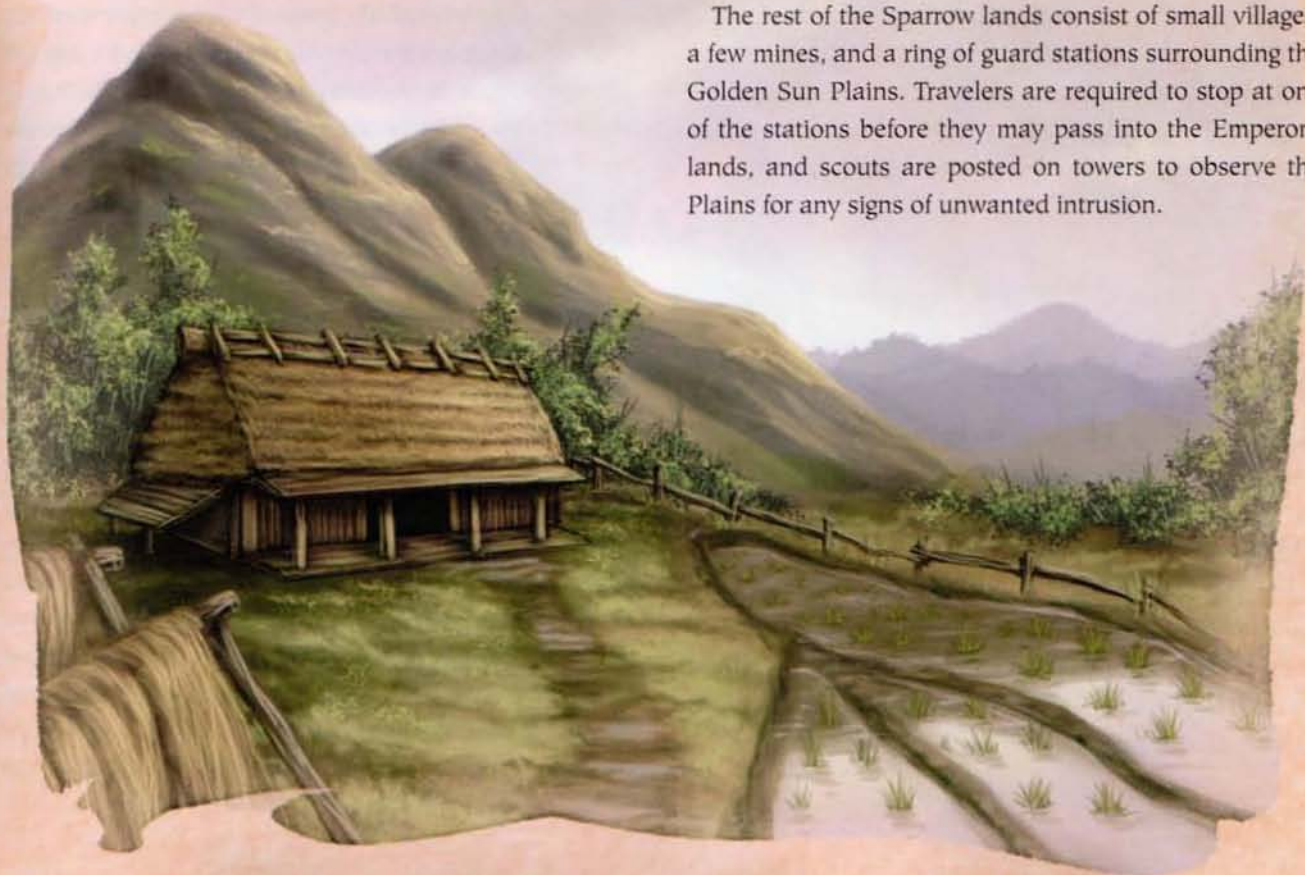
There are few permanent structures of note within the Sparrow lands. Kyuden Suzume is built out of the side of a hilltop, restructured from an abandoned iron mine and bearing more resemblance to a bandit's hideout than the seat of a clan. The topmost stories sit on the hill's crest, providing an impressive view of the surrounding countryside. The Sparrow Clan Champion dwells here with his family and those few courtiers, mostly Crane, who see fit to attend him. The remainder of the castle's occupants dwell in the maze of warrens and tunnels beneath,

branching out from within the hillside for hundreds of yards in every direction. Countless secret entrances dot the surrounding landscape, known to most Sparrow but purposely withheld from any outsiders. They provide an excellent means of defense should the castle fall under attack: Sparrow samurai can emerge from the entrances, strike behind enemy lines, and fade away again before their presence is detected.

Life within the lower warrens of Kyuden Suzume is dark, but surprisingly cheery. The rooms and corridors are kept clean, and Kaiu engineers have been brought in to help secure the foundations. Many of the servants spend days there without ever seeing the sun, but they claim it provides them with a feeling of security. Most of them know the corridors extremely well and the harsh simplicity of it all speaks to the clan's ethos.

The castle is also home to the Sparrow's only dojo, which focuses on contemplation as much as combat. Sparrow Clan samurai rarely look before they leap, preferring to observe their enemy and pinpoint his weaknesses rather than charging in on a whim. Many of their exercises take place below ground, where the mind can focus inward and every detail becomes magnified. The remainder are learned in the surrounding hillsides, encompassing everything from strategic wargames to lengthy kenjutsu exercises performed on nearby plateaus.

The rest of the Sparrow lands consist of small villages, a few mines, and a ring of guard stations surrounding the Golden Sun Plains. Travelers are required to stop at one of the stations before they may pass into the Emperor's lands, and scouts are posted on towers to observe the Plains for any signs of unwanted intrusion.



Heroes of the Sparrow

SUZUME YUGOKI, SPARROW CLAN CHAMPION

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

Honor: 5.1 Status: 7.5 Glory: 5.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Suzume Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Other Minor Clan Daimyo), Irreproachable

KATA: Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Battle 2, Calligraphy (Sparrow Clan Cipher) 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette 5, Games 1, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: History 3, Lore: Sparrow Clan 5, Meditation 3, Storytelling 3, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology (Shintao) 3

Yugoki was born knowing that he would one day rule the Sparrow Clan. What he did not know was how quickly he would be thrust into a position of importance, and how much change he would create in his Clan.

His formal service began very early. As a boy barely past gempukku, his grandfather sent him to negotiate with the Mantis Champion Yoritomo in the midst of the Clan War. The journey would prove a watershed for the young man. He saw the destruction of so much of Rokugan: the burned villages, the terrified peasants, the unspeakable horrors which seemed to hold the countryside in their grip. The Sparrow had always been happy to remain in their isolated provinces, but the more he saw, the more Yugoki knew that such could never be the case again. To ignore such horror was to turn one's back on the most basic notions of honor and humanity.

He was further inspired by Yoritomo, the great man with whom he negotiated for the Sparrow's entry into the Alliance which bore his name. Here was a samurai who refused to stand by while his people were threatened, who refused to let the Empire fall into corruption and decay. Yoritomo's bold actions demonstrated that even the Minor Clans could stand up for themselves, and that they could become a potent force for good in Rokugan. Yugoki returned from his negotiations reinvigorated, and ready to lead his clan to greatness.

Foremost among his beliefs was the need to engage the rest of Rokugan. He praised his grandfather's alliance with the Fox and the Wasp, and resolved to push for similar relationships in the future. He admonished Sparrow storytellers to travel the length of the Empire, speaking to anyone they met and forging closer ties to the Sparrow. He urged the clan diplomats to stand up for the Sparrow's needs more readily. When Mukashino died, Yugoki inherited his mantle ahead of his father, who was a soft-spoken man who lacked the temperament for politics. Since then, the Sparrow's reputation has continued to rise.

Yugoki's greatest triumph has been joining the Minor Clan Alliance, which he supported wholeheartedly from its earliest inception. The Sparrow remain a comparatively small voice within the alliance, but their earnestness and enthusiasm make up for their limited resources. Yugoki has proven less than willing to simply let the Tortoise Clan call the shots in the Alliance, and used leverage with his allies in the Fox to ensure that all clans are heard. He earned the respect of the Badger Clan by contributing resources to their rebuilding even when the Sparrow had very little to give. He hopes to continue pushing for a greater voice in the future.

Yugoki was never much of a swordsman, though he grasped the fundamentals of strategy exceedingly well. He plays the diplomatic game much like a general at war: observing the enemy quietly, noting the opportune moment to strike, and moving only when he is certain he has the advantage. True to his clan's storytelling instincts, he often uses analogies to make his points in court, and those expecting a backwoods bumpkin are often surprised by the elegance of his logic. Like the bushi beneath him, he attacks his enemies, and then fades away beneath the façade of a minor clansman... leaving them no viable target to attack.

Now in his sixties, Yugoki has lost little of the handsome charm which he held in his youth. His fine-boned features reflect his Crane heritage and he speaks with the easy-going smile of someone who has known the listener his whole life. He exercises every day, and trains with lowly peasant weapons such as kama and nunchuku. He's only marginally more skilled at them than he is with a katana, but they keep him fit and remind him of his clan's true calling. Though he now moves in the corridors of power, he is still a Sparrow, and honor through humility must remain his central belief.

SUZUME KEIJI, SPARROW CLAN SCOUT

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

Honor: 4.5 **Status:** 2.0 **Glory:** 2.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Suzume Bushi 2 / Suzume Scout Path

ADVANTAGES: Way of the Land (Plains of the Golden Sun)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 2, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 3,

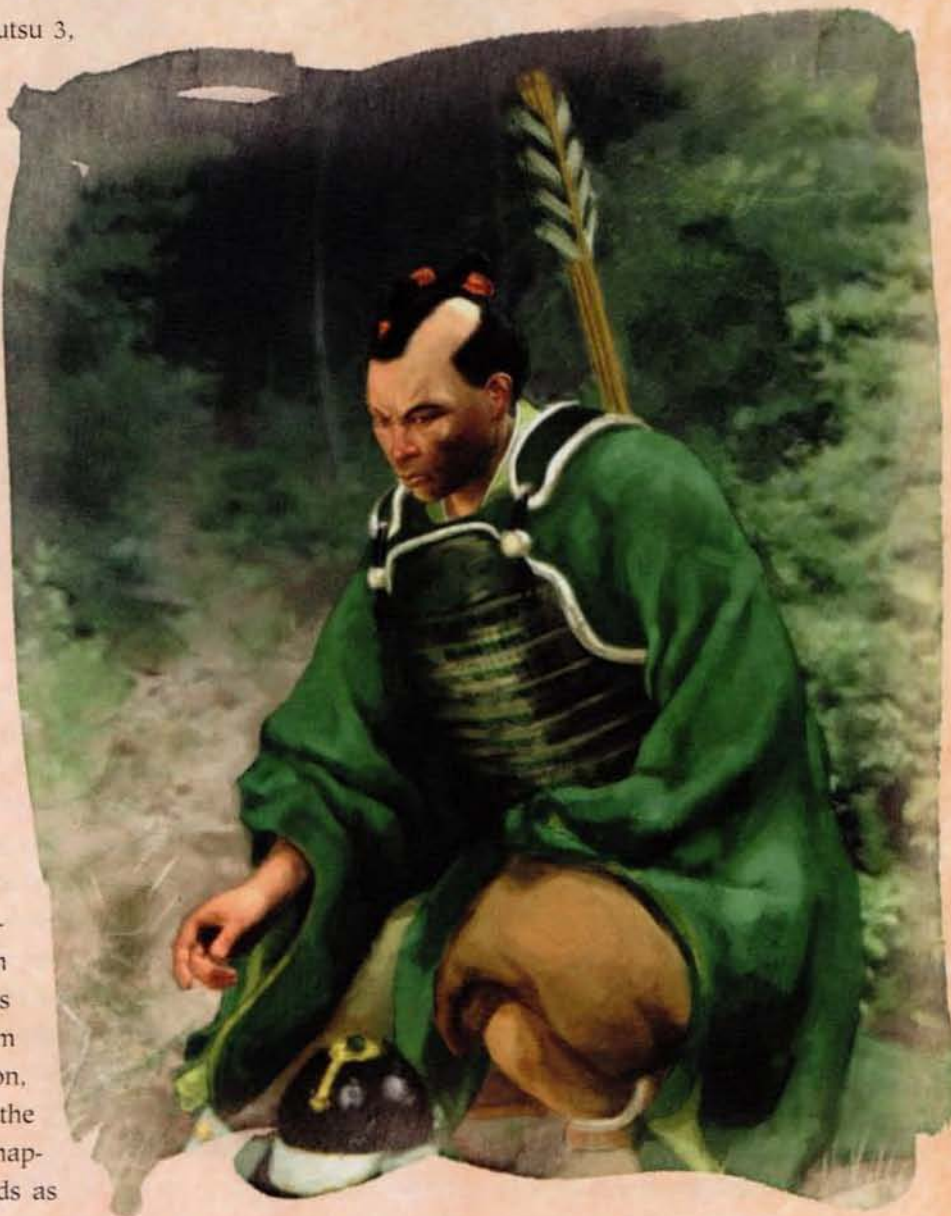
LORE: History 2, Lore: Sparrow Clan 2, Medicine 3, Stealth 1, Storytelling 2, Theology (Shintao) 2

Suzume Keiji has encountered numerous Rokugani in the course of his duties, but precious few of them ever knew he was there. From an early age, he demonstrated a knack for the natural world and an ability to move from place to place unseen. He trained as a scout and an archer, taught by an old Tsuruchi Bowman who could knock out a bird's eye at a hundred paces. His parents' marriage was a noisy one, and he would often spend long days away from home: wandering the hills and practicing with his arrows in isolated cul-de-sacs.

A streak of impishness led him to cross the border into the Golden Sun Plains one day. He remained there for several weeks, enraptured by the natural beauty around him, so different from the barren rocks and scrub bushes of his home. Several bushi patrols passed by him and never once noticed his presence. Soon, he was coming and going at will, skirting the border patrols through secret paths and happily treating the Emperor's coveted lands as his own private park.

It was another scout who finally caught him, after tracking the boy for several days. Rather than alert anyone else to Keiji's presence, he spoke privately with the Clan Champion, and had the young man placed under his command. By the time Keiji underwent his gempukku ceremony, he was already a skilled tracker and woodsman who knew the Golden Sun Plains better than anyone.

He prefers to operate alone these days, checking in at a border station once a week or so and spending the rest of the time tracking travelers through the Golden Sun Plains. He shadows them for days on end, neither betraying his presence nor making any move to stop them. He will observe their behavior, mark their location, and size up any members for possible combat skills. If he believes them



to be a threat, he will mark the best location to confront them and arrange for a squad of bushi to meet them there. In a few rare circumstances, he has had to attack them himself, but his keen Bowman's eye and knowledge of the terrain usually lets him dispatch them before they are even aware they are threatened.



He treats the Plains as he would a favored geisha, and interlopers as jealous rivals who must not be allowed to mar her beauty. He never builds anything larger than a campfire and takes care to see that the secret game trails crisscrossing the territory are never discovered. He cleans himself only when returning to civilization, and even other Sparrow are shocked by the musty odor which follows him wherever he goes. His mother keeps a single silk kimono for him, used only when he must address his Champion in court. The rest of the time, he favors brown and green peasant garb, his half-hidden daisho the only sign that he is anything more than a wayward farmer.

Silence has been his ally for more years than he can count, and unlike his brethren, he rarely consents to speak. He is an eager listener, however, and loves stories as much as anyone in his Clan. His only joy at returning to civilization is the chance to sit and hear some great tale of the Clan War, or an ancient fable of tragic lovers. Men like Keiji rarely have regrets, but alone in the darkness of the woods, he sometimes wishes he could speak as eloquently as the tale-spinners back at Kyuden Suzume. He has enough stories of his adventures out on the Plains to fill a hundred nights.

Keiji is a shy and unassuming man, friendly but unsure of how to act around other people. In many ways, he is still the nature-loving child he once was. The delicacies of Rokugani culture can confuse him at times, but he's smart enough to keep his mouth shut rather than reveal his ignorance. In the Golden Sun Plains, however, he transforms into a natural predator. His eyes see everything that moves and he can spot the faintest signs of passage in an instant. The Emperor may own the Plains, but no one loves them as Keiji does, and he will cheerfully give his life to keep them unspoiled.

Playing a Sparrow

The lot of the Sparrow Clan has never been easy, but they have become so used to their burden that it no longer troubles them. Indeed, they approach life with a sense of optimism and enthusiasm that belies their often harsh circumstances. Every reward is cherished by a Sparrow and every tiny benefit reminds them of how precious life truly is.

A Sparrow Clan samurai will shoulder any burden asked him: less food, longer marches, difficult battle conditions, lesser pay. They do this not as a demonstration of their honor or a display of hardiness, but because it honestly doesn't occur to them that things could be any other way. Problems will *always* arise. Resources will *always* be at a premium. They don't count on any advantages and they don't believe the Heavens will smile on them. If they do, then it comes as a pleasant surprise, but they learned long ago not to rely on good fortune to carry the day.

The ease with which they bear misfortune also contributes to their infamous long-windedness. Talking helps take the mind off of one's hardships, and clan members will chatter on about anything as long as it fills the empty air. It can be exasperating for those who aren't used to it, and even the best storytellers in the clan are occasionally asked to ratchet back their incessant prattling.

Yet the Sparrow also know how to be quiet when it suits them. Talking among friends and comrades is one thing, but when survival is at stake then silence is golden. And one thing the Sparrow know is how to survive. They move through the wilderness like mice, opting for hidden means to reach their destination. They keep a sharp eye on the surrounding territory, and can spot enemy soldiers long before most samurai even look up. For all their supposed foolishness, the Sparrow draw a keen distinction between appropriate social interaction and active danger. Their ability to distinguish one from the other has kept them alive for centuries.

The Sparrow's outdoor skills are unparalleled. They make extremely adept trackers and can identify most forms of Rokugani fauna by sight. Many of them are keen experts on the weather as well. Knowing the signs of a coming storm can keep you alive in the hills and gullies of their territory: flash floods have been known to wash whole villages away, and a night in the cold can turn even the hardest samurai into a bedridden wreck. Sparrow shugenja are adept at weather magic, while their bushi know a thousand different ways to avoid the ravages of the elements.

Above all, the Sparrow Clan is governed by the concept of honor through poverty. Material goods are viewed as excessive at best and an active evil at worst. The price of a fine kimono may also be used to feed an entire village, so to wear one is an insult to those who struggle to feed their children. Sparrow samurai are thus frugal almost to a fault. It gives them a reputation as skinflints among the

other clans, compounded by their willingness to engage in work that other samurai would consider base. A Sparrow will not hesitate to labor alongside his peasants in the fields if that is what it takes to bring in the year's meager harvest. In some circles, the clan's name is almost synonymous with the peasantry, and their philosophy is largely perceived as a means of excusing their base and low-born behavior.

Wise observers, however, see something much different in the Sparrow's frugality. Theirs is an essentially selfless clan, pulling together for the common good and never leaving anyone behind. Bushi who fight alongside Sparrow samurai speak of their tireless courage, their bottomless loyalty, and their willingness to endure any hardship for the sake of their fellows. The Sparrow will tell you it all stems from their core philosophy: endurance as a purging fire that defines what truly matters in life.

As befits their oratory skills, the Sparrow place a fair amount of emphasis on etiquette and protocol. Though their clothing may be worn and their faces dirty, good manners cost nothing. They find that a polite demeanor makes up for their uncouth appearance, and many of them stress the intricacies of a proper greeting as much as they would an ancient tale or poem. The more delicate aspects of protocol sometimes elude them — there is little time for tea ceremonies in Sparrow lands — but they are fast learners, and their knack for observation means that they can emulate anything they witness within a few minutes.

Above all, Sparrow Clan samurai emphasize the long view of things. Their approach to war and peace alike entails thorough preparation, and factoring in all of the variables before deciding on a course of action. They are masters of making short-term sacrifices for long-term gain, and they will avoid easily-obtained goals unless they know they will benefit from them down the road. Temptations abound in this world, but true honor comes from resisting them in favor of something greater. The Sparrow have been doing so for centuries, and they see no reason to change things now.

New Mechanics

New Path: Suzume Scout

The Sparrow bushi who watch over the Golden Sun Plains are a special breed, even among the hardy Suzume Family. They are specially trained to keep an eye on outsiders who come to the Plains, as the Sparrow are charged to do on behalf of the Emperor, and to guide them through — and back out of — these lands, as necessary. This duty requires unusual skill in tracking and an instinctive feel for the natural world, so that they can remain aware of their surroundings even while paying full attention to their human charges.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Suzume Bushi 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Suzume Bushi 2

Technique:

The Sparrow's Eye Misses Nothing

A Suzume Scout's duties require him to be aware of all things all around him at all times. The Golden Sun Plains have not been tamed and harnessed by man, so they are technically wilderness, with all of the hazards that come with traveling in a wilderness. At the same time, no hazard is so great as a man who is found in a place where he does not belong. Both require vigilance.

You gain a bonus to the total of all Stealth and Hunting Skill Rolls equal to your Awareness. You also gain the Advantage Way of the Land (Golden Sun Plains) if you do not already have it.



FEALTY AND FREEDOM

THE TORTOISE CLAN



History of the Tortoise

The Legend of Someisa: First Century

The Tortoise Clan are fond of citing a heimin as their spiritual ancestor. Someisa lived during the Empire's First Century, and she was known for her generosity to passing travelers. She was an old woman when one day she met Shinsei as he was leaving the Empire, and instead of asking him to share his wisdom, she asked the prophet if he had any questions for her.

Shinsei was amused by her irreverence and offered to tell her his final riddle, but only if she promised never to tell it to anyone else. Someisa promised and Shinsei whispered his final riddle in her ear. Someisa lived for another 300 years, but she could not bear to keep the secret to herself. During the first hundred years, she told the trees in her garden, and the trees blossomed thousandfold. During the next hundred years she told a nearby river, and the river bubbled with joy and flowed silver. Eventually the Emperor came to visit her, and he ordered her to tell him Shinsei's last secret. Someisa merely bowed to the Emperor, but before she could speak she transformed into a tortoise. The Emperor understood and bowed in return.

Founding of the Tortoise Clan: year 442

The Tortoise Clan was founded in the days after the Battle of White Stag, in which the gaijin interlopers were driven from the shores of Rokugan. Even learned historians of the Empire are unclear exactly what role the clan founders played in this event. Some believe they helped introduce the gaijin to Rokugan and indeed were complicit in their attack on the Empire. Others say that they were merely acting at the Emperor's behest and were as horrified as the rest of Rokugan when the interlopers turned invaders.

Whatever the full truth may be, these facts are known: A Dragon shugenja named Agasha Kasuga met with the surviving gaijin invaders. Using his Air and Water magic, Kasuga helped the remaining gaijin vessels to escape unharmed, creating a great storm with his magic which aided the ships' departure and pushed them out of the Bay of the Golden Sun into the open sea. Kasuga's feat was not popular among his fellow Rokugani, however. Their beloved Empress had been killed, along with a number of her advisors and bodyguards. Worse, it seemed that one of their own had helped the murderers escape. They howled for vengeance. Kasuga's family was imprisoned and his own seppuku seemed inevitable. But when Kasuga returned to the Empire months later, he met in private with Emperor Hantei Muhaki, who had taken the throne after the Empress died fighting the gaijin. Muhaki not only pardoned Kasuga, but rewarded his service with his own Minor Clan.

Both Kasuga and the new Emperor had anticipated the response. They knew that rescuing the remaining gaijin was unforgivable to the Rokugani, but also vitally necessary if they wished to preserve any hope of good relations in the future. Moreover, someone would be needed to pursue further relations with the gaijin, to learn all they could about them, and to watch for signs of renewed attack. The Ki-Rin Clan was long gone and none knew when they would return. Muhaki needed Kasuga not only to save the gaijin, but to shoulder the dishonor of doing so, and to continue shouldering it without the purge of seppuku. Branded an outcast, he could then keep careful tabs on the overseas gaijin empires, watch them for signs of danger, and report back to the Emperor far more reliably than the absent Ki-Rin.

Kasuga accepted that responsibility, but he would not have the Agasha Family share his dishonor. The solution was to grant him leadership of a new Minor Clan — a band of near-outcasts who could perform this dishonorable but necessary work without tainting the remainder of their families. This group, the newfound Tortoise Clan, would need men and women who could accept the scorn of the Empire for the good of the Empire: not thugs or schemers, but those who put Rokugan's fortunes ahead of their own good name. He and Muhaki spent a long time in counsel, identifying those who could serve. Scorpion spies, Mantis sailors, Yasuki merchants, Crab bushi weary of their endless vigil against the Shadowlands, ronin... all could be enticed into this new duty. By the time the Emperor announced the creation of the new clan, Kasuga had already approached those he needed and made them the offer. Under the protection of the Emperor and with its new goals clearly in mind, the Tortoise was born.

The Tortoise serve the Yoritomo Alliance: 1120s

During the Clan War, the Tortoise emerge from obscurity to serve as ambassadors for the alliance of Minor Clans led by the Mantis, drawn in by Yoritomo's charismatic leadership, as well as the desire to find security in numbers in turbulent times. The Tortoise never formally joined the Alliance, but their dogged and skillful service is noted and remembered by those who had previously dismissed them as scoundrels.

The Tortoise are given custody of Otosan Uchi: year 1160

In 1159, Daigotsu strikes at the heart of the Empire by occupying Otosan Uchi in a surprise attack. After his withdrawal, the Imperial City is left mostly abandoned and razed, and in

places Tainted. Its only remaining residents are a handful of Nezumi scavengers, Tsi family smiths too stubborn to give up their old forges, Ninube stalking the shadows, and Yotsu ronin who have taken it upon themselves to watch over the ruins. Imperial decree gives the Tortoise the official job of keeping an eye on what remains of the former capital.

Kasuga Taigen rallies the Minor Clans: year 1165

As the Lion and the Unicorn Clans square off over possession of the City of the Rich Frog, Tortoise Champion Kasuga Taigen sees the need for the Minor Clans to band together to defend their collective interests in turbulent times, just as Yoritomo united them during the Clan War. He sets about rallying the other Minor Clans, forming the Minor Clan Alliance.

Customs of the Tortoise

The Tortoise Clan's duties are divided into three general spheres, all of which are overseen by the ruling Kasuga Family. In all three instances, they are driven by an overwhelming sense of realism and practicality, and believe their ends as commanded by the Emperor justify a number of questionable means.

First comes the purpose for which the Clan was founded, and to which they have devoted their energies for 700 years. The distant lands of the gaijin have not troubled Rokugan since the Battle of the White Stag, but they must be watched regularly for any signs of attack. Over the centuries, the Tortoise have built up a modest but impressive network of spies and informants. Their tasks are comparatively simple: They haunt seaports and coastal towns, keeping watch on the construction of ships and the comings and goings of any merchant vessels. Their duty is the protection of Rokugan, and no gaijin can enter Rokugan without first boarding a ship. Are soldiers moving into town in greater numbers? That may be cause for concern. Have local merchants seen increased orders for dry goods or food that keeps? That's worth passing on. Are port warehouses filling with equipment which may be construed as warlike? Find out how much and who ordered it. Questions like these keep Tortoise spies busy, watching not only the gaijin but figuring out ways to pass the information back to Rokugan quickly.

In addition, they keep a close watch on word of any new inventions or weapons. Rokugan remembers the terrible gaijin cannon that slew their Empress, and the Tortoise Clan is charged with ensuring no one can ever spring any similar surprises on them. Their involvement in smuggling stems from this mission, for smugglers often have information on new and inventive materials which could be used in a war against the Empire. With trade routes well established and Tortoise spies watching the coastal underworld, they can hear word of any weapons before it spreads through more honorable channels. The Clan's centuries-old development of trading ships, pirates and smugglers exists mainly for this purpose.

The Tortoise's second and third duties lie much closer to home. During the Clan War the Tortoise Clan began to serve as a representative of the Minor Clans at court, and their ambassadors continue to do so today. This situation evolved less as a formal command from the Emperor than from a practical necessity within the Imperial Court. The Minor Clans had long been prevented from gaining the Emperor's ear, shunted aside by the Great Clans. By virtue of their very creation, the Tortoise were exempt from this process. Their lands belonged to the Hantei and no other clan could make a claim to it, giving them solid geographical legitimacy. Their spying operations meant they needed regular access to the Emperor, which meant that other clans could not shut them out. And they retained these benefits despite an appalling reputation at court, meaning that scandals and insults had little effect on them. Is it any wonder that other Minor Clans began approaching them for help?

Contrary to their reputation, the Tortoise were happy to provide aid for other Minor Clans. Without them, many of the smaller clans would never attain the recognition they have today. During the Clan War, they were instrumental in helping the Mantis Champion Yoritomo forge his famous alliance, and they helped keep the Minor Clans united long enough to cement those gains. They remain steadfast proponents of their "brothers" in other families, and their champion, Kasuga Taigen, was the architect of the Minor Clan Alliance of 1166. While few of the other clans relish dealing with them, most admit that the Tortoise discharge their duties to the Alliance with unmistakable skill.

The final mission charged to the clan is the stewardship of the ruins of Otosan Uchi. Though the city remains cursed and only a few hundred souls now dwell there, it was the seat of the Emperor for many centuries. Its loss was felt throughout the Empire and the thought of it succumbing to further corruption is more than most Rokugani can bear. The Tortoise

stand watch to keep its Taint at bay, rebuild where they can, and help those few souls who live here obtain some measure of safety. They essentially serve as a police force, patrolling the streets and keeping an eye out for signs of trouble. Every squad has a supply of jade with them, along with a shugenja trained in combating the Taint. They focus primarily on inhabited neighborhoods near the fringes of the city, where the remaining population ekes out a precarious living. Beyond that, they work to identify the worst areas — where Shadowlands incursions are most likely to manifest — and post guards to warn the clan of any attacks. It's a difficult proposition, but the Tortoise are known for perseverance. Inch by inch, they have begun reclaiming the city from darkness.

They have utilized a number of unique allies in their duties. Foremost among them are the Yotsu Family, ronin who have dedicated themselves to the defense of the weak and the helpless. Otosan Uchi was their home for many centuries before its destruction, but they will not leave it even if it means their deaths. The Tortoise have eagerly accepted their help in guarding the broken city, relying on the Yotsu Family's knowledge of every street and alleyway to make their patrols more effective.

The Nezumi, too, have come to Otosan Uchi in recent years, though not in great numbers. While not formally allied with the Rokugani, they have reached an understanding among those who dwell here. They leave the humans be and in exchange, they are free to make use of whatever loot they can find within the ruins. In the event of a Shadowlands attack, each side will act to help the other, uniting in the face of a common threat. This arrangement has served the Tortoise well, not only because it provides additional help, but because it allows them to make deals of their own with the Ratlings to secure smuggling routes into Rokugan. Their ease in dealing with the Nezumi does make the Kasuga quite unusual among the samurai class.

Regardless of where the Tortoise appear — whether at the Imperial Court or some far-flung wharf — the clan remains bound together by practical necessity. All of their duties entail messy and unseemly compromise: stains on Rokugani honor that would drive members of any other clan to seppuku. Not even the Scorpion will descend to such levels in pursuit of their duties. The Tortoise do this because they are the only ones who can, born as they were from a dishonor that they have endured for so long they can no longer feel it. Indeed, they now take a certain pride in it. It is what defines them as a clan, and what sets them apart from their so-called betters.

Most importantly, from a Tortoise's perspective, it allows them to see the world not in black and white as most Rokugani do, but in infinite shades of gray. They know that the gaijin who the Empire scorn have their own form of honor, and can be as loyal and devoted as any Lion samurai. They see the great bravery of the Nezumi in the face of overwhelming odds, and note the merit of Minor Clans whom Rokugan's elite dismiss as inferior. On the reverse side, they can see how those in power twist honor to serve their own ends, and that more than a few so-called noble samurai routinely disgrace their names in the service of selfish desires. They see all of these things and they believe that they can accept them. They have walked the dividing line for so long that both sides are now equally clear; it is a hard-earned wisdom which they would not trade for the world.

Lands of the Tortoise

The Tortoise lands occupy the area around the Bay of the Golden Sun, territory that officially belongs to the Emperor alone. It was ceded to them during their creation in an act of political calculation. Hantei Muhaki angered the court enough by giving the "traitor" Agasha Kasuga a clan of his own; attempting to carve out territory for that clan anywhere else would have invited open revolt. As it stands, the Tortoise lands serve them extremely well. The harbor allows them to marshal their fleet and the waters produce copious amounts of fish. It has allowed them to stay wealthy and prosperous despite their status as near-pariahs. Indeed, were it not for the fact that they cannot expand their territory, they might have easily achieved Great Clan status long ago.

Kyuden Kasuga

The Peninsula of the Dawn holds the majority of Tortoise Clan holdings, which consist mainly of fishing villages, watchtowers, and prosperous farms. Their roads are well-developed and Imperial patrols are regular. The family makes their home in the modest but richly appointed fortress of Kyuden Kasuga, located midway along the peninsula and overlooking the bay. It has been built to resemble a turtle's shell, decked out in the Tortoise's colors along with heraldry from the remainder of the Minor Clans as a show of solidarity.

Ruins of Ootosan Uchi

Ootosan Uchi is cordoned off from the surrounding Crane lands, guarded by the Doji. Ostensibly, their duty is to ensure that no oni escape. In truth, they keep an eye on the movements of the Tortoise Clan, and ensure that the smugglers don't get any ideas about conducting unauthorized activities. They needn't worry; the Tortoise take their commitment to Ootosan Uchi seriously and besides, it makes the perfect gathering point for useful people who want to avoid attention. Launching some kind of foray into Crane territory would ruin that. But if the Doji want to post guards nearby, let them. It means more bushi nearby in case there's any trouble they can't handle.

Watchtowers

At the edge of the peninsula sits a pair of watchtowers. They used to be manned by Seppun Guardsmen, though the Tortoise stood ready to lend aid in the event of an invasion. The northernmost tower, the Tower of Dawn, fell during Daigotsu's attack on Ootosan Uchi: a great sea monster rose from the depths and smashed it like a child's toy. The southern tower, called the Tower of Sunset, still remains, but with the capital moved inland, its importance has diminished. The Tortoise maintain it out of a sense of honor, however, lighting the fires in the top to guide wayward ships home.

The south side of the bay belongs largely to the Doji Family of the Crane Clan, and they have made it quite clear where their boundaries are drawn. Beyond the Sunset Tower and the city of Ootosan Uchi, the Tortoise have no jurisdiction, and woe betide any Kasuga Family samurai who forgets it. The Tortoise have never made any claims to the southern shore, which has helped ease tensions somewhat, and they much prefer taking their ships down the coast to the River of the Blind Monk when they travel instead of risking ruffled feathers by moving through Crane territory.

Heroes of the Tortoise

KASUGA TAIGEN, TORTOISE CLAN CHAMPION

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 3
Honor: 1.2	Status: 8.0	Glory: 5.5		

SCHOOL/RANK: Kasuga Bushi 3 / Kasuga Courtier 2

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Minor Clan Champions) Bente's Blessing, Bland, Crafty, Multiple Schools

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (Tortoise Daimyo), Greedy

KATA: Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Acting 3, Athletics 2, Commerce (Appraisal) 5, Courtier 4, Craft: Sailing 3, Deceit (Lying) 4, Defense 3, Etiquette (Sincerity) 4, Investigation 2, Navigation 4, Peasant Weapons (Kama) 5, Stealth (Shadowing) 4, Underworld 5

Members of the Imperial Court cite Kasuga Taigen as all that is best and worst in the Tortoise Clan. He is brash, bold, headstrong, and doesn't seem to care what other people think. He is persistent, pushing other courtiers on issues with stubborn resolution and never giving up until he gets what he requires. He is crafty and resourceful, with a knack for bending the rules as far as he can without breaking them. And he delights in flaunting his clan's "special" relationship with the Emperor. He claims the look on other nobles' faces whenever he mentions that fact is what keeps him alive.

Beneath the bluster and bravado, however, lies a shrewd and devoted mind — someone who looks at the big picture and sees what role the Tortoise should play in it. He has never forgotten his ancestors' mission; every piece of information arriving from Tortoise ships passes through his hands personally before he sends it on to the Emperor. He censors nothing and ensures that the Emperor receives every word no matter how trivial. It is not his job to determine what is important; he merely needs to place it in the right hands.

His stubbornness arises in part from a devotion to the downtrodden of Rokugan. Too often, he sees samurai behaving as if the peasantry were a nuisance barely worthy of their attention. The nobles exist to defend and protect the peasantry, not grow wealthy off their hard work. This altruism extends to the Minor Clans as well, who for too long were used as pawns in the Great Clans' power games. Taigen took inspiration from the legendary Mantis Clan Champion Yoritomo, who elevated his people to great-



ness through sheer force of will. While the Tortoise could never duplicate the circumstances of Yoritomo's ascent, they had the resources and the wherewithal to attempt something similar. All they needed was the will to act and the patience to know when the time was right. Taigen possessed copious amounts of both.

He began laying seeds for it when the Lion Clan seized the City of the Rich Frog, believing correctly that the act would eventually lead to war. He approached the Daimyo of the Fox Clan, Kitsuni Mizuochi, and made a proposal. When war came, the Great Clans would be distracted and divided. If the two of them could bring the other Minor Clans to their side, then they could forge an alliance which would grant all of them a voice they could never hope for as individuals. Mizuochi agreed, and as the Lion and the Unicorn traded barbs around Kaeru Toshi, the pair began surreptitiously contacting representatives from various Minor Clans. The Tortoise knew how to act without attracting notice, while the good reputation of the Fox Clan helped ease any potential mistrust. Most of the other clans responded with great enthusiasm.

The Minor Clan Alliance became Taigen's great triumph. With the Tortoise at its head, he could now speak as an equal to the Great Clans and ensure that his "brothers" in the other Minor Clan families were looked after. Others in the Alliance grumbled a bit at the Tortoise's prominence, but he silenced them with a booming laugh and a piece of irrefutable logic — the Tortoise have the ear of the Emperor in ways no other Minor Clan can match. Who else can guarantee such access and influence? The fact that Taigen has remained true to his word has further eased tensions, and the Minor Clans now look to him as their key diplomat and spokesperson.

He is somewhat concerned whether that will always be the case, however. His younger brother Eizan, though just as cunning as he, lacks Taigen's concern for the welfare of others. He plays the angles too prominently for Taigen's liking, and his greed for koku is a tad too brazen. Eizan currently serves the Clan at sea, which suits both him and his brother, but Taigen worries about what would happen if the younger Kasuga ever assumed leadership of the Clan. All that he has wrought could be undone in a very short period of time.

Taigen always seems to be more Crab than Tortoise, with a loud booming voice and a seemingly casual disregard for propriety. It's a bit of a ruse. His laughter is intended to put others at ease and his apparent social errors are deliberately designed to encourage others to un-

derestimate his cunning. His friendliness is at least partially genuine, however, and he truly enjoys the company of others. A man of prodigious appetites, Taigen loves to eat, drink, and spend time with geisha; he's particularly fond of the exotic foreign dishes his ships bring back and always saves the choicest samples for himself. He finds combat distasteful and his lack of exercise has given him a certain girth. He divides his time evenly between the Tortoise Clan fortress and the Imperial Court, preferring to pay as much personal attention to his duties as possible.

KASUGA EIZAN, TORTOISE CLAN SMUGGLER

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
Honor: 1.0	Status: 4.9			Glory: 3.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Kasuga Bushi 4 / Kasuga Smuggler Path

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Yasuki Jinn-Kuen), Forbidden Knowledge 4 (Kolot), Languages (Ruumal), Leadership

DISADVANTAGES: Greedy

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Commerce 3, Craft: Sailing 4, Deceit (Intimidation) 3, Defense 3, Jiu-jitsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Gaijin Cultures (Ivory Kingdoms) 3, Lore: Kolat 2, Navigation (Sea) 4, Peasant Weapons 3, Sleight of Hand 3, Underworld 3

Eizan is Taigen's younger brother by more than a decade, and was once in line for leadership of the clan before the recent birth of Taigen's grandson. He shares his brother's craftiness but comparatively little of his goodwill. He is a shifty, clever, and somewhat selfish man who often asks what the Tortoise can do for him rather than the other way around.

He showed an affinity for seamanship at an early age and the ocean remains his abiding love. Taigen easily exploited that to remove his younger sibling from the political picture. As captain of his own boat, Eizan would have the freedom to engage in schemes for the Tortoise Clan while staying far away from the intricate policies his brother was crafting. The arrangement has benefited both brothers quite well. Taigen can run the clan as he wishes and Eizan remains free of the older man's oversight to engage in his true purpose.

Eizan belongs to the Kolat and has since an extremely early age. The shadowy conspiracy always had a few pawns in the Tortoise Clan, attracted to the Kasuga's great wealth and routine association with less-than-savory figures. Upon completion of his gempukku ceremony, he was indoctrinated into the ranks of the Coin Sect,

Playing a Tortoise

charged with providing financial support for the Kolat's various schemes. He made an almost perfect agent. His ship, the *Fortune's Coin*, trades vigorously with the Ivory Kingdoms and dabble in a bit of piracy when its captain feels the urge. His profits are copious and he can skim a percentage off the top with no one back in Rokugan any the wiser. The sailors are all loyal to him and none ever speaks about the Yasuki ships he meets at certain predetermined points, or the silent men who board to unload a percentage of the cargo. Eizan pays well and smuggling is a common practice among the Tortoise. Why should they believe it to be any more sinister than that?

In addition to trade goods, Eizan also provides the Kolat with information on the Ivory Kingdoms, with a special emphasis on anything the conspiracy can use as a weapon. He maintains a number of informants in various Ivory ports and decides for himself which of their tidbits he passes on to Taigen and which go to his true masters. He reports his information directly to the leader of the Coin Sect, Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, who sails out to meet him rather than risk speaking to him onshore. Every piece of news they exchange is done so verbally, leaving no sign of their connection. The system has worked extremely well.

There may come a time when the Kolat ask Eizan to assume leadership of the Tortoise Clan, though he does not relish the prospect. Taigen is a canny foe and will not be easily usurped, and with the birth of his grandchild, it will take more than a simple assassination to step in as Tortoise Clan Champion. Taigen's son-in-law is the Keeper of the Earth, making it even more difficult to strike at the young heir. Better Eizan stays where he is aboard the *Fortune's Coin*, where he can thumb his nose at his big brother with impunity, rather than struggling through the endless tedium of being daimyo.

Eizan possesses none of his brother's physical softness; his frame is lean and wiry with brown skin hardened by years of sailing under the sun. He sports a number of scars across his leathery body and keeps his graying hair tied back in a tight queue. He rarely raises his voice, and he speaks in cracked, gravelly tones that do not lend themselves to lengthy speeches. But he shares the twinkle in his brother's eye and his politician's instincts serve him extremely well in maneuvering through the portside underworld of the Ivory Kingdoms. He's killed more people than he can count and he doesn't regret a single slit throat. When he dies, his young son Hiro will inherit the *Fortune's Coin*... and all of the obligations it entails.

Stubborn, capricious, and practical to a fault describes the traits of many Tortoise samurai. Their clan has a broad streak of iconoclasm, borne from centuries of doing dishonorable but necessary work and allowing the ends to justify the means. They apply flexible standards to enforcing Bushido, and rules which do not serve them can be discarded at the drop of a hat. Otherwise, they would not be able to function as they have.

Some samurai might not be able to handle such a casual attitude towards right and wrong. The more expediency governs one's actions, the more one's noble goals get lost amid corruption and compromise. But the Tortoise remain balanced on the razor's edge with remarkable skill — skirting moral impropriety without ever completely crossing over into it. Their tenacity and resolute devotion plays a considerable role in this. Once a Tortoise has set his mind to something, it is extremely difficult to get him to change it. Their stubbornness plays a key part in their ethical make-up as well.

With so many rules bent or broken so casually, the ones they do adhere to become all the more important. A Tortoise may lie or cheat, for instance, but he will only do so in the name of gaining information, and that information must be of some use to the Emperor. He may smuggle goods past the Imperial Magistrate, but only because they hide equipment which none save the Emperor must see. He may fraternize with thugs and criminals in the ruins of Otosan Uchi, but only because he knows they will stand by him when the next oni attacks. If one allows the ends to justify the means, then those ends must be beyond reproach, and Tortoise Clan samurai apply the strictest possible criteria to this. If it doesn't benefit the Emperor, then it is not worth enduring the stain on one's honor.

Their status as pariah gives them a streak of iconoclasm as well. Members of the Tortoise Clan take great delight in making mischief — flummoxing members of bigger Clans through verbal trickery or making a joke out of piously held beliefs. It gets them into a great deal of trouble more often than not, but they have little to lose in that regard. Their samurai are skilled enough to hold their own in a duel, and if it's merely a question of lost honor, then what of it? In the eyes of others, they never had any to start with.

The rise of the new Minor Clans Alliance has tempered their puckish nature somewhat. The Tortoise leaders are keenly aware that other clans are now counting on them and they cannot afford to upset the established order the way they once did. Though still possessed of great mischief, they temper it with a sense of propriety, filtering their comments through the formalities of etiquette rather than blurting it out directly. The acumen they show at court suggests that they can play the political game as well as anyone.

Tortoise samurai often attempt to think outside the box when following orders. They keep the overall goals in mind at all times, but they aren't afraid to suggest unconventional methods to reach it. Indeed, they seem to consider it their duty to do so, especially in mixed company with samurai from other clans. Alternate perspectives, new ideas, and unorthodox ways of approaching a challenge cannot help but be beneficial, even if they are ultimately discarded in favor of something more by-the-book. Tortoise Clan members can be exasperating when making such suggestions, but even their most ardent opponents concede that their words help broaden one's perspective.

In personal appearance, the Tortoise are notoriously dingy. They pay little attention to personal grooming and their clothing is often rough and unkempt. This stems from their sea-going history: aboard a ship, there is little chance to dress oneself properly, and the wind and waves can turn even the finest kimono to faded rags. They see no need to change their appearance when they go ashore, for to do so would be to deny their true nature. Their diplomats have begun dressing more appropriately, but the remainder continue to wear whatever suits them. As with so much else about the Clan, the perceived loss of status matters very little. Being at the bottom of the pile has its advantages.

New Mechanics

New Path: Kasuga Smuggler

Among the duties that the Tortoise Clan performs for the Emperor is gathering intelligence on the gaijin where they live, and for most Rokugani living away from the Empire for long periods of time can be an unsettling experience. But the Kasuga who do so find that not only does their dedication to duty see them through the difficult task of

dealing with foreigners on a regular basis, but that they develop a knack for smuggling items and documents that gives them a genuine sense of achievement.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

REQUIREMENTS: Sleight of Hand 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Kasuga Courtier Rank 2 or Kasuga Bushi Rank 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 3

Technique: Under the Tortoise's Shell

Tortoise agents who spend a good deal of time abroad as part of their work do a lot of what might rightly be called smuggling. They find that deceit, concealment, and both physical and verbal evasion become second nature to them.

You gain a bonus to the total of all Courtier, Deceit, Etiquette and Stealth Skill Rolls equal to your Void Ring. You also gain 2 Free Raises for each Void Point spent on a Sleight of Hand Skill Roll instead of 1.

New Item: Kappa's Water of Life

This mystical water is found in the concave at the top of a kappa's head — the creature's life energy, which sustains its presence in the mortal realm. They guard it ferociously, and many tales recount how travelers avoid being consumed by the monsters after tricking them into bowing or otherwise emptying their water of life. If spilled, the kappa will become severely weakened (see *Creatures of Rokugan*, p. 123).

However, some Tortoise samurai who either found themselves in unusual circumstances, or who stumbled across caches of obscure knowledge, have learned that if a mortal drinks this water, he temporarily gains some of the creature's benefits. The drinker's skin becomes tough and wrinkled like a tortoise's, granting protection from blows equivalent to Carapace 2. In addition, all rolls made using the Games, Deceit, Sleight of Hand, or Traps Skills are made as if the pertinent skill were 1 Rank higher. The effects last for 1 hour. The possible benefits to a Kasuga samurai are obvious, given their dominant activities.

The entire contents of a single kappa's concave must be swallowed for the draught to work, and needless to say, the kappa will fiercely resist any efforts to do so. If someone claims a kappa's water, it will immediately retreat to the nearest water to regenerate. When it heals, it will move heaven and earth to hunt the violator down and destroy him, often recruiting other kappa to help.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM

THE
IMPERIAL FAMILIES

History of the Imperial Families

Since the birth of the Empire, the Imperial Families have ranked among the most powerful and influential samurai in Rokugan. Their purpose, history, and destiny have traditionally been closely tied to the Emperor. Even in recent times, with the fall of the Hantei and the surprisingly short-lived Toturi Dynasties, the Imperial Families have demonstrated that centuries of political influence do not fade easily, and have continued to exercise considerable power.

Whether their future will persist in the power vacuum left behind by Toturi III's death, however, is uncertain.

The Hantei Family

For 1,000 years, the Hantei Dynasty ruled Rokugan. They were, with a few exceptions, wise and benevolent rulers. For eleven centuries, though the fortunes of the Clans rose and fell, there was always one true constant – the Hantei Emperors.

The family was named for Hantei, the favored son of Amaterasu and Onnotangu, founder of the Empire, the first samurai. When the Kami fell to earth, it was Hantei who realized that his destiny, as well as that of his brethren, lay not in the Heavens. A tournament was held to determine who would rule the mortals, and Hantei proved victorious.

To some, Hantei's choice to remain in the mortal world was the most fundamental and defining act an Emperor has ever made. With all of the power and wisdom that the Kami possessed, surely they could have found a path back to Tengoku if they chose. Instead, Hantei recognized that the mortal world needed guidance and leadership. This decision symbolizes the role of the Emperor – to give up his own life and freedom so that he might stand as a symbol of something more: a leader, a Son of Heaven, residing among mortals by choice.

The Hantei Emperors were always revered as something more than mortal, though only Genji, Hantei's son, displayed obviously divine abilities. Genji lived for several centuries and was said to possess uncanny charisma, which he used to unite the clans during the Empire's turbulent early years. After Genji's death, the divine blood of the Hantei Emperors became more diluted. They lived no longer than ordinary men. Even so, the Hantei were revered as virtual gods, and acknowledged as the leaders of not just Rokugani politics, but of its culture and religion as well.

And so it went for eleven centuries. In modern times, historians point to the Hantei Dynasty as a time of peace and prosperity. Though this is not entirely true – there was plenty of warfare and strife during their rule – it was at the very least a time of political stability compared to recent years. Though clans might betray one another, or even plot against a lesser Imperial Family, to betray the Hantei was unthinkable. Those few who would contemplate such

betrayal were regarded as madmen – shortly before their exile or execution.

It was, ironically, loyalty that eventually brought the Hantei to ruin. Though a tragic misinterpretation of Uli-ku's prophecies (and due in no small part to the corrupting influence of the Bloodsword, Yashin), Scorpion Clan Champion Bayushi Shoji believed that only the Hantei line's extermination could prevent the return of the Dark Kami, Fu Leng. Shoji's actions only hastened the inevitable. Not only did Shoji fail to kill the last Hantei, but his failed coup drove his friend, Yogo Junzo, to a mad path of revenge that ended in the opening of the Black Scrolls, the return of Fu Leng, and the ultimate destruction of the Hantei Family.

Though the Hantei are remembered fondly, they are at the same time an uncomfortable memory. It was, after all, the failure of those sworn to serve the Emperor that brought about the end of Rokugan's first and finest dynasty. Though many of the same samurai who failed the Hantei rallied at the Second Day of Thunder and atoned for their mistakes, this does not change the past.

With the fall of the Hantei Dynasty, Rokugan was changed forever. That which was believed to be eternal, ended. The bright star that defined and guided an Empire, faded. Fu Leng's defeat saved Rokugan from utter destruction, but some would say until a new and lasting dynasty is established, the Empire's ultimate future is still uncertain.

Rumors of the Dark Lord Daigotsu's connection to the Hantei bloodline only make the scars left behind by the fall of this great Family even more painful.



The Toturi Family

During the short life of the Toturi Dynasty, the Toturi Emperors set out to avoid many of the conditions that hastened the fall of their predecessors. During the Hantei rule, it was custom that very few individuals would bear the true Hantei name. The Emperor, his wife, and his children were the only ones allowed to use the name. When a new Emperor was selected, his brothers and sisters would abdicate their claim on the throne and join the Otomo or Seppun Families.

Though this practice allowed the Hantei to rule virtually unchallenged, it created a problem during later dynasties. Hantei XXXVIII demonstrated considerable difficulty in producing an heir. His son, Hantei Sotorii, was weak and sickly. Fu Leng's subtle and insidious corruption went entirely unnoticed (and the poisons of Bayushi Shoji's vengeful widow, Kachiko, did little to help matters).

When it became clear that the Emperor had become possessed by the Dark Kami, many continued to follow him blindly. A world where one did not obey the Hantei without question was unthinkable. Many brave and noble samurai fell to the Shadowlands due only to their own unflinching loyalty. And when the Day of Thunder passed, there were no Hantei remaining to take up the throne.

To avoid the possibility of this happening again, the Toturi Dynasty did not guard its name so carefully. The Toturi Emperors even went so far as to grant their name to loyal vassals, so that if the Emperor fell there would always be an heir to the Toturi name.

Unfortunately, Toturi I was a bit better at establishing precedent than he hoped. And even to those who followed him loyally, the fact that Toturi had gained his throne by slaying the previous Emperor was a dangerous precedent. When Toturi III set off on his mad quest into the Shadowlands and inexplicably named no heir, it left the entire Toturi Family in a precarious state. After all, Toturi himself had demonstrated that when an Emperor proved himself unfit to rule, men of honor and ambition could step forth to fill the void.

It was a lesson that Khan Moto Chagatai learned only too well. When the Unicorn invaded the Imperial City, there was no official Toturi heir to speak out and unite the clans. Even if there had been, the Otomo Family was busy making its own designs upon the throne. The Imperial Families were in disharmony. In the end, it was the clans themselves – not the Toturi – who restored order. And in the end, it was clear that the clans preferred no Emperor at all over a Toturi heir.

The brave men and women who bore the Toturi name continue to do so. Though few understand why Toturi III did what he did, the Toturi continue to honor him. With the withdrawal of the Phoenix from the Imperial City, the Toturi have stepped forth to take on the mantle of the Imperial Guard. Though the Emperor may be dead, they continue to protect his city, serve his Champions, and direct his magistrates in their duties.

The Seppun Family

This Imperial Family takes its name from one of Hantei's first servants, a mortal woman who witnessed the Kami's fall from the sky. Seppun proved to be wise as well as pious. She was close friends with Shinsei, Isawa, and Shiba, and though the Little Teacher and the Phoenix Clan constructed the foundations of the Empire's faith, Seppun was deeply influential in the creation of Rokugani religion.

Rather than join any of the Great Clans, the Seppun were chosen to serve the Emperor directly. Seppun's eldest son, Anzu, trained among the most renowned warriors in the young Empire, building a core of bushi techniques that would come to define the Imperial Guard. At the same time, Seppun's youngest son, Kichi, set out to find the wisest holy men and shugenja. The knowledge he gained became the basis of the Seppun Hidden Guard.

The Seppun have always served a single purpose – the glory of the Emperor. For many, this duty took a very literal meaning. Following the tradition of Seppun's sons, they became fierce warriors and shugenja, dedicated to protecting the Emperor's life, his family, and his city. Other Seppun pursued this purpose through less direct routes, creating music, art, and culture to promote the Emperor's greatness, or using their considerable wealth to become patrons of the arts throughout Rokugan. Though the Seppun participated in Imperial politics, they did not share their Otomo brethren's penchant for manipulation. The Seppun, instead, were gracious hosts and generous friends to all who honored the Hantei – all for the glory of the Emperor.

The Seppun were shocked by the downfall of the Hantei line. But when Amaterasu granted her blessings to the Toturi Dynasty, the Seppun were quick to transfer their loyalty to the new line. Even when Otosan Uchi fell, they did not falter. Their considerable talents are responsible in no small part for the astonishing growth of Toshi Ranbo since the Imperial seat was moved there.

Following the death of Toturi III, the Seppun were again deeply shocked. Unlike the Day of Thunder, there was no

one with the strength and charisma to replace the fallen Emperor. Instead, there was only chaos. Many Seppun have become extremely depressed and withdrawn since the Son of Heaven's death, retreating to their family's temples, seeking the answer by rededicating themselves to religion.

When the Toturi Family sought to find a purpose by taking control of the Imperial Guard, the Seppun did not protest. They have, in fact, helped in training the Toturi and begun the transfer of their Miharu School to the Toturi Family. To the Seppun, with no Emperor there is little point in serving as the Imperial Guard. If the Toturi wish to step into the role, then more power to them.

For the time being, the Seppun have chosen to focus on the one constant, enduring remnant of the dynasties they served – faith. The Seppun temples have become a stabilizing force during these turbulent times, encouraging many lost and confused samurai to strive toward a better Rokugan.

The Otomo Family

The Otomo have always been controversial figures in Imperial politics – and they would not choose to have it any other way. The first Otomo was a clever and perceptive man. Though Great Clans followed the Kami loyally and swore their fealty to the Emperor, Otomo knew it would not always be so. Times of strife, after all, bred unity. Once Fu Leng was defeated, the Clans would seek new foes. Most likely, they would turn on one another.

Otomo warned Hantei that this would be the case, but Hantei disagreed. To prove that Otomo's fears were unfounded, he placed the man in charge of the palace courts, so that he could witness the love and loyalty his brothers and sisters held for one another.

When the War Against Fu Leng ended, Otomo's fears proved to be well-founded. The Lion and Crane began moving to war with one another almost immediately. While Bayushi was loyal to Hantei, he was not quite so certain that he wished to serve the fallen Emperor's son. His clan began brewing plans to undermine the Imperial Court. The Crab, eager for more supplies to support their duties in the south, began casting hungry eyes upon the newly vacated Ki-Rin lands.

But Hantei Genji knew his father's servant well. He summoned Otomo to his court and asked him for his counsel. Otomo, of course, had spent his years in the court gathering information on various powerful individu-

als throughout the Empire that could be used as leverage against them. He had even gone so far as to assemble a network of Otomo spies that served in courts throughout the Empire, gathering information and relaying it to their master in Otosan Uchi in case the Emperor was ever threatened.

Using Otomo's information, Genji pressured the Lion and Crane into setting their bruised egos aside – for now. The Crab were encouraged to be satisfied with what they had. And though even Otomo's most talented spies found very little that could be used against Bayushi, the Scorpion lord was so impressed by his attempts that he viewed Genji as a worthy Emperor after all.

The traditions first established by Otomo came to define the family even more strongly after the defeat of the Gozoku Alliance in the fourth century, when the authority and power of the Gozoku leaders was handed over to the Otomo to use in defense of the Hantei Dynasty. The Otomo became extremely wealthy, powerful, manipulative, and vindictive, but they never forget their loyalty to the Emperor – for they recognized that without the Emperor's sanction and protection, much of what they did would be impossible. When Toturi I took the throne they, like their Seppun brethren, were very quick to move their loyalties to the new dynasty. While in the Seppun's case this was due to Amaterasu's divine sanction, for the Otomo this was more a matter of pragmatism. Without the blessings and protection of an Emperor, the Otomo knew that the many enemies they have made over the centuries would soon line up seeking satisfaction.

With the death of Toturi III, the Otomo Family's future is again uncertain. Otomo Hoketuhime made a bold move to secure her family's position by claiming the throne for herself, but her reach exceeded her grasp and the effort ended with her death. Many among the Otomo curse Hoketuhime for her ambition; if she had supported a charismatic Toturi heir the other Imperial Families might have supported her move and the Toturi dynasty would retain its throne. Instead, they believe, her greed and arrogance hastened the untimely death of the Empire's second dynasty.

Ironically, Hoketuhime's death has painted the current family as political incompetents, leading even their dedicated enemies to ignore them for the time being and grant daimyo Otomo Taneji an opportunity to secure his family's future. He knows it will be a difficult task, finding allies in an empire that has resented his family for over a thousand years, but he has no choice.

The Miya Family

Unlike Otomo and Seppun, who were well regarded among their people even before the Kami fell, Miya was a man of humble origins who served Otomo as his most trusted messenger. When the War Against Fu Leng ended, Miya was dispatched to spread the news of the Thunders' victory. Spreading the promise of hope throughout Rokugan, Miya inspired the early samurai to begin the first crucial steps of rebuilding the Empire. In return for his services, Hantei Genji granted Miya a family and named them as the Emperor's official messengers and heralds.

Genji's reward served a dual purpose. Not only was it recognition for what was truly a heroic act on Miya's part, but he knew that Miya would serve as a face to which lower rank samurai – and even common peasants – could easily relate. There, the people would say, is the hero who delivered them hope. There, the people would say, was a common man who rose to glory through his dedication to the Emperor. There, the people would say, was a champion who understood them.

This was Miya, a living symbol of hope who helped insure that Genji's rule would be a bright one.

Throughout history, the Miya have embraced their role as the voice of the Emperor. They have also gravitated into a position as peacekeepers, ending conflicts between the clans and preventing bloodshed whenever possible. This has, in some ways, frequently put them at odds with the Otomo. Where the Otomo have frequently seen it as beneficial to instigate wars between clans or families to prevent them from gaining enough strength to threaten the Emperor, the Miya have always embraced peace.

While the Otomo have sometimes resented the Miya diplomats for their meddling, they have also come to recognize them as a valuable resource. After all, it is not the Otomo's intent to destroy the clans, but to keep them in balance. Once a war has weakened a clan sufficiently that it is no longer a threat to the Emperor, the Miya can begin the healing process. At times, the Otomo have even arranged for the Miya to stumble over an explosive situation just in time to bring about a peaceful resolution. This has led to quite a few bitter confrontations between Otomo courtiers and Miya heralds in the courts, a fact which has done a great deal to reinforce the Miya's position as heroic defenders of the common man.

When the Hantei Dynasty ended, the Miya did not experience the same shock and confusion as the Otomo and Seppun families. After all, the Empire was still in ruins following the Clan War and they had far too much to do.

The Imperial Heralds never paused in their work, ending petty squabbles and helping to rebuild what had been destroyed. When Toturi took the throne, they honored him, partially because of Amaterasu's sanction but mostly because the Miya knew him as an honorable man that would defend the people.

Now, following the Toturi Dynasty's fall, the Miya again find themselves far too busy to contemplate their political future. Heralds continue to ride throughout Rokugan, strengthening the bonds between the clans and doing what they can to prevent chaos from overwhelming everything.

It is somewhat ironic that, of all the Imperial Families, their future is the most secure. Even the most vicious warlord recognizes the Miya mon as a symbol of hope, selflessness, and bravery. The shisha are beloved throughout the Empire.

If anyone can secure the future of the Imperial Families, it is the humble Miya.

Customs of the Imperial Families

The Imperial Families have always been the Emperor's closest and most trusted servants. In the case of the Hantei Dynasty, many members of the Otomo and Seppun were even direct relatives of the Emperor. Due to their unique status, the Imperial Families were not bound by tradition or custom – they *created* tradition and custom. A young Otomo princess who attended Winter Court wearing a new style of clothing could rest assured she would spawn a dozen imitators within the week, and the new fashion would spread as far as Crab lands by the following spring. A Seppun priest who devised a new interpretation of a passage from the Tao would not be questioned. Rather, he would find Isawa and Asahina sages scrambling to adapt and understand his teachings.

Despite their influence on Imperial custom, the Imperial Families rarely wrought radical change upon the Empire without reason. After all, the best way to keep the Empire stable is to keep tradition for changing too drastically. After all, what is loyalty to the Emperor, but a tradition? By keeping things relatively similar and stable, the Imperial houses have guaranteed that Rokugan would remain strong.



The relative cultural similarities between the dawn of the Empire and the modern day are largely due, in fact, to the influence of the Imperial Families. Any time tradition is called into question, the Otomo and Seppun are quick to answer. Any time technology progresses too quickly, the Miya are there to urge caution. Following the Battle of White Stag, the Miya were instrumental in explicitly forbidding the manufacture and use of gaijin pepper and similar explosives.

While it would be excessive to suggest that the Imperial Families encourage stagnation, they are conservative in the extreme. They maintain this tradition for one simple reason – it works. For eleven centuries, the Empire remained whole and strong. Only the return of a dark god was able to undo what the Hantei Dynasty had built.

With the death of Toturi III, many among the Imperial Families worry that their reduced influence will soon lead to cultural instability. Unless they can restore their power, their moderating influence on Rokugan's development will quickly unravel. The Khan's attack on Toshi Ranbo was, to many Imperials, a harbinger of much darker times to

come.

Customs of the Hantei

While the extinction of the Hantei line precludes them from having any enduring tradition, the revered dynasty's affect upon Imperial culture continues to this day. One could rightly say that the entire samurai tradition was, in a way, a Hantei tradition as Hantei was the first samurai. Beyond even this, however, the family has left a most peculiar mark upon history.

The Hantei are still deeply revered – as is right. The founder of their family was the first Emperor, and his reign was blessed by the gods. However, the dynasty's end is regarded with unspoken fear and superstition by many Rokugani. That Fu Leng could possess the last Hantei so easily, without arousing the suspicion of even the wisest among the Crab and Phoenix, implies a great deal. It implies that the Hantei line was somehow flawed, to invite such great evil into itself. Even worse – it implies that all samurai are flawed. All samurai are, after all, sworn to protect the Emperor. In allowing the last Hantei to be-



come the vessel of Fu Leng and perish on the Second Day of Thunder, all of Rokugan failed their leader.

It is a subject that most Rokugani treat with a great deal of sensitivity – and superstition. Since the Second Day of Thunder, many samurai avoid saying the Hantei name altogether, believing that it will invite bad luck.

Some take the superstition even further. During its long reign, the Hantei Emperors were well known for distributing gifts to samurai who pleased them. Nearly every house in Rokugan held at least one trinket bestowed by a Hantei Emperor – at least at one time. Since the Second Day of Thunder, however, many of these trinkets have been misplaced. Their owners would never admit to destroying or giving away something given to them by the Emperor, naturally, but years pass and sometimes it can be hard to keep track of all of a family's heirlooms...

The Kuni Family are a bit more blunt about this practice than most. They believe that the Hantei line is cursed by Jigoku, and anyone who willingly owns an artifact given by the Hantei line invites the Taint to corrupt them. Following the Second Day of Thunder,

the Kuni destroyed all gifts given to them by Hantei Emperors save for a few powerful nemuranai (which they placed in storage) and magical texts (which they later copied, then destroyed). They are quite outspoken about the curse they believe follows the Hantei line, and will admonish anyone who keeps a Hantei artifact for their ridiculous foolishness.

Customs of the Toturi

Having existed for barely more than a single generation, the Toturi had few customs to speak of. Hailing from diverse backgrounds and unified by little more than the fact that they all impressed the Toturi Dynasty sufficiently enough to be granted the name, they were a family of strangers thrown together by chance, bound by necessity, and unified by a sense of honor and devotion to the fallen dynasty's name.

Philosophically, the Toturi followed their namesake. Toturi I was a hero of the common man, who spent a great deal of time as a ronin and associated with peasants. The Toturi Family – despite their wealth and status – endeavored to follow his example. The Toturi had a deep respect for common folk.

This is not, however, to say that they treat the lower classes as equals. Far from it. Peasants, after all, have their part to play in the Celestial Order. They are destined to serve. To elevate them above their proper status only serves to humiliate and embarrass them. There were exceptions, as in the case of General Toku, who rose from peasant obscurity to heroic status, but it is no man's place to force destiny. Should another peasant be destined to follow Toku's path, then he must find it himself. However, Toturi samurai are well known for looking out for the lower classes.

The Toturi were also well known for their tolerance of ronin. This is quite unorthodox for any samurai family, let alone an Imperial Family. The mere existence of ronin is distasteful to the average samurai. They are a living example of failure, an aberration of the Celestial Order suited only for mercenary work and, with luck, an honorable death.

The Toturi viewed ronin in a much more compassionate light. This was due not only to Toturi's experiences as a ronin, but also because many members of the family were themselves former ronin or sons of ronin. When Toturi sought to secure his family name, he looked first to the brave wave-men who served him during the Clan War. As a result, many Toturi know only too well how it feels

to be cast out of family and clan. While the Toturi did not open their doors to every ronin – the vast majority of these men and women arrived in their current state for good reason – they are at least willing to give such individuals the benefit of the doubt.

To those ronin looking for honest work, the Toturi are always offering a few bounties in Toshi Ranbo. The work is difficult (usually involving dangerous criminals with little or no leads to their location) and the pay meager – but it is honest work, backed by the favor of an Imperial Family. For a ronin, such opportunities are rare indeed.

Customs of the Seppun

If there is one trait that unifies the Seppun Family, it is piety. The Seppun are a deeply religious people. All members of the family are expected to study the Tao and honor the Fortunes. It is not unusual for members of the family to travel spend at least one year in Phoenix lands, studying with the keepers of the Empire's faith.

But for all their unswerving dedication to the Tao and Fortunism, Seppun are also a surprisingly open-minded people. As Seppun herself once said: "He who believes without understanding chooses to be blind." A Seppun scholar will eagerly invite religious discussion, and is sure to have a few theories of his own. They will even tolerate theoretical discussion of other religious dogmas – such as those of the various kingdoms of the Burning Sands or other foreign nations – so long as they remain theory. While Rokugani religion is extremely tolerant and flexible, any true blasphemy or denial of the Celestial Order will meet with a Seppun's stony silence, or worse, his steel.

All Seppun take an inordinate amount of pride in Toshi Ranbo. After the fall of Otsan Uchi, the family took the relocation of the Imperial Capital as a personal challenge. Though they did not build Toshi Ranbo, the Seppun have sought to expand, rebuild, and improve the city so that it will be greater than its predecessor.

The Ten Thousand Temples – an obvious attempt to surpass Otsan Uchi's Four Temples – is the most obvious example of this. While most Seppun sponsor architectural crews somewhere in the city, all members of the family are at least expected to be patrons of a temple. Every Seppun has donated personal wealth to aid in the construction of at least one of the many shrines that compose the Ten Thousand Temples. Most carry a small trinket, amulet, or netsuke that represents the Fortune or kami honored by the shrine they have sponsored.

Any time a Seppun visits the Imperial City, he is ex-

pected to visit the shrine he has sponsored and pay his respects to the kami. Those who dwell in the city do so at least once a week, with more pious members visiting as often as daily.

The Seppun also have a proud tradition of hospitality, dating back to the Hantei Dynasty, when they were frequently the hosts of the Imperial Winter Court. Those fortunate enough to be a guest in a Seppun household can look forward to luxurious treatment and fine entertainment, usually better than that enjoyed by the master of the house himself. The Seppun take the satisfaction of their guests quite seriously. To insult the honor of a guest in a Seppun household is to insult the honor of the Seppun Family. It is not uncommon for a high-ranking Seppun to favor an ally by offering them an invitation to Kyuden Seppun. Even if the recipient is unable to attend, the mere invitation is a gift certain to draw the envy of all other samurai.

Customs of the Otomo

The Otomo endure much for the good of the Empire. They deceive, they manipulate, they undermine the strength of the clans all so the balance will endure. Through it all, however, they cling tightly to the virtue of courtesy. As the custodians (and, in many cases, the creators) of Rokugani etiquette and custom, the Otomo believe all samurai are deserving of courtesy. Even a despised enemy should be treated politely, and with respect. Anything less is a direct violation of not only Otomo Family tradition, but of the Celestial Order itself.

Those who deal with the Otomo find that this custom takes a most peculiar form. To an Otomo, courtesy is the very least a samurai deserves in much the same way as rice and water are the least a prisoner deserve. If an Otomo should suddenly become extremely genial and polite, it is a good indication he is angry. If a guest in an Otomo house finds that his host suddenly becomes extremely formal and excessively attentive, it's a good sign he has overstayed his welcome. On the other hand, if an Otomo appears relaxed, distracted, or shows emotion in a guest's presence, this should be taken as a most sincere compliment. Only around those who are truly trusted and respected will an Otomo allow his courtly mask to slip in such a manner.

The Otomo likewise feel that the lower classes are not deserving of such courtesy. The typical Otomo will not look directly at a heimin, nor speak to him for any longer than is necessary. An eta in an Otomo's presence will be

ignored entirely. From the Otomo's perspective, this attitude is neither cruel nor elitist. The lower classes are a different part of the Celestial Order. They quite literally live in a different world. To treat them in a manner that only a samurai deserves is to degrade everyone. The Otomo believe the lower classes do not wish a samurai to treat them as an equal any more than a fish would wish to be removed from its river and taken for a walk.

In public, the Scorpion and Otomo are bitter foes. High-

same ultimate goal – the security of Rokugan – during times of stability they often attempted to stay out of each other's way, the Otomo trusting the Scorpion to moderate themselves while the Scorpion avoided unraveling the Otomo's complicated schemes.

However, this unspoken truce is not always maintained. Indeed, it worked to the Otomo Family's disadvantage during the reign of Hantei XXXVIII. So great was their trust in Scorpion Champion Bayushi Shoji that the Oto-



ranking courtiers from both groups frequently provoke ongoing rivalries with one another, sometimes lasting for generations. While the Otomo and Scorpion both approach these feuds very seriously, they are not always real. Sometimes they are, instead, an act to distract the courts. While the two greatest manipulators of Imperial politics are seemingly occupied with one another, the other Clans continue with their business in a more relaxed fashion, allowing the Otomo to uncover their plans and activities. In reality, however, their relations are not always completely hostile. Since both the Scorpion and the Otomo have the

mo never foresaw his attempted coup. Since the Scorpion Clan redeemed themselves, the Otomo have publicly forgiven them, but they are more wary of the Clan of Secrets. They recognize the Scorpion can be dangerous rivals as well as useful allies.

Another important Otomo custom is their unique approach to blackmail. An Otomo would never openly admit to spying upon another samurai, or attempting to apply political pressure by threatening someone's honor. Instead, the Otomo always present their blackmail in the form of a "gift." The target samurai will be summoned to

an Otomo household with the promise of an Imperial gift. The Otomo will then reveal the “lies” he has stumbled upon — whatever blackmail information he has uncovered — and promise the samurai he will do his best to keep this information secret. In return, he may imply that performing a small favor on behalf of the Emperor (such as instigating a war with a neighboring Clan) would be appreciated. Unofficially, of course.

Though the Otomo frequently invite allies to their household and bestow actual gifts upon them, the practice of blackmail via a “gift” is widely known among the upper ranks of the court. Though only a foolish (or suicidal) samurai would openly suggest that the Otomo are blackmailers, an invitation to an Otomo household to receive a gift is invariably seen as bad news.

Customs of the Miya

Of all the Imperial Families, the Miya Family are the most widely traveled. As diplomats, messengers, and heralds their duties take them to the farthest ends of the Empire as a matter of course. They are by far the most cosmo-

politan of the Imperial Families and their customs are a reflection of this.

The Miya are extremely adaptive, picking up etiquette, mannerisms, and even superstitions from the lands they visit. A Miya is taught to be open-minded and flexible from an early age. When a Miya journeys to a new land, he expects not only to deliver a message or to end a conflict, but to learn. Thus the culture and customs of the Miya Family are a complex mosaic reflecting every part of the Empire.

Though the Miya are the lowest ranking Imperial Family, they are also traditionally the closest to the people. Only the Toturi have attempted to forge a similar bond with samurai, peasants, and ronin alike, and the Miya have centuries more experience. The Miya mon is so widely recognized as a symbol of the Emperor's benevolent authority that in the more rustic regions of Rokugan it is believed to be the Emperor's seal. The Miya, though flattered by this misunderstanding, attempt to correct it whenever possible.

The Miya are also traditionally the Imperial Family most likely to be seen working directly on behalf of a Great or



Minor Clan. Both the Hantei and Toturi Dynasties regularly granted the service of a Miya herald (usually for a period of one to five years) as a gift in return for noteworthy service. As these heralds are invariably well educated, eloquent, charismatic, and fiercely loyal, their presence is appreciated even in the surliest Hida court. This practice serves not only to reward the Emperor's vassal with a talented servant, but also to gather information on distant regions of the Empire. The Miya are always instructed to pay careful attention to their assigned households, keep dutiful logs, and send regular reports to the Otomo.

While most daimyo realize their Imperial Herald is also an Imperial spy, few seem to mind. These heralds are such talented and valuable servants that the information they forward to Toshi Ranbo is seen as a fair price – and most daimyo have very little to hide from the Emperor anyway. Most of the time.

Lands of the Imperial Families

Although the Imperial Families are among the wealthiest and most powerful families in the Empire, their personal holdings are relatively small. Even the humblest of the Minor Clans possess more territory than the Otomo or Seppun. There are numerous reasons for this.

The Imperial Families were intended to have no political concerns other than the Emperor's well being. Ownership of land in a feudal society such as Rokugan also imposes a responsibility to govern and protect that land. If the Imperial lands were threatened (whether by an encroaching neighbor, a peasant revolt, or even a natural disaster), restoring order would be a distraction from their primary focus. While it is true that all clans serve the Emperor yet govern large areas of land simultaneously, the Imperial Families were never intended to have such a split focus. They are the Emperor's personal servants, intended to serve him directly as his eyes, ears, and watchful bodyguards. As a result, they are given only as much land as they require to live comfortably.

Additionally, land ownership was traditionally seen as somewhat redundant and unnecessary. Traditionally, the Emperor is considered to own all the lands of the Empire – the samurai and peasants are merely allowed to live in them and govern them in return for their fealty.

The Imperial Families, as direct servants of the Emperor, indirectly benefit from this. Imperial taxes support the Imperial Families. This means the Imperial Families do not require as much land as other families, since they are not intended to be self sufficient.

With the fall of the Toturi Dynasty and no clear successor to take the throne, this situation has created an uncertain future for the Imperial Families. Though most families have continued to pay their taxes dutifully, a handful of samurai (particularly among the Mantis Clan and Unicorn Clan) no longer feel the need to support families who serve an Emperor who no longer exists.

Members of the Yoritomo Family in particular are quite outspoken in their belief that the Imperial Families are a redundant icon of the past, parasites subsisting off of the hard work of the rest of the Empire and offering little in return. As a result, the Yoritomo have already begun to pay far less taxes than required, as a sign of protest at the continued support of the Imperial Families.

Obviously the Imperial Families take offense at this treatment, but there is precious little they can do at present. While they have attempted to draw upon the Emerald Champion and their other allies to enforce adherence to the tax laws, they realize this is only the beginning of possibly greater problems. With no Emperor and no clear heir, the Yoritomo Family's minor rebellion is possibly only the start of greater problems. When the other clans realize that nothing binds their loyalty to one another beyond their own honor, they will fall to fighting among themselves. The throne must be filled, and quickly. Perhaps the Toturi could have done so at one time, but that opportunity was sadly wasted. At this point, it seems there is only one precedent for restoring the throne – and that is Toturi's. Someone must take the throne by strength of arms.

This inevitable event paints a dark picture of the future of Rokugan, and the Imperial Families in particular, especially if the new Emperor has no desire for their services.

The more pragmatic members of the Imperial Families have learned to leverage their political neutrality to secure their own future. The Imperials are still quite welcome among many of the Great Clans (particularly the Crane and Lion). Some Imperials have already begun moving their estates to the territory of these clans, setting up shop in their cities as guardsmen, priests, or political advisors. These individuals are treated as honored guests in their new adopted homes, and viewed with resentment by Imperials who have chosen to remain independent.

Lands of the Hantei

Though the Hantei Family is all but dead, and therefore possesses no land, there are a few shadows of this once great dynasty that merit mention.

Shrine of the Hantei. This large, abandoned temple is located deep in the forests northwest of Kyuden Doji. It was built during the War of Spirits, intended as a memorial to the fallen Hantei Dynasty. The Doji Family had always possessed a deep connection to the Hantei, as nearly every Hantei Emperor had married a member of the Doji Family.

Construction of the shrine was fraught with trouble and ill fortune. Accidents were frequent. In the most notorious incident, the chamber intended to be dedicated to Hantei Sotorii collapsed, killing seven peasant workers and a visiting monk. Rumors began to spread that the shrine was cursed, and that the restless spirits of the Hantei Emperors would seek revenge on any who set foot there.

Crane regent Kakita Kaiten cared little for these rumors, but the shrine's construction eventually became too expensive to justify. The fact that the invading spirit armies were led by the risen Hantei XVI also influenced Kaiten's decision to cease spending Crane wealth on a shrine to honor the dead dynasty.

The temple was left unfinished and the road leading to it destroyed. It has remained unoccupied for decades. Occasionally, bands of ronin or homeless peasants will attempt to move in. They invariably leave within days, citing terrible nightmares and unexplained accidents during their stay in the cursed temple.

The Crane Clan refuses to acknowledge that the Shrine of the Hantei exists.

Otosan Uchi. The once proud Imperial City is now a blasted ruin. Following Daigotsu's invasion and the death of Toturi II, Lion Clan Champion Matsu Nimuro pronounced the city cursed and burned most of what remained to the ground. The Imperial City was transferred to Toshi Ranbo, and only the Yotsu and a few Nezumi remained to tend to the ashes. Most of the Nezumi later departed to follow their race's unexpected and inexplicable destiny, but before they left one of their Nameseekers delivered a message to Yotsu Seou.

The Ratling revealed that the city held a brilliant future and destiny – but only if the humans deserved to find it. Otosan Uchi would rise into the sky one day, and

rule over all the lands of Rokugan again, shining like a diamond, the envy of all the world. Though Seou shared the Nezumi's vision with her family, none are certain if it is true, as there are still clearly Tainted monstrosities inhabiting sections of the ruins. They have spoken of this to no one outside their family.

Hantei Summer Homes. The Hantei Emperors were well known for their extraordinary wealth. In addition to their opulent estates in Otosan Uchi, they owned many smaller homes throughout the Empire. These were referred to as the Hantei Summer Homes. Though they existed in the lands of every clan, the Emperor rarely visited them for more than a few days at a time. A few more sedentary Emperors never used them at all, emerging from Otosan Uchi only for the Winter Court. More frequently, these lavish palaces were used as gifts. In return for some service, the Emperor would allow a samurai to dwell in one for the summer, enjoying the comfort and luxuries therein. They also served as a permanent reminder of the Emperor's power – that even far from the Imperial City, he possessed much greater wealth than anyone else.

Since the fall of the Hantei, the more conservative Toturi Dynasty discontinued use of most of these homes and they were given as gifts to the clans whose within whose lands they were located. While the Crab Clan notoriously demolished all of theirs to use the materials to fortify the Kaiu Wall, most of these summer homes remain today. Though no longer maintained with the same luxury as they were during the days of the Hantei, they remain some of the most beautiful and opulent homes in the Empire.

Lands of the Toturi

The Toturi Dynasty first defined itself during the War of Spirits, a difficult and troubled time for the Empire. As a result, Toturi I did not seek luxurious holdings outside the Imperial City, viewing such things as an extravagant waste. Toturi III followed his father's example, and thus the Toturi have only few notable holdings beyond their homes in Toshi Ranbo.

Rethado Beiden. This small shrine stands in Lion Clan lands, at the border of the mighty mountains that separate their territory from the Scorpion Clan. At one time, this was Beiden Pass, one of the most heavily traveled areas in the Empire. Now, few come here besides a few traveling pilgrims or historians eager to see the area personally.



The most critical battle of the War of Spirits happened here. The spirit armies were crushed in a desperate gambit by Toturi I, who used powerful magic to collapse the pass upon the invaders. Neither Hantei nor his general Tsuneo expected Toturi to be so desperate as to destroy such a crucial strategic highway rather than surrender it to the enemy, and this mistake ultimately crippled the Steel Chrysanthemum's army.

Unknown to all but those closest to Toturi, the final battle at Beiden weighed heavily upon the Splendid Emperor. Though the returned Hantei XVI gave him no choice, Toturi carried the guilt of that day for the rest of his life. For a Rokugani, to raise swords against one's ancestors was already anathema – and the primary reason why the War of Spirits was such a difficult time. But to be forced to such an act, crushing the enemy in an avalanche rather than in battle, always struck Toturi as a cheap and hollow victory. If any others felt this way, none said as much. Most, it seems, were glad that the war was simply over.

As a means of atoning for his perceived crime, Toturi arranged for this shrine to be constructed. It stands as a memorial to all who died in the war on both sides. A handful of Toturi samurai are stationed here to protect the shrine and the monks who dwell here. The assignment seems largely ceremonial, as the area is fairly remote and no longer has any tactical or economic significance.

Its spiritual significance, however, is another story. In the years since the shrine's construction, the monks have noted numerous strange figures kneeling in prayer. When approached or spoken to, these figures immediately vanish. Kitsu sodan-senzo who have visited the shrine claim it has developed an extremely powerful connection to Yomi, the Realm of the Blessed Ancestors. Several of the figures seen in the shrine have been identified as heroes who died during the war.

The Kitsu are quite certain that no such connection to Yomi existed here before (the lands were once well-traveled and the Lion have a strong sense for such things).

That such a wondrous thing could be wrought by the hand of man is curious and unprecedented. In recent months, more and more Kitsu have flocked to the little shrine, working together with the Toturi and the monks to comprehend the magic that has been created here.

Lands of the Seppun

Of all the Imperial Families, the Seppun possess the most land and territory. Their lands are lush, fertile, and dotted with numerous luxurious palaces. For some among the Seppun, their wealth offers them security; they believe that no matter how far the Imperials have fallen, they can always fall back to the Seppun province. For others, this only makes the future even more worrisome. With few real troops to defend their land, the Seppun province becomes all the more attractive to an encroaching invader.

Fortunately, their Lion and Crane neighbors have always been courteous and respectful. But desperate times can turn friends into enemies, and maintaining good relations with both the Crane and the Lion is a delicate balance even at the best of times.

The Plains of Otosan Uchi. The lands surrounding Ootosan Uchi are technically the Seppun Family's domain, and though this was once a matter of great pride it has since become their curse. The invasion, corruption, and fall of the original Imperial City wounded the Seppun Family deeply. Though they agreed that the Lion Clan's destruction of Ootosan Uchi was necessary, that didn't make it any less difficult for them to bear.

Ootosan Uchi's Hub Villages, once the beating heart of Seppun commerce, now lie near-empty. Even the Nezumi who once dared make their homes there have mostly vanished. Only the stubborn Yotsu ronin remain. The Seppun have developed a deep sense of collective denial regarding Ootosan Uchi. They no longer speak of it. If anyone mentions the city in a Seppun's presence, they tersely change the subject. They avoid approaching the area altogether and avoid contact with the Yotsu. The entire area has become an unspoken taboo for the family.

Other than the substantial loss of Ootosan Uchi, the Seppun province is a lush and fertile area. Much of the region has traditionally been held as sacrosanct, forbidden



to grow crops by Imperial decree. Given the recent hard times the Imperials have fallen upon, and given the lack of any Emperor to enforce said decree, many among the Seppun have pushed for permission to sow these fields.

Daimyo Seppun Kiharu has denied these decrees, at least for now. He counters that a samurai should not disobey an Imperial decree simply because the throne lies vacant. Duty remains constant no matter who rules the Empire. If it were otherwise, there would be no Empire at all. He realizes that this view is idealistic, but he maintains it in the hope that a new Emperor will rise. He also worries that growing crops in the fields surrounding the accursed city will only invite ill fortune.

He only hopes his family does not become desperate enough that his idealism must be sacrificed.

The Seppun Gardens. Not a true garden *per se*, the Seppun Gardens are an informal name for the vast plains that surround Kyuden Seppun. These plains are famous for their unusual statuary. The peasants and monks who dwell in the area traditionally carve a giant stone statue each time a new Seppun Daimyo is appointed, and sell smaller statues as souvenirs to those who pass through the area. The coarse, heavy stone used to craft the statues appears completely resistant to erosion. Many of the oldest statues seem just as new as the ones depicting Kiharu and his predecessor, Hotaitaka. The origin of this stone is closely guarded by the peasants and monks who carve the statues.

Recently, several of the statues have gone missing. The local magistrates are dumfounded, as each of the statues weigh several tons. They could not be moved without considerable effort, let alone be removed from the fields without leaving a trace.

Several peasants have reported sighting copper-skinned goblins in the area, and believe they may have some connection to these mysterious crimes.

Kyuden Seppun. The ancestral home of the Seppun Family is one of the oldest palaces in all of Rokugan. Though it has expanded a great deal over the centuries, it is quite notable for its uniquely ancient architectural style. The palace is vast, nearly the size of a small city, and is in fact composed of several smaller, connected buildings encompassed by a larger outer wall.

Though built within view of Otsan Uchi, the palace always remained separate so that it could serve as a second, easily accessible home for the Emperor. Because of its distance from the Imperial City, the palace was spared

destruction by Daigotsu's legions. It also served as a rallying point, allowing the defenders to regroup before pushing back into Otsan Uchi to crush the Dark Lord's forces.

In a gesture of surprising generosity, the Seppun opened the doors of their palaces to all refugees from the Imperial City. Though many of these individuals have since moved on to dwell in Toshi Ranbo, some of the peasants and artisans who once worked in the Hub Villages continue to serve the Seppun here to repay their compassion.

One of the most notable rooms in Kyuden Seppun is the Sun Balcony. Once, this large chamber was exposed to the open air. Here, the Emperor and his attendants could gather and look upon the Imperial City on the distant horizon. After the fall of Otsan Uchi, this room was enclosed, as were all windows allowing view of the ruined city.

A Seppun artist who witnessed the city's destruction painted a vast mural on the new wall, a somber depiction of the horizon and the burning city, with armies of samurai marching away over the hills. The room is forbidden to all but members of the Seppun Family, who sometimes come here and quietly view the painting while they meditate on what they have lost.

Lands of the Otomo

For all their wealth and political power, the Otomo have surprisingly few holdings. They have no official province at all, and maintain no farms or villages. This is intentional, as the Otomo do not wish their political goals to be distracted by self-absorbed concern for their own holdings.

Their original ancestral home was destroyed during the fall of Otsan Uchi, but they were temporarily granted sanctuary in the lands of the Crane Clan while their new palace was constructed. Though the Otomo were grateful for this, many among the family accepted this hospitality reluctantly. The Otomo do not appreciate being indebted to anyone, and even though the circumstances were extreme, some among the family still resent the humiliation imposed by turning to a Great Clan for help. As it is the Otomo Family's duty to maintain balance between the clans by turning them against one another, that duty becomes impossible if they are beholden to any one clan.

The result is a rather curious political situation. The Otomo are grateful and friendly to the Crane, but at the same time they resent the Crane. Daimyo Otomo Taneji has assigned his highest-ranking courtiers to finding some sort of service they can do to permanently pay off their

debt, so that the Crane will no longer have any political leverage against them. Alternately, he hopes they might find a way the Otomo can become indebted to another of the Crane Clan's enemies, so that the family can claim a conflict of interest and deny any possible aid the Crane might request.

With the wildly shifting loyalties and alliances so prevalent among the clans of late, such an undertaking would be extremely difficult and complicated, but Taneji feels his family is up to the task.

Otomo Districts. While the Otomo have few land holdings, they are extremely interested in commerce. Quite frequently, they have learned, the easiest way to manipulate a clan is through economics. If you wish the Lion to go to war, they must have adequate supplies of food and iron. If you wish the Dragon to go to war, they must be desperate and impoverished. If you wish to force the Crab's hand, all you need is to offer them a bit of jade and they'll do whatever you require.

To this end, the Otomo have developed a keen interest in trade. In almost every large city, there are Otomo with a powerful controlling interest in local trade. In some areas, they invest heavily in arts and crafts. In others, they control the food supply. Their interests are always highly specialized in each area, but quite diverse overall. Their control of whatever particular aspect of the market they choose has caused these areas to be known as Otomo Districts.

For instance, in Prosperous Plains City, where the Otomo have invested heavily in fruits and produce, that section of the market is known as the Otomo District. In Honored Treaty City, where they have invested heavily in textiles, that section of the market is known as the Otomo District. The Otomo have a well-earned reputation for being shrewd bargainers and cunning entrepreneurs in whatever area of the market they choose. They hire only the finest merchants and artisans, and have built considerable wealth despite their lack of any land holdings.

One important exception to this is the City of Lies. The Otomo have never sought an economic presence in the city, and have always invested lightly and cautiously in other Scorpion cities.

Kyuden Otomo and Ruined Kyuden Otomo. Unlike every other major Rokugani Family, there is not a single palace that bears the Otomo name. There are two.

The first Kyuden Otomo was constructed in Otosan Uchi. The largest and proudest of the Otomo palaces, it was abandoned when the city fell. Strangely, it was not de-

molished, and it remains intact to this day. The Otomo are not aware of this fact. If they were to discover the truth, they would be quite eager to recover the numerous family heirlooms and nemuranai that were abandoned during the evacuation. Unfortunately, the castle has become a home to numerous dangerous Shadowlands creatures. Even the Yotsu avoid it.

The second Kyuden Otomo was constructed in Crane lands, on the shore of the Heart of Yakamo. Though the Crane hope it will be a permanent home for the displaced Imperial Family, the Otomo secretly never intended it as anything more than a temporary retreat until something more befitting their political neutrality could be found. More detailed information on Kyuden Otomo can be found in *Masters of Court* (page 163-4).

Recently, the Otomo have called for a meeting between influential members of all the Imperial Families to determine their collective future. That the Otomo have approached all the other families as equals – including the Miya, whom they typically treat as underlings – says a great deal. Following the death of their daimyo and their failure to secure a new Toturi Emperor, the Otomo have chosen to take responsibility for the future of all the Imperial Families. They have also drawn upon numerous favors, securing samurai from numerous Great and Minor Clans to serve as guards during the conference.

What the Otomo are ultimately planning is uncertain, but the events that transpire at this meeting will undoubtedly have a significant effect upon the future of Rokugan.

Lands of the Miya

Miya Family territory is beautiful, but rugged, with very little arable farmland. Much like the other Imperial Families, the Miya face an uncertain future with no Emperor on the throne. Unlike the other Imperial Families, the Miya are not deeply concerned with their own fates. They continue as they always have, rushing across the face of the Empire, bringing news, spreading hope, and sowing peace where they can.

The Anou Wall. This high stone wall stands at the outer border of Miya lands. Though only a dozen feet high and incomplete in many places, it is an impressive defensive structure and has kept the Miya lands free from bandits and intruders on many occasions.

The origins of the wall lie with the Anou, the only vassal family currently in service to the Miya. The Anou once served the Kaiu Family as architects and quarrymen. Several centuries ago, during a rare Winter Court in Crab



lands, the drunken Kaiu Daimyo boasted about his servants at length. He bragged about their skill and artistry, and even told an Imperial functionary that their talents surpassed anything in Ootosan Uchi. When the Emperor learned of this, he decided to teach the Kaiu a lesson in humility and self-control. The Anou were promoted to Imperial vassals and relocated to Miya territory.

The Crab were incensed at the insult, but could do very little about it. In effect, the Emperor had complimented them by promoting their servants. The Anou were quite delighted by the gesture, as Miya lands were quite a bit safer and more prosperous than the eternally besieged Kaiu Wall. The Kaiu never forgot the slight, and have been quite cold toward the Miya in general (and the Anou in particular) ever since.

This wall was the first project of the newly relocated Anou, followed by the fortification of Kyuden Miya. Sadly, the wall has fallen into disrepair over the years. Because the Miya have no real enemies, they rarely spare the expense to maintain the structure. In the last few months, however, more and more Anou stonemasons have appeared on the walls, shoring up breaks and repairing the structure. Some wonder if the Miya are expecting an attack, or if they are simply ordering their vassals to work to occupy their minds in these turbulent times.

Kyuden Miya. The ancestral home of the Miya Family is relatively humble, especially compared to those of the Seppun and Otomo Families. It is no larger than a modest Minor Clan castle. Its sturdy and easily defensible construction resembles a Crab fortress more than an Imperial Palace, due in large part to the Anou vassal family's influence.

Given the small size of the castle, one might be surprised to discover how many Miya there actually are. The family has grown and expanded to a degree unrealized even by their fellow Imperials. Only about one-fifth of the Miya actually reside in their homelands at any given time – the rest are abroad as diplomats, courtiers, heralds, and messengers. Though the Miya have not gone to any effort to hide their numbers, neither do they broadcast them. They have learned that their duties are performed most easily when they avoid calling attention to themselves. This Miya penchant for discretion and humility did not go unnoticed by the Righteous Emperor, and it resulted in the Miya becoming the reluctant owners of the Empire's most valuable treasure.

Yuritogen's Grave. Toturi III rose to his position amid great turmoil and controversy, and knew from the beginning that his reign might be short-lived. He knew that if he were to fall (and, even worse, if his despised brother the Shogun were to take the throne) chaos and anarchy would consume Rokugan.

Though Kaneka did not long outlive his brother, Toturi III's predictions seem nonetheless likely to come true.

Fortunately, the Righteous Emperor was a cautious and methodical man. During his reign, he kept careful records of all his correspondences and official records. He also made carefully encrypted copies of everything, especially the detailed reports from his notorious Scorpion intelligence network. He regularly compiled these records and secretly forwarded them to a most unlikely recipient – Imperial Herald and Miya Daimyo, Miya Shoin.

Shoin's bravery, intellect, and integrity had greatly impressed the Righteous Emperor, so it was into his hands that these crucial secret documents were delivered. Unaware what to do with them and nearly overwhelmed by the responsibility, Shoin simply hid them. He had a small shrine constructed, named it Yuritogen's Grave after a minor hero of the War Against the Darkness, and hid Toturi Naseru's records deep within. The real Yuritogen was buried in Otsan Uchi, a fact that few other than Shoin know.

The documents interred here reveal some of the deepest secrets of the Empire. The manipulations, maneuverings, and misdeeds of every Great Clan are all outlined in gruesome detail. The Righteous Emperor's records were quite impressive, and outline not only his career but that of his father before him. If exposed, these documents would stain the career of many a noble samurai. If used as blackmail, they could steer the course of Rokugan itself.

Shoin once asked the Emperor why he, and not Otomo Taneiji, was chosen to receive such a terrible gift. The Emperor replied that while the Otomo would be the ones most likely to use it, the Miya would be the ones most likely to use it justly.

Shoin has not yet decided what, if anything, to do with the Emperor's gift.

Heroes of the Imperial Families

TOTURI SHIGEKAWA, TOTURI FAMILY DAIMYO

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

Honor: 3.2 **Status:** 9.0 **Glory:** 4.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Seppun Guardsman 3 / Toturi Tactician 1

ADVANTAGES: Bland, Tactician

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (no reputation)

SKILLS: Battle 6, Courtier 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 4, Iaijutsu 2, Kenutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4.

Toturi Shigekawa is a good man trapped in a most difficult position.

Born the grandson of a ronin who served in Toturi's Army, Shigekawa was granted the Toturi family name upon his gempukku. Having been raised on tales of Toturi the Black and the heroic exploits of his followers, Shigekawa



eagerly joined the Imperial Legions in hopes of serving one of the legendary Emperor's offspring. In time, his wish was granted when he fought beside the Shogun's armies as a member of the First Legion.

And yet, despite the great exploits and heroics of those around him, Shigekawa found no glory. This was through no lack of courage or skill or dedication. It would be an exaggeration to call Shigekawa extraordinary, but he was quite competent and well liked by his superiors. Somehow, though, whenever a great battle came to pass, Shigekawa missed his chance for greatness and went virtually unnoticed. He rose gradually through the ranks.

When Toturi Miyako stepped down from her position, she passed leadership of the First Legion to Shigekawa, hoping the steadfast bushi might finally find the respect he deserved. Additionally, the samurai found himself serving in the position of the Empress' bodyguard while Toturi III was away from Toshi Ranbo. During Shigekawa's tenure as leader of the Legion, Toshi Ranbo was attacked by the Khan and the Empress committed jigai to avoid capture.

By custom, Shigekawa (as her protector) should have committed seppuku when his charge died. The Empress forbade him from doing so, commanding him to remain and command the First Legion. That he would obey such an unorthodox command at the cost of his own honor cast a shadow over Shigekawa's obscure reputation. Though he did his best to protect the Imperial Capital, many still remember him only as the man who failed to follow his Empress into death.

After Toturi III died, Shigekawa believed that another Toturi would become Emperor. Instead, the other Imperial Families failed to support any Toturi claim. Shigekawa was deeply shocked when Toturi Kyoji, his friend and personal choice to become the next Emperor, returned to Monkey Clan lands to rule his father's family, the Tokus, forsaking the Imperial Family name he had borne. In effect, Shigekawa became daimyo of his family by default.

The entire situation vexes Shigekawa mightily. His family, once a name that defeated a god and commanded respect, seems doomed to be relegated to a historical footnote at best. Though he has been placed in a position of command, the perceived failure and dishonor attached to his career makes others reluctant to follow him.

He is uncertain what to do, but he fears what the future may hold for the Toturi name.

SEPPUN KIHARU, SEPPUN FAMILY DAIMYO

Air: 5	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 5	Void: 4
Awareness: 6		Willpower: 5		Intelligence: 4
Honor: 3.9		Status: 9.0		Glory: 7.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Seppun Shugenja 5 / Seppun Devout 1

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Clear Thinker, Inner Gift (prophecy), Sage

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Idealistic, Soft-Hearted

KIHO: Flee the Darkness, The Great Silence, Way of the Willow, The Wind's Truth, Chi Protection, Speak to the Soul.

SKILLS: Calligraphy 4, Courtier 6, Defense 4, Etiquette 6, Games (Go) 9, Investigation (Notice) 5, Lore (Crane, Scorpion, Lion, Phoenix) 4, Medicine 3, Meditation 7, Shadowlands Lore 4, Spellcraft 8, Tea Ceremony 4, Theology 9.

SPELLS: (spells marked with * are Innate Abilities) Sense*, Commune*, Counterspell*, Summon*, Importune*, By the Light of Lord Moon, Benten's Touch, Secrets on the Wind*, Path to Inner Peace*, Castle of Water*, Reflections of Pan Ku, Reflective Pool, The Ties that Bind, Bane of the Scorpion, Essence of Air, The Eye Shall Not See, Know the Mind, Symbol of Air*, Hand of Jurojin, Command the Clouds, Power of the Ocean, Peace of the Kami, Rise Air.

To see this little old man quietly tending the rock gardens of Toshi Ranbo, few would guess that he has witnessed the Scorpion Clan Coup, survived a plague, fought the Lying Darkness, served two different Imperial Dynasties, was a member of the elite Hidden Guard, founded the order of the Ten Thousand Temples, and is the daimyo of the most powerful of the Imperial Families. A great man, Seppun Kiharu is nothing if not humble. He has always followed his own path and allowed his actions, rather than his reputation, to speak for him.

Of late, that path has been one of peace and introspection. Having long since tired of the terrible wars that regularly threaten the Empire, he now seeks peace through Enlightenment – though he will be quick to point out that his definition of Enlightenment is not the strange, arcane path promoted by the Keepers of the Five Rings. To mention the Keepers in Kiharu's presence quickly draws the old man's ire and a stern lecture that Enlightenment is only found through introspection and self-discovery, not unlocked by magical books. The belief that Enlightenment was a goal that could be fought for was, in Kiharu's

opinion, a foolish crusade that led far too many samurai to their untimely deaths. One of these samurai was Toturi III, a man whom Kiharu had the rare honor of considering a close friend.

Though Kiharu is usually a cheerful, inspiring person, the recent months have begun to take their toll on him. The Emperor and Shogun's death, Sezar's madness, the Khan's invasion, the Empress' suicide, and too many events to name have shaken his confidence in the goodness and honor of men. Though he attempts to retain his idealistic worldview and encourages others to do the same, he finds it more difficult with each passing day.

When Kiharu looks upon the throne and sees it empty, he is disgusted. Have the people of Rokugan learned nothing from the conflicts of the last few decades? Have they not learned that only when a strong Emperor sits upon the throne and the clans honor their promises to serve him will the Empire prosper? Again and again, he watches men and women who he thought wise make the same foolish mistakes, and each tragedy chips away a bit of his cheerful good nature.

In the end, all Kiharu has is hope. He tends his temples and preaches the Tao to all who will listen. He encourages others to believe that a new Emperor will rise, and that he will wash away the corruption of the Empire and lead Rokugan to a new golden age. He hopes the day never comes when nothing he says will convince those who seek his counsel. He hopes the day never comes when they realize how thin his faith in his own words has become.

Thankfully, another stark reality has distracted Kiharu from his grim musings. As a dedicated priest, he has never made time for marriage or children. In his old age, the possibility of such things is long past. He knows he is quite an old man, and does not wish to repeat the mistakes that led to the downfall of the Toturi Family. He needs to select a new heir, and soon. Sadly, few among his family seem to have the experience or the drive to lead the Seppun in these difficult times.

Kiharu watches carefully, hoping a worthy successor will step forth – and soon, if the wracking cough that builds within his chest is any indication of what the future holds.

OTOMO TANEJI, OTOMO FAMILY DAIMYO

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

Honor: 3.1 Status: 9.0 Glory: 6.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Otomo Courtier 5

ADVANTAGES: Allies (numerous), Blackmail (numerous), Clear Thinker

DISADVANTAGES: Driven (secure his family's future)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 6, Craft: Sailing 2, Deceit (Intimidation) 5, Defense 4, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation) 5, Games: Go 3, Horsemanship 1, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Law 5, Storytelling (Oratory) 4, Tea Ceremony 4, Underworld 4

Taneji is an oddity for an Otomo Daimyo. Though wealthy, well-educated, and charismatic in the manner of an Otomo, he possesses none of their usual cruelty or guile. He prefers to approach matters openly, maintaining balance through diplomacy and appeals to honor rather than blackmail or manipulation. Though the Otomo Family's tactics are well known to him – and he is quite capable of using their techniques when he must – Taneji refers a friendlier approach. Within his family some have taken to calling him “shisha,” a nickname for the Miya Family heralds. Though he pretends to take great offense at this nickname, he is quietly proud of it.

As described in *Masters of Court* (page 159-61), Taneji's unconventional approach stems, ironically, from a Miya's influence. When the renowned historian, Miya Hatori, embarked upon his grand quest to assemble the history of the Empire, Taneji was one of the favored few chosen to follow him. At Hatori's side, Taneji experienced the art, culture, and traditions of every Great and Minor Clan. In the course of his long journey, Taneji made many friends in unexpected places. He came to view members of the other clans not as pawns to be manipulated or weights to be balanced upon a scale – but as people.

Of course Taneji knows this is a lesson that he knows his family cannot possibly understand without sharing his experiences. Though he has attempted to enlighten his kin where he can, he knows that they rely upon their manipulative ways for good reason – the Otomo techniques are effective. So, while Taneji prefers a less callous approach, he tries not to disdain his family for being what they are. The Otomo name is in his mind a privilege and a duty, not merely a right given him by birth. Although he could now use his social position to force others to lis-



ten, he continues to prefer to convince them through his sincerity, winning them over by courteously hearing their cases and showing concern for their needs.

Like the other Imperial Daimyo, Taneji knows that the Imperial Families face an uncertain future. With no Emperor, there is little guarantee of any sort of stability in Rokugan. Even if the clans don't break apart into splinter nations, there is little way of knowing who might finally rise to power. When they do, will that individual have any use for the previous Imperial Families? Already he has seen signs that the Empire is in danger of collapsing in upon itself, disintegrating into an endless war of all against all. There is almost nothing one man can do to stop this state of affairs. Still, he carries on, refusing to stop in what he sees as a near-holy labor. Taneji fears that his family's reputation will be their undoing. Even if a strong leader seizes Toturi's throne and restores order, even if the new Emperor sees the wisdom of drawing upon the tactical skill of the Toturi, the loyalty and faith of the Seppun, and the dauntless determination of the Miya, the Otomo

Family's sins might be too great to insure their salvation. Though few outside the Imperial Families realize that it was Otomo Hoketuhime's arrogant bid for the throne that resulted in a Toturi IV never being crowned (and, ultimately, in her death) his family has long been resented by the Great Clans. The Otomo have always abused their position as the Emperor's favored – such was a necessity for the work they do. Will the new Emperor punish them, merely because a few Otomo took sinister joy in keeping the Clans weak? He fears that it is a likely outcome.

Recently, Taneji received a secret correspondence offering sympathy for his family's current troubles. The writer showed an impressive understanding of Imperial politics, and offered his own prediction of a variety of stark outcomes for the Otomo, depending upon who took the throne. If the Crane ruled, the Otomo would likely be stripped of their power and allowed to remain in the capital as curiosities – Imperial house pets. If the Crab came to power, they would become little more than ronin, cast out

to fend for themselves without the taxes they had come to rely on to survive. If the Scorpion ruled, the Otomo might even be exiled for failing the Toturi – and to remove the political threat they posed.

Each prediction was darker than the last, and each rung in Taneji's mind with disturbing truth. Yet the missive's author offered another path – a path by which the Otomo could secure their position and power through what they did best, the manipulation of information and economics. A tentative alliance was offered, an alliance that would be in the best interests of both the Otomo and the author.

The letter was signed by Master Steel, of the Kolat.

Before he became daimyo, Taneji might have issued an angry, self-righteous response or even turned the letter over to an Emerald Magistrate so that he might use it to track the Kolat to their source. But now, instead, Taneji finds the letter strangely comforting. Someone, at least, has as keen a grasp of the current political situation as he does; and the offers made in this letter sound very little like the fiendish Kolat of old.

He has not yet decided if, or how, he will answer.

MIYA SHOIN, MIYA DAIMYO, IMPERIAL HERALD

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

Honor: 3.4 **Status:** 9.0 **Glory:** 8.8

SCHOOL/RANK: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter 2 / Miya Herald 2

ADVANTAGES: Absolute Direction, Clear Thinker, Different School, Fleet, Great Destiny, Luck (6)

DISADVANTAGES: Small

SKILLS: Athletics (Running) 4, Courtier 6, Defense 5, Etiquette (Conversation) 7, Horsemanship 4, Investigation 6, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu (Tsuruchi Longbow) 6, Lore: Heraldry 6, Stealth 4, Storytelling 4.

Though most of the spirits that returned through Oblivion's Gate eventually betrayed Toturi I and joined the Steel Chrysanthemum's armies, there were exceptions. One of these was Miya Dosonu, who became Toturi's personal messenger. Though Dosonu died during the war, he bore a son to Yemi, a mortal daughter of the Seppun Family. That son was Miya Shoin.

A small man with a quick wit, Miya Shoin rose quickly through the ranks of his family. He was trained by the Mantis Clan hero, Tsuruchi Ichiro, and went on to become a magistrate. His accomplishments drew the unexpected attention of Hantei Naseru, long before he took

the throne as Toturi III. On the Toturi heir's behalf, Shoin and a group of young samurai set out on a quest to solve a chain of grisly murders.

In time, Shoin learned that the killer was the returned spirit Gusai, a former Mantis Champion who had become corrupted by a fragment of the Lying Darkness and who intended to murder all those who had returned through Oblivion's Gate, as well as their offspring. As this list of potential victims included Naseru and his siblings (as well as Shoin), the Anvil's gratitude was great. When Toturi III rose to the throne, Shoin was appointed as his Herald.

When his aunt, Miya Yumi, stepped down from her position as daimyo without an heir, she named Shoin as her successor. Though Shoin was relatively young and inexperienced, there was no argument from the elder members of the family. They agreed with Yumi that Shoin had enormous potential. He represented the very best the Miya had to offer, and his training with the Mantis offered an unconventional new perspective. Shoin accepted the promotion graciously, though he continues to defer to his elders when the complications of leadership grow too great.

Lately, it seems, he has been conferring with them a great deal.

Shoin was gravely shaken by Toturi III's death. Though he had several personal differences with Naseru, and it would be an exaggeration to call them friends, he also had a deep respect for his Emperor. He had never imagined the circumstances that would lead to the Emperor's tragic, doomed quest. The resulting power vacuum has come as quite a shock, to say the least.

If it were not due to Shoin's brave efforts, perhaps the political situation in Toshi Ranbo would be even worse than it is. Even after the Emperor and Empress perished, Shoin continued to hold court in their absence, encouraging representatives of the Great Clans to speak their grievances and communicate their problems so that they could be solved. Though he has not said so directly, Shoin feels it is critical that the court maintain its traditions even in the absence of an Emperor. He feels that once the people of Rokugan excuse themselves from behaving like samurai merely because there is no Emperor to serve, their honor will never bind them to serve another – or even respect each other. In the interests of peace, he must continue to uphold tradition.

He is relieved that several prominent members of the court seem to agree, and have continued to make appearances. Yet it worries him that several significant seats re-

main absent. The Crab send only a token ambassador. The Unicorn are absent altogether. The Crane frequently make excuses for their absence. The Minor Clans rarely appear at all.

This, he knows, is the first sign of trouble to come not just for the Imperial Families but for all of Rokugan. Shoin worries that the answer is already at his fingertips. The Sword of the Righteous Emperor, buried deep in Kyuden Miya, thirsts for a new owner. Whoever takes it up, he knows, will be driven to acts of great glory. Perhaps, if it is granted to a samurai with promise, he might be inspired to fulfill his destiny and seize the throne.

The idea is very tempting, but Shoin has resisted it for now. The sword is powerful, but twisted. Even if a new Emperor was to result from its release, great bloodshed would also follow. As a Miya, he cannot possibly condone such a violent outcome – but as the relations between the Clans become gradually more frayed he wonders what other choice he has.

OTOMO TOYO, RELUCTANT PROPHET

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

Honor: 1.8 Status: 3.0 Glory: 2.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Otomo Courtier 2

ADVANTAGES: Benten's Blessing, Heartless, Inner Gift (lesser prophecy)

DISADVANTAGES: Cruel, Epilepsy

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 4, Deceit (Intimidation) 4, Defense 3, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 4, Investigation 3, Lore (Law) 4, Meditation 2.

Otomo Toyo was a quite typical member of the Otomo house. Trained as a courtier, he was a clever, keen-minded individual with an instinct for rooting out other's weaknesses and shortcomings. Early in his career, his tutors made the mistake of praising his intellect once too often. He became lazy and arrogant, assured that his talent would carry him through life. He failed to notice when his more studious associates soon caught up to him, and then surpassed him. By the time he reached his gempukku, he was a completely and thoroughly

mediocre sort of person. His tutors didn't think much of him at all, other than that he had wasted his potential.

While others (whom he had always considered less talented) moved on to impressive promotions and glory, Toyo stagnated. His laziness and bitter personality caused him quite a bit of difficulty in holding any sort of important position. He lost his appointment as a minor functionary and was reassigned to Musume Mura as an assistant tax collector. After making several disastrous mistakes in routine record keeping, he was reassigned again. This time, he was sent to Friendly Traveler Village as a cultural advisor. Officially, his duty was to



greet magistrates, heralds, and other Imperial diplomats upon their arrival, helping them feel comfortable in the city. Few Imperial travelers ever actually visited the rowdy Yasuki settlement, and those who did generally didn't want a nosy Otomo advisor following them around. It was a pointless, dead end job in a filthy hole of a city (by Otomo standards). Toyo resigned himself to failure and made a habit of wasting his modest stipend on Friendly Traveler sake.

Then the episodes began. In times of stress, Toyo would lose control of his body and ramble incoherently. His personal servant, who witnessed the seizures on two occasions, later fearfully reported that Toyo had screamed a dark vision of the future. He spoke of the end of the Imperial Families, and of a hero who could stop the terrible future if he was found in time. From there, he had mumbled a great deal of complex symbolism and foreign tongues that neither Toyo nor the servant understood. Nervously, the young courtier sent a message to Toshi Ranbo, asking what he should do.

The Otomo Family's reaction was swift and decisive. Toyo would return to Toshi Ranbo immediately. An audience with Seppun Kiharu had already been arranged. If any could decipher the truth of his visions, it would be the revered master of the Ten Thousand Temples. They also forwarded sufficient koku for Toyo to hire guards and travel to the city.

Unfortunately Toyo wasted half of the money on sake before he realized what it was for.

The young courtier knows he's made mistakes in the past. He knows he is a lazy, self-centered man who has ruined every chance life has given him for redemption. Can he still be a hero? If he can overcome his own cruelty and weakness and undertake a dangerous journey from the heart of Crab lands to the Imperial City – then maybe.

He knows he cannot make the journey alone, but he has precious little to offer. He certainly can't contact his family again and admit his stupidity in wasting their money. Perhaps he can find some young heroes, inexperienced and idealistic, and trick them into helping him with the promise of his family's gratitude?

MIYA YUMI, IMPERIAL HERALD

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

Honor: 2.7	Status: 2.4	Glory: 1.2
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SCHOOL RANK: Miya Herald 1

ADVANTAGES: Strength of the Earth (2)

DISADVANTAGES: Bitter Betrothal, Brash

SKILLS: Athletics (Running) 2, Defense 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 2, Horsemanship 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 3, Stealth 2.

The woman now known as Miya Yumi was bound for greatness from an early age. Her sensei, a respected herald who had served Emperor Toturi I, constantly said she reminded him a great deal of the daimyo Miya Yumi in her youth. She had the same fire, the same independent spirit, and the same tireless determination. As a gesture of respect toward both her sensei and Yumi, the young girl asked the retired daimyo for permission to adopt her name. The elder Yumi, flattered by the request, humbly granted it.

Soon Yumi was given her own horse and standard, and offered an assignment as an Imperial messenger. She was well suited for the role. Though the work was tiring and unforgiving, she was proud to serve her family as a shisha.

She was shocked when she returned from a journey to find Toshi Ranbo in flames. The rumors of the Emperor's disappearance and the Empress' death were true. Though the Phoenix Clan and the Imperial Families had done their best to restore order, much of the city was in chaos. Like many others, Yumi worried for the future of Rokugan.

It wasn't long before she had much more personal worries. She soon received a curious message from her father. Apparently her family, in the interest of securing the Miya's position in the turbulent political climate, was attempting to form an alliance with the Minor Clans. As part of this alliance, several marriages were to be arranged between the Miya and prominent Minor Clan samurai. Yumi was to be one of the spouses.

This was no surprise. As a member of an Imperial Family Yumi had always expected to be married off for politics. The details, however, were shocking. She was to be married to the son of the daimyo of the Ox Clan. She was expected to journey to Ox Clan lands within the month and give up her role as an Imperial Herald.

Now? Of all times? Just to secure an alliance with a Minor Clan so reclusive and remote that they probably couldn't



offer her family much help anyway? It was intolerable.

Yumi mounted her horse that day and rode off down the road. Surely she would find some place that could use a trained herald and wouldn't ask too many questions. Surely her family would realize the folly of what they had asked and wouldn't spare the effort to track her down. Surely.

Playing An Imperial Family Member

So perhaps you have decided that you'd like to play a member of one of the Imperial Families. Or, perhaps you are a GM running a campaign and one of the players has asked if he can play such a character. In the Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition, there are no official rules regulating whether or not a player can create an Imperial character, though obviously a GM should feel free to disallow anything that he feels is unbalanced for his campaign.

Sometimes, a GM might feel compelled to forbid an Imperial character, fearing they would present unfair compli-

cations or perhaps invoke jealousy and resentment from less "important" player characters. Quite often, however, this is not the case and is simply due to misunderstanding an Imperial character's status or the responsibilities that balance out their political connections.

This section is designed to help both players and GMs get a better idea of how an Imperial player character works and how to introduce them to a party with a minimum of difficulty.

Why Do You Want This?

First of all, ask yourself why you wish to be a member of an Imperial Family. Is it simply because they seem a more powerful option than other player characters due to their status and wealth? If this is the case, you may be approaching the idea with the wrong mindset. Remember that a Rank 1 Imperial character does not automatically begin with significantly more Status, Glory, or wealth than any other character. Though your character likely comes from a wealthy family and bears a distant connection to the throne, this does not confer automatic superiority over the rest of your party.

Keep in mind that the Imperial Families are usually as large as Minor Clans, and not every member of them is directly related to the famous daimyo and personalities



presented in this book. A starting Imperial is considered to be a novice samurai, just like everyone else. A young Imperial has to prove himself, just like everyone else.

If, however, you are intrigued by the idea of playing a character who has connections to a complex network of powerful political intrigue, or simply enjoy the history and flavor of the Imperial Families, this may be the character for you. Certainly, playing an Imperial offers you extraordinary opportunities for glory, fame, and adventure – but these are not significantly different than those attainable by the heroic actions of any other player character.

Isn't This Overpowered?

In previous editions of Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game, playing Imperial characters required explicit permission from the GM. Not only were their higher status and con-

nections potentially unbalancing (which remains true), but their Schools were also designed to be significantly stronger than standard character options. However, in the Third Edition, while the Miya, Seppun, Otomo, and Toturi Schools all offer powerful abilities, none of them are significantly mechanically unbalanced when compared to what other Great Clan characters already offer.

As for the rest, remember that as stated earlier, Imperial characters do not inherently have greater importance than other characters. Their Status, Glory, and School Rank progress just like any other character. Just because a Seppun bushi is a student of the Seppun Guardsman School does not guarantee that he is one of the Emperor's personal guards, any more than an Isawa shugenja is automatically assumed to be an Elemental Master.

Instead, remember that Imperial characters have greater obligation than other characters. It almost goes without saying that their family will be closely monitoring their actions to insure that no shame befalls the family name. Earning the trust and support of his own family is an Imperial character's first (and potentially greatest) challenge.

Of course, it's always possible that a player might want to play an important Imperial, or be closely related to one of his favorite Imperial NPCs. This works no differently than for any other character – if the player is willing to invest significantly in Imperial-flavored character options

such as Social Position, Servant, Allies, Blackmail, and Inheritance, and if the GM approves, he should reap the same benefits as any other character would.

Imperials Can Be Useful!

Many Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game campaigns face immediate problems when different players wish to play characters from rival Clans. While this can cause interesting conflict, a GM is then forced to react quickly and tailor the campaign background so that these differences do not end the story before it begins. This is where an Imperial player character can be extremely useful.

Perhaps the Imperial player character is the commanding officer of their small party of magistrates. Perhaps the Imperial player character is a mutual friend who has brought the other player characters together for a purpose. Perhaps, as a favor to his house, the other player characters have volunteered to escort the young Imperial character on a dangerous mission. The possibilities are limitless, but the result is the same: The presence of an Imperial character offers a compelling reason for the other player characters to get along.

Just make sure when you do this that the player doesn't mind his Imperial character being used as a walking plot device, as problems can result from this. Some players may be overcome with the power rush of being so important to the campaign, and derail events simply because they can. Others may resent being thrust into such a position because it wasn't what they had in mind for their character. The other players might feel jealous because the Imperial hogs so much of the spotlight.

Conversely, other players might appreciate that the important character is a player, rather than an NPC (thus making the campaign feel less like an escort mission). A few brilliant players might take charge in a good way, adding excitement to the campaign and perhaps even dragging a few other players out of their shells as their actions demand reaction.

Above all, make sure that everyone is having fun, and that the Imperial's story doesn't dominate the campaign any more than your players want it to.

How Am I Different?

The most important difference between Imperials and clan samurai is their neutrality. The Imperial Families have never gone to war with any of the clans, and they attempt to remain impartial in their disputes. Because of the favor they have maintained with the Hantei and To-

turi Dynasties, the clans (and ronin) have likewise been careful not to invoke their ire. As a result, an Imperial can often step into a party easily without worrying about clan rivalries getting in the way. The Otomo are an exception here, but at least they are equally feared and hated by everyone. In many ways, adding an Imperial to a group is much like adding a ronin – they are a neutral party from a distinctly different strata of society, and many player characters might not know how to react to them at all.

Another important thing to keep in mind when playing an Imperial character is that you are probably unique. Most members of the Imperial Families remain in Toshi Ranbo or their home provinces, rarely venturing out except for the Winter Court. Unless the campaign takes place in the capital, it is quite possible that most NPCs you encounter have never even met an Imperial other than the tax collector and perhaps the occasional Emerald Magistrate or Miya herald. The novelty of your character's status might bring you quite a bit of attention – possibly unwanted attention.

The most important thing to keep in mind when playing an Imperial is that most samurai will look upon you as a symbol. You represent something greater, a connection to the Son of Heaven himself – however vague and tenuous that connection may be. Sadly, this might make your life more difficult than most samurai. A heroic deed, while appreciated, is only to be expected of an Imperial samurai. Failure, on the other hand, will reflect poorly on the most respected families in Rokugan. It is likely that someone in your family will require regular reports of your activities, and they are unlikely to be forgiving of your mistakes. No one said ruling an Empire was easy.

How Do I Act?

Like any character, every Imperial is an individual. You should not feel constrained by stereotypes and generalizations when designing or playing your character. The following can be useful, however, as a starting point.

Outside of the Imperial City, many Imperials (even from the down-to-earth Miya Family) come off as aloof and arrogant. They are curt, demanding, and unforgiving. Those placed in a position inferior to a Great or Minor Clan samurai – a situation quite likely in a player character party – will do their duties obediently, but sullenly. Though they may warm up to the rest of the party in time, most Imperials tend to keep a careful distance from their lessers, especially ronin, monks, and peasants.

While in a few cases this attitude is born of genuine

arrogance, for most Imperials this is simply a matter of necessity. The social structure of Rokugan is extremely rigid. Each member of society is expected to perform their duties, as is their duty, right, and privilege. Many Imperials discover at an early age that attempts to befriend lower ranking individuals rarely end well. All too often, these individuals merely attempt to flatter them to gain advantage – or worse yet, are simply terrified of the power they represent and respond with cautious politeness rather than true friendship.

The reason why most Imperials are so cold and distant toward non-Imperials is because, for most of their life, non-Imperials have demonstrated they *prefer it when they act that way*. It's easy to believe the Son of Heaven and his servants are of divine descent when he issues commands and refuses to look you in the eye. It's much more difficult when he's drinking sake with you and telling dirty jokes.

So ask yourself – how does your Imperial character relate to those of lesser rank?

Do you look down on them with true arrogance? Oddly, this kind of character won't raise too many eyebrows. People simply expect Imperials to be, well, imperious.

Does your character keep a respectful distance, merely because it is expected? Some Imperials regret their high birth, wishing that they could have been born to a simpler, more engaging life. If your Imperial is this sort, your story could unfold as your shy, sheltered character steps out into the world and, for the first time, experiences it.

Or, alternately, is your character the exception? Perhaps you don't fit the stereotype at all. Your character is social, outgoing, and charismatic. Just remember that an Imperial who acts in this way will have no difficulty making friends, as long as you don't mind being surrounded by sycophants. It's also quite likely that your own family will look down on you for conducting such unseemly relations with your lessers.

In the end, getting an Imperial to relax and fit in with a close-knit party can be difficult. It *should* be difficult. But that same difficulty should lead to many interesting interactions and some great role-playing opportunities.

Surviving as an Otomo

Playing an Otomo offers a few special challenges unlike the other Imperial Families. The Otomo are an extremely powerful family, and have built their power through a web of manipulation, deceit, and blackmail, all in the Emperor's name. Many samurai, upon hearing that an Otomo will be joining their ranks, will be less than thrilled.

Keep in mind that a wise samurai will keep his complaints to himself. The Otomo may be manipulative villains, but few would be so foolish as to say such a thing to their face. Publicly, they are the Emperor's faithful servants, and no one would dare say a thing to besmirch their honor (especially since you never know what sort of dirt they may have on your family).

There are two simple ways an Otomo can approach joining a party if he wishes to fit in easily:

The first tactic is to steer into the skid. Embrace your family's reputation and step into the role of a callous manipulator who cares little for his lessers. Make it clear from the beginning that you care only for the glory of the Empire, and any who would dishonor themselves in your presence will be granted no mercy. Likewise, so long as your servants (as how could non-Imperials be anything less than a servant) do their job and bring honor to their station, you are on their side.

You may be a monster, but you are *their* monster. For now.

The second way, and one that has worked well for many a Scorpion player character, is to become the exception. Convince the party that, while the Otomo have a reputation as heartless bureaucrats, you aren't like that. You are a cheerful, friendly person who is quite glad to be away from his overbearing family. And, if the rest of the party is nice to you, maybe you can even put in a good word with your relatives so that they aren't so cruel to their clan in the future.

Whether this sort of Otomo is sincere or just crafting another lie, of course, is up to you.

New Mechanics

New Path: Miya Peacekeeper

Though nearly all Miya pursue a philosophy of peace, a few choose to dedicate themselves to this role a bit more firmly. A Peacekeeper is a student of the Miya School who has chosen to pursue this philosophy more actively. These brave diplomats often seek out areas rife with conflict and struggle, riding through violent territory in their attempts to negotiate peace. Peacekeepers have been known to continue riding despite terrible injuries and resolutely face down opponents long after others would have given up due to sheer exhaustion.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3**REQUIREMENTS:** Etiquette 5, Horsemanship 3**PATH OF ENTRY:** Miya Herald 2**PATH OF EGRESS:** Miya Herald 3**Technique: Peace at Any Cost**

Miya Peacekeepers are tireless in their pursuit of peace. You suffer no TN penalties to opposed Social Skill Rolls or Horsemanship Skill Rolls due to Wounds. If you have made no attack rolls during a skirmish, enemies who attack you may not re-roll exploding dice for damage; they simply count as 10's.

New Path: Toturi Tactician

Though their history was sadly cut short, the Toturi Emperors were among the most cunning tactical minds Rokugan has ever known. Those who now bear Toturi's name may not share his blood, but they follow the example that he and his children set forth. Toturi officers study unconventional tactics, and endeavor not to let assumptions cloud their judgment. These cunning tacticians are some of the most fearsome opponents to ever

dominate a battlefield, following in the proud tradition of the Black Wolf.

As the Toturi hail from many different backgrounds, their tacticians do not adhere to a single philosophy. Their teachings are intended to be versatile, allowing students of any background to grasp the truth.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3**REQUIREMENTS:** Battle 5, Any Weapon Skill 5, Tactician**PATH OF ENTRY:** Any Bushi School 2**PATH OF ENTRY:** Re-enter the same School at rank 3, or enter a new Bushi School at Rank 1**Technique: Superior Tactics**

When participating in Mass Combat, you receive a Free Raise on your Determination Roll to see how your character is faring. Once per Mass Battle, you may re-roll your result on the Mass Battle Table.

Additionally, during a skirmish, whenever an enemy declares a Raise or attempts to gain the benefits of a Free Raise against you, you may spend 2 Void Points to cancel



all Raises on that roll. If the Raise increased the TN of the attack roll, they must still meet the increased TN to successfully hit you.

New Path: Seppun Devout

The Seppun originated from humble beginnings as priests and holy men. Even in the current day, many find this role a suitable vocation. As the Seppun helped shape the origins of Rokugani religion, so do they continue to influence its future. The Devout are among the most open-minded of all shugenja, dabbling in the theories and practices of all clans. No mystery, it seems, is beyond their careful scrutiny.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 4

REQUIREMENTS: Lore: (Any Clan) 4, Spellcraft 6

PATH OF ENTRY: Seppun Shugenja 3

PATH OF EGRESS: Seppun Shugenja 4

Technique: All Paths in Harmony

If you possess a Lore Skill of 4 or higher in a specific clan, you are considered to be familiar with the basic elements of that clan's Shugenja Basic School techniques. If you make a successful Intelligence/Spellcraft Roll against a TN of 25 and spend 2 Void Points, you may emulate a single shugenja Basic School of that Clan. While doing so, you lose your normal Affinity/Deficiency and gain the Affinity and Deficiency of that School. You also gain that School's basic Technique. This benefit lasts until you recover the spent Void Points. You may only emulate a single shugenja school at a time.

New Path: Otomo Bureaucrat

Just as the Seppun possess a simple, innate understanding of the Empire's magic, so do the Otomo possess a deep and complex awareness of Imperial politics. They are not only great innovators at diplomacy, manipulation, and



deceit, but great students as well. Though their own techniques are powerful, they have also learned a great deal from the Doji, Bayushi, and Ide courtiers with whom they share the Imperial Court.

Those who underestimate an Otomo's political acumen may quickly find their own tactics turned against them.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 4

REQUIREMENTS: Lore: (Any Clan) 4, Courtier 6

PATH OF ENTRY: Otomo Courtier 3

PATH OF EGRESS: Otomo Courtier 4

Technique: All Paths Lead to Me

If you possess a Lore Skill of 4 or higher in a specific clan, you are considered to be familiar with the basic elements of that clan's Courtier Basic School's techniques. If you make a successful Awareness/Courtier Roll against a TN of 25 and spend a Void Point, you may gain a single courtier Basic School Technique taught by that Clan. This benefit lasts until you recover the spent Void Point. You may only emulate a single technique at a time.

New Spell: Detect Lineage (Seppun Secret Spell)

ELEMENT: Air

MASTERY LEVEL: 5

DURATION: Instantaneous

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 willing target

RANGE: Touch

This extremely rare spell is known only to a handful of Seppun shugenja. Its existence is a carefully kept secret of the Hidden Guard. In the past, the Seppun have used it to root out heirs to the throne when there were none apparent, or to unmask frauds who claimed to be sons or daughters of the Emperor.

When cast, this spell can detect whether or not the target is truly related to a specific person. The caster must touch the target, and the target must declare the name of the person to whom he claims relation while holding an object that belonged to that individual.

Unlike most spells, the GM makes the roll for this spell secretly (he must keep the highest resulting dice; the spell should not fail simply because the GM wants it to). If the spell fails, the caster gets no answer from the kami. If the spell succeeds, but the target does not have a legitimate lineage, the caster gets no answer. Thus, while a positive result confirms the truth (barring magical interference) a non-responsive result could simply mean the spell failed.

If the spell succeeds and the target has a legitimate lineage, they are bathed in a warm yellow glow (much like that which suffuses returned spirits) for 24 hours.

This spell cannot be cast upon a specific individual more often than once per year. If such an attempt is made, the spell automatically fails (although, once again, the caster might not know why the spell failed).

Historically, in every case where the spell confirmed or denied an individual's legitimacy, the Seppun (knowing how unreliable magic can be) did not use the results as the sole evidence. They merely used the spell to point them in the right direction as they searched for confirmation (or denial) that the target was who he claimed to be.

New Spell: The Champion's Arrival (Seppun Secret Spell)

ELEMENT: Water

MASTERY LEVEL: 5

DURATION: 10 minutes

AREA OF EFFECT: Self

RANGE: Self

Unlike their brethren in the Imperial Legions, the Seppun Hidden Guard prefer subtle tactics. Direct confrontation is rarely their choice; it is far more common that they use their magic merely to gather information and then summon overwhelming numbers of Imperial Guardsmen to deal with an opponent.

Sadly, this is not always an option. Sometimes, the Seppun find they can only rely upon themselves in a violent situation. For those times, they have spells like this.

This spell causes the caster to channel the strength of past Emerald Champions. When you cast it, you immediately heal all of your Wounds and you become noticeably larger and taller. You appear to be garbed in brilliant emerald armor and wielding a jade katana. Neither the armor nor the katana can be removed or disarmed until the spell ends.

While under the effects of this spell, you are considered to be wearing Excellent Quality Light Armor and your Strength is increased by 2. When attacking with the katana, your attack roll is no worse than 5k5; if your Kenjutsu Skill would give you more rolled and/or kept dice, use the higher numbers. The katana has DR 4k3 and ignores all forms of Invulnerability when used to attack a creature or person with the Shadowlands Taint. You are also able to speak in a booming, commanding voice that projects easily over a battlefield.

You cannot cast any spells while under the effect of this

spell, but can end it at any time before its natural duration. When the spell ends, you are exhausted and you lose all of your remaining Void Points.

Casting this spell for purposes other than defending the Emperor or the honor of the Seppun Family earns the ire of the Emerald Champions and causes it to fail.

New Spell: Rumor's Wicked Weave (Otomo Secret Spell)

ELEMENT: Air

MASTERY LEVEL: 5

DURATION: Instantaneous

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 mile radius

RANGE: Touch

This spell is one of the most powerful tools in an Otomo shugenja's arsenal. It is always used with care and subtlety, for if its existence were well known its effectiveness would be severely diminished.

The spell allows the caster to spread an idea. This idea must be a sentence of no more than ten words long. When cast, the spell randomly selects individuals within the area and implants a suggestion within their consciousness. Generally speaking, it will pick roughly one in four people (the caster cannot choose the targets).

The results are extremely subtle, but very useful for an Otomo. Every target affected by the spell will remember hearing the caster's suggestion, but won't remember when or where they heard it. They will be under no particular compulsion to believe the suggestion, but they will be quite certain that they've heard it someplace else before.

For instance, an Otomo might spread the following idea: "Bayushi Kwanchai has an illegitimate son." If he were to bring this matter up in conversation with a large group of people the next day, some of them would recall having heard such before. In an attempt not to feel foolish, some might even invent sources (usually "a friend of a friend") or simply say that they have it on good authority that they have heard the rumor before. Particularly gossip-prone individuals may bring the matter up with little provocation at all – if, for example, the Otomo were to simply mention Bayushi Kwanchai in passing it might prompt them to spit out the implanted suggestion.

Needless to say, the Otomo have found this spell extremely useful for spreading rumors without revealing their hand in the matter.

This spell may only be cast as a ritual and may only be cast at night.

Imperial Nemuranai

The number of nemuranai owned by the Imperial Families is vast. This is due partially to their great wealth; the Hantei and Toturi Emperors had a way of collecting rare and valuable items and then passing them on to their vassals. The number of Imperial nemuranai also has a great deal to do with the powerful status of these Families. As the Emperor's rule was blessed by divine decree, so do the members of the families that serve him share in a fraction of his divine glory. Items wielded by heroes (and villains) of the Imperial Families seem to have a far greater likelihood of becoming spontaneously awakened than in any other family.

The following are just a few examples.

New Item: Hidden Guardsman's Blade

The Seppun Hidden Guard are charged with protecting the Emperor's mind, body, and soul from magical threats. These mysterious shugenja work primarily in Toshi Ranbo, reinforcing the wards that protect the Imperial Palace and those within it from any supernatural intrusion. To this end, they have a vast arsenal of spells and nemuranai at their command. The Hidden Guardsman's Blades are one example, powerful wakizashi wielded by all senior members of the Hidden Guard.

These swords are extremely well crafted, but not particularly ostentatious when sheathed. They are carried in plain wooden saya, their hilt wrapped in plain (albeit high quality) black silk. The tsuba of each blade is stylized to resemble the Seppun Family mon. The sword does damage as a regular wakizashi (2k2) but it grants its owner a Free Raise on Investigation Skill Rolls while carried.

A guardsman's blade grows warm if a spell is cast within 60' of it. This warmth is sufficient that its bearer will feel it through saya and clothing without touching the weapon. If drawn and pointed in the direction of the caster, the blade flares a brilliant white. As magic is regulated quite strictly in the Emperor's presence, these weapons are extremely useful to prevent any attempt to subtly work spells against him or his servants.

The magic of these swords functions only for their legitimate owners, the Hidden Guard, though on rare occasions they have offered them as gifts to trusted allies. While quite a suitable reward for a player character, keep in mind that most samurai cannot get away with drawing a blade and pointing it at a stranger as easily as a Seppun might.



New Item: Otomo Kimono

The Otomo have not maintained their mastery of the courts for centuries without having at least some magical aid. Though the Seppun possess a far stronger magical bloodline, the Otomo have several powerful shugenja. Usually, these are the result of generations of planning, the result of carefully arranged marriages with the Isawa, Asahina, and Soshi. And while the Otomo do not possess skill at artifice remotely comparable to their Crane cousins, they have produced a handful of minor nemuranai that their less gifted brethren find quite useful.

The most common of these are the Otomo kimono. These are extremely fine kimono, usually dark brown, emerald green, or a dark golden color. The craftsmanship is extremely fine, creating quite an impression anywhere, in or out of a courtly setting. The wearer of an Otomo kimono normally gains a Free Raise on all Courtier Skill Rolls, not due to any magical effect, but simply due to the kimono's

entrancing beauty. However, the GM may deem that in certain situations (such as a dirty ronin camp, a poor village, or the battle-hardened Kaiu Wall) such an ostentatious display of wealth might instead incur penalties.

The kimono's wearer gains a certain amount of resistance against prying magics. Any time a spell is used to spy upon the wearer or see into his mind and emotional state (including such spells as Reflective Pool, Secrets on the Wind, Whispering Wind, and Know the Mind) the TN for the Spellcasting Roll is increased by 10. If the Spellcasting Roll fails by less than 10, the caster believes it succeeded normally and the wearer immediately knows that magic has been used against him. The kimono then allows its wearer to supply a false result.

If, for example, someone attempts to spy upon the kimono's wearer using Secrets on the Wind, and fails due to the +10 TN penalty, the wearer can then decide the caster only overhears a boring conversation about the weather – when in reality the Otomo courtier is discussing something else altogether.

These kimono are rarely given to anyone outside the Otomo Family. Not only are they extremely difficult to make, but the Otomo prefer to keep their existence a secret. That being said, it is not inconceivable that a player character that performs an extraordinary service for an Otomo might be rewarded with such an item.

New Item: The Cursed Chop of the Hantei

Shortly after the Fall of Otosan Uchi a brave (if somewhat foolish) Nezumi scout endeavored to explore the ruins of the Imperial Palace. Though he did not make it far before being chased out by a wandering oni, he came out with what he believed was a great treasure. It was ring of dark green jade, bearing the Imperial Seal.

As the Imperial Palace had been declared off limits to his tribe, the Nezumi knew he could not keep his treasure without risking trouble. He traded it to the first traveling merchant who journeyed past, in return for a sack of rice.

The rice proved to be contaminated, causing many members of the Nezumi's tribe to die that winter.

The merchant, meanwhile, was overjoyed by his find. It appeared to be an Imperial chop, as it bore the mon of the Hantei Family. Purchasing a few ancient ink paintings, he quickly marked them with the chop – selling them as genuine Imperial relics for quite a profit to gullible samurai further along his trade route.

What the merchant didn't realize was that the chop belonged to Hantei XXXIX, and was subtly touched by the Taint during the Emperor's possession by Fu Leng. Anything marked by the chop brings bad luck upon its owner, always in proportion to the owner's station. When a peasant came into ownership of a marked figurine, his beloved dog choked on it and died. A mid-ranking magistrate purchased a marked painting, and that same night it tore off the wall, blew into a lantern, and started a fire that burned down the man's house. Each time the curse strikes, the item that was marked by the chop is directly responsible for the owner's ill fortune.

To make matters worse, the chop carries an additional curse. Whoever carries it will have extraordinary good fortune – and the chop will always be the obvious source. The instant it is sold or given away, that fortune changes to disaster (as it did for the poor Nezumi).

The GM is encouraged to be creative if this cursed item should pass into the party's hands.

Adventure Seed: The Cursed Chop of the Hantei

The Cursed Chop of the Hantei can only enter your campaign if it is set after the fall of Otosan Uchi, of course. If the player characters discover it either directly or indirectly through its ripple effect, as the merchant continues along his route and the chop traces a path of misery and ill fortune, they may have the opportunity to trace it to its source, in which case those familiar with the merchant will reveal that he is bound for Toshi Ranbo. Considering the high station of the samurai who dwell there, the chop's curse could be disastrous for the entire city.

New Item: Sword of the Righteous Emperor

If not for a tragic twist of fate, this sword would have been legend. It still might, if destiny permits.

After the founding of the Oriole Clan, master smith Tsi Zutaka was charged with forging a blade suitable for Emperor Toturi III. He set to work immediately, intending to craft the finest blade possible. Zutaka was a perfectionist, and not a man to be rushed in his work. One year later, still at work on the blade, he received word that the Emperor was dead. Though greatly saddened at the news, he continued his work.

When the blade was complete, he presented it to Imperial Herald Miya Shoin, in hopes that it would be given to the Emperor's successor. Shoin accepted the weapon gravely. He set it in a place of honor at Kyuden Miya – and then removed it and placed it in a vault deep within the castle only a few weeks later. Those who lingered near the sword for long were invariably overcome by great depression and sadness. The room that housed the blade became uncomfortably cold until the sword was removed.

A visiting Seppun shugenja confirmed that the blade was responsible for the strange events. The spirit of the sword, destined for legendary exploits, is now anguished that its destiny has been denied. If the blade is not soon taken up by someone worthy (either an Emperor or a legendary hero), the spirit of the sword may become twisted with madness.

The Sword of the Righteous Emperor is a katana, and wielding it grants you a bonus to the total of your damage rolls with it equal to either your Glory or Status, whichever is higher. Additionally, you gain a Free Raise and a +1k0 bonus to all attack rolls with the weapon. In addition, any time you defeat a samurai of equal or higher Glory, Status, or Insight Rank (whether winning a duel or killing him in a skirmish), you immediately gain an extra Void Point. This Void Point does not count against your maximum, and remains with you until you spend it.

However, if wielded by anyone other than the rightful Emperor, the sword will attempt to drive its wielder to acts of glory. The only way to temporarily satisfy the sword is for its wielder to defeat an opponent of equal or higher Glory, Status, or Insight Rank. If not satisfied, it radiates a depressing miasma over everyone in its presence. Anyone within 100' of the sword does not recover Void Points or spell slots, and cannot naturally heal Wounds until they leave the sword's presence or it is satisfied.

With each month that passes, if the sword is not satisfied, the radius of this effect increases by 10'. If the sword's wielder becomes Emperor of Rokugan, the sword will be permanently satisfied.

FEALTY AND FREEDOM

RONIN



The Ronin in History

Because they are generally despised, it is easy to forget that ronin are, strictly speaking, still samurai. As such, their history goes back to the very origins of the samurai caste.

If the original samurai were the human followers of the Kami who first formed the Great Clans, then it follows that the first ronin must have been created soon after the dawn of the Empire. From the start, it was apparent that not everyone who had been made a samurai was worthy of serving their clan. Those who fell short were shamed and cast out, although they were allowed to retain their social rank as samurai. These outcasts found it difficult, if not impossible, to join another clan, as it was generally assumed that if they weren't good enough for one, they weren't good enough for another. And so they wandered, without home or lord, regarded with suspicion by all. Their descendants, born into the samurai caste but without clan affiliation, became the first true ronin.

Of course, ronin status has never been a permanent curse. There have been cases in which samurai cast out by their clan have redeemed themselves and gained another chance to swear fealty. And true ronin have always theoretically had the opportunity to prove themselves

worthy of entering the service of a lord. War is always a great opportunity for ronin to leave their life of wandering behind them, as the Great Clans almost always need to fill out their armies with mercenaries; an act of bravery that catches a daimyo's attention is a sure path to the security of clan fealty. This is especially true of the Crab Clan, who declare one of their Twenty Goblin Winters whenever they need additional manpower in their fight against the Shadowlands.

It's also true that there are times when ronin deserve better than the contempt they receive from their betters. Although many ronin do turn to banditry and piracy, many others lead commendable lives dedicated to defending the Empire and its subjects. The Sword of Yotsu, which has served the Empire loyally and courageously in its own way for generations, was founded by such ronin, and they have now gained the right to consider themselves a proper samurai family with a name of their own. The Eyes of Nanashi are the militia and municipal authority of the ronin town of Nanashi Mura, and they take considerable pride in giving ronin self-government a good name.

The greatest ronin of them all, however, was the former Akodo Toturi, who was stripped of his position as Lion Clan Champion when he protested the cruel behavior of Hantei XXXIX after the defeat of the Scorpion Clan Coup. The young Hantei was already suspicious of Toturi, who had briefly claimed the throne when it appeared that the Emperor's line was extinguished, and he did not forgive this perceived second act of disloyalty. Toturi was a man

of exceptional natural talents, as well as inheritor of the Lion Clan's tradition of military leadership, and instead of sulking in his exile, he soon gathered a substantial body of followers. Of course, many of them were former Akodo bushi who were banished along with him. But many others were true ronin and outcasts from other clans, who recognized in him the most charismatic and capable leader they were likely to meet in their lifetimes.

Toturi's ronin army numbered tens of thousands of soldiers at its peak, and it played an important role in the Clan War, winning the Battle of Beiden Pass against the combined Crab and Shadowlands army. By the war's end, Toturi had reunited with the Lion Clan, bringing its bickering families together under his leadership and even representing them as the Lion Thunder at the Second Day of Thunder. After the Clan War and the end of the Hantei Dynasty, he assumed the vacant throne as Toturi I.

Although he had regained the respectability wrongfully stripped from him (and then some), Toturi never forgot his time as a ronin. He brought most of his old followers into the Imperial Legions, and he even tapped his most trusted ronin associates for important positions like Chancellor that had always belonged to samurai from the Great Clans or the Imperial Families. Although his reign saw much turbulence and ended tragically, Toturi earned a singular place in history as the ronin who became Emperor and gave his name to a dynasty.

Ronin Groups

Ronin are outcasts, but they aren't necessarily loners. Since the early days of the Empire, those who were deemed unfit to serve a clan have found it advantageous to band together. Indeed, sometimes it is the only way they can survive. These groups, often called *otokodate* ("manly fellows"), are fragile by nature, composed of those who come together solely out of hard circumstance, and usually lack the institutional stability of a clan. It is exceedingly rare for any formal group of ronin to last longer than its founding leader. But taken together, they have had a significant impact on the history of the Empire, for good and for ill.

Bandits and Pirates

Without a lord to provide for them in exchange for their service, a samurai can easily turn desperate and abandon all sense of decency and honor. After all, it is still considered beneath his dignity to perform common labor, like a heimin, even though he has no other support. Other ronin are simply greedy, or born with malice in their hearts.

Whether out of despair or an evil nature, they use their daisho to rob and murder others.

Highwaymen and bandit gangs can be found almost everywhere in the Empire, though their frequency varies according to local population density and the ability of local and Imperial authorities to patrol the area. Small groups and loners lurk along trade routes, looking for wealthy travelers and under-protected caravans, while larger bands may target isolated villages, looking for valuables, hostages, or the rice crop. Along the coasts and even on the high seas, pirates take their toll on merchant shipping – although, thanks to the legitimization of the Yoritomo and the efforts of the Crab navy, this is not nearly the problem that it was once. all of these criminals are ronin, and



by no means are most ronin criminals. But there is no question that masterless samurai compose a significant percentage of the Empire's criminal underworld.

One of the most notorious (and successful) bandit groups is the Forest Killers, which has terrorized the southern end of the Shinomen Mori for generations. Such is their skill and experience that they have developed their own fighting techniques. They are particularly notorious for having wiped out the Hidden Sword, an otokodate of righteous ronin sworn to destroy them.

Mercenary Companies

Any group of ronin is generically known as an otokodate, but in practice, the term tends to refer most often to mercenary bands of soldiers. These tend to be ad hoc formations that come together under a charismatic leader when the moment is right — when war sweeps the Empire and the Great Clans suddenly find themselves in need of more soldiers — and they will sell their services as a ready-made unit. These groups can be composed entirely of ronin, or of ashigaru led by ronin officers. When the war is over and the need for their services wane, or when they are so bled down that they cannot continue as a unit, they dissolve, and their surviving members move on or wait for the next opportunity to fight for pay.

These mercenary otokodate saw their heyday during the Clan War, one of the few times in the Empire's history when all truly fought all. Blades for hire saw no shortage of bidders for their services, although many mercenaries who would otherwise have fought only for pay joined Toturi's Army as volunteers, and would have followed the Black Lion to the ends of the earth.

One of the most distinguished mercenary commanders in history made his name in that era. Saigorei was an outcast from the Akodo who formed an otokodate called the Broken Guard. Saigorei was a master of the pike, and he trained his followers in what he knew best — ways in which warriors on foot could negate their disadvantages against opponents on horseback. The Broken Guard distinguished itself by helping the Fox Clan defeat a band of mounted bandits that had been plaguing their lands.

Later, Saigorei joined Toturi's Army and became one of the Black Lion's most trusted subordinates. After Toturi, as Emperor Toturi I, committed seppuku to break the hold of the Lying Darkness on his soul, it was Saigorei who led his reconstituted army to victory at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate.

The Kaeru Family

Though they are now technically a vassal family of the Ikoma, the Kaeru were ronin for many generations before. They consider the City of the Rich Frog to be their holding by right. As long as the city lay within the borders of the Unicorn lands, the Unicorn were content to let the Kaeru have their independence. After the War of the Rich Frog, however, the Lion insisted on keeping a tighter rein on the city. The Kaeru joined the Lion Clan by compulsion, but in their hearts, they are still independent.

They consider themselves the ultimate authority in the City of the Rich Frog, and their private army of Machi-Kanshisha enforcers makes sure they receive the proper respect from the city's residents. The Machi-Kanshisha do not see themselves as servants of the Lion; the Kaeru Family are their employers and true lords.

The Sword of Yotsu

Like the Kaeru Family, the Yotsu Family are no longer technically ronin, but it is hard to think of them as anything else. The Yotsu recently became a vassal of the Sepun Family, but their roots lie in an act of heroic devotion and their dedicated service to the Empire as ennobled ronin.

The family was created in 1111 as a reward to the ronin Yotsu, who stumbled upon the camp of the Bloodspeaker cell that had kidnapped the heir of Hantei XXXVIII in order to sacrifice the boy in a ritual. Unable to escape with the Imperial heir and avoid being discovered, Yotsu put his son in the prince's place, sacrificing his own to preserve the Hantei bloodline. For his selflessness, he was ennobled as Yotsu Yatoshin and granted his own district in Otosan Uchi.

The Yotsu thus had a curious dual status as servants of the Emperor who were at the same time ronin. They recruited other ronin as their followers, screening them so they only accepted those of exceptional honor and courage. Together, they formed the Sword of Yotsu and considered themselves an otokodate, even though they had sworn fealty to the Yotsu Family. Members of the Sword of Yotsu served as magistrates in Otosan Uchi, and as yojimbo to Yotsu Yatoshin and his family.

Led by Yatoshin's daughter Seou, the Sword of Yotsu fought bravely when Daigotsu unleashed his surprise attack on the Imperial City, but of course they were too few to prevent its downfall. Afterward, however, Seou held her followers to their duty, staying in the ruined city to watch over those who had not been able to flee. Their

courage, like the selflessness of the family's founder, set a shining example of what ronin could contribute to the Empire, and no ronin are more widely admired than the Sword of Yotsu.

Eyes of Nanashi

The Eyes of Nanashi are described in more detail later in this chapter, but they at least deserve mention as long as the subject of distinguished ronin groups is raised. Nanashi Mura is a remarkable institution, the largest permanent settlement in the Empire in which ronin govern themselves.

In the absence of functional Great Clan or Imperial institutions, it has always been up to the residents themselves to carry out basic civic functions and preserve public order. The Eyes of Nanashi are the town's militia and police force, organized by ronin, composed of ronin, and led by ronin. They have always done whatever the town required of them in exemplary fashion, and in this sense, they are the pride of ronin throughout the Empire.

Ronin Heroes

YOTSU SEOU, DAIMYO OF THE YOTSU

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
Honor: 4.1	Status: n/a			Glory: 5.9

SCHOOL/RANK: Ronin Warrior 5 / Sword of Yotsu Path
ADVANTAGES: Allies (Seppun Kiharu 4/4), Way of the Land (Ruins of Otsan Uchi)

KATA: Striking as Fire, The Empire Rests on Its Edge, Victory of the River

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 4, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History (War Against the Darkness) 4, Lore: Law 5

The fact that Yotsu Seou can be described as both a ronin and a family daimyo of sorts makes her exceptional enough. She is also the younger daughter of Yotsu Yatoshin, the ronin whom Hantei XXXVIII rewarded for saving the life of his son, and sister of Yotsu Urieko, her predecessor as leader of the Yotsu family.

But quirks of title and pedigree can easily obscure the courage and tenacity with which she has served her family and the Empire. Seou and her twin sister Seiki were always particularly close to Urieko, and they spent much of their young lives in Otsan Uchi, where Urieko held responsibility for protecting the family district. It was an important post, and Urieko took her duties very seriously. Both younger sisters helped her as best they could, and so quickly learned the importance of duty as an aspect of personal character and the value of bushi training as a means of fulfilling one's duty.

With the Empire constantly at war and the family district in the Imperial City in safe hands, however, it was almost inevitable that Seou would take up soldiering while she was still a relatively junior member of the Yotsu leadership cadre. She served under the great ronin general Saigorei during the War Against the Darkness, when he reconstituted Toturi's Army and led it at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate.

After the war, she became the district commander in Otsan Uchi when Urieko succeeded their father as leader of the Yotsu family. Having looked up to her older sister all her life, she took her new duties very seriously. However, Seou would have to face a far sterner challenge than anything Urieko had ever seen, as Daigotsu's attack on the Imperial City occurred during her tenure. She held to her post even as the great capital crumbled around her, and even after it fell, she and her followers remained behind to watch over those who could not evacuate. Her courage did not save the city, but it did ensure that the Yotsu District was one of the neighborhoods least affected by the Taint.

As Yotsu leader, Seou considers it of utmost importance that her followers still keep watch on the ruins of Otsan Uchi. It is almost as if she cannot bear to think of it as a wreck, and holds out hope that it can be cleansed so that the Emperor will once again make his home there. Now in her late middle age, memories of the happy years she spent there with her sisters have softened into nostalgia. Outside of her immediate family, her long friendship with Seppun Kiharu remains her most treasured personal relationship, and it can be argued that it led directly to the Yotsu becoming vassals of the venerable and still-formidable Seppun.



MASAMUNE, LEADER OF THE EYES OF NANASHI

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

Honor: 3.8 Status: n/a Glory: 5.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Master of Games 4

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Daikoku's Blessing

SKILLS: Battle 2, Commerce (Appraise) 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 4, Etiquette (Conversation) 4, Games (Fortunes and Winds) 5, Investigation (Notice) 4, Kenjutsu (Wakizashi) 3, Lore: Dragon Clan 2, Medicine 2, Meditation 2, Storytelling 4, Underworld 2

Traditionally, the Eyes of Nanashi have been led by bushi — hard-handed samurai who were physically and professionally trained to handle a rough crowd. Keeping order in a town full of ronin meant you had to be ready to deal with people who had little lose by fighting you and who were often drunk enough to do so without a second thought. Masamune, the current leader, has taken a very different path, however. He is the first chief of the Eyes of Nanashi who was not trained as a warrior.

Masamune was born into the Kaeru Family of the City of the Rich Frog, and originally trained in politics, com-

merce, and the art of the deal. He left the City of the Rich Frog at an early age to apprentice at the Wretched Frog, where, it was hoped, he would learn about the ways of business. However, gambling caught Masamune's interest more than bookkeeping, and he found himself spending hours at Fortunes and Winds under the excuse that he was "learning his trade."

In a short period of time, he became so expert in the ways of the back room that he learned all the popular ways of cheating at games of chance, whether by those who ran the game or those who played it. He also discovered that cheating disgusted him. Disappointed by his bosses' lackluster approach to running the Wretched Frog, he joined with the Eyes of Nanashi and never left.

Policing games of chance in Nanashi Mura has always required that you keep your daisho handy, and Masamune has learned by necessity how to use a sword. But he prides himself much more on his gift for smooth talk and his knack for figuring out how to get people to see things his way. Disputes that he arbitrates never seem to end in drawn blades — truly an exceptional achievement in the gambling dens of Nanashi Mura.

His peers in the Eyes of Nanashi soon noticed his gift for keeping the peace with a minimum of fuss, and Masamune got the chance to show his gift for talking down trouble in other situations as well. When the other senior leaders needed to choose a new chief for the Eyes of Nanashi, there was a moment of surprise when Masamune's name came up — but then, everyone agreed there was no one better for the job.

Masamune still practices his proven formula for successfully keeping the peace in his adopted town. He doesn't intervene directly in as many disputes as he used to, as he has political and administrative duties now. But when he does go back into the fray, he finds that the friendly twinkle in his eye still has its magic, and the bits of gray that now dot his hair seem to command respect. Of course, it doesn't hurt that he can now call on many bushi to back him up, either.

DOJI SAITO, REDEEMED RONIN

[This NPC was contributed by Javier Santamaria Terron, the winner of the koku auction at the 2007 Legend of the Five Rings CCG European Championship tournament. Congratulations, Javier!]

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
		Agility: 4	Perception: 3	
Honor: 3.7		Status: 3.5		Glory: 3.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Kakita Bushi 2 / Doji Magistrate 1

ADVANTAGES: Benten's Blessing, Great Destiny, Irreproachable, Kharmic Tie (Bayushi Aiko)

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic (Bushido), Lost Love (Bayushi Aiko)

KATA: Kakita's First Stance, Watchful Falcon, The World is Empty

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 2, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Bushido 4, Meditation 1



Playing a Ronin

Doji Saito is one of the relatively rare examples of a samurai who left his Clan in disgrace, but who was ultimately forgiven his transgressions and allowed to swear fealty to his Champion once again.

As a young man, Saito showed every sign that he would spend his life in honorable service to the Crane. Noted for his character as well as his swordsmanship, he seemed very much a natural pick to serve as yojimbo for a Crane magistrate sent to the Scorpion lands to receive custody of a criminal.

After arriving in the Scorpion lands, however, they found themselves stalled, as the Scorpion magistrates hemmed and hawed over whether they could even find the man in question. What neither Saito nor his charge knew was that the "criminal" was, in fact, a Shosuro shinobi who had been caught spying for the Scorpion while in his disguise, and the Clan of Secrets was willing to kill rather than let one of their agents fall into the hands of a rival clan.

During this time, Saito met and fell in love with a young local samurai named Bayushi Aiko. Unfortunately for him, Aiko knew of the plan to kill the Crane magistrate, but refused to tell him; instead, she decided to lure him away so that he would not be with his charge when the assassination was to take place. Her cunning saved his life, but it forced him to return to his clan in shame, having failed to protect his murdered charge. Saito was banished for dereliction and became a ronin.

Over the next twenty years, Saito labored to redeem himself. He never saw Aiko again, and his youthful infatuation has long since soured. But after years of searching, he did find the Shosuro who had been the ultimate, if indirect, cause of his misery, and killed him in a duel sanctioned by an Imperial Magistrate. For this, the Crane took the unusual step of allowing him once again to use the Doji name, accepting him back into the fold. He now serves his once and present clan as a magistrate.

Given the lowly status of ronin in Rokugan, it seems unlikely at first glance that they would make desirable player characters. In a world where Great Clan allegiance means so much, why would you want to play someone who is little better than scum? You have no standing, very little in the way of social or material resources at your back, and you're unlikely to be trusted to do anything really exciting or important. In fact, you're probably asking for a world of hurt and humiliation in terms of how NPCs and maybe even your fellow player characters treat you.

You might as well be a Nezumi.

But the flip side of playing a character who is so scorned and shut out of the social and political order is that you also have something resembling complete freedom of action. An enterprising player might choose to play a ronin precisely because he has no rules and allegiances to tell him what to do. Even Minor Clan samurai are strictly bound by the needs of their clan and must feel the weight of obligation to something larger than themselves; this is doubly true of Great Clan and Imperial samurai, who play for the highest stakes in the Empire. A ronin, by definition, is his own man, and no one tells him what to do. All choices are open to him, for good or evil, to serve the Celestial Order or defy it, to honor the code of Bushido or rebel against it. It's all up to you.

Of course, it is also possible that your ronin character may be a part of an otokodate, or even a ronin family like the Kaeru or the Yotsu. In these cases, you will have obligations to a larger group, and you are not entirely a free agent. However, these groups are smaller and more intimate than the Great Clans, and they are mostly associations of choice rather than birth. The ronin who make up these groups are more like close friends or relatives, and going against the will or interests of the group lacks the sense of offense against the Celestial Order that comes with defying your clan or the Emperor. So, yes, ronin do associate with each other, but as a general rule they are not as solid as the formal institutions of Rokugani feudalism. In fact, as noted earlier, it is rare for a ronin group to outlive its founder.



It

is also worth pointing out that no player character affiliation in the Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game fits one of the classic tropes of roleplaying games better than a ronin. Since the earliest roleplaying games, a fairly standard backstory for a player character has been that of a young would-be hero who leaves the circumstances of his birth and youth to seek his fortune. His goal is to better his circumstances — to become rich, to do a great deed, to gain social position — and the fact that he leaves the familiar behind him gives complete freedom to act, even to reinvent himself, without prior constraint.

In Rokugan, it is very hard to escape those prior constraints if you are born into a Great Clan; the burden of the social and political obligations with which you enter this world is simply too great. Within the samurai class, only a ronin has this kind of freedom to seek his heart's desire and reinvent himself as necessary. In fact, if you are part of a Great Clan and you try to slip the constraints of your clan fealty, you will most likely disgrace yourself and be cast out... as a ronin. And that's if you're lucky.

On the other hand, a world of possible goals and paths opens itself to a ronin. You can seek the security and pres-

tige of allegiance to a Great Clan or the Imperial Families, if you like. There are always opportunities to gain their favor; the Crab's Twenty Goblin Winter is just one established process by which the clans try to add to their ranks. The Monkey Clan still recruit ronin into Imperial service, according to the mandate of their founding. And history gives us examples of ronin who seized sudden opportunities to prove their worth. The ronin Yotsu is perhaps the most spectacular example; the wave-men who flocked to the banner of Toturi the Black and later became Imperial Guardsmen as their reward are another example.

If you want to become rich, there are plenty of lost treasures in the Empire (and beyond it) that await rediscovery. It's also possible to work the Empire's trade routes and commercial centers in search of a profit. Worrying about money is supposed to be beneath a samurai's dignity, but you're only a ronin, so nobody will care. And if you decide to turn bandit, well, it's a dangerous life, but you wouldn't be the only ronin to do so.

If you want adventure, it's a big Empire and there's plenty to explore. You have no clan or family allegiances to affect whether or not you should visit this place or that. You have no one to order you to one place or another, or to keep you in a place that does not agree with your desires. Of course, getting the proper traveling papers to keep you out of trouble wherever you go is another matter. But that's part of the adventure, isn't it?

If you want action, you can join a mercenary *otokodate*. It's a dangerous life, but even a Great Clan bushi is prepared to live and die by the sword. And the Fortunes know, there have been enough wars both great and small over the last hundred years to keep a blade for hire steadily employed. If you like skirmishes and mass battles, being an enterprising ronin mercenary may actually be a better option than being part of most Great Clans, because the level of military activity for any individual clan ebbs and flows, and the Phoenix prefer to stay out of wars all together.

In short, if you are a ronin in Rokugan, the world may not be your oyster, but all of its possibilities are certainly laid out in front of you.

Ronin in Your Campaign

The points discussed here about ronin player characters are important not only to players, but to GMs as well. If you have a party that is partly ronin, remember to give the wave-men something to do, so that they aren't just punching bags for everyone else's sense of superiority. It's easy to let the NPCs and other PCs dump on ronin in the name of accurately reflecting Rokugani social attitudes; just keep in mind that ronin have, on the other hand, an unusually wide range of possible actions and goals.

Then and Now

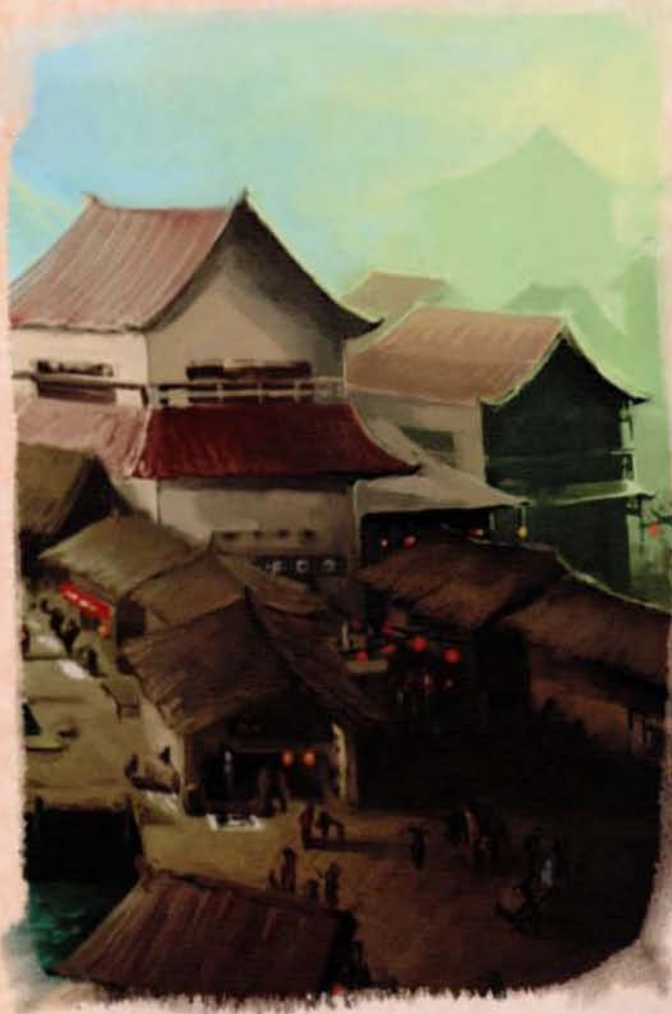
The town of Nanshi Mura first appeared in the Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game in *The Way of the Wolf*, a supplement for First Edition. There, it is described as it was c.1120, during the Clan War era. Two generations have passed in Rokugan since then. This chapter describes the ronin village as it is in the present, in the aftermath of Khan Moto Chagatai's failed bid to seize the throne and amidst the struggle to determine the next Emperor.

New Mechanics

New Advanced School: The Machi-Kanshisha (Bushu)

The Machi-Kanshisha are retainers of the Kaeru, the ruling family of the City of the Rich Frog. Their primary role is to serve as the Kaeru's enforcers, and anyone who defies the will of the Kaeru can expect to receive a visit from them. But because of the family's position in the City of the Rich Frog, they also take on de-facto roles as keepers of the peace; what is good for the Kaeru and what is good for the citizens of the city is often one and the same. However, they refuse to accept official jobs as law enforcement officers, even though the local magistrates will offer them such positions from time to time. The Machi-Kanshisha make it absolutely clear that their first duty is to their Kaeru patrons, not to a magistrate who answers to the Lion Clan or directly to the Emperor. One can argue that the Machi-Kanshisha are corrupt in the sense that they will serve a parochial interest





that pays them well before they respect higher authority. But the flip side of the argument is that they are not easily bribed, precisely because the Kaeru Family pay them well enough to buy their absolute loyalty.

Curiously, the Machi-Kanshisha get away with this duplicitous attitude toward authority in part because they carry themselves modestly. Instead of a katana and a samurai's swagger, they use blunt, non-lethal weapons like the bo to make their point. Many Machi-Kanshisha carry a long iron smoking pipe slung over the shoulder and use it as a weapon. This lack of ostentation in the weapons they use is quite deliberate, and it allows them to go about the Kaeru Family's business without making too obvious that they act as a law unto themselves.

RINGS/TRAITs: Agility 3

SKILLS: Staves (Pipe) 3

OTHER: The Machi-Kanshisha are based in the City of the Rich Frog, and their Techniques may only be learned there, unless you happen to meet a traveling sensei from the school. Typically, only members of the Kaeru Family

or other Lion vassal families are admitted, although ronin who prove their worth to the Kaeru are also allowed to study there in exchange for their oaths of service. Therefore, when you take The Machi-Kanshisha as an Advanced School, you also gain the Disadvantage Obligation: Kaeru Family (4 points).

With the GM's permission, any character that meets the prerequisite requirements may begin a campaign at Rank 1 in this School as long as he possesses no other Techniques.

Techniques:

RANK 1: SMOKE & MIRRORS

Even the simplest weapon can be devastating in the hands of one skilled in its use. You gain a Free Raise on all of your attack rolls made with a bo or pipe. When using a bo or pipe, you may reduce by 1 the number of Raises required for you to use the Disarm, Feint, and Knockdown combat maneuvers.

RANK 2: CLOUDED MIND

The Machi-Kanshisha style of combat disables opponents rather than causing serious injury, relying on careful strikes targeting nerve clusters. When you make an attack roll against an opponent, you may spend a Void Point and declare 1 Raise. If successful, this attack deals normal damage, but it also forces the opponent to make a Contested Raw Earth Roll against you. If you are victorious, the opponent suffers Wound Penalties as if he has suffered 2 more Wound Ranks of injuries than his actual current state. This Technique may not reduce an opponent below the Down Wound Level. This effect lasts for 1 hour.

RANK 3: WEAR THEM DOWN

The lightning speed of a Machi-Kanshisha's attacks may intimidate even the most stalwart of opponents. You may make an additional attack per round.

New Path: The Broken Guard (Bushi)

The Broken Guard were a mercenary band active during the Clan War, founded and led by Saigorei, a disgraced Akodo bushi. Many of its members were Akodo, cast out when Hantei XXXIX banished the Family.

Saigorei was expert in the use of polearms, especially the pike. He passed on his skills to his followers, and the Broken Guard quickly gained a reputation as foot soldiers who were particularly effective in countering mounted

warriors. One of their signal achievements was helping the Fox Clan clear their part of the Shinomen Mori of mounted bandits. This made them particularly popular with the common people, as did their willingness to accept ashigaru into their ranks, which is unusual for ronin mercenary bands.

Saigorei was equally famous for maintaining tight discipline among his followers. He insisted on setting aside part of their pay as a common reserve fund against lean times, and he forbade any of the Broken Guard to rob or steal under pain of death. Despite the fact that he could no longer claim the pride of being an Akodo, he refused to stoop to associating with criminals.

Saigorei joined the Imperial Guard after the coronation of Toturi I. The Broken Guard disbanded, as it not only lost its leader, but the many other Akodo within its ranks who returned to the Lion Clan after the restoration of their family.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

REQUIREMENTS: Honor 2.0 or higher, Spears 4

Technique: The Tiger's Teeth

The Broken Guard no longer exist as a formal organization, but the knowledge of their Technique lives on. When wielding a polearm against a mounted opponent, or an opponent who is at 3' or more taller than you, you gain 1 Free Raise to all of your attack rolls and a +0k1 bonus to your damage rolls. These benefits are cumulative with the normal benefits of using a polearm.

New Path: Canopy of Knives (Ninja)

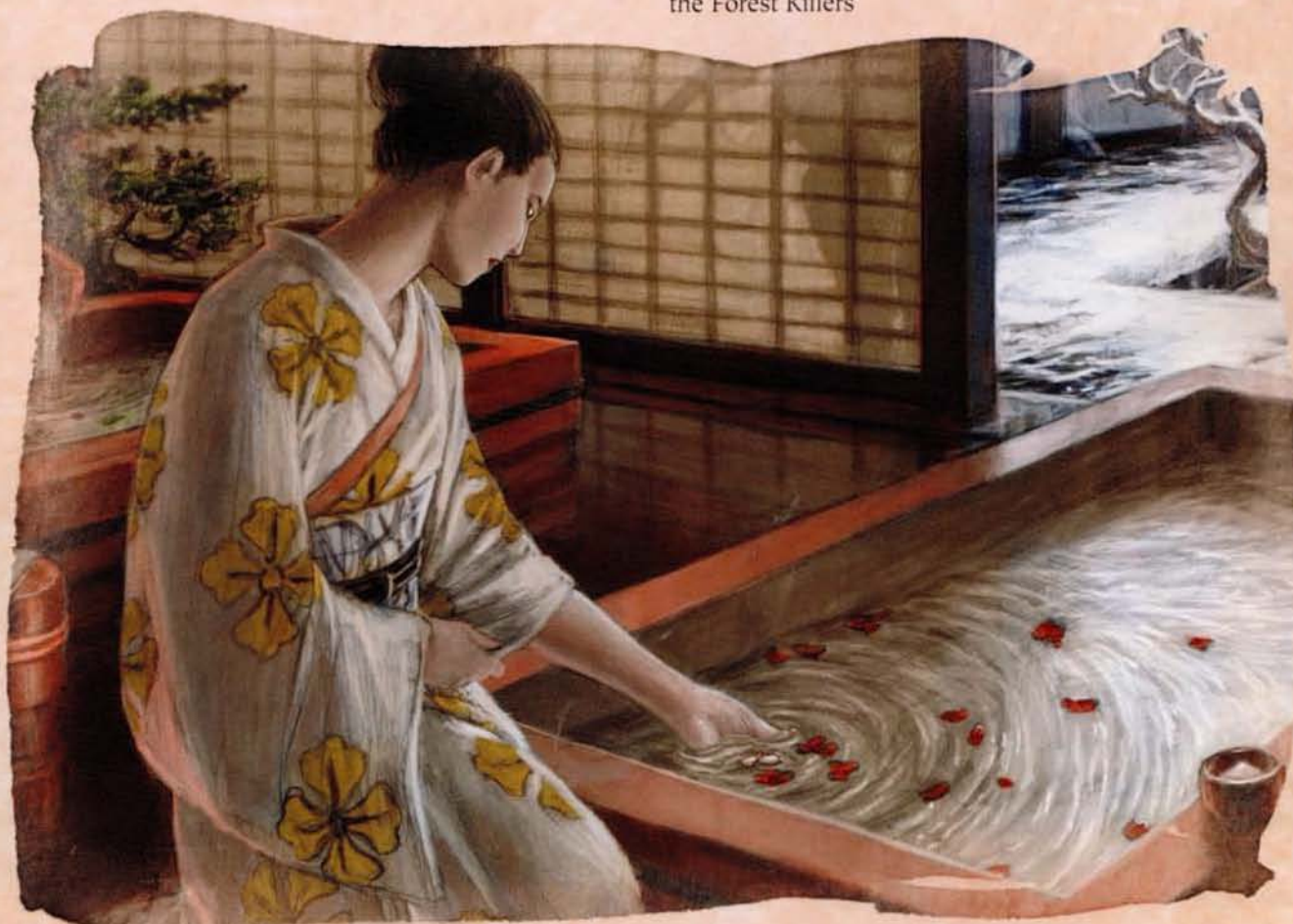
Such is the skill and fearsome cunning of the Forest Killers bandit group that they have developed their own particular technique for striking with a knife. It relies on stealth and speed to catch an opponent unawares, and keeps him on his heels to prevent him from regaining the initiative.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School 1, Forest Killers Path (see below)

PATH OF EGRESS: Enter any Ronin Bushi School at the appropriate Rank

REQUIREMENTS: Knives 3, Stealth 3, membership in the Forest Killers



Technique: Canopy of Knives

Those Forest Killers who study the Canopy of Knives approach silently and eliminate their opponents with a precise knife strike. You gain a +5 bonus to the total of your Initiative Roll, but you must make an attack roll using a knife in the first round of that combat. If your Initiative Roll is higher than the target of your attack with a knife, you gain a Free Raise on your attack roll. You also gain an additional attack per round when fighting with a knife.

New Path: Cutting the Weave (Ninja)

The Weavers are a group of Kolat-backed assassins who disguise themselves as traveling basket merchants (hence their name). They do not know that they serve the Kolat, however, and they see themselves as independent killers-for-hire. As such, their knowledge of the Rokugani underworld is unsurpassed. Weavers learn how to use an assassin's blade first of all, but veterans of the gang either acquire or learn extraordinary skill in the use of disguise.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Weaver Path (Rank 2; see *Art of the Duel*, p. 157)

PATH OF EGRESS: Enter any Ronin Bushi School at the appropriate Rank

Technique: Cutting the Weave

The Weavers often pose as traveling merchants to conceal their true purpose: assassination. You gain a bonus equal to your Commerce Skill Rank to the total of any roll involving the Awareness Trait or Awareness-based Skills. When an opponent makes Raises on an attack roll against you, you gain an equal number of Free Raises on all of your attack rolls made against that opponent in the following round.

New Path: Flight of Innocence (Bushi)

This technique was pioneered by the obscure but skilled ronin Gahei in the period before the Clan War. Gahei could be described as a ronin by temperament; though a samurai by birth, he never set much store in swearing fealty to a clan. In fact, for much of his life, he never showed enough patience or resolve to swear allegiance to anything or anyone in a meaningful way, or even to study any subject long enough to gain respect as a master of it. He once studied archery technique with the Wasp, but never showed any interest in forming an enduring relationship with his Tsuruchi masters.

In his later years, however, Gahei settled into a monastic life and in its enduring calm, he meditated on the one skill he had come closest to mastering: kyujutsu. He developed an archery technique that was uniquely his own, and even passed it on to a handful of disciples who were fortunate enough to come across him. Though he was content to live and die in relative obscurity, Gahei's technique has managed to survive through those who have found it worth learning.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2
Requirements: Reflexes 3, Kyujutsu 3

Technique: Flight of Innocence

Archers who master the Flight of Innocence Technique have truly learned to fire without thought or even sight, and can fire accurately with their eyes closed or blindfolded. You may fire at a target to which you have no line of sight. You must be aware of the target's presence, however. The target gains a +5 bonus to its TN to Be Hit, but you suffer no additional penalties because of your inability to see the target.

New Path: The Forest Killers (Bushi)

The Forest Killers are ruthless bandits who plague the southern Shinomen Forest and the nearby area. They use an old ruined castle in the forest as their stronghold, and they have defied all efforts to exterminate them for several generations. Their experience as woodsmen rivals even that of the Toritaka Family of the Crab (formerly the Fal-



con Clan). Some of their members are descendents of former members of the Hare Clan, made ronin after their clan was destroyed by the Scorpion.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School

1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2, or Canopy of Knives Path

REQUIREMENTS: Honor 2.0 or less, any Weapon Skill 3, Way of the Land (Shinomen Mori)

Techniques: Fool's Harvest

The Forest Killers use the impenetrability of the Shinomen Mori to their advantage, striking from and retreating back into its vast depths. You receive a Free Raise on all of your Stealth Skill Rolls. If you make a successful attack roll against an opponent who is unaware of your presence, you gain a +10 bonus to your Initiative Roll for the next round, as long as you attack that same opponent.

New Path:

The Gaze of Sun Tao (Bushi)

This technique, which remains an exclusive preserve of ronin, bears the name of a famed wave-man, but its true inventor has been lost to the passage of time. It is particularly useful to duelists, but proves its value in skirmishes as well. It is a tradition firmly held by those who know the Gaze of Sun Tao that they will not pass it on except to other ronin. Furthermore, tradition dictates that one who can teach the technique will not do so except to a prospective student who has defeated him in combat. A ronin who finds the honor of his class insulted may point out in rebuttal that, as far as anyone knows, this requirement has never been violated.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 1

PATH OF ENTRY: None. This is an entry-level Path.

PATH OF EGRESS: Ronin Duelist 1

BENEFIT: +1 Reflexes

HONOR: 2.5

SKILLS: Battle, Hunting, Iaijutsu, Jiu-jitsu, Kenjutsu, Lore: History, any 1 Skill

OUTFIT: Katana, wakazashi, any 1 other weapon, ashigaru armor, well-worn traveling clothes and sandals, traveling pack; 5 zeni



Technique: Gaze of Sun Tao

The teachings of Sun Tao can be applied to any battle, even the formalized dueling rite of iaijutsu. When you make the Awareness/Iaijutsu Roll prior to beginning a duel, you gain a +5 bonus to the roll. You may Focus 1 additional time above your normal maximum number of Focuses in a duel.

New Path:

The Hidden Weapon (Bushi)

This technique traces its origin back to Tsuruchi, the founder of the Wasp Clan, which later became the Tsuruchi Family of the Mantis Clan. One of the family's key holdings was the village of Shaiga. Rather than alert rivals to the village's importance by stationing soldiers there, he trained the local peasantry in fighting techniques that would allow them to neutralize even heavily armed warriors without drawing attention to themselves as a military force. Any resistance to an attack would then seem like a surprising effective spontaneous response by the permanent residents rather than a proper military plan.

Since Tsuruchi's time, the family has occasionally bolstered the local residents with ronin mercenaries and taught them the same technique, mostly by allowing them access to the Silent Mountain Dojo.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2



REQUIREMENTS: Agility 3, Strength 3, Peasant Weapons 3. Must be True Ronin.

Technique: Strike the Center

Members of the Hidden Weapon strike to stun rather than draw attention to themselves by killing when lethal force is not necessary. You may make 2 Raises on any attack roll to stun an opponent in addition to dealing normal damage. A stunned opponent may adopt no posture other than Full Defense for a number of rounds equal to your Insight Rank. A stunned opponent may immediately spend a Void Point as a Free Action to negate the effects of this Technique.

New Path: Law of the Heavens (Bushii)

By any standard, the Eyes of Nanashi have a long and honorable history of keeping the peace and enforcing justice in the ronin town of Nanashi Mura. The best and most experienced among them become experts in local traditions, Imperial law, and even the legal traditions of the Dragon Clan, despite the fact that most of them have

never had the educational opportunities that service with a Clan or Imperial Family would have given them.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 3
Requirements: Must possess the Eyes of Nanashi Path Technique (see *Art of the Duel*, p. 157)

Technique: Law of the Heavens

Members of the Eyes of Nanashi seek enlightenment through order and vigilance above all things. You may gain a bonus equal to your Rank in Lore: Law to the total of your attack rolls, damage rolls, and Initiative rolls.

New Path: The Poisoned Frog (Bushii)

The Kaeru Family maintain several dojo in the City of the Rich Frog with which to train the Machi-Kanshisha, but the House of the Golden Frog stands out among them. It is the place where the Kaeru train the operatives who will take on their dirtiest jobs, the ones that require absolute secrecy and discretion. Those who follow the path of the

Poisoned Frog are not ninja, but they learn skills that allow them to fill a similar role within the Machi-Kanshisha.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2, enter a new Ronin Bushi School at Rank 1, or enter the Machi-Kanshisha Advanced School at Rank 1 if you meet all requirements.

REQUIREMENTS: Agility 3, Stealth 3, Honor of 2.0 or less

Technique: The Poisoned Frog

When you attack an opponent who is unaware of your presence, you can use the advantage of surprise to inflict an especially painful, crippling wound. For each Raise you make on your attack roll for which you gain no other benefit, your opponent suffers a +5 TN penalty to any action he takes. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Insight Rank. This penalty is cumulative with multiple uses.

New Path: The Scales of the Carp (Courtier)

As the Yasuki Family have discovered, the problem with being successful traders is that you acquire a reputation for taking advantage of others, and when that reputation precedes you, it puts others on their guard and makes them reluctant to deal with you. There are many folk, especially in the southern Crane lands, who are wary of dealing with a Yasuki, and some cities and towns refuse to let them in at all.

When they meet with such hostility, the Yasuki rely on a secret society of ronin traders, smugglers and gamblers known as the Scales of the Carp to get around it. The Yasuki supply their associates with goods and information, in return for which they kick back to the Yasuki the majority of their revenue, usually about 70%. Yasuki patronage also grants them the protection of a Great Clan family in case of trouble with the law, as well as Yasuki-owned safe houses in the northern Crab lands.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin School Rank 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

REQUIREMENTS: Awareness 3, Commerce 3, Etiquette 3

Technique: The Carp Smiles

Ronin merchants in service to the Crab Yasuki, the Scales of the Carp share their patrons' gift for the deal. When making any Contested Roll using the Commerce, Deceit, or Etiquette Skills, you gain a bonus to the total equal to your Air Ring + your Insight Rank.

New Path: The Silent Current (Courtier)

The ronin known as the Scales of the Carp rely on their wits to get by; the veterans of the group understand that it's what you don't notice that will land you in a world of trouble or worse. They teach this Technique to particularly promising students who are being groomed for leadership positions.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin School Rank 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

REQUIREMENTS: Awareness 3, Commerce 4

Technique: The Silent Current

Students of the Silent Current learn to study their opponents carefully, glean useful information from even the most casual interactions. Whenever you discuss business with another person, you may make a Contested Awareness/Commerce Roll against that individual as a Complex Action. For every 5 points by which your roll exceeds your opponent's, you gain a Free Raise that can be used against him on all





attack rolls or on uses of the Commerce, Deceit, or Etiquette (Sincerity) Skills over the next week. If these Raises are not used within a week, they are lost. You may not target an individual with this Technique more than once per week.

New Path: The Sword of Yotsu (Bushi)

The Sword of Yotsu is one of the Empire's most distinguished ronin groups, and one of the few that can claim that not only did it survive its founder, but it continued to thrive after his passing. Currently a vassal of the Seppun, the Yotsu have never forgotten their origins as honorable ronin dedicated to defending those who could not defend themselves, and their training continues to reflect that tradition.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Any Ronin Bushi School 1

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

Requirements: Honor of 2.0 or greater, Lore: Law 3, Kenjutsu or Iaijutsu 3

Technique: Shelter the Blameless

The Yotsu believe they are the champions of the weak. When fighting to protect or defend someone else, you gain a +1k0 bonus to all attack, damage, and Defense Skill Rolls.

New Disadvantage: Heimin (8 Points)

Although ronin are despised by samurai who have been accepted into a Great Clan (or even a Minor Clan), they are still samurai — or at least, they are supposed to be samurai. You, however, harbor a shameful secret in that you are not descended from the samurai class at all, but

from common stock. Your immediate forebears were farmers, merchants, craftsmen, or practitioners of another trade that samurai consider untouchables. Perhaps you yourself have soiled your hands by practicing such a trade. The isolation and rootlessness of a ronin's life have given you the freedom to create your own identity and you have gotten along by faking it, but if a proper samurai were to discover your true heritage, he could execute you on the spot for your affront to the Celestial Order.

So far, you've been lucky, but in point of fact, your lack of proper breeding makes you less familiar with Rokugani high culture than a proper samurai. It costs you twice as much as normal to purchase Ranks in all High Skills. This does not apply to Ranks you might purchase as a part of character creation. You also suffer a +5 TN penalty to all of your Social Skill Rolls involving other samurai. This penalty may be increased at the GM's discretion.

This Disadvantage may only be taken by characters who are created as true ronin.

Nanashi Mura: The City of Ronin

Because ronin are so widely shunned by the rest of the samurai class, the wave-men tend to associate with others of their kind. Ronin villages — settlements where the samurai population is largely, or even exclusively, ronin — dot the Empire. The largest and most prominent among these is Nanashi Mura, a settlement tucked into the southeastern corner of the Dragon lands that is so large it really is a town of modest size rather than a village.

The founding of Nanashi Mura dates back to the late 11th Century. It is extraordinarily long-lived for a ronin settlement, most of which tend to fall apart of their own accord or are broken up by the Great Clans, who find them potentially threatening. It was established by a renegade Unicorn officer named Shinjo Fuyari, who was banished for attacking other clans without orders. Fuyari did not take this well, and he gathered a ronin army to help him exact revenge against his former clan. Marching back toward the Unicorn lands, however, he was stopped by a mysterious ronin named Nanashi ("no name"), who convinced him he would do more for his new followers by leading them to a life of peace and security, rather than war.

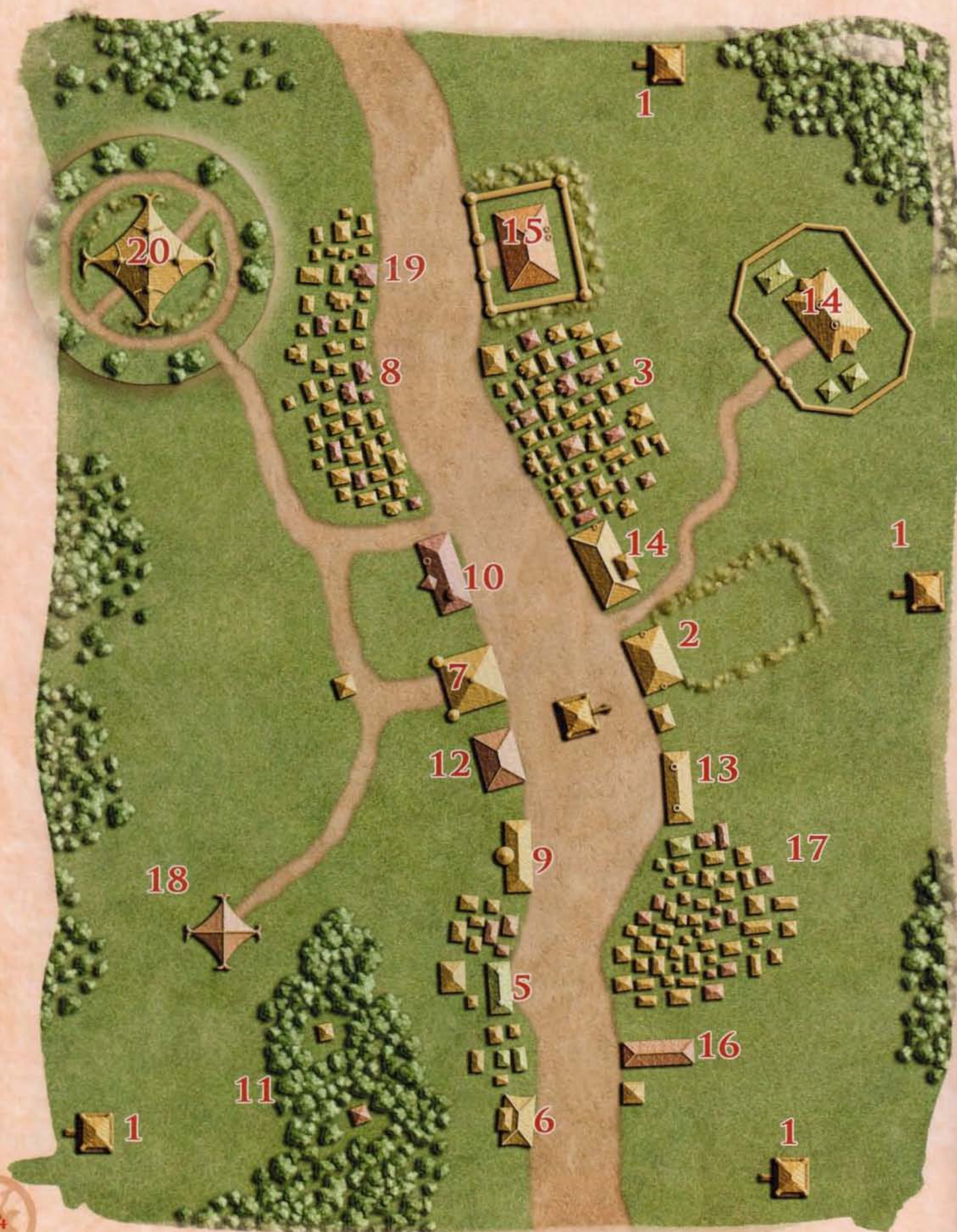
Inspired by Nanashi's words, Fuyari eventually persuaded the Dragon to grant him a parcel of land on which to settle. He never saw Nanashi again, but named the new village after the man who, in a brief encounter, had not only changed his mind but had revealed a whole new way of looking at the world. Fuyari died shortly thereafter, but Nanashi Mura has endured through a combination of good fortune, sound leadership, and the forbearance of the Dragon Clan.

For their part, the Dragon have always been unusually sympathetic to ronin, and in that sense it is no surprise that their Champion granted Fuyari some of their land. But even then, the Dragon have taken no chances with these ronin in their midst. The village was deliberately sited in a corner of their lands, near the border with the

Phoenix and far from the Dragon Clan's heartland and political centers. Also, the site has no land nearby that is suitable for farming; the Dragon understood that as long as Nanashi Mura had to import all of its food, the ronin could not effectively assert their independence. The clan has always kept one of its samurai in town as the local magistrate — yet another subtle reminder of who is supposed to be in charge.

However, the most substantial authorities of Nanashi Mura have always been home-grown, namely the village headman and the organization known as the Eyes of Nanashi. The headman is always a ronin of generally recognized stature, chosen by popular acclamation when the former headman retires or dies. He works in coopera-





tion with, but is not necessarily superior to, the Eyes of Nanashi, which keeps the peace and is also charged with defending the town from attack. Originally the town militia, it has over the years assumed many functions of town government. For more about the Eyes of Nanashi, see *Art of the Duel*, pp. 145-6 and p. 154.

1. Watchtowers

Two watchtowers stand at the southern edge of town, each manned by a lookout from the Eyes of Nanashi. Each has a large bronze alarm bell. These are the only fortifications that the townspeople dare to put up, lest the Dragon take it as a challenge to their ultimate authority over the village and its surroundings.

2. The Silent Garden Inn

The Silent Garden Inn is about as well-appointed an inn as you will find in a ronin settlement, and a respectable-looking place by the standards of most Rokugani towns and cities. Its most distinctive feature, however, is its back room, a gambling den where you can find a game of Fortunes & Winds, or cards, or any other form of wagering at any hour of the day or night. The Silent Garden has always been considered a much nicer establishment for gambling than its main rival, the Wretched Frog.

The current proprietor is a former Phoenix diplomat named Hiei, and he well understands that while even tempers and easy relations are difficult to maintain in the gambling business, they are also essential to keeping the profits flowing. Therefore, he works closely with the Masters of Games, those members of the Eyes of Nanashi who specialize in making sure that games of chance are run honestly, to make sure disputes over cheating are kept to a minimum, and defused quickly when they arise.

3. Broken Wing

This residential district — no better than a slum, by the standards of most Rokugani towns — got its name from the fact that most of its residents have historically been outcasts from the Crane and Phoenix Clans. Although this is less so than it used to be and a significant number of true ronin now live here, one can still see among the ramshackle huts traces of the aesthetic sensibilities of both clans, giving these hovels an odd air of gentility.

4. Magistrate's Manor

This imposing manor house on the edge of town is the

headquarters of the Dragon Clan's official representative, the resident magistrate. As tolerant as the Dragon may be of ronin in general and those who live in this corner of their lands in particular, they still want everyone to know who is in charge. The manor is surrounded by a 10-foot-tall wall pocked with arrow slits, and the gate is guarded by an imposing gatehouse with lookouts stationed at all hours of the day and night. A permanent garrison of twenty bushi guards the manor compound, although they try to keep a low profile around town — with the possible exception of the off-duty time they spend in the sake houses.

During the reign of Toturi III, the Dragon magistrate changed many times. Watching over ronin has never been a terribly prestigious job for a Dragon samurai, and it seemed that one would barely settle in before he was called away to serve in the Dragon armies that played such an important role in helping that Emperor keep the peace in Rokugan. Sometimes, months went by without the clan having any real presence in town.



The most recent arrival, however, seems determined to stay for a while. Kitsuki Yukihiro is a tenacious young woman with a keen mind, and unlike her time-serving predecessors, she is determined to use this position as a stepping stone to a bigger and better role in her clan's affairs. As such, she has participated in the town's affairs more actively than previous magistrates. Since she has trained in her family's famous investigative methodology, her interests lean toward criminal investigations and other matters of law and public order. The Eyes of Nanashi therefore tend to resent her, as they are used to magistrates who don't much care what they do. Yukihiro carries on regardless, as she is determined to accomplish something that the leaders of the Dragon Clan will notice. In fact, she has gained some respect from the local residents, as the Kitsuki Method's complete rejection of social snobbery gives ronin more respect than they would find under traditional Rokugani jurisprudence.

5. *Sakura Sake*

Sakura Sake is fairly typical of the sake houses in Nanashi Mura: small, dingy, and faded, serving rice wine that is inexpensive, but a little rough on the palate. Its proprietor is a one-armed former mercenary named Shige who claims to have in his possession a steel war fan that belonged to Toturi during the Clan War.

6. *Dojo of the Eye*

The Dojo of the Eye is the largest and most imposing building in town. It serves a variety of functions, as it is not only a training center where ronin can seek to improve their weapon skills, but also a hiring hall and a second headquarters for the Eyes of Nanashi.

The first floor is set aside entirely for the use of the Eyes of Nanashi, and it contains not only training space and living quarters for their sensei, but also administrative offices that don't fit in their barracks (location #16).



Much of the second floor serves as a place where prospective employers can come to hire mercenaries, leaving notices that they are hiring and perhaps even meeting with ronin who are here to train. The town authorities advertise it as a safer and more orderly way to find wave-men to fill your needs than trolling through back alleys and cheap sake houses.

The rest of the second and all of the third floor are devoted to training space for whoever needs it. Sensei who feel they have something to impart can set up here at the spur of the moment, as long as they can afford to rent space. There has not been a single headmaster here for years; instead a variety of fighting styles bloom and fade as different sensei come into and go out of fashion.

In back of the dojo is an archery range and a large open space most often used by the Eyes of Nanashi to practice small-unit tactics.

7. Tempered Jade Tea House

Tempered Jade seems very much like an island of serenity and refinement in this bustling ronin town. It serves only fine and expensive teas — luxuries that almost no one in town can afford, except for the resident Dragon samurai.

However, for two generations the family who owns the place have made up for their lack of sales volume with cunning. They discreetly offer Jade Petal Tea for sale and keep careful records about their buyers. They then sell this knowledge to the Asako Inquisitors, who would dearly like to know of Tainted samurai and keep track of them.

Atsuko, a niece of the original proprietor, now runs the tea house very much as her predecessors ran it. However, her son Joji has different ideas. He seems to find it distasteful that their true source of income is selling out samurai who are suspected of the Taint, and wants to drive up sales volume by serving cheaper tea, sake, and perhaps simple foods like rice balls. He argues with his mother about this constantly, which has led her to worry about why her son is so protective of those who have been corrupted.

8. Bushi Row

This residential neighborhood draws its name from the fact that the town's most successful mercenary fighters tend to live here. Historically, they have been exiles from the Crab and Lion Clans, who therefore have substantial military experience (and a combative attitude



to match). Residents of Bushi Row hold ronin who live in the Broken Wing neighborhood in contempt, as old clan rivalries can carry over when ronin outcasts get together, and fights between the two groups are not unusual.

It's worth noting, though, that Nanashi Mura has existed long enough so that old clan allegiances are often a matter of family history rather than personal history. The current acknowledged leader of the neighborhood is Takashi, whose father was an Akodo who found that he rather liked the ronin life after the family was banished and did not return to the Lion when the Akodo were reinstated. Takashi was therefore born a true ronin, but he identifies with his fellows in Bushi Row as part of his heritage.

9. Stables

Ronin are rarely able to afford the best of anything, and so the horses available at the local stable are not in very good condition. Finding one that can manage more than a canter when loaded up is almost impossible.

Yasuki Sugu's son Hidetaka took over the stables from the incompetent Otaku outcast who had been running it, but he did little to improve the quality of the merchandise — in part because his buyers simply could not afford the best horses. Yasuki Nabiki currently owns the stables, but she pays it little mind compared to the House of Joy.



10. The Wretched Frog

Like its more successful rival the Silent Garden Inn, the Wretched Frog is a restaurant with a large back room dedicated to games of chance. It is run by the Kaeru Family of the City of the Rich Frog, an attempt to establish a branch in another city and expand their business activities.

Unfortunately, it hasn't worked out very well, even after many years of trying. The Wretched Frog has never been able to shake its reputation as a pale shadow of the Silent Garden, any more than it has been able to rid itself of the odd but still unidentified smell that rises from its floorboards. It goes about its business with an air of being cursed, but the truth is that the otherwise successful Kaeru haven't put much effort into improving the place. The war fought by the Lion and the Unicorn for control of the City of the Rich Frog has only lessened the Kaeru's interest in the Wretched Frog, as it forced them to draw all their attention to what was happening closer to home.

11. Itode Grove

When Nanashi Mura was first established, the Dragon Clan announced that local traditions considered this stand of ancient oak trees to be sacred, and the ronin were forbidden to ever cut it down. In fact, no such traditions ever existed. The grove made the village less defensible by blocking the view of the plains to the southwest. The Dragon felt that forbidding the ronin from clearing it was a useful test of their loyalty.

When the Scorpion Clan was banished in the War Against the Darkness era, some Scorpion disguised themselves as ronin and remained in Rokugan, awaiting friendlier times. Some of them passed through Nanashi Mura and even took up temporary residence in the Itode Grove. Relics of their presence can still be found in the grove, as the locals still accept the Dragon's misinformation and leave it alone.

12. Sugu's House of Joy

This large shop bears the name of Yasuki Sugu, its founder and longtime owner, who dominated local commerce for many years. Sugu was not a ronin, but a

fully-fledged member of the Crab Yasuki, and one of the few non-ronin residents of the town. He kept the business a family affair, passing it down to his descendants. His granddaughter Nabiki now runs the shop.

Yasuki Nabiki carries on in her grandfather's tradition, shrewdly using her family connections to bring in both exotic and mundane goods, buying low and selling as high as she can. She is eager for news of war from around the Empire, and will pay for good intelligence; she knows that if mercenaries have just been released from service, many of them will come to Nanashi Mura with money to spend. She will then adjust her prices and inventory accordingly.

Nabiki also continues her grandfather's dominance of the food trade in town, knowing how that made him indispensable to the locals. She is always suspicious of anyone who might try to horn in on her position. She also does not appreciate the unusual seriousness with which Kitsuki Yukihiro takes even specious complaints that she is gouging on the price of rice. Her family has never known a Dragon magistrate to behave like that in the past, and she doesn't know what to make of it.

13. *The Broken Jar*

This dilapidated sake house recently got a new proprietor, one with a dark secret. He calls himself Mienai, but his real name is Moto Ugai. He is, in fact, a deserter from the Khan's army, having lost his nerve before the Battle of Toshi Ranbo. He eventually made his way to Nanashi Mura and took over this derelict sake house. Lacking the nerve to commit seppuku for his failure, he lives in constant fear that the Unicorn will find him and force him to do the honorable thing.

14. *Meeting Hall*

Nanashi Mura built itself a respectable-looking town hall, one that would satisfy the civic pride of most Rokugani towns. But apart from public meetings, the frequency and gravity of which have varied from headman to headman, the hall is little used. The decades have not been entirely kind to it, and it is starting to crack at the edges.

15. *Takuan-uchi*

It always takes someone of genuine stature to serve as headman of Nanashi Mura, but Takuan was an exceptional man even by that standard. Widely respected and even loved as the town's leading authority figure,



he was swept up in the events of the Clan War and, like many other residents, he left to follow the great ronin general Toturi. He became one of Toturi's most trusted advisors and served him as Imperial Chancellor after he was crowned Toturi I. After his untimely death during the War Against the Darkness era, Nanashi Mura officially named the headman's residence in his honor.

The current headman is a canny old true ronin named Akechi. As one who has never cared much about joining a Great Clan, Akechi sees himself as a tough-minded realist; he understands that the Dragon have never fully trusted this mass of ronin living within their borders, and he doesn't fully trust them, either. But at the same time, between the War of the Rich Frog and the Khan's invasion, he has seen war and disorder raging closer to home than he would like, and he realizes that if the Dragon Clan weakens, Nanashi Mura could lose the best guarantee of its safety and independence. So he is publicly supportive of the Clan and magistrate Kitsuki Yukihiro, though privately suspicious of their every action.

16. Otokodate House

This imposing two-story blockhouse is the barracks of the Eyes of Nanashi. It is large enough to accommodate 50 samurai, although only one-third of the Eyes will be present here at any given time, mostly resting and performing menial tasks.

17. Highway's End

Though it is not any more physically decrepit than the other residential neighborhoods, Highway's End has always had a decidedly forlorn air that makes it seem more run down. Exiles from Minor Clans — including refugees and the descendants of refugees from clans that no longer exist — settle here, as not even Great Clan outcasts will accept them as equals. Criminals on the run also gravitate here, as the ambience is so depressing that most everyone will leave them alone. The locals have an expression that Highway's End is dark even at noon on a summer day.



18. Fuyari's Shrine

Shinjo Fuyari's ashes are interred in this small shrine. Every day, a monk from the Temple of Ebisu comes by to tend to the grounds, and it is an object of civic veneration and pride. Any attempt to disturb it will draw a swift and firm response from the Eyes of Nanashi.

19. The Steel Room

So-called because it is built from sheets of metal reinforced by wooden beams, this shack serves as Nanashi Mura's jail. It has no windows, and because it is built largely of metal, it is unbearably cold at night and unbearably hot during the day (late afternoons in the height of summer are nearly fatal without a supply of fresh water). This lack of comfort, of course, is a feature and not a defect; the Eyes of Nanashi want to discourage any offense against the town's laws.

20. Temple of Ebisu

A group of sohei monks received permission to build this temple to the Fortune of Honest Work shortly after Nanashi Mura was founded. In exchange, the monks of the temple agreed to teach the Eyes of Nanashi some of their fighting techniques. The monks sometimes accompany Eyes of Nanashi patrols, and relations between the two groups have always been friendly. However, it is also the case that townspeople are not allowed on temple grounds. And the original founders of the temple refused to answer any questions about their history prior to settling in the town or their motives in coming here. This has always lent them an air of mystery that their descendants are either unable or unwilling to dispel.

The temple itself is sited to maintain a sense of separation from the town proper. It is surrounded by a high fence and cherry trees.

WE ARE NOT THE FOOTNOTES OF HISTORY. WE FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HEROES.

—TOTURI KYOJI

While the Great Clans are the Emerald Empire's most obvious movers of great events, they are not the only ones. Since the Dawn of the Empire, the Emperor has retained the right to create Minor Clans as reward to those who have served with great distinction. The Imperial Families - the Seppun, the Otomo, and the Miya - have devoted their lives to serving the Imperial Throne directly, and although they are small compared to the Great Clan families, the pride they take in their role as the Emperor's own retained servants makes up for their lack of numbers. And ronin, though despised as "wave-men" are always useful to their betters as freelance soldiers and are on occasion important parts of the social order.

Fealty and Freedom examines all of these Rokugani factions and gives them their due. *Fealty and Freedom* features:

- Detailed histories of the Minor Clans, the Imperial Families, and the role of Ronin in the Emerald Empire including profiles of notable characters.
- Advice and insight for playing characters from all of these factions and how their unique perspectives fit into the Emerald Empire.
- New and updated character creation and development mechanics for all existing Minor Clans, the Imperial Families, and Ronin characters.
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Fealty & Freedom is the definitive source for the inner workings and character of Rokugan's minor factions. Players and game masters alike will find exciting new insight into life outside the Great Clans. With all new schools, paths and powerful items this book is an essential addition to any *Legend of the Five Rings* library.

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