



Legend of the Five Rings



THE VACANT THRONE
THIRD EDITION



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THE VACANT THRONE

INTRODUCTION
THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The dawn of the Age of Enlightenment, also known as the Lotus Era, finds the Emerald Empire in great tumult. An Emperor sits upon the throne, but his authority is undermined by a vast conspiracy that shrinks into the shadows whenever exposure threatens. A prophet returns to the Empire to bring hope and inspiration, and is murdered by the forces of darkness.

And yet not all is lost. In the wake of Rosoku's murder, the Keepers of the Elements — those men and women chosen by his challenges to help guide the spirit of Roku-gan — have vowed to ensure that the wisdom of Shinsei's line is not lost. The greatest among them, the Keeper of the Five Rings, is Asahina Sekawa, a man also known as the Asahina family daimyo and the Emperor's Jade Champion. Sekawa is loved and despised across the Empire in equal measure, but most admit, even if grudgingly, that his resolve is unwavering and absolute. Many desperately hope that with his leadership, the Keepers will follow through on their vow to help shepherd the Empire into a new age of wisdom and prosperity, and help a new generation of samurai unlock the true potential within themselves.

The Emperor Toturi III sits upon the throne, but his stature seems diminished from the days of his war with his siblings to determine who would become the next Emperor. The authority of the Emperor is never truly absolute, Toturi Naseru has discovered to his chagrin, and his ability to take direct action against those he perceives as enemies is limited, both by tradition and by the necessity of maintaining an impartial Imperial presence. Fur-

thermore, the longer he sits upon the throne, the more convinced the Emperor becomes that there are those in power actively working against him. If he could place his trust in anyone, that person might rightfully suggest the Emperor's suspicions are unfounded. It is a possibility that cannot be discounted, but Naseru's instincts have not diminished to the point he can ignore his feelings. Someone, somewhere, moves against him, and he knows not whom he can trust. The Gozoku, he believes, are real and deadly, and many of its innermost circle remain hidden among the ranks of the Clans that ostensibly are loyal to him.

One of the Emperor's most significant problems is posed by his half-brother Kaneka, the Shogun of the Empire. There has never been love lost between the two, but since Naseru's ascension to the throne their relationship has been tenuously positive. Those who support the two men, however, remain unrestrained partisans. The supporters of the Shogun blame the Emperor and his bureaucracy for their failure to protect Rosoku from his assassin, while the Emperor's adherents likewise claim the prophet's safety should have been assured by the Shogunate. For his part, Kaneka, once approached by the Gozoku, has long since turned his back on them and their conspiracies in order to walk his own path. He finds the Empire's obsession with Enlightenment merely one more symptom of a larger problem: The Empire has grown weak.

The third brother of the Toturi Dynasty, Isawa Sezaru, maintains a much lower profile than either of his brothers, and commands barely any political or military might, in-

stead focusing on his own mystical power. Sezar's disdain for the ongoing conflict of his brothers, however, grows with each passing day. Perhaps because of the stress induced by his personal confrontation with the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban, Sezar's grip on sanity becomes more and more tenuous as the months progress. For the moment, he is content to simply observe the conflict between Naseru and Kaneka from afar. He wonders, however, if he must one day choose between the two.

Elsewhere in the Empire, conflicts continue to blossom between the Clans despite the presence of an Emperor on the throne. The war between the Lion and Unicorn is finally at an end, but the two Clans maintain a heavy military presence on their shared border, and most observers consider further conflict between the two inevitable. Likewise, skirmishes between the Lion and the Crane have broken out on more than one occasion, causing many to wonder if their brief alliance will truly last. The Scorpion and the Crab have exchanged blows as well, although the Crab seem largely disinterested in making significant incursions into their enemy's lands, rendering the conflict largely one of thwarted assassinations and thinly veiled threats.

The largest conflict in the Empire at present is the war raging between the Mantis and Phoenix Clans. Although the two have been on bad terms for centuries, owing to the connections between the Phoenix and the assassin who took the life of Kaimetsu-uo's father, in recent months the conflict has erupted into full-blown warfare, with hatred brewing on each side. The Phoenix have been aggressive in court, accusing the Mantis of using blood sorcery and arguing, based on a bureaucratic error made the final days of the Clan War, that their claim to Great Clan status is false. The Mantis response has been both swift and martial, taking war to the shores of the Phoenix provinces.

A new and disturbing trend in this age of Enlightenment is one of insurrection. Numerous peasant revolts, more



than in any time in recorded history, have erupted in the lands of no less than four Great Clans. Each has been put down quickly, but the problem continues to escalate, and disquiet among the lower classes remains at an all-time high. Unknown to the Clans, a single sinister architect sits at the center of this cultural revolution, suspected only by the Scorpion. A malevolent madman, tattooed with the blood of a god and longing for the power of a god himself, the specter of madness known only as Kokujin stirs the peasants against their samurai masters.

The State of the Clans: The Crab

The Lotus Era finds the Crab still adjusting to the return of the Great Bear, Hida Kisada, back from beyond the veil of death. His return was significant to not only the Crab, but to the Empire as a whole, for he made the defeat of Iuchiban possible.

The return of the greatest leader in the history of the Clan was sure to create some questions about Clan leadership, however. All of the Crab had great respect and loyalty for Clan Champion Hida Kuon, but now the Great Bear walked amongst them once again. Kisada was quick to dispel any talk that he might challenge Kuon. When Kuon offered the position of Champion back to his grandfather, Kisada immediately declined. Although he retained great respect amongst the Crab samurai, he remained as an unofficial advisor only.

Despite this, Kisada was a pivotal figure at this point in Crab history. Some in Rokugan still saw Kisada as a traitor rather than a hero. Prior to his death, Kisada had stood against the Fu Leng-possessed Emperor Hantei XXXIX, but he had also allied himself and the Crab with the Shadowlands, an action that cost him a son. Not everyone could forget that, notwithstanding his return to help save the Empire from Iuchiban.

One of those who could not forget was Kisada himself. This is why he made his famous oath, "The Crab will never again ally with the Shadowlands."

As the Diamond era ends, this oath is challenged. Soetsu, a former Crab but now a minion of Daigotsu, approaches Kisada and tells him of battles within the Shadowlands. The Lost, fallen samurai who serve the Dark Lord, are being attacked by the more monstrous denizens of the realm. Soetsu is sent as a messenger, both to ask for the aid of the Crab and to appeal to the Emperor himself. Kisada remembers his oath and his mistakes during his earlier life, and is not swayed by Soetsu's appeal. Although the Crab do not aid the Lost, neither does Kisada wish Daigotsu's forces to be directly hindered – he is willing to let the two factions within the Shadowlands keep their attentions on each other, rather than their traditional adversaries, Rokugan and the Crab. He brings the imprisoned Soetsu in chains to the Emperor, to present the message from Daigotsu. Unfortunately, the meeting and Kisada's intentions lend themselves to more than one interpretation. Where Kisada wished to sit back and allow the Shadowlands to rail against itself, the Scorpion see him allowing an emissary of the Shadowlands to live. Clan Champion Bayushi Paneki sees the possibility of Kisada repeating his former mistakes, and this misunderstanding will sow the seeds of war between the Crab and Scorpion, and indirectly to the war between the Crab and the Crane that will follow.

Still, some questioned whether it was a misunderstanding at all. Kisada held firm to his oath, but there were disturbing signs. Daigotsu and the Crab had previously sworn a one-year ceasefire so that each could deal with Iuchiban instead. Now the Hiruma were under constant attack by the Oni and other demonic creatures of the Shadowlands. The Lost were fighting these very same creatures, and Soetsu had asked for Crab help against them. How unlikely was it that the Crab could see the enemy of their enemy as an ally?

Elsewhere, the Crab hold some important positions within the Empire, and therefore have gained political in-

fluence that would not normally be theirs. Emerald Champion Yasuki Hachi has sworn fealty to both the Crab and Crane to end the conflict over the proper home for the Yasuki family and (more importantly) control over the resources of the Yasuki lands.

Kaiu Sugimoto has been named the Keeper of Earth, and is responsible for protecting certain knowledge passed on from Rosoku, descendant of Shinsei. Along with the other Keepers, he discovered the Tomb of Ryoshun and saved the Badger Clan from dissolution. With the death of Rosoku the importance of the Keepers has grown substantially and they must find a new path to tread.

The respect given to these two men, as well as the gratitude expressed toward Hida Kisada by the less suspicious citizens of the Empire, gives the Crab an unusual amount of political leeway. The machinations of the Imperial Court are never a high priority for the Crab, often to their detriment. This new-found political strength allows them to concentrate on the Wall and the Shadowlands, as has always been their wish.

For most of the Crab, none of this changes how they see the world or their duty. They continue to stand on the Wall and hold firm against the threat from the south. They are newly invigorated by the return of the Great Bear, but their duty has not changed, and they believe it never will.

The State of the Clans: The Crane

As Rokugan entered the Lotus Era, the Crane Clan is in a position of great strength. Clan Champion Doji Kurohito is known throughout the Empire as a courageous warrior and a skillful courtier. He personally forged a peace with the Lion by breaking the curse on the ancient sword Chukendomo, and through his vassal Yasuki Hachi he secured peace with the Crab Clan. His wife Doji Akiko is the Phoenix Clan's Master of Water, a position that reinforced the alliance between the two Clans. Three of the Elemental Keepers are Crane, as is the Keeper of the Five Rings, the Emerald Champion, the Jade Champion, and the Imperial Advisor. Having secured their borders on all sides and achieved matchless influence in the Imperial Court, the Crane are effectively unassailable by their enemies.

It is therefore inevitable that the Crane Clan's first great crisis of the era comes from within.

In a stunning display of both calculation and boldness, Ikoma Masote successfully provokes Doji Akiko into admitting in front of the assembled Imperial Court that

she is a member of the Gozoku conspiracy. Kurohito immediately kills her for her treason and requests the Emperor's permission to commit seppuku to clear his Clan of the shame she caused. Permission is granted, and he preforms the three cuts before the next dawn, leaving his daughter Domotai as the new Crane Clan Champion.

The most tragic aspect of the event is that it need not have happened at all. Had Kurohito learned of his wife's involvement in the Gozoku on his own, he could have dealt with the problem as an internal Clan matter, and there were many opportunities for him to do so. In a Clan as rich with talented courtiers as the Crane there were many who could have detected the telltale patterns in Akiko's activities, and Kurohito himself had ample warning. He was prevented from seeing it by his great love for Akiko and his inability to imagine the woman he loved could be less honorable than himself. Akiko herself took advantage of the situation, recruiting any suspicious courtiers to her cause or using her status as the Champion's wife to intimidate them into silence. Together Kurohito and Akiko doomed themselves, leaving their daughter grieving for the father she loved and the mother she would never understand.

Doji Domotai had been groomed from childhood to be the next Crane Champion, and she was widely regarded as an intelligent woman with great potential as a leader. There is no denying, however, that she assumed the Championship far earlier than anyone expected and in very unfortunate circumstances. Many of the lesser lords of the Clan

watch her nervously, wondering what to expect from their Matsu-trained Champion and her Lion husband. Everyone agrees in the abstract that sending her to the Lion for training was a good idea, but as a practical matter it renders her something of an unknown to her vassals.

Asahina Sekawa has stepped forward to offer his new Champion counsel and support. Domotai finds their conversations extremely useful; both his experiences as the Asahina daimyo and the wisdom he acquired from the Book of Five Rings allow him to point out hidden dangers and possible solutions to her most immediate problem: how to avenge her father's death. Meanwhile, her willingness to listen to him has calmed the more nervous of her vassals. The shugenja of the Asahina family have long served as spiritual counselors for the lords of the other Crane families, and Domotai's behavior in this matter is reassuringly traditional.

Although he does not directly advise her, the lord of the Kakita, Kakita Noritoshi, also gives Domotai his full, unwavering support. He remembers her from the time she spent training in the Kakita Dueling Academy, and was impressed by the focus she displayed then. The Matsu sensei may have added to her technique, but he is certain they could not take away from her essential nature.

Daidoji Kikaze is somewhat less confident. He swore his fealty to Domotai with absolute sincerity, but privately he worries. For many years the small cadre of Daidoji warriors known as the Harriers have served the Clan by delaying and harassing invading armies with any means they deem necessary — including use of the Imperially-proscribed gaijin pepper. Knowledge of the Harriers was limited to a small number of people within the Daidoji family and an even smaller number outside of it. Normally, the Crane Champion passed this information to his heir, but Kikaze does not know if Kurohito told Domotai before his death. After discussing the issue with his hatamoto, Daidoji Shihei, Kikaze has decided to leave the matter be for now. Until the Crane are actually involved in a war there will be no reason for her to care, and even then it might not be necessary for her to know. This is a decision that will have repercussions in the future.

The State of the Clans: The Dragon

The grandson of the Kami Togashi, Togashi Satsu, has endured much recently. With the departure of his father, Hoshi, for the Celestial Heavens, Satsu is left to guide a Clan



surrounded by enemies without the wisdom of the Heavens. By confronting his greatest enemy, the insane tattooed man Kokujin, Satsu has proven himself worthy of guidance by the spirit of his divine grandfather Togashi. Satsu has been trying to move his Clan toward greater participation in the Empire, but at the same time he finds himself growing more distant by the day. His grandfather's divine wisdom and prescience comes at a price: the more Togashi involves himself, the less Satsu seems to understand.

The Dragon's other two Ise Zumi Orders are led by Hitomi Kagetora, one of the final surviving original disciples of Hitomi, and Hoshi Wayan. The Tamori family is led by Tamori Shaitung, daughter of the corrupt Dark Oracle of Fire, who is recently betrothed to the Phoenix Master of Air, Isawa Nakamuro. The defeat of her monstrous father and the betrayal of her sensei, Tamori Chosai, has saddened Shaitung, but she is no stranger to hardship. Under her tutelage, the Tamori remain a strong and well-respected family despite their small size. The Mirumoto daimyo is the famed swordmaster Mirumoto Rosanjin, a veteran of the Blood Hunt and one of the finest duelists in the Empire. He has begun grooming Mirumoto Mareshi, son of Mirumoto Daini and the direct heir of the Mirumoto line, to take his place, teaching him the administrative duties required of a family daimyo. The Mirumoto armies are led in the field by the young general Mirumoto Kei, whose exploits during the War of the Rich Frog garnered her fame and glory beyond her original station. Lastly, the daimyo of the Kitsuki family is Kitsuki Mizuochi, but he is growing old, and has begun relying on his heir, Kitsuki Iweko, to carry out many of his administrative duties, a task the brilliant and honorable young woman is more than capable of handling.

The Dragon's longest-running alliance is with the Scorpion, and the two Clans continue to maintain their trust of one another. The alliance has been strained somewhat of late, however, as the Dragon acted under Imperial edict to interfere in the War of the Rich Frog, a conflict the Scorpion had manipulated and watched closely. Fortunately, the new leader of the Scorpion, Bayushi Paneki, regards Mirumoto Kei with considerable personal respect. The Dragon have also intervened in the war between the Phoenix and the Mantis, doing much to heal the bad blood between the two Clans. Meanwhile, the Unicorn have made overtures of their own toward the Dragon, offering to feed the often-hungry Clan in exchange for support.

The Dragon remain mistrustful of the Lion Clan. Resentment lingers over the Lion's brutal treatment of the Dragonfly Clan, and the Dragon's interference in the War



of the Rich Frog also caused tension between the two. While Mirumoto Kei worked to minimize casualties on all sides of that battle, she found herself forced to personally duel and kill several prominent Lion. Similarly, despite their recent overtures many among the Unicorn Clan still resent the Dragon for their interference, though most have remained quiet, at the behest of their Khan. However, the Dragon consider their greatest enemy to be the madman Kokujin, whom Satsu believes to still be alive despite his apparent death in the Twilight Mountains.

As the Age of Enlightenment begins, the Dragon hope to expand their influence in the Empire and continue carrying out the desires of Toturi III. Having proven themselves in the War of the Rich Frog, the Dragon view themselves as one of the staunchest allies of the Imperial line, and Satsu's own divine heritage is viewed as a bridge between the Imperial dynasty and the Dragon Clan itself. The Dragon also hope to root out any lingering Taint in the Empire, be it remaining Bloodspeaker sects or incursions by the Shadowlands, and to this end more Dragon are pursuing careers as magistrates. But most importantly, the Dragon wish to seek out the whereabouts of Kokujin.

The State of the Clans: The Lion

The beginning of the Lotus Era finds the Lion Clan in a state of dignified turmoil. While they won the War of the

Rich Frog, the victory was costly and it was accompanied by changes and muted dissent throughout the Clan.

Ikoma Sume served the Lion long and well as daimyo of the Ikoma, but at the conclusion of the war he began to wonder if he was getting too old, and if a younger leader would have seen things he had missed. Few were surprised when he announced his retirement, but many were shocked when he selected Ikoma Korin as his replacement — for years it had been assumed by all that his nephew Ikoma Otemi would become the next family daimyo. No Lion would publicly question his judgment, but there were a great many discreet conversations on the topic. Some praised the decision, pointing out that Otemi's appointment as acting Lion Champion left him too busy to tend to the Ikoma. Others demurred on the grounds that his Championship was more a regency and he could have temporarily left the day-to-day business of the family in the hands of a trusted advisor. Everyone was confused by Sume's choice of an heir who had briefly declared himself a ronin.

None of this bothered Sume, but it put Korin in a delicate position. He had the status he needed to command, but to truly lead he would have to prove himself. The task was made more difficult by the existence of a substantial faction of minor lords who chafed under the peace Matsu Nimuro had forged with Doji Kurohito. Their ambitions were represented by Ikoma Masote, a courtier who had attained some success in the Imperial Courts and who was known to have a cordial relationship with the Shogun.

Korin's greatest ally, ironically, was the man whose place he had usurped — Ikoma Otemi. Otemi understood Sume's logic perfectly: Even after he renounced the Championship in favor of Nimuro's son, Otemi would have great prestige in his Clan and would almost certainly be numbered among the new Champion's advisors. By appointing someone else as Ikoma daimyo, Sume had seen to it the new Champion would have two Ikoma advisors, increasing the family's influence in the Clan. Otemi had always regarded Sume as a father figure, and he supported the old man's plan without reservation.

Otemi clearly sees the frustrations driving Masote's faction, but he opposes the idea of war with the Crane Clan. He regards the Crane-Lion treaty as a monument to the Matsu Nimuro he remembered best: not the short-sighted battle-monger who had died outside of Sukoshi Zutsu, but the canny and foresighted Golden Lion who captured Toshi Ranbo. Otemi knows eventually the treaty will be

broken — such was the way of the world — but he wants it to be for something more than a convenient distraction. He is quietly promoting the idea that the Dragon are the appropriate target for his Clan's anger.

Somewhat ironically, the Matsu are the Lion family who are most in favor of continued peace with the Crane Clan. Doji Kurohito's efforts to cleanse the sword Chukendomo of its curse and allow it to fulfill its destiny won him a reputation as an honorable samurai, attentive to the duties he owed his ancestors, and his decision to send his daughter and heir to be trained in a Matsu dojo was a dramatic gesture that further raised his reputation. Conversely, anger over the Dragon Clan's interference in the War of the Rich Frog runs high among the Matsu. That the Dragon acted on the Emperor's orders does not sway them; since the Emperor did not specifically order the Lion Clan otherwise, he clearly intended the Dragon should suffer the logical consequences of their actions.

The leaders of the Akodo family are courted heavily by Masote's faction, but without appreciable affect. Akodo Setai, the family's representative in the Imperial court, finds Masote and his politics distasteful and does everything in his power to lobby against him. Additionally, family daimyo Akodo Shigetoshi considers himself honor-bound to follow the lead of the Clan Champion, thus placing the bulk of the family in support of Otemi's proposals for war against the Dragon.

The Kitsu pay little mind to the tensions in the other Families. Their daimyo, Kitsu Juri, was recently murdered and there seems nothing they can do to avenge him. Juri's body was found outside a small cell that had apparently held a prisoner, but there were no records to say who had been imprisoned there or why. Kitsu Katsuko, Juri's daughter and successor, has made repeated attempts to find her father in the spirit realms, but to no avail. No ancestor will agree to help. Katsuko is left with the growing realization that her ancestors consider her father's death to be an issue unworthy of their time. With a heavy heart she began a long series of prayers and purification rituals to cleanse her family. She does not know what crime her father committed to earn this dismissal, but she will not let it stain the future.

The State of the Clans: The Mantis

At the dawn of the Lotus Era, the age that would one day be referred to by the Empire's historians as the Era of Enlightenment, the Mantis are embroiled in a long and costly war with the Phoenix Clan. The war has been fought



mainly along the coastline, and the Mantis have proven unable to make any significant headway into the Phoenix lands. The entire Isawa coastline is protected by powerful rituals that prevent any form of direct action by the Mantis, forcing them to focus on the much less secure Agasha and Shiba coastlines, which makes it more difficult to catch their opponents by surprise. However, the Mantis have benefited from the strife the war is causing among the Phoenix Families; while the Isawa apparently believe they are acting in the best interests of the Clan as a whole in protecting their own lands first, it is obvious the other Families resent what they perceive as a self-serving act. The Mantis believe that if the war drags on long enough, the Phoenix may turn on one another, making the whole of their lands easy picking for the Mantis forces.

While the battle may be going fairly well for the Mantis, the ongoing debate over it in court is not. The Phoenix have lodged a petition asserting that proper documentation from Emperor Toturi I confirming the Mantis' Great Clan status does not exist. The petition has some degree of support among other Clans, mostly those who have ongoing hostilities with the Mantis, but as of yet the Emperor has shown no interest in hearing the matter himself, and no one else has the authority to rule on it. Some suspect it is the Emperor's wish to keep the Clans in conflict, thereby ensuring his own power, but no one says so openly.

The war has also exposed the limitations of the Mantis' orochi allies. The Orochi Riders, powerful Mantis warriors and shugenja who ride the massive water serpents, can devastate the enemies of the Clan. However, the frigid waters off the Phoenix coast proved extremely detrimental to the orochi's effectiveness, and their master sensei, Yoritomo Kaigen, had no choice but to remove them from the conflict altogether rather than risk their loss.

Although a supporter of the Toturi Dynasty, Mantis Champion Yoritomo Kumiko also has some contact with the group calling themselves the Gozoku, a reborn alliance of conspirators who believe the Emperor should be a puppet so that other, wiser individuals might govern the Empire. Kumiko's dialogue with the group is only an experiment, however, and if they show their true colors as ambitious and self-serving men, she will likely turn against them and thwart their schemes on the Mantis Islands.

A persistent problem for the Mantis as the Lotus Era begins is the continued existence of the Dark Wave, a sinister fleet composed mostly of Mantis ships lost during the Rain of Blood, when their crews became corrupted by the

foul, Empire-wide ritual enacted by the Bloodspeaker cult. This "fleet" might not represent a significant threat save for the presence of the Clan's former Champion, Yoritomo Kitao, among its ranks. After a series of attacks against Mantis holdings following the Rain of Blood, the Dark Wave virtually disappeared. Some particularly optimistic souls among the Clan hope they have departed from the Empire or even been destroyed by some environmental factor such as the Great Water Spider. Yoritomo Kumiko has no such delusions, however, and neither does the commander of her armies, Yoritomo Naizen.

At the beginning of the Era of Enlightenment, the Mantis are part of a powerful, if largely informal, economic alliance that has bent most of the Great Clans to their will. Together with the Crane and the Unicorn, the Mantis set the tone in the economy of the Empire in a manner that even the most depraved and greedy Kolat would have no choice but to admire. The Crane can and do utilize their dominance of the courts to ensure they control what commodities become valuable with each passing season, while the Mantis control the flow of those commodities through ports and trading vessels. The Unicorn, for their part, control the only pass through the Spine of the World Mountains of any significant size, the Seikitsu Pass.

The State of the Clans: The Phoenix

As the Era of Enlightenment begins, the Phoenix Clan's attention is dominated by a single concern: the ongoing war with the Mantis, a conflict known as the War of Fire and Thunder. The Phoenix did not expect it to last long once the Elemental Masters turned the fury of the kami against the Mantis, but it has proven to be one of the longer and more costly wars the Phoenix have ever fought. Even if they deny it openly, among themselves the Council of Elemental Masters have no choice to grudgingly acknowledge that the Mantis command considerably more mystical potency than they previously imagined, particularly over the seas. This realization has come at a great cost for the Phoenix, as the Mantis have ravaged much of the lengthy Phoenix coastline.

Unfortunately, the Phoenix are divided at a time when they most need to close their ranks. The Isawa are generally regarded by the other Clans as having initiated the conflict with their allegations that the Mantis were practicing maho. To make the matter worse, the Isawa have enacted an enormously powerful ritual that protects the

entirety of their family's coastline from Mantis attack, but leaves the remainder of the Phoenix coast vulnerable. The coastal regions that once belonged to the Shiba, since ceded to the Agasha family, have become the primary targets for all Mantis military attacks. The Agasha have suffered greatly during the war, and their resentment toward the Isawa grows as the war drags on.

The Agasha are not alone in their feelings toward the Isawa. The Shiba have been sending as much aid to the Agasha as possible, but they remain off-balance after barely thwarting Yoritomo Naizen's surprise attack on their holdings, and they dare not risk committing their full resources. Likewise, they have been instructed to maintain at least a marginal standing force within the Isawa lands in the event the Mantis find a means to break the Isawa's ritual, a possibility the Masters publicly deny even as they prepare for it in secret. The Asako, for their part, have lent as much aid as they have been able to the Agasha, sending healers and supplies in a steady stream. Even the patience of the Asako, ever benevolent and charitable, has been tested by what they perceive as the pride of the Isawa.

If the problems were confined to war strategy, they might be easily overcome. Unfortunately, that is not the case, as several families have internal conflicts that have begun to affect their ability to conduct their affairs properly. The Isawa are divided at the highest levels of leadership, with a schism within the Council of Elemental Masters. The Master of Water, Doji Akiko, the daughter of Isawa returned to the mortal realm through Oblivion's Gate, is a progressive and headstrong leader who remembers the glory of Isawa's tribe and wishes to see its legacy realized. Her leadership often places her at odds with the more conservative Isawa Nakamuro, the Master of Air

and a widely respected leader not only among the Isawa, but throughout the Clan and the Empire beyond as well. A similar division exists within the Shiba, for while many are loyal to their Champion Shiba Mirabu, a noticeable percentage of their ranks remain devoted to Shiba Aikune, son of the previous Champion, and are vocal about awaiting his return, an act that undermines Mirabu's authority at every turn.

The constant possibility of the Last Wish's return is another specter that hangs over the Phoenix, and is yet another reason that the other Families grow increasingly frustrated with the Isawa's leadership. Had the Wish never been created in the first place, or if it had been properly secured, the war with the Dragon would likely never have taken place, and the Clan's lot would be much improved over its current state.

Fortunately, the Phoenix are not without sources of strength. Their alliance with the Crane is stronger than ever. Even more importantly, the Phoenix carry the Emperor's favor in the form of close ties with his two brothers, Isawa Sezaru and Kaneka the Shogun. Sezaru holds the position of Voice of the Emperor, the favored vassal of Emperor Toturi III, while Kaneka retains his position as Shogun of the Empire. Up until this point, the Isawa have declined Kaneka's offers to intercede in the war with the Mantis, but the disquiet among the families has been increasing to the point that it may soon become unavoidable.

Although it is unknown to all outside their sect, there is a particularly large and powerful cell of maho-tsukai within the ranks of the Phoenix. These individuals, formerly members of the Bloodspeaker cult, are lead by Asako Kinuye, a contemporary of many of the Elemental Masters and a woman possessed of both extraordinary power and an exceedingly insidious nature.

Kinuye is responsible for the plot that launched the war between the Phoenix and the Mantis, an endeavor she hopes will strengthen the Clan by testing their mettle and allowing the weak within their ranks to perish. Whether such a plot can pos-



sibly be successful remains to be seen, but in the mean time, thousands of Phoenix lives have been lost.

The State of the Clans: The Scorpion

The years leading up to the Lotus Era were quite troublesome for the Scorpion. Because they consider themselves the secret guardians of the Empire, many Scorpion bushi found the Rain of Blood and Iuchiban's rise to be failures of their Clan's responsibilities. They vowed to be ever more vigilant to prevent such a catastrophe from happening again. They have excised the demons from within their own ranks, destroying Atsuki and the remnants of the Shadowed Tower, and they are eager to continue their righteous crusade.

The death of Rosoku, sadly, proved to be another blow to the Scorpion Clan's morale. His loss leaves the Empire in an unstable situation, one that could have been avoided if the Scorpion had been more vigilant. The mere fact that a Bloodspeaker could reach the son of Shinsei meant the Clan of Secrets had failed, unable to uncover this plot to destroy the spiritual heart of the Empire.

Bayushi Paneki, Scorpion Clan Champion, will do what he feels he must to protect the rest of the Empire, regardless of what anyone else thinks of him and his Clan. He does not care if the reputation of the Scorpion suffers; he only wants the job to be done. He has already proven to be a ruthless warrior on the battlefield, and his skills helped defeat Bayushi Atsuki and the rest of the Shadowed Tower. He is ready to use that power in a wider arena with the resources of the entire Clan of Secrets behind him.

Paneki has detected many threats that still shadow the Empire. While the Kolat conspiracy helped the Empire in the time of its greatest need (during the March to Volturnum), it is anathema to the soul of Bushido and must one day be crushed. The thought that his agents could be a part of this secret organization sickens him, and he has sworn to one day root it out and crush it utterly. He does not know how he will do it, but he is determined to see it through before his time is over.

Paneki also sees the Shogun Kaneka as a threat to the continued safety of the Empire. Kaneka may have reconciled with his brother Toturi III, but he still masses a great army to rival that of the Imperial Legions. These warriors follow no Clan affiliation and remain sworn to serve only the Shogun. Paneki fears that Kaneka, with his ambitious allies in the Unicorn Clan and the Mantis Clan, could try

to seize the throne for himself. Paneki will not see that happen; the Scorpion Champion has already decided to have the Shogun killed at the first sign of treason.

Paneki is even more suspicious of Hida Kisada. Once the basest of villains, now he is seen as a hero because he helped defeat Iuchiban, even as he allows abominations like Daigotsu Soetsu to exist. He refuses to leave Ningendo and return to the spirit realms as Emperor Toturi I dictated. Paneki has personally decided that Kisada should leave the mortal realm, one way or another.

The Scorpion are determined to maintain their control over the courts through the years to come. The wily Bayushi Kaukatsu remains the Imperial Chancellor, able to spot threats to Scorpion power three moves ahead and crush them long before their plans come to fruition. The Emperor seems to appreciate the strength of Kaukatsu, and allows him free rein in the Imperial court. Kaukatsu has not squandered this opportunity, gathering ever more power and influence to bolster his Clan.

The State of the Clans: The Shadowlands

At the beginning of the Lotus Era, the Shadowlands are as organized as they have ever been, but nevertheless remain fractured and factionalized. On the one hand, the Dark Lord Daigotsu has succeeded at turning the City of the Lost into a dark mirror of Rokugan, and the first stirrings of Shourido, his alternative to Bushido, are bearing dark fruit. But unfortunately for him, not all of the denizens of the Shadowlands look upon him as their leader, nor wish to be part of a dark imitation of Rokugani culture.

The Oni Lord Kyoso no Oni has not bent her knee to Daigotsu. As the Lost fought Iuchiban's forces, Kyoso looked upon the Tainted and Lost humans of the Shadowlands with disdain and began gathering her own forces. She sent Shokansuru to free the remains of the Maw from Kyuden Hida so that the great demon could walk the mortal plane again.

As the Lost worked with the Crab to defeat the Bloodspeakers at Shiro Hiruma, Kyoso made the castle her first target, bringing mindless chaos with her. The monsters there were driven into a frenzy, killing anything they could find. The Hiruma were not immune, as they turned on their allies and killed any members of the Lost they could reach. The Shadowlands had gone to war with itself.

Daigotsu sees the rise of the demons under Kyoso no Oni as a clear threat. One of the greatest defenses the City

of the Lost has is the nature of the Shadowlands itself – the Taint keeps the samurai of Rokugan from easily reaching or attacking the settlement. Kyoso's monstrous forces have no such restriction. The demon forces are disorganized and chaotic, but their sheer power is such a threat the Dark Lord cannot ignore it.

Daigotsu sends one of his Lost samurai, Soetsu, to parlay with Hida Kisada and propose another alliance between the Crab and the Shadowlands, and to demand the Emperor recognize the Lost as a Great Clan. Daigotsu had previously declared a one year truce with Hida Kuon, giving Rokugan and the Lost the opportunity to deal with the Bloodspeakers. Further, the Lost aided the Crab when Iuchiban attacked Hiruma Castle, and returned that family's ancestral armor to them. An alliance seemed like a logical choice. Daigotsu was certain Kisada would recognize the greater threat posed by Kyoso, but he is mistaken.

This will be a war that the Lost must fight with only their own blades and the few allies Daigotsu has gathered, such as the bakemono who follow the sinister Omoni. However, these are not allies to be scoffed at. Omoni's creatures are not the weak, erratic goblins mocked by the samurai of

Rokugan and by the stronger creatures of the Taint. Omoni has created a force of goblins much more formidable than their namesakes from previous eras. Their strength has increased and while their intelligence is still limited, what wit they possess is honed toward loyalty and viciousness.

Meanwhile, the former Dragon of Air, which fell to corruption during the battle of Oblivion's Gate, has resurfaced. Now known as the Shadow Dragon, it uses many of the same tactics and abilities formerly utilized by the Lying Darkness, subverting through whispers and deception. While this evil may not come in the form of sword or claw, it could be the greatest threat to Rokugan yet.

Another follower of the darkness threatens Rokugan in a different way. Kokujin, the former disciple of the Lady Moon when she was the mortal Hitomi, has gone over completely to the Taint. Kokujin travels across Rokugan, but does not do so as a mere murderer or would-be conqueror. This Kokujin is instead a prophet.

Kokujin seeks those who have lost their way within the Empire. He finds the confused and weak, and tells them of another way, a way to gain power and strength. He tells them of Shourido and the power of the Taint. By striking at the Empire from within, he has become a greater threat to Rokugan than he ever was when he brought only death.

With the onset of internal dissension and war within the Shadowlands, it would be understandable if some of the samurai of Rokugan saw this time as one of respite. When one's greatest foes make war upon themselves, they are unable to turn their attentions toward you. But the threat of the Shadowlands is too broad to be contained by one force. If Daigotsu turns his attentions away from Rokugan, another will continue the threat. That is the way of the Shadowlands and it always will be so, as long as the evil of Jigoku exists and as long as there are weak men and women who succumb, willingly or not, to its temptations.

The State of the Clans: The Unicorn

The Unicorn Clan stands at the precipice of greatness. It is now their time to shine in the grand history of the Empire. Their strengths have always been numerous, but now they have a leader in Moto Chagatai who is willing to use them to their full extent. Everything is possible, and the Great Khan is determined to seize greatness for his Clan.

The Unicorn have just concluded a vicious war against the Lion over the City of the Rich Frog. At the end of the





war, the Unicorn retreated and left the city in Lion hands. However, they made the political point they had wished to make: they demonstrated their military prowess and fought toe to toe with the strongest army in the Empire. The very fact that the Lion could not eject them without severe casualties (the death of their champion Matsu Nimuro being placed directly at the feet of Moto Chagatai himself) has garnered them considerable respect. The fact that they retreated rather than continue the war in face of Imperial forces also has garnered some minor support for the Clan, if for no other reason than showing they are not quite as barbaric as some might imagine.

Moto Chagatai is not a scrupulous man. He is willing to do whatever he feels he must to advance the interests of his Clan, no matter what anyone else says or thinks. All three of the Unicorn armies are now battle hardened and ready for action, their generals both skilled and experienced. Wily old Shinjo Shono leads the Junghar; Iuchi Lixue, one of the foremost shugenja in the Empire, leads the Baraunghar. Chagatai's plans are still gestating, but when they come to fruition, they will require all of his generals' cunning and experience.

The Moto were once haunted by a set of gaijin gods called the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, or the Lords of Death. Chagatai made a pact with the gods, promising that if

they would cease to curse his family, they would be revered by more people than had ever followed them before. As a consequence, the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang have been declared official Fortunes by the Emperor, and are now a part of the Rokugani cosmology. They have gained a place alongside Emma-O in Meido, the Realm of Waiting, and dozens of shrines to their name have appeared across the land. While the Lords of Death are still considered to be strange gaijin gods by most of the Empire, the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang are pleased at this turn of events. They have begun to reward the Unicorn for their devotion with blessings and support.

The Unicorn Clan is also expanding its network of allies. The Crab Clan has never been closer to the Unicorn than now. Kaiu engineers have begun to draw up plans for the Khol Wall, a giant structure akin to the Kaiu Wall that will serve as a northern shield against the gaijin. The

Unicorn, in turn, have come to the defense of the Crab on more than one occasion. What's more, Chagatai's demonstration of strength in the War of the Rich Frog has gained the respect of Clan Champion Hida Kuon.

The Unicorn Clan also wield growing economic power. Trade blooms with the Crab, the Crane, and the Mantis. A more covert trade with Medinaat-al-Salaam and other gaijin nations of the Burning Sands continues at a brisk pace, and Chagatai has even contacted the former Senpet Empire to open trade relations with them. War has not badly depleted the Unicorn rice stockpiles, and it will not be hard to bring them back up to full levels. The Khan is still unsure of the future, but he will be prepared for every eventuality.

The Shogun Kaneka was forced to cut all ties to his former bases of operation when he swore allegiance to the Phoenix, and Chagatai and his former close friend have had little interaction since then. However, the Khan still remains fiercely loyal to Kaneka and will do what he can to ensure his continued success. If Chagatai had his way, Kaneka would be sitting on the Throne instead of his half-brother. Of course, such thoughts are treasonous, and Chagatai has never uttered them aloud. Still, he hopes for an opportunity to put his dreams into motion. A strong man must sit on the Throne. Chagatai believes that only he and Kaneka are strong enough to be worthy of that place.

THE VACANT THRONE



THE PATH OF HOPE

The beginning of the Lotus Era sees the narrow aversion of one war and the start of two others. The Crane-Lion alliance is jeopardized early in the spring when Ikoma Masote brings about the deaths of Doji Kurohito and Doji Akiko. Doji Domotai does not want to destroy one of her father's greatest achievements — the end of the thousand-year feud between Crane and Lion — by allowing resentments to linger, so she maneuvers through her connections in the Lion Clan to have Masote killed. After taking his head in a duel, she declares honor satisfied and the relations between the two clans began to thaw once again.

Meanwhile, the Phoenix discover that a Black Scroll has been used in their lands, and uncover signs that the Mantis are responsible. As many Phoenix still bear hard memories of the two Clans' conflict during the Hidden Emperor Era, it takes very little to convince them the Mantis are once again attacking them. While the Mantis are angered by the charges, it is the Phoenix claim that they are not a true Great Clan that truly enrages them. Open war breaks out between the Phoenix and the Mantis and rages up and down the Phoenix coast.

The Dragon Clan's leadership become concerned that the Lion are preparing to declare war on them. Fearing what might happen if the Crane decide to aid their allies, they send agents to Kosatan Shiro to look for signs of gaijin powder use, which they plan to use as blackmail to keep the Crane out of the war. Due to a series of mishaps, however, the powder stores explode, destroying Kosatan Shiro. As a result, the Crane Clan declares war on the

Dragon, and the Lion Clan happily join in support of their allies.

In a show of strength meant to cow his enemies, Hida Kisada appears in the Imperial Throne Room with one of the Lost, Daigotsu Soetsu, as a prisoner. Soetsu was sent by Daigotsu with an offer of alliance to the Crab and a message for the Emperor — the Dark Lord wishes to have himself and his followers recognized as a Great Clan. Asahina Sekawa, the Jade Champion, grasps that this is a terrible threat to the weakened Empire: If Toturi III accepts, the controversy will tear the Empire apart from within, but if he refuses Daigotsu will renew his attacks on Rokugan. Speaking with the Emperor privately, Sekawa convinces him to delay announcing his judgment.

The Emperor informs the Court that before he can rule on Daigotsu's petition, he must first have a better understanding of the Enlightenment that has spread through his Empire. He proclaims he is going into seclusion to meditate on the issue. Naseru originally intended this as an excuse to not make a decision immediately, but with further thought he begins to wonder if gaining spiritual understanding might not be a good idea. Resolving to go and speak with those who are said to have gained Enlightenment, the Emperor sends for Bayushi Paneki and obtains the purified Mask of Fu Leng. With its powers of disguise at his disposal, he leaves Toshi Ranbo to wander the Empire, disguised as just another seeker of wisdom. Soetsu is left in the custody of the Scorpion to await the Emperor's eventual judgment.



Year 1167, Month of the Monkey

The Death of Ikoma Masote

After months of patient maneuvering, Ikoma Yasuko convinces Masote's supporters that his failure to neutralize Doji Domotai when he engineered the deaths of Doji Akiko and Doji Kurohito is a sign of weakness on his part. They quickly withdraw their support for him. With that done, daimyo Ikoma Korin swiftly arranges for a duel between Domotai and Masote. The courtier accepts his impending death with courage, and does not ask for a yojimbo to stand in for him in the duel.

Yajinden and Asako Kinuye Meet

Though unable to free himself of Iuchiban's domination, Yajinden did succeed in breaking the bonds that tied Kinuye to the Bloodspeaker. In their meeting he reminds her of this, and while he makes no immediate demands for payment, he does make it clear he will eventually be asking for a favor in return.

Start of the War of Fire and Thunder

The Phoenix, outraged at the use of a Black Scroll on one of their villages, declare war on the Mantis, whom they believe to be responsible. The Mantis deny all responsibility for the destruction, but are happy to oblige the Phoenix desire for conflict. Bloody war rages along the Phoenix coast, while in court the Phoenix begin a campaign to undermine the Mantis's status as a Great Clan.

Hida Kisada Sends a Message to Bayushi Paneki

A package for the Scorpion Champion is delivered to Kyuden Bayushi. It has a Crab seal but no other identifying marks. Upon opening it, Paneki finds a bloodied mask of one of the agents he had dispatched to deal with Kisada and a note: "Keep your dogs on a shorter leash."

Year 1167, Month of the Rooster

Kosatan Shiro Is Destroyed

The Dragon Clan sends a party of magistrates and soldiers to Kosatan Shiro to investigate reports that the Crane are using the illegal substance known as gaijin pepper. Mirumoto Narumi, the Emerald Magistrate who authorized the investigation, meets with Asahina Keitaro and demands to be allowed to search the castle for evidence. Keitaro refuses, as he knows the Lost known as Daigotsu Rekai is imprisoned in one of the storerooms and he has been commanded to keep her presence a secret. In the resulting conflict, Rekai manages to escape. Before she leaves, she sets several fires that touch off explosions of the stored gaijin pepper, destroying the castle.

Murder of Imperial Heralds

Three Imperial Heralds are murdered in the Dragon lands under mysterious circumstances. At approximately the same time, all three are attacked in different provinces and skinned alive. One of them, Miya Yoshimaru, is a cousin of the family daimyo Miya Shoin. It is not known at the time, but the attack was planned and carried out by the tattooed madman Kokujin, who is starting to organize his peasant rebellion.

Dark Ancestry

Isawa Sezaru begins to research the Lying Darkness at the request of Akodo Shigetoshi. Over the years, Shigetoshi has become concerned about the Akodo who were created by Lady Hitomi's naming of the Darkness, and he wishes to know more about what, if any, connection there is between his family and the Darkness.

Year 1167, Month of the Dog

The Anvil of Despair Is Used

Daidoji Shihei, fearing for the welfare of the Crane in their battle against the Dragon, decides to use the power the

sinister Anvil offers. He recruits a talented but disgraced blacksmith named Tsi Xiao and arranges for the creation of a small workshop in the basements of Shinden Asahina.

The Oracle of Thunder Arrives at Court

Togashi Mitsu, the new Oracle of Thunder, is presented to the Imperial Court by Asahina Sekawa. Many Dragon courtiers are offended that Mitsu chose a Crane to make this announcement rather than a member of his own Clan, and Mitsu does not improve matters by announcing he wishes to build a Temple to Thunder in the Crane lands.

Daigotsu Soetsu Arrives at Court

In a move that shocks and appalls all rational souls present, Hida Kisada arrives at the Imperial Throne Room with a prisoner: the Lost samurai Daigotsu Soetsu. Kisada is ostensibly bringing the Lost for the Jade Champion's judgment, but his real goal is to demonstrate to the Scorpion that he is a ruthless and determined opponent. Soetsu, meanwhile, bears Daigotsu's message for the Emperor: He will cease all attacks against Rokugan in exchange for official recognition for him and his followers as a Great Clan.

The Righteous Emperor Goes Into Seclusion

Toturi III surprises the Imperial Court by announcing that before he can make a judgment on Daigotsu's petition, he must first understand the mysteries of Enlightenment. To facilitate this, he plans to go into seclusion in the Imperial Palace, leaving his wife Empress Kurako to supervise the Empire in his absence.

Year 1167, Month of the Boar

An Exchange of Treasures

Moto Latomu and Iuchi Katamari meet with Yajinden outside of the Forest of Dreamers in the Unicorn lands. Yajinden has found the daisho of the Unicorn Thunder, Otoku, and is willing to give it to Katamari in exchange for a small crystal sculpture from the Imperial Archives. He claims it

is a work of his that has sentimental value to him, but it in fact it disguises an iron box holding his heart. Katamari makes the exchange after demanding a promise that Yajinden will not plot any harm against the Unicorn Clan. Yajinden agrees, with the provision that he cannot control the actions of those who use his creations.

Distress in the Imperial Aviary

Scandal erupts in the Sanctuary of Heavenly Fans, where the peafowl for the Imperial Gardens are raised. Overnight someone has slipped into the Sanctuary and stolen the tail feathers from all of the peacocks. As the Righteous Emperor does not care for peacocks and has not requested any for the Gardens this is not a huge inconvenience, but theft of Imperial property cannot be tolerated and a team of Emerald Magistrates is dispatched at once to investigate.

Toturi III Prepares For His Journey

The Emperor privately meets with Bayushi Paneki and obtains from him the purified Porcelain Mask of Fu Leng, an artifact that will allow him to move among the Empire's people unrecognized. Despite the fact that Paneki had told no one about the meeting, Togashi Satsu appears and gifts the Emperor with a special chrysanthemum tattoo.

Involving Your Character in the Events of Path of Hope

This time period is rich in possible trouble for characters, as it offers wars, intrigue, mystery, and scandal.

The War of Fire and Thunder gives the chance for Mantis or Phoenix characters to gain glory while fighting for their Clan. Characters from other Clans pursuing their own business in the Phoenix lands may be forced to deal with shifting battle lines and hostile bushi from both sides of the conflict.

The destruction of Koston Shiro is a unique event for characters involved in it, as even during war it is unusual to have a fortress so completely destroyed. Characters in service to the Dragon Clan may be part of the delegation sent with Mirumoto Narumi, while characters loyal to the Crane could be part of the effort to contain the Dragon intruders. As Koston Shiro is a center of commerce and

local government, its adjoining castle town is large and active, which gives characters of other Clans a variety of possible reasons for being there when the castle explodes. This event will create major panic and chaos in the town, and characters can nobly aid the local magistrates in restoring order or exploit the chaos, as appropriate.

The War of Silk and Steel that follows will provide opportunities for Lion, Crane or Dragon characters to shine in battle. Scorpion characters might be given a mission later to investigate exactly why the castle blew up, a scenario that also offers Crane characters the opportunity to obstruct the Scorpion's efforts.

Characters connected with the Asako Inquisitors, the Kuroiban, or the Jade Magistrates might wonder how exactly Hida Kisada managed to transport a Lost samurai all the way from the Wall to the throne room in Toshi Ranbo, while Crab characters could be part of the group that accompanied Kisada. Scorpion characters might be part of their clan's mission to transport Daigotsu Soetsu to his confinement in Scorpion lands.

Characters who are Imperial Magistrates or yoriki to Imperial Magistrates might be called in to investigate the theft at the Sanctuary of Heavenly Fans. Iuchi Latamari's theft of a small crystal statue from the Imperial Archives is another option for magistrate characters. This would be especially exciting for Unicorn characters, as success in their investigation would lead to a conflict of loyalties when they discover that a respected member of their Clan is to blame.

Characters who are Enlightened, or have some reputation for wisdom, might find themselves approached by an unassuming man who describes himself as a wanderer who is looking for Enlightenment. Characters who are seeking Enlightenment themselves might journey for a time in the company of this wanderer.

Enlightenment: An In-Depth Look

Rosoku was the son of the Hidden Ronin, the descendent of Shinsei who had guided the Seven Thunders in their struggle against Fu Leng. After the Second Day of Thunder the Hidden Ronin withdrew from the Empire, but he never stopped thinking about it or how he could help it

in the crises it was facing. He never abandoned his family's tradition of quiet secrecy, but Rosoku had grown up absorbing both his father's wisdom and his desire to aid the Empire. When the Rain of Blood came Rosoku was horrified by the immediate destruction it caused, but was even more concerned by its aftershocks. Many samurai who had been considered wise were destroyed by the Rain's exploitation of their inner weaknesses, and slowly the idea that wisdom was of no use spread through the Empire. Living in harmony with the Five Elements no longer seemed like a worthwhile goal to much of the Empire's populace.

Ultimately, Rosoku knew, this malaise was a worse threat to the Empire than Iuchiban. The ideals of Bushido allowed the samurai of the Empire to aspire to great nobility, but the Tao was the quiet bedrock on which the Empire rested. Even the Lion Clan, which had the least use for the Tao, embraced the concept of the Five Rings and their influence on human lives.

Seeking a way to reverse the damage, Rosoku came up with the idea of a series of tests that would reward the first person to pass them with access to further wisdom. He reasoned that the greatest ways of learning were to question and to teach, and thus the tests would have two good effects: They would cause many people to question themselves and their world, and they would point out those

who could serve as teachers to others. When his preparations were complete he went to the Emperor with his proposal. Toturi III immediately saw the tests offered him great political benefits, so he happily agreed to issue an Imperial proclamation authorizing and endorsing them.

The tests were phrased as follows:

The smith who can craft a helmet strong enough to shatter one thousand blades shall keep the Book of Earth. The scholar who can contain one thousand years of learning on a single parchment shall keep the Book of Air. The warrior who can defeat a thousand enemies in a single stroke shall keep the Book of Fire. The general who can lead his armies from one end of the Empire to the other in a single night shall keep the Book of Water. The sage who can perform a task greater than these four things combined shall keep the Book of Void. And the truly enlightened soul who can complete all five of these tasks shall become the Keeper of the Five Rings.

At first the effect on the Empire was all that Rosoku had hoped for. Many people found the tests to be inspiring examples of how wisdom is found in the unexpected, and while some thought it was foolish to think Enlightenment could be 'won' in a contest, almost everyone was caught up in discussions of the Tao.





The first person to pass one of the tests was Mirumoto Masae, who became Keeper of Air after realizing the link between the Empire's thousand year-long struggle against the Shadowlands and a simple treaty between the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. Next, Kaiu Sugimoto pitted the strength of his honor against the greed and ambitions of his cousin and in doing so passed the test to become the Keeper of Earth. Kakita Tsuken became the Keeper of Fire by risking his life in a duel to save a village from an invading army; Doji Jun'ai then rallied a military force to complete the village's defense and in doing so passed the test to become Keeper of Water. Finally Asahina Hira had the insight to question something all of the other Keepers had taken for granted, and in doing so became the Keeper of Void.

None of the Keepers had realized it before encountering their particular test, but each possessed a deep intuitive knowledge of their Element, and their discussions with Rosoku and each other served to deepen and broaden that knowledge. They quickly blossomed into what Rosoku hoped they would be, examples and teachers to the Empire's people. In their actions, conversations, and correspondence with the people they knew and the strangers who sought their counsel the five Keepers spread the idea that life in harmony with the Elements was not an alien, unattainable goal but one that could be accomplished by understanding one's place in life and its relationship to the larger world.

Soon people all over Rokugan were looking at themselves and the people around them with fresh perspectives and realizing that they already knew people who lived the life the Keepers described. These people were proclaimed to be Enlightened, and stories of them soon circulated through the Empire, furthering Rosoku's goal.

As time went on, however, a problem arose. No one was surprised that a Crane — especially one of the Kakita family — had become Keeper of Fire, but that the Keepers of Water and Void also came from that Clan seemed odd to many. The rumor arose that the entire process was a sham, and that Rosoku was plotting with the Crane leadership to advance the Clan's interests. Distressed that his motives could be so badly twisted and uncertain about what to do if a member of the Crane succeeded in attaining the position of Keeper of the Five Rings, Rosoku decided to rescind the final challenge until he could decide what to do about the situation.

Before he could announce his plan, however, Rosoku was killed by a Bloodspeaker assassin. Many feared that Enlightenment itself had been lost. The forces he had let loose were too strong to be deflected so easily, however. In the process of tracking down the assassin, Asahina Sekawa discovered the Book of the Five Rings, and was led to think deeply on what it meant to be Enlightened. He didn't feel as if he had completed any mystical test, but then neither had any of the other Keepers. Finally he decided it was his purpose as Jade Champion to guard the Empire from spiritual dangers, and if that meant he had to take up the title of Keeper of the Five Rings he would not flinch from the challenge.

In the days to follow Sekawa discovered something wondrous and strange. Some people believed that he was the Final Keeper, and came to him for advice, and some people thought he was a fraud, and came with cleverly worded questions. But all of them inspired him with new insights. His understanding of the wisdom in the final book grew until his mastery of the Five Rings was so great he could summon the power of jade and crystal at will.

Sekawa had, in fact, become the Keeper of the Five Rings, and all through a simple process of inquiry conducted in a spirit of humility.

There were many who wondered if Sekawa's attainment had some effect on his Clan, enlightening the Crane. Sekawa himself would smile at such talk and say it was the Crane Clan which had enlightened him, not the other way around. Nevertheless, it is true that Sekawa spent the most time with members of his Clan, and few went away from a conversation with him without something on which to meditate.

An example of the subtle but far-reaching influence of Sekawa's wisdom is found in the life of Doji Domotai. After the death of her parents Sekawa had a long conversation with her about her father, the Crane Clan, and the Crane's duty to the Empire. The immediate effect of it was Domotai's decision to forego declaring war on the Lion in favor of a more focused revenge on Ikoma Masote, a resolution that preserved the alliance between the long-time rival Clans. But the conversation stayed in her mind, so when she later learned of the existence of the Harriers, she immediately recognized a truth to which generations of Champions before her had been conveniently blind: the Harriers' systematic lawbreaking not only brought dishonor to the Crane, it was a complete denial of the Crane Clan's purpose for existing at all. Domotai would never describe herself as Enlightened, but her actions in purging the Harriers from her Clan showed a sure appreciation for the ideals of the Crane.

Notable Samurai: Path of Hope

ASAHINA HIRA, KEEPER OF VOID

Air: 5	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 5
Willpower: 4		Intelligence: 4	Perception: 4	
Honor: 3.9		Glory: 4.0	Status: 5.0	

SCHOOL/RANK: Asahina Shugenja 5

ADVANTAGES: Ishiken-do, Blessings of the Elements (Void), Kharmic Tie (Kakita Tsuken)

DISADVANTAGES: Dark Secret (Isawa Nariaki), Soft-Hearted, Bad Eyesight (in youth, now completely blind)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 2, Etiquette 3, Meditation (Void Re-

covery, Zenji) 5, Theology (Fortunism, Shintao) 5, Tea Ceremony 5, Medicine (Disease, Herbalism, Wound Treatment) 3, Artisan (Ikebana) 3, Spellcraft 2, Instruction 2

SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Wind Borne Slumbers*, Quiescence of Air, Tempest of Air, Path to Inner Peace*, Purify Water, Elemental Ward, Sense Void*, Call Upon the Wind, Altering the Course, Rejuvenating Vapors, Echoes Of A Breeze, Summon Fog, Bane of the Scorpion, Kharmic Intent, Regrow the Wound, Wall of Air, Hand of Jurojin, Wall of Air

Hira was the son of a talented Asahina healer and a ronin shugenja who had distinguished himself in caring for the wounded after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. The youngest of the couple's children, he quickly showed his mother's aptitude for healing and stood out in his early training as a shugenja. His eyesight was quite bad — sometimes he would have to ask his fellow students to read a text aloud for him — but that never seemed to affect his ability to speak to the kami or to determine the cause of a patient's suffering, nor did it limit his enjoyment of the delicate and precise rituals of the tea ceremony. In his mid-thirties his eyes worsened and then failed entirely, and Hira realized to his shock that he hadn't really used them much at all.

Confused and disturbed, Hira recruited some younger relatives as readers and started going through his late parents' journals. From them, he received another shock: his father had been Isawa Nariaki, an Ishiken who had come through Oblivion's Gate to aid the forces of the Empire. In his first life, which began and ended in the 6th Century, Nariaki had disgraced himself so greatly the Phoenix had subjected him to the Ritual of Forgetting and cast him out, so he had accepted with gratitude the Asahina's offer of fealty and family.

Hira began exploring the question of how he was using Void to replace his sight, studying the matter as if investigating a patient's health. Bit by bit, he developed ways to communicate with the Void kami and ask for their aid. His progress was not swift but it was steady, and by the time he became Keeper of Void he had become an Ishiken himself.

His status as a Keeper has put Hira in a delicate position. He has always kept quiet about his skills, so as not to let his father's ancient crime cast shame on the Asahina. When he was a simple Asahina healer, it was easy to avoid any Phoenix shugenja learned enough to recog-

nize his ancestry. His accomplishment has brought him a certain fame, however, and Hira knows many in Kyuden Isawa must be wondering how it was that a Crane, and not a Phoenix, was able to master the Test of Void first. Fulfilling his duties while shunting aside any inconvenient questions will be a great challenge – but it should be less difficult, Hira reminds himself, than teaching himself Void magic without sensei or scrolls.

CHITIK, NEZUMI NAMEFINDER

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

Name: 4.6	Glory: 3.0	Niche: 7.0
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TRIBE: Third Whisker

SCHOOL/RANK: Nezumi Shaman 3

ADVANTAGES: Great Name, Rokugani Culture 2

DISADVANTAGES: Greedy

NEZUMI ADVANCED ABILITIES: Spirit Sight, Soft Bones

SKILLS: Defense 3, Hunting 3, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 4, Name Lore 5, Meditation 2, Mee-i'thich 2, Stealth 3, Scrounging 5, Knife 3, Tribal Lore 3, Rokugani Language 2, Tloo'cha'thrr 2

SPELLS: Importune Transcendent, Bend Name*, Smite the Nameless*, Mend Name, Name Weapon, Name Weapon, Hide Name, Seek Name, Conjure Animal, Burn Name*, Conjure Thoughts*, Trade Name

When Chitik was just a pup he happened upon an unusually full trash heap in a Crab fortress. A truly irritating Otomo courtier had been visiting, and upon his departure the Crab lord had ordered everything in the man's suite thrown out so he would have no reminders of the Otomo's presence. The young Nezumi discovered what so many before him had: humans had all the best stuff.

Chitik quickly became proficient in the fine art of raiding trash heaps, but it wasn't enough for him. By means of some discreet observations he began to learn the ways of the Crab marketplaces and soon he was trading for things directly, instead of waiting for them to be thrown out. His greatest achievement was his discovery that under the right conditions, he could blackmail a human into giving him stuff for free. Many of the Crab-tribe understood the basics of Nezumi society and the story of the offended Nametaker who steals someone's name and leaves them a stranger to their family was fairly well known. Given the proper preparations, Chitik found he could convince

someone that he was in the process of stealing their Name, and then allow them to bribe him into giving it back. Chitik is always careful to make sure the elders of his tribe don't know what he is doing, and equally careful to make sure the tribe receives a satisfactory portion of his take from these deals.

Chitik is a tall, slender Nezumi with elegant black fur. He has a collection of fine Rokugani clothing which he wears whenever possible, a practice that confuses his fellow Nezumi and amuses the Crab with whom he deals. His desire for more things is unquenchable, to the point of sometimes not wanting to share with his tribe. When this happens he reminds himself there are more nice things available in the world; he just needs to go out and get them.

Allies & Enemies

Although Asahina Hira has no lands and no official political power, the Keeper of Void has no shortage of people who would be happy to do favors for him. He has access to his fellow Keepers, the Jade Champion and his staff, and just about any courtier in the Imperial Capital. As such his Influence is worth 3-4 Points. His Devotion will be worth 1-2 points, as Hira's connection to the Void makes him reluctant to get too deeply involved in other people's affairs.

Chitik's Influence varies wildly depending on where the campaign is set. In Rokugan proper it would be 1 Point. Along the Kaiu Wall it would be 2 Points, and in Nezumi territory it would be 3 Points. As Chitik's priorities tend to focus on himself and his tribe, most humans would only be able to get 1 point of Devotion, while other Nezumi could get 2-3 Points of Devotion.

Neither Asahina Hira nor Chitik would make significant Sworn Enemies.

New Mechanics

New Item: Books of the Elements

There are two sets of items known as the Books of the Elements. Despite their names, they are not actual books;

rather, they are lengthy treatises written on particularly long and durable scroll sheets, the sort more commonly used to record historical annals rather than philosophical or theological information.

The first set of the Books was created by the prophet Rosoku, descendant of Shinsei, and concealed in various places throughout the Empire. Rosoku's challenge to the samurai of Rokugan to find these treasures began what some have called the Age of Enlightenment, in which the general public became increasingly interested in the notion of reaching Enlightenment. These books were discovered by five separate individuals, who read them and in doing so became known as the Keepers of the Elements. The contents of these books are unknown to the general public, but clearly the wisdom contained within was significant, for they inspired within those who read them a significant change, a change that many have referred to as Enlightenment.

Since the Keepers first read the books left for them by Rosoku, they have in turn rewritten the individual Book of their Element to some extent, creating a new book for each of the five Rokugani Elements. These new books have been copied and distributed among worthy samurai of the Empire, to further inspire the people of Rokugan.

In order to benefit from any of the Books of the Elements, you must have it in your possession for at least

six months, reading from it and reflecting upon it every day. Once this is done, you gain the benefits listed below. These benefits last indefinitely so long as you continue to study the book regularly (at least three times per week). Failure to do so for more than two consecutive weeks results in the loss of the mechanical benefit, and you must start the process over again from the beginning if you wish to regain the benefit.

THE BOOK OF AIR In keeping with the dynamic nature of the Element it represents, the Book of Air has undergone the most revision of all the Books of the Elements. Its protector, Mirumoto Masae, while an honorable and dutiful samurai, is something of a progressive thinker. Masae's thoughts on politics and societal reform are for the most part radical breaches with Rokugani convention, and while it is unrealistic to think they will ever be implemented, they can inspire those who read them to look at just about anything from a fresh perspective.

Studying the Book of Air allows you to spend 2 Void Points, rather than just 1, when enhancing any Social Skill Roll.

THE BOOK OF EARTH The Keeper of Earth, Kaiu Sugimoto, is the least conventional among the Keepers, which is another way of saying he remains the most like his pre-Enlightened personality. His changes to the Book of Earth



are the least extensive, and yet they have changed the meaning of the book most significantly. The current Book is an examination of a properly minimalist lifestyle, and the appropriate means of prioritizing and managing resources in all things.

Studying the Book of Earth grants you a bonus to equal to your Commerce Skill Rank to the total of all of your non-Bugei Skill Rolls.

THE BOOK OF FIRE Revised by Kakita Tsuken, the Book of Fire is a treatise on war, the art of the duel, and the necessity in all things of finding one's center. The text is surprisingly thoughtful (at least to those who knew Tsuken prior to his Enlightenment), and discusses the nature of the human soul compared to the seemingly militant nature of mankind. The Book of Fire is currently in the possession of Kitsuki Berii.

Studying the Book of Fire grants you a bonus equal to your Meditation Skill Rank to the total of all of your Bugei Skill Rolls.

THE BOOK OF WATER The Book of Water was heavily revised by Doji Jun'ai, a gentle soul with a great affinity for learning despite her training as a warrior. Her revisions to the Book of Water address the spiritual benefits of learning, and the lessons that can be gained from examining Rokugani history and literature. Those who study her writings discover the pursuit of learning can enhance every aspect of their lives.

Studying the Book of Water grants you a bonus equal to your highest Rank in any Lore Skill to the total of all of your non-Bugei Skill Rolls.

THE BOOK OF VOID The Book of Void is a treatise on theology and philosophy, written by the eldest and most enigmatic of the Keepers, the blind Ishiken Asahina Hira. Hira's insights into the human soul are so powerful and insightful that many find them uncomfortable to read.

Studying the Book of Void allows you to spend 2 Void Points instead of 1 to enhance any non-Bugei Skill Roll.



THE VACANT THRONE



DRUMS OF WAR

Conflict spreads throughout the Empire during this time. With the Emperor believed to be in seclusion, the differences between the various Clans are left to flourish without any mitigating Imperial interference. The war between the Mantis and the Phoenix, known as the War of Fire and Thunder, comes to a head, with grave consequences including the loss of the Mantis Champion and one of the Elemental Council of Masters. The Dragon turn their military attentions towards the Crane, the Lion siding with the latter.

Meanwhile, despite their concerns over Hida Kisada's perceived softness towards the Shadowlands, the Scorpion take actions similar to those for which they condemned Kisada: they accept Soetsu, the ambassador from the Shadowlands, into their Clan, though ostensibly as a prisoner, and accept the gift of the Porcelain Mask of Fu Leng.

An assassination attempt against the daughter of Shinjo Shono and a surprising addition to a temple to the Celestial Dragons leads two different groups to Otosan Uchi, where a sinister new plot is uncovered and a new cosmic force in the world is discovered.

As one Clan is blessed by a Fortune, another Clan receives a Fortune's curse, and throughout all of this, the Emperor remains out of contact as he travels the Empire in disguise.

Year 1167, Month of the Rat

The War of Fire and Thunder Continues

The Mantis harry the Phoenix coast, with their attacks concentrating on the lands of the Agasha and Shiba. The Phoenix suffer severe casualties, but the Masters refuse to get involved. Shiba Aikune, who has the power of the Last Wish at his command, and the Emperor's brothers Kaneka and Sezarú all pledge allegiance to the Phoenix, but also stay away from the fighting.

Rama Singh Joins the Mantis

Rama Singh of the Ivory Kingdoms swears fealty to Yoritomo Kumiko and the Mantis Clan. Known now as Yoritomo Singh, he immediately requests information about the war from the Mantis general, Toritomo Naizen.

Bishamon's Wrath

The Fortune Bishamon, angered that the Scorpion did not protect Rosoku from his fate, razes much of the Scorpion farmland. The Clan faces starvation as a result.

Year 1167, Month of the Ox

The War of Fire and Thunder Ends

Moshi Sayoko brings word to Yoritomo Kumiko that the orochi, which the Mantis had been using to ensure the dominance of their fleet, are reacting badly to the cold seas off the coast of the Phoenix lands. This forces Kumiko to rethink her strategy of turning the Phoenix against their own by confining the attacks to lands other than the Isawa. She had hoped the lack of support from the Masters would hurt their reputation amongst the other Phoenix families, but the deterioration of the orochi forces her into a more straightforward strategy.

The full force of the Mantis fleet attacks the Phoenix coast, finally drawing a response from the Council. Asako Bairei studies the tactics the Mantis employed in previous wars. He correctly surmises the point at which the Mantis will mount their main attack, and both the Council and the Phoenix army are waiting for them when they land.

In the ensuing battle, both sides take heavy losses. Then a third force entered the fray: Yoritomo Kitao and the Dark Wave, a fleet of Tainted ships, attacks both sides. Isawa Sachi and Yoritomo Kaigen suspend their battle and turn their attention to this horrible new threat. While Yoritomo Kumiko seeks out Kitao and engages her in single combat, Yoritomo Naizen convinces Shiba Mirabu that the Dark Wave is the true threat, and the Mantis and Phoenix officially join forces against it.

Kumiko claims Kitao's life, but at the cost of her own. Sachi and Kaigen also sacrifice themselves as Sachi calls on the power of Earth to create a new island formation that dashes the Dark Wave to pieces on its rocky shoals.

In the wake of the battle, Isawa Nakamuro negotiated the surrender of the Phoenix, for he wished no more innocent deaths on their hands. The Phoenix agree to withdraw their accusation of maho against the Mantis, and the Mantis gain control of the new islands created by Sachi. They found Broken Wave City on the largest island and build a new castle, Kyuden Kumiko, to commemorate her victory. Kumiko is succeeded as Mantis Champion by her leading general, Yoritomo Naizen.



A New Master of Water

Asako Bairei is named Master of Water, replacing the disgraced and executed Doji Akiko.

Year 1167, Month of the Tiger

The War of Silk and Steel Begins

The Dragon march on the Crane lands. Neither side says anything about the true nature of the conflict between the Clans. Within a month, the Lion join forces with their Crane allies and broaden the war.

Moto Go to The Wall

Moto Akikazu and Moto Tsusung receive visions from the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, the Lords of Death. These visions instruct Akikazu to travel south, across the Great Carpenter Wall, but they do not indicate a purpose.

Meanwhile, an unknown Ninube assassin attempts to kill or kidnap the daughter of Shinjo Shono, but is thwarted.

An Eighth Celestial Dragon

Agasha Miyoshi serves at the Temple of the Seven Dragons in the City of Remembrance. She witnesses an eighth Dragon appear on a carving depicting the seven Celestial Dragons the temple is dedicated to. She reveals the phenomenon to Isawa Angai and Mirumoto Ryosaki, and the three of them choose to investigate the possibility of the birth of an eighth Celestial Dragon.

Year 1167, Month of the Hare

Revelations in the Shadowlands

Moto Akikazu and Mirumoto Taishuu arrive at Kyuden Hida, both wishing to cross the Wall, though for different purposes. Akikazu is following the visions sent him by the Lords of Death, while Taishuu has been sent by Togashi Satsu to act as an emissary to the City of the Lost – Daigotsu Soetsu's opposite number. Hida Kuon resists at first,

but Akikazu offers a chest full of jade in recognition of the honor given to the Unicorn when Kuon sent his son to be trained amongst them. Taishuu also offers to release Kaiu Sumata, a hostage with the Dragon. In addition, the Dragon agree to remain neutral in the conflict between the Crab and the Scorpion. Ultimately, Kuon relents.

While in the Shadowlands, Moto Akikazu discovers he is the reincarnation of Moto Tsume. He and Taishuu discover the remains of a tower belonging to the Lost. In it Akikazu uncovers the lost Ruby of Iuchiban, only to be accosted by Daigotsu Kosjiro and Moto Tsume — or rather the body of Moto Tsume, which has been reanimated in death. Taishuu insists that Akikazu flee with the Ruby while Taishuu follows Tsume back to the City of the Lost.

Rendezvous at Otsan Uchi

Agasha Miyoshi, Isawa Angai, and Mirumoto Ryosaki arrive at Otsan Uchi, following the trail of the new Dragon. Shinjo Shono and Moto Chen also arrive at the former Imperial City, on the trail of the threat against Shono's daughter. Isawa Angai and her party rescue Tsi Zutaka from the Sons of Shadow, where he had been outfitting the Ninube-aligned bandits with weapons.

Together, these heroes join with the Yotsu (who have just been granted lands nearby by the Crane), as well as Doji Reju and Asahina Sekawa (who have come to Otsan Uchi to investigate threats emanating from the ruined city) to defeat the forces of the Ninube, which are led by Ninube Chochu. Reju is killed in the battle, but Chochu is slain by Mirumoto Ryosaki.

Isawa Angai discovers the new Obsidian Dragon, who tasks her with finding a suitable Oracle.

Involving Your Character in the Events of Drums of War

This is a good era of play if you are running a game where your characters like to charge into battle and 'fight the good fight,' no matter which side they are on, as conflict rages all across the Empire. There is less in the way of courtly intrigue, but that still exists; you just have to look a little deeper to find it.

The best opportunity for player interaction is at Otsan Uchi. As a number of seemingly disparate stories come

together, there are many Clans and factions represented. A Unicorn player could join Shinjo Shono and Moto Chen as they try to uncover who is behind the attack on his daughter. A Phoenix player, or a character visiting the City of Remembrance, could join in the attempt to uncover the eighth Celestial Dragon. A Crane player, or any character with ties to the Jade Legion, can follow Doji Reju and Asahina Sekawa as they try to uncover what evil lies within the former Imperial City. A ronin player could join the Yotsu or the East Wind as they defend the city. Whichever path is taken, the players will be able to join in the fight against the Ninube and possibly become a hero of the Empire.

The War of Fire and Thunder provides many opportunities for Phoenix or Mantis players. Both sides use shugenja and bushi in battle, and the war rages on both land and sea, especially once the Dark Wave becomes involved. This gives characters who have chosen nautical Skills an excellent chance at making themselves the heroes of the day. Characters of a more political inclination could help negotiate the final agreement between the two Clans once the Dark Wave is defeated.

The war between the Dragon and the Crane-Lion alliance begins in this time frame, making it a point at which you can start an adventure involving characters from those Clans. The war will reach its climax later on, but preparations and some skirmishing can take place now.

Players who prefer the more courtly aspects of Rokugan have a singular opportunity at this point as well. The marriage between Isawa Nakamuro and Tamori Shaitung is a love match, but one with serious political implications because of their positions. The pairing of a Dragon Clan daimyo and an Elemental Master is sure to set off waves of intrigue and speculation about the impact this will have on the Dragon and the Phoenix, waves that could easily catch up courtier player characters.

In the main storyline Moto Akikazu and Mirumoto Tai-shuu were unaccompanied when they traveled into the Shadowlands, but it does not have to be that way in your game. Either Clan could have sent yojimbo with samurai of such importance, or the Crab could have insisted on providing an escort, at least for part of the journey.

The Ninube: An In-Depth Look

The Ninube are a renegade family that once served the Lying Darkness. Their name is taken from Doji Ninube, the wife of Isawa Ujina and mother of Isawa Kaede. Ninube had been corrupted unwillingly by the Lying Darkness before her marriage, and poisoned Ujina when he discovered her true nature following Kaede's birth.

The Lying Darkness used Ninube's name for many others it corrupted in the same fashion. They were useful tools, since once they were brought into the Ninube, their original identities were subsumed under their new existence.

The Ninube are a powerful group with skills similar to ninja. They are also capable shapeshifters. When the Lying Darkness was given the name Akodo to give it form and take away its power, the Ninube escaped its downfall and maintained their independence. They continued to work toward the agenda given to them by their former master: the complete unmaking of the world.

The Shadow Dragon — that is, the corrupted Air Dragon — stole the remaining power of the Lying Darkness on its dissolution. While this could have made the creature the new master of the Ninube (as happened to the Goju, although that group also worked with Daigotsu), the new goals of the Shadow Dragon eliminated that possibility. The Ninube saw the use of the power of Nothing towards any purpose other than the original goals of the Lying Darkness as a betrayal, and thus viewed the Shadow Dragon as an enemy, not an ally.

The Ninube worked for the Shadow Dragon for a time, but were always plotting for the opportunity to seize their own power and break free from its thrall. The Shadow Dragon saw this as a betrayal, but against itself, not the memory of what had gone before. The Ninube had power the Shadow Dragon saw as its own.

Nevertheless, it let them continue their existence, and did not punish them for their actions. The reason for this could be any number or combination of things. It could be that the Shadow Dragon was willing to allow the Ninube to continue operating as long as they did not stand against it directly, thereby creating confusion in the Empire. Those



who had felt the presence of the Shadow Dragon could mistake the actions of the Ninube as originating from the Dragon, thereby concealing its true activities.

Another possibility is that the Shadow Dragon foresaw the Ninube would be instrumental in the birth of the Obsidian Dragon (see below), and felt that the existence of this new creature would be beneficial to itself. It is also possible the Dragon let them continue purely out of curiosity. What could they accomplish without the direction and protection of the Lying Darkness?

The Ninube, under the direction of Ninube Chochu, found a new home in the ruins of Ootosan Uchi. They let the reputation and current abandonment of the fallen city hide their presence. When the city was threatened, as it was when Matsu Nimuro ordered its destruction in order to keep Tainted creatures from hiding therein, the Ninube used the threat of corruption against key Lion personnel to ensure that Nimuro's orders were not carried out and the ruins were left untouched.

While continuing to hide in Ootosan Uchi, the Ninube undertook to take an item of great power to Iuchiban. It is unclear whether they were following orders from the Shadow Dragon or using their own initiative, but it is known that the Ninube reformed the Egg of P'an Ku and

took it to the Bloodspeaker. Iuchiban, however, did not accept the gift, instead requesting the Egg be given to the Lion. The Ninube, acknowledging the great destruction this could cause, followed Iuchiban's request.

The Ninube used their connection to the Goju to watch Daigotsu, trying to find other avenues to power. Observing him taught them how to watch the other spirit realms in order to find advantages and opportunities. In doing so they discovered the imminent birth of the new Obsidian Dragon. Thus, they were prepared when the Dragon manifested itself, and captured and bound the creature with powerful magic. They kept it and planned to find a way to tap into its power, but they never gained the opportunity – they were attacked by several forces from the Empire, as described in the timeline above. When the Jade Champion, Asahina Sekawa, entered Ootosan Uchi, his mere presence broke the bonds holding the Obsidian Dragon. It was still weak, but free to interact with Isawa Angai.

The final great gambit of Ninube Chochu and her brethren was to seize the power of two Kami, and use it to become divine. Spying on the other realms had revealed to Chochu that the Kami Shinjo had been reincarnated.



They staged a covert assault on Shiro Shinjo in order to seize Shinjo in her new, weak form. The attempt was unsuccessful, for the assassin was spotted and defeated, first by Akasha, then by Shinjo Genki. The Ninube tried to make its escape but Shinjo Shono took up the pursuit and was able to stop it. This led Shono and Moto Chen to hunt down the Ninube in Ootosan Uchi.

Even at the moment of their defeat, Ninube Chochu swore that her family would one day be divine and her soul would return to the mortal realm. As she prepared to unleash her final furious assault on Asahina Sekawa, however, she was felled by Mirumoto Ryosaki.

Ultimately it wasn't his position as Jade Champion that allowed Sekawa to defeat the Ninube. Instead, he called on his power as Keeper of the Five Elements to rain crystal and jade down on the faceless hordes. While they were not completely exterminated, the machinations of the Ninube were brought to an end. It will be some time before they regain enough strength to be a threat to Rokugan.

The Obsidian Dragon: An In-Depth Look

The Celestial Heavens craves balance in all things. It is for this reason that when the Elemental Dragons created Oracles, they eventually gave rise to their opposite number, the Dark Oracles.

When the Jade Dragon came into being, it was treated in many ways as a Dragon, even though it was not truly the same as the other Celestial Dragons. Its purpose was to foment purity and righteousness. It wished to aid the Crab in their struggle against Jigoku, and to accomplish that it chose an Oracle, Omen, and tied itself to it. This cost the creature its freedom but increased its power in the mortal realm.

Lord Sun saw what the Jade Dragon was doing and approved. The former Hida Yakamo granted his favor to the Jade Dragon, thereby creating an imbalance in the Celestial Heavens. It was only a matter of time before a new, eighth Dragon manifested itself to redress this imbalance.

The Obsidian Dragon is the last child of Onnotangu, the former Lord Moon. Some have referred to the dark Dragon as a twin to the Jade Dragon, but this not entirely an accurate description. They are not twins, but rather they are the same being, manifested in two parts. They represent the dark and light, the yin and yang. The Jade Dragon was not a 'true' Dragon, but together, the Jade and Obsidian Dragons are just that. They, together, are the eighth dragon that Agasha Miyoshi sought out. The Obsidian Dragon is the manifestation of night and sin. Where Jade fosters purity, Obsidian fosters vice.

The Ninube captured the Obsidian Dragon when it manifested, but the arrival of the Jade Champion inadvertently released it. To fully manifest its powers it needed to find an Oracle, like the Jade Dragon had, but it was too weak from its capture to seek one out, so it tasked Isawa Angai to find a suitable candidate.

Notable Samurai: Drums of War

HIDA DAIZU, THE CRAB'S SHELL

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

Honor: 3.4 Status: 2.5 Glory: 3.6

SCHOOL/RANK: Hida Bushi 4

ADVANTAGES: Large, Strength of the Earth (4 point)

DISADVANTAGES: Overconfident, Antisocial (4 points)

SKILLS: Athletics 5, Battle 6, Defense (Armored) 5, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 4

Hida Daizu is famous throughout the lands of the Crab, but is not widely known away from them. Any who see him in his distinctive, shell-like armor and helm will certainly remember him, however.

Daizu does not consider himself atypical for a Crab. He was raised on duty and sees the Kaiu Wall as the symbol of that duty. He keeps the lessons of it in his heart, and continues to be resolute in whatever duty is assigned him, just as the Wall stands eternal in the defense of the Empire.

Daizu's earliest life was not unusual in any way, at least for a Crab. He was raised at Kyuden Hida and he spent his

time either with training or with education at the Temple of Persistence. Daizu saw Hida Kisada not just as a great leader, but as the very embodiment of what it meant to be a Crab. The monks of the temple considered him a good candidate to become one of them based on his self-discipline and determination, but the young man was fervent in his wish to serve his Clan as Kisada had done. At the time of his gempukku, Daizu pledged himself to Kisada's memory and swore that persistence would always be his watchword. He wanted to be a living reminder that the Crab were the Wall, in a very real way.

Daizu's first assignment was the Kaiu Wall garrison, as he requested. Whenever he was not on duty he split his time between study and meditation on the meaning of Kisada's life and deeds. He took it upon himself to know whatever he could about the Shadowlands, for he felt that to defeat an enemy you had to first understand them. While in his studies, he found a copy of a scroll brought back from the Shadowlands by Hiruma scouts nearly 200 years prior. This scroll showed a depiction of a giant armored creature, attacking a much smaller oni with his back to the Wall. The creature appeared to be a man, but with a great crab shell obscuring his features. For the first time, Daizu came to the realization that the Shadowlands feared the Crab and what they stood for.

Struck with that inspiration, Daizu went to a Kaiu armorer attached to his legion and requested a suit of armor just like what he had seen in that scroll. Most armorers would have dismissed Daiu's request as impractical, but fortunately, this particular Kaiu was intrigued and relished the challenge. It took him many months to complete, but when it was finished, Hida Daizu stood atop the wall in armor that made him appear like that fearsome crab-man the scroll told him frightened the creatures of the Shadowlands.

Some time later, Daizu found himself in the unexpected position of welcoming his hero and inspiration back to the mortal realm. Hida Daizu, along with Hiruma Todoru and Hiruma Ashihei and the fallen poet Rezan, were present when Kuni Yori tried to return through Oblivion's Gate. Through the intervention of the legendary ronin, Sanzo, on the other side of the Gate, Yori was thwarted, and Hida Kisada stepped through instead.

Hida Daizu considered swearing allegiance directly to Kisada now that his hero had returned to the mortal realm, but the example of Kisada's own life prevented him from abandoning his loyalty to his Clan. Daizu was sworn

to persistence, and that did not mean switching to a new calling, no matter how tempting.

Kisada recognized this dedication in Daizu and gave him the sword Kettei for a time. Daizu relinquished the blade later, so it could be wielded against the Shadowlands by Kyofu. Kisada gave Daizu a new blade to replace it – a blade that Daizu now considers his family's sword, which he will pass down through generations.

HORIUCHI WAKIZA, TOPAZ CHAMPION

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Void: 4
Intelligence: 3 Perception: 3				
Honor: 1.8	Status: 1.5		Glory: 3.2	

SCHOOL/RANK: Horiuchi Shugenja 2

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Irreproachable 2, Precise Memory

DISADVANTAGES: Unlucky 3

SKILLS: Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, Lore: Shugenja 3, Meditation 2, Spellcraft 3

SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Summon, By the Light of Lady Moon, Earth's Touch, Speed Growth, Heart of Nature, Purify Water, Reflections of P'an Ku, Reflective Pool, Wave-Borne Speed

Unbeknownst to anyone currently living, including herself, Horiuchi Wakiza descends from a line of Lion shugenja. Wakiza was born in a small village near the northern border of Lion lands, where her father was stationed at a small shrine dedicated to Bishamon. A border skirmish with the Dragon left both of Wakiza's parents dead while an ashigaru woman escaped with the baby. The woman planned to give the child to the first Lion samurai she could find, but in the heat of the battle she found herself fleeing across the border into Dragon territory.

When she realized what she had done, she tried to find her way back into Lion lands, while avoiding Dragon patrols, as she was convinced they would kill both her and the child on site. She became so desperate that she tried to enlist some ronin to her aid. Unfortunately for her, the ronin she approached were actually part of a bandit gang who had been looking for a new territory to ravage. They decided that they would keep the woman as a servant. They let her keep 'her' child as incentive to work hard. Within a month, the gang had moved into Unicorn land, skirting the edge of Lion territory. They were set upon by Unicorn magistrates, who had learned of their arrival. In the resulting melee all of the bandits were killed, as

was the ashigaru woman, though her death was unintentional.

The Unicorn discovered the child and took her back to their camp, where a Horiuchi shugenja took custody of her. The shugenja was able to sense that the child was no peasant, and in the manner of her family, she adopted the child. Wakiza was taken back to the Horiuchi lands where she was raised in their customs. She learned of her affinity for communing with the elements at a very early age. She was taught in the Unicorn fashion and grew well, knowing nothing of her Kitsu background. When she was old enough for her gempukku, her skill and mastery of the elements was such that the Horiuchi decided to enter her in the Topaz Championship.

There was a secret that Horiuchi Senzhi, Wakiza's instructor in the ways of the shugenja, kept from her, however. It seems that before Wakiza was born, her father had wronged another shugenja. The circumstances of this incident were never made clear to Senzhi when he learned of it through his magic. All Senzhi knew was that Wakiza carried a curse on her head, where any achievement or lucky occurrence in the young woman's life would be countered by another, less fortunate incident. One could argue that Wakiza was lucky to gain the teacher that she did, that helped her grow into someone capable of winning the Topaz Championship, but she did so only at the cost of her parents and heritage. On the night that Wakiza was to travel to the championship, Senzhi was trampled to death when an unbroken horse slipped free from its bonds.

The next occurrence happened at the Topaz Championship itself. Wakiza was brilliant in all aspects of the competition. She carried the Horiuchi name with pride as she was named the winner. Yet, unlike other Topaz Champions, she did not gain the glory normally awarded to the winner, as the specifics of the Championship were overshadowed by the revelation at the event that Doji Akiko



was a traitor to the throne. Her execution and the subsequent seppuku by the Crane Champion, Doji Kurohito, made the new Topaz Champion a much less important topic of interest.

Allies & Enemies

Hida Daizu has great influence within the ranks of the Crab, though he does not usually utilize that influence. Those who fight against the darkness of the Shadowlands would find him a strong ally, worth 3 points of Influence. Any person who had priorities other than fighting the Shadowlands, or anyone who lays claim to multiple priorities will not be able to count him as an ally at all. As a Sworn Enemy, he is very dangerous, since he will be unrelenting in his desire for revenge. Anyone who stands between Daizu and his duty had best be prepared to face the consequences. He would be worth 3-4 points in Sworn Enemy.

As Topaz Champion, Horiuchi Wakiza should have some influence in the Empire. Circumstances have lessened this influence, however. She is only a 2 point Ally. Furthermore, it is possible that any ally could suffer misfortune when Wakiza aids him in other ways. This misfortune would not outweigh the aid given, but would lessen the impact. Wakiza is unlikely to be a Sworn Enemy, but if she were, she would not be a tenacious one. It would also only be worth 2 points.

New Mechanics

New School: Ninube Ninja School (Shugenja)

The Ninube are vastly different from the Goju, the only group to which they can readily be compared. While the Goju use stealth as a means to enact their brutal agendas, sneaking into the palaces of the Clans to steal information or assassinate important targets, the Ninube relish stealth and deceit for their own sake, taking some sort of perverse joy in lurking around unsuspecting prey but rarely if ever revealing their presence.

NINUBE FAMILY BENEFIT: +1 Reflexes

SCHOOL TRAIT BENEFIT: +1 Awareness

HONOR: 0.0

SKILLS: Acting, Deceit, Spellcraft, Stealth (Sneaking) 2, Theology, any one Skill

OUTFIT: Wakizashi, aiguchi, black robes, basket hat, scroll satchel

AFFINITY/DEFICIENCY: The Ninube are attuned to the primordial essence of the world, and the emptiness that exists around it. They possess an Affinity for Deceiver spells (see below) and a Deficiency for Earth spells.

TECHNIQUE: WALK IN SHADOW

The Ninube are perhaps the most enigmatic of all known servants of evil, and their magic is equally confounding. You may cast Deceiver spells, normally restricted to the Soshi Deceiver Advanced School (see *Masters of Court*, p. 111), without suffering the maladies normally associated with them. You may also cast any maho spell as a Deceiver spell. Ninube shugenja do not gain the Shadowlands Taint from casting maho spells as Deceiver spells.

SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Summon, Counterspell, 3 Deceiver spells, 2 Air spells, and 1 Fire spell

NEW CREATURE: DODAI NO ONI

Air: 2	Earth: 5	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Taint: 4
Awareness: 4 Willpower: 6				

Rolls when Attacking: 4k3 /
as per host +2k1

Rolls for Damage: Varies
(as host)

TN to Be Hit: 5 / +10

Wounds per Level: 5 / +5

SPECIAL: Corrupter of Dreams: Once per night, the Dodai no Oni can attempt to influence anyone sleeping in the building it inhabits. It must first make a successful Contested Willpower roll against its target. It must then make a successful Awareness Roll against a TN equal to the target's Willpower x5. If it succeeds, the victim will wake up the next morning with increased distrust or hostility toward one other member of the household of Dodai no Oni's choice; the target suffers a +5 TN penalty to all Social Skill Rolls involving that person. At the GM's discretion, such sentiments may accumulate over time, and will be expressed more openly until a violent outburst is inevitable. If the target possesses a piece of jade, he is immune to this effect, but the jade will deteriorate as if it were in



the Shadowlands. **Fear 5. Haunted Dwelling:** The seed-stone spreads its influence over an entire building, effectively turning it into an extension of itself. Nothing that happens in the building will escape the demon's attention. The oni has total control over the building's mobile parts and objects within; it can slide doors, make pieces of the ceiling fall, fling items across rooms, etc. But it will use this power only if threatened or if it is certain no witness will remain alive after the deed is done. When using this power to attack, Dodai no Oni rolls 4k3, and the damage depends of the nature of the thrown item — typically, a DR of 1k1, or up to 2k2 for more dangerous objects, and the dice of those damage rolls do not explode. The oni can make up to 4 attacks per round in this fashion. Damaging or even destroying the building will not harm Dodai no Oni. **Heart of Obsidian:** Only the seed-stone can be damaged. When unearthed, the seed-stone's TN to Be Hit is 5, it has Carapace 4 (except against jade and crystal), and it has 5 Wounds per Wound Level. It will bleed thick crimson blood if harmed. Each round that a character is in direct skin contact with the seed-stone, he must make a Raw Earth Roll against a TN of 20. Failure causes him to gain 1k1 Shadowlands Points. A character under the control of the demon will make such a roll only once per day. **Hidden Taint:** Dodai no Oni's presence and the seed-stone's Taint cannot be detected by anyone with an Awareness Rank equal to or lower than the oni's. Elemental kami are restless within the building, but are unaware of the reason for their anxiety. An Air spell cast purposely to reveal hidden spirits will fail to reveal the demon's presence (it is not hidden; it *is* the house), but an Earth kami living in the house, if asked specific questions, could tell

about a stone that disrupts the flow of Chi buried beneath the building. **Oni Qualities** (see *Creatures of Rokugan*, p. 82). **Puppeteer of Flesh:** Dodai no Oni can take control of any living being's body present in the building if it wins a Contested Willpower Roll against the target (the target gains 4 Free Raises for this roll if equipped with jade). It can only control one body at a time, and only one it has had enough time to attune itself with. The oni needs at least a month to attune to a victim living permanently in its domain, up to a year for a member of the resident's family who does not reside there permanently. If the host finds himself more than 100 feet away from the seed-stone at any time, the control

is broken. During possession, the oni's mind completely overrides the host's, who will have no recollection of his actions while controlled. The victim's Rings, Traits, Skills, Advantages, and Techniques remain unaffected, though the oni does not gain access to the host's memories. The victim makes attack rolls normally, but gains bonuses from the Dodai no Oni (+2k1 on all attack rolls, +10 to the TNtbH, and +5 Wounds per Wound level). Switching from one body to another is a free action, but can be done only once a round.

Dodai no Oni are exceptionally strange demons that exist as a disembodied awareness surrounding a small, fist-sized piece of obsidian known as a seed-stone. Until the seed-stone is placed within or buried beneath a building of some sort, the oni is essentially hibernating. Once placed, however, the seed-stone allows the oni's essence to seep outward and establish its consciousness within a construct such as a house. How this strange ability was developed is unknown, but some indications point to Daigotsu specifically commissioning the creation of these creatures by his underlings Omoni and Shokansuru. They are extremely rare, for obvious reasons, and they never been seen within the Shadowlands. One appears periodically in the Crab lands, but the vigilance of the sons of Hida prevent this most of the time. Only three documented cases exist in the Kuni records, and most Kuni are unaware of the existence of these strange creatures.

Unknown to the Empire, Daigotsu had at least a dozen seed-stones distributed throughout Otosan Uchi during his assault there many years ago, and as yet none have been discovered for what they truly are.

THE VACANT THRONE

TEST OF
ENLIGHTENMENT

The Test of Enlightenment is one of the great legacies of Shinsei, but not one that ultimately serves the Empire well. The return of the prophet Rosoku to the Empire heralds a great obsession with Enlightenment that touches every aspect of Rokugani society. Even the most powerful among the samurai caste — the Emperor and his brothers — undertake the quest to discover what mysteries can be unlocked by Enlightenment, imperiling the Empire with their absence in a crucial time. The Shogun's occupation of the Imperial City dramatically increases tension throughout Toshi Ranbo, and the shockwaves are felt through the Empire, nowhere more strongly than in the halls of Shiro Moto. The Khan, desiring to support what he believes is an attempt by his brother-in-arms to seize control of the Empire, begins moving his forces toward the Imperial City, but the Lion Clan stands in his path.

Year 1168, Month of the Dragon

Cultural Exchange With the Ivory Kingdoms

Moshi Keikiesu returns from the Ivory Kingdoms, where she had been sent as part of the diplomatic exchange that allowed Rama Singh to take up residence with the Mantis Clan. Singh, having already sworn fealty to the Mantis, chooses to remain within Rokugan, the first gaijin ever so

honored. Keikiesu's new form of magic, a combination of her natural talent as a shugenja and the strange magics of the Ivory Kingdom, cause rumors of sacrilege and heresy to spring up among her fellow Mantis, but few are willing to speak them in her presence.

Kaneka's Army Arrives at Toshi Ranbo

The forces of the Shogun arrive in the Imperial City and establish themselves as a garrison, over the protests of the Imperial Families. When confronted about the matter, Kaneka claims he only wishes to protect the city during the Emperor's period of seclusion, and vows to withdraw at his brother's request as soon as he emerges.

Year 1168, Month of the Serpent

Kaneka Departs

Kaneka, suspicious of his brother's "seclusion" and suspecting the truth, departs from the Imperial City in secret and adopts a disguise as a nondescript warrior known simply as "the Ronin." As the Ronin, Kaneka wanders the Empire in search of news of his brother, whom he suspects is the similarly unfamiliar figure people refer to as "the Wanderer." He also hears rumors of a third, far more remarkable, individual calling himself "the Mystic."

Year 1168, Month of the Horse

Isawa Sawao Becomes Amethyst Champion

The famous sensei and shugenja Isawa Sawao emerges from a month spent in secluded meditation with new purpose and clarity. He unexpectedly petitions the Otomo family for the position of Amethyst Champion, a position vacant at the time. The Otomo can find no fault with the honorable hero, and he is granted the position, as well as possession of the Amethyst Crown, which the Champion is tasked with guarding. After a brief encounter with the ronin called the Wanderer, Sawao begins carefully studying the Crown and all lore surrounding it, seeking a way to break the curse that has plagued it for centuries.

Legion of Two Thousand Returns

Shinjo Natsume, a vassal of Shinjo Shono, is cast out from the Unicorn lands after allegations of dishonorable behavior. Natsume, secretly acting on Shono's orders, seeks out the last few surviving members of the Legion of Two Thousand and convinces them to join him in recreating a new Legion to serve the Emperor and the Empire. He and the sensei of the Thousand Leaves Dojo, a ronin organization, are the first officers in the recreated Legion and soon begin combating the Empire's enemies.

Year 1168, Month of the Goat

The Unicorn Test the Lion

A Unicorn Clan army tries to force passage through the northern edge of the Lion lands in an attempt to reach the Imperial City. The Lion, suspicious of the Unicorn despite the end of the War of the Rich Frog, repel the incursion, and many lives are lost. The Khan is enraged to hear of this Lion resistance, and immediately orders preparations for a second incursion toward the Imperial City. The Lion forces are led by Ikoma Fujimaro and Matsu Yoshino, the young son of the previous Champion, Matsu Nimuro.

Yoshino's first victory is heralded by the Clan as a sign of his impending greatness.

The Ronin and the Mystic

Near the ronin city of Nanashi Mura, Kaneka finally encounters the Mystic, and confirms what he has long suspected: it is in fact his half-brother Isawa Sezar, traveling incognito. The irony of all three sons of Toturi traveling the Empire in disguise is not lost on the two, and they have a lengthy discussion about their place in the Empire. Disgusted with the entire affair, Kaneka discards his disguise and announces he will return to the Imperial City to embrace his destiny as the Shogun. Likewise Sezar returns to the Phoenix lands to contemplate his own destiny.

Involving Your Character in the Test of Enlightenment

There are relatively few truly Empire-wide events taking place during the Test of Enlightenment period. For the most part, this period concerns the individual Clans and how their members deal with the Empire's interest in Enlightenment, and how some among them achieve that nearly mythical state.

One of the simplest but least structured possibilities is to have the characters' lord order them to seek the secrets of Enlightenment for him. This could result in the characters wandering around the Empire, much like the Wanderer, the Ronin, and the Mystic. Indeed, they could interact with or even travel alongside those famous individuals.

The characters may be present in the Imperial City at the time the Shogun's force occupies it, or perhaps when the Shogun departs, leaving the city full of armed men but without a clear authority figure other than the Empress. This tense political climate will include numerous conflicts between the various military forces in the city, most notably between the head of the Empress' Guard, Kakita Matabei, and the Shogun's chief shireikan, Shiba Danjuro. Both are very honorable men, but neither will turn aside from their duty, nor will they be quick to back down in a conflict with each other.

Perhaps the most significant conflict in this particular period is the failed "incursion" by the Unicorn into the



Lion lands. Ironically one of the least aggressive acts of the Khan is interpreted in such a manner that it gives rise to one of his most aggressive acts some months later. Characters in the area, whether travelers or locals, can easily become embroiled in this unexpected conflict on either side of the battle, and as a result could become essential to third parties who wish to figure out exactly what happened. Agents of the Emerald Champion in particular will be interested in determining who was the aggressor in this instance, and the characters might be their only available independent witnesses.

The Tomb of the Seven Thunders: An In-Depth Look

The legends of the Tomb of Seven Thunders are both ancient and varying. The function and contents of the temple have never been explicit in any iteration of the legend, and the tales often reveal more truthful information about the teller than the Tomb itself. The most popular legend is that the Tomb is the site where Shinsei and the

Seven Thunders prepared for their battle against Fu Leng, although few are able to address the improbability that eight people could construct a temple in the blasted ruins of the Shadowlands. Another variant insists the remains of the Thunders killed in the battle were interred there afterward, by Shinsei himself, while Shosuro recovered before their return trip to the Empire. This seems equally unlikely, but few are willing to doubt the Little Prophet was capable of performing extraordinary deeds. Another, perhaps slightly more plausible, theory is that Hida constructed the temple prior to his death, after defeating his corrupted son Hida Atarasi. A more recent theory is that the building itself may have existed prior to the arrival of the Seven Thunders, as the accounts of those few who survived the battle there describe some decidedly unusual architecture that suggests a possible Naga origin. Regardless, there are none who can say with authority, and now that the temple has purportedly been destroyed, the mystery will likely remain unsolved.

The samurai of Rokugan who traveled to the Tomb in order to rescue their Emperor discovered a multitude of items secreted there, many of Rokugani origin but some obviously from other cultures. At their Emperor's behest, they carried these items back to the Empire, where they

have each had significant impact of some sort on the Clan which came into possession of them. The items retrieved were:

The Crab Clan retrieved a book known as the Tao of Fu Leng.

The Crane returned with the first blade carried by the hero Kakita.

The Dragon came into possession of the artifact called the Jade Mirror.

The Lion were blessed to recover the urn containing the ashes of Lady Matsu.



The Mantis recovered the enigmatic Candle of Shadows.

The Phoenix took the heavenly Egg of the Void.

The Scorpion retrieved a previously unknown Black Scroll.

The Unicorn took the Heavenly Kobune of Suitengu.

The Lost recovered the Scarab Case, which was stolen by the Nezumi.

The Nezumi recovered an item linked to their destiny called Tomorrow's Hourglass.

The origin of these items remains uncertain, even after lengthy examination and analysis by the Clans that retrieved them. Some are clearly centuries old, while others appear only to be a few decades old at most. Among the most easily dated are Kakita's First Blade — the one he used to defeat Lady Matsu in the first Emerald Championship — and of course the ashes of Lady Matsu, presumably recovered following her death fighting Fu Leng on the first Day of Thunder. The Candle of Shadows, on the other hand, seems to have been created relatively re-

cently, perhaps only twenty years ago at most. The means by which these various items could have been assembled in the Tomb is unknown, but the most common theory is that the line of Shinsei, which is known to have continued after the Little Prophet's disappearance after the first Day of Thunder, has continued to visit the Tomb over the centuries, placing items in it as appropriate. Presumably, they felt the Empire would need these items in the future and they must be kept safe, or perhaps they were thought too dangerous to be allowed to remain in the hands of men. It is also possible they felt both to be true.

There were dozens of other, lesser items present in the Tomb at the time of the battle that destroyed it. Some of them may have survived, although how they might be retrieved given their current location and condition is unknown. They included the following:

The Bottle of Smoke: This small glass bottle is almost a sphere, with a slightly flattened bottom so it can rest atop a flat surface, and a small, corked neck at the top. The glass is transparent, but the bottle is filled with a constantly swirling cloud of black smoke, with occasional flashes of light from somewhere within. The bottle would be valuable to almost anyone for its appearance alone, and could easily be as entrancing as the most storied work of art. It possesses great value beyond its appearance, however, because of its contents: within it is contained the essence of a djinn, a powerful spirit of smoke and fire from the Burning Sands.

The circumstances through which the djinn became trapped within the bottle are unknown, but presumably its presence within the Tomb indicates at some point a member of Shinsei's line determined the bottle was too dangerous to remain in the open. It is possible one of the Little Prophet's descendants may even have been the one who trapped it within the bottle in the first place.

If the bottle was recovered and returned to the Empire, it would pose a considerable threat if opened. The djinn within would be bound to obey the wishes of its releaser for a period of one month and one day. It is a powerful spirit with considerable magic at its disposal, and is completely without remorse or mercy. Treat it as a major djinn according to *Legend of the Burning Sands*, pp. 291-5, or as a creature with power roughly equivalent to a shugenja of Insight Rank 6. It will obey its liberator's wishes in the most direct, brutal way possible and, once its period of servitude is over, it will turn that same attention upon its liberator, with predictably lethal results.

For more about djinn and guidelines for creating your own djinn, see *Legend of the Burning Sands*, pp. 291-5.

The Garden of Zen: Even among the collection of vastly different objects located within the Tomb, the so-called Garden of Zen would have stood out quite a bit. It is a small, shallow wooden box, no more than three inches deep and of a size easily held in a person's lap. At the time of its placement within the Tomb, the box contained nothing more than sand and a handful of rocks, with a small wooden rake included as part of its contents. It is in many ways similar to a small version of a Taoist garden, a fixture in many of the more ascetic Brotherhood temples throughout the Empire, and reminiscent of some small toys used by children to make designs and play games with their peers.

The origin of the Garden of Zen is a mystery, one made even more infuriating because it is obviously of Rokugani design. Doubtless it was placed within the Tomb because of its extremely powerful abilities, which can only be discovered through time and meditation using the box. Once you have become attuned to the box, which requires spending at least half an hour a day using it and a successful Meditation Skill Roll against a TN of 20, you gain the ability to use it to reshape a similar, larger area in the same manner. By using the garden's rake to draw a simple border in the earth, you can draw off a similarly proportioned area of up to 100x the size of the garden itself. Then, you may use the rake on the stones and sand within the box as normal, but doing so affects the delineated area as well. Great trenches can be dug, great stones unearthed or buried, and any foliage can be torn away with a simple movement of the hand.

The Mask of Truth: This seemingly simple object is a mask of black porcelain. It is completely featureless except for a single kanji that adorns its right cheek, written in faint but slightly reflective brush-strokes that can only be seen if the angle is just right. The kanji in question is *shinjitsu*, or Truth. If placed over the face, the mask rests lightly in position with no need of fasteners or straps, and can be removed just as easily. While it is worn, there is no sensation that one is wearing a mask; it feels perfectly natural, almost as if it were not truly there. Those who are familiar with the Jade Mirror and the Mask of Truth believe there might be some link between the two.

The mask's abilities might seem like a powerful benefit for those who control it, and at first that is likely to be the case. When wearing the mask, you see the world as

it truly is, with no deceptions or illusions. Everyone you encounter wears their heart on their sleeve, as it were, with their expression giving away their true feelings about whatever matter is being discussed. Mistruths and exaggerations have a strange sound to them, allowing you to instinctively determine when someone is lying to you. As might be imagined, the Mask of Truth would be a devastatingly powerful tool for a courtier navigating his way through the treacherous world of Rokugani politics.

Unfortunately, the mask's benefits have considerable drawbacks as well (as one might notice is often the case with the items contained within the Tomb). The longer it is worn, the more severe and distorted the effects. The appearance of those you see becomes more twisted to reflect the baser parts of their nature, and their words become more and more skewed away from their intended meaning toward their worst possible interpretation. Most who wear the mask and do not put it aside eventually go mad, convinced they are surrounded by enemies on all sides, even when among their most beloved family.

Notable Samurai: The Test of Enlightenment

AKIFUMI, STUDENT OF ONE HUNDRED PATHS

Air: 4	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 5
Willpower: 5		Intelligence: 5		Perception: 5
Honor: 4.4		Status: 0.0		Glory: 2.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Four Temples Monk 4

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Fukurokujin's Blessing

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Dark Secret

KIHO: Ancestral Guidance, Channel the Fire Dragon, Cleansing Spirit, Eight Directions Awareness, Harmony of the Mind, One with All, Soul of the Four Winds, Speak to the Soul, Wind's Truth

SKILLS: Courtier 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 4, Instruction (Four Temples Monk, Kiho) 7, Jiujuitsu 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 4, Meditation 6, Staves 3, Theology (Ancestor Worship, Fortunes, Shintao) 8

Rokugan is a society admittedly confused by monks and their status within it, where many of its most prominent monks are former warriors of renown or men who possess mystical tattoos that allow them to accomplish su-

pernatural effects. Even in Rokugan, though, the simple man known as Akifumi is something of a mystery. He has no well-known past, unlike his famous contemporaries Tanari and Heigai (although most politely pretend not to know the past histories of those individuals). He is a simple man who walks among peasants and monks alike without drawing attention to himself, as comfortable in the most wretched, impoverished village as in the grandest and most elaborate temple. Samurai rarely if ever take notice of him, and those few who do are generally directed to him by other members of his order to seek his specific wisdom. On these rare occasions, Akifumi remains polite and respectful, and genuinely attempts to help those who wish it. However, he finds the company of samurai somewhat distasteful, because they remind him of a life he has worked very hard to forget.

Many believe Akifumi has walked the halls of the Brotherhood his entire life, so complete is his aura of serenity and wisdom. No one wishes that were true more than him, but sadly it is not. A lifetime ago, Akifumi wore a mask and plagued the unaligned regions of the Empire as a ruthless bandit lord, spilling the blood of thousands during a decade of terror. He wore a mask to better terrorize those he felt were beneath him, and perhaps to share his crimes with the Scorpion who killed his parents when he was a child. It was not until industrious magistrates devoted themselves to hunting him down and destroying his gang that he finally was forced to flee, leaving his mask behind on a dead subordinate so the Empire would think him dead.

The bandit lord, wounded, stumbled across a monastery hidden in the most remote reaches of the southern Empire. The monks there nursed him back to health, and as he recovered, he experienced an epiphany. Even today, after decades of loyal service to the Brotherhood, Akifumi cannot adequately explain what caused him to see the true path, but he embraced it, and has walked it ever since.

Not so long ago, a man called the Wanderer came to see Akifumi. He did not give his true name, and the face he bore was not his own, this much the old monk could easily see. But his questions were sincere, and his interest in the matter of Enlightenment was genuine, and so the old monk spoke to him as he would a trusted friend, and they spent several days together discussing theology and philosophy. When the Wanderer departed, he headed for the Shinomen Mori, convinced by something that Akifumi

said that he might to reach his goal somewhere within its depths.

Akifumi occasionally wonders if the Wanderer found what it was he sought, but he knows he cannot follow. Each man must walk his own path.

QOLSA, CHILD OF THE BRIGHT EYE

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Akasha: 3
Awareness: 4			Strength: 5	
Honor: 3.1		Status: 0.0		Glory: 2.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Naga Vedic 3

ADVANTAGES: Fear Resistant, Inner Gift (Calm Mind)

DISADVANTAGES: Doubt (Divination)

SKILLS: Courtier 3, Divination (Astronomy) 3, Etiquette 4, Instruction 3, Jiu-jitsu 5, Lore: Rokugani Culture 4, Medicine 2, Meditation 5, Swordsmanship 3, Theology (Moksha) 6

Much of the background of the Naga named Qolsa has been lost to time. The other Naga who have remained awake in the modern age do not recall him, and he has no recollection of his past. He remembers the whole of Naga history perfectly, even details that could only be gleaned by an individual who was present at the time, or who had a particularly strong affinity for the Akasha, but he cannot recall his place in those events, if any. Others have offered speculation as to why this might be, but no one knows for certain. Qolsa himself believes whatever calamity struck the city of the Constrictors during the Great Sleep may have at least partially severed his people from the Akasha, save for the greatest among them, such as the Radakast and the Chaldera.

Qolsa's awakening corresponded neatly with the surging interest in Enlightenment among the people of Rokugan. The Naga, as a whole, have no concept of an Enlightened state, existing as they do within flawless harmony thanks to their communal soul. His awakening was unanticipated, and unexplainable. The other Naga were at least as surprised as their human allies to find the gigantic Constrictor among their number, as they had very little ability to sense him through the Akasha. Qolsa was, in essence, a living blank within their group mind. Stories of his awakening and his desire to discover how to reconnect with the Akasha circulated among the Unicorn and, from there, to other parties in the Empire, until it came to the attention of the man known as the Wanderer.



The Wanderer and Qolsa spent two days together, discussing matters of spiritualism, theology, and philosophy. The exact content of their conversation is known only to them, and neither of them indicated any interest in sharing it. Ironically, while it is entirely possible the Wanderer came to see Qolsa in hopes of furthering his quest for Enlightenment, instead it was Qolsa who managed, after their conversations and subsequent meditations, to attain some degree of reconnection with the Akasha. The Wanderer, on the other hand, seemed to take little away from the conversation. However, while in the Shinomen he discovered the map that would ultimately lead him to the Tomb of the Seven Thunders, and his fate.

Much later, some years after his awakening, Qolsa's meditations upon the Akasha revealed to him that the great Naga hero, the Jerish, has been reborn in a human body. Confounded as to how such a thing might happen, Qolsa nevertheless dispatched the warrior Zamalash to locate this individual, ultimately revealed to be the young blacksmith Hida Fubatsu of the Crab Clan. With the permission of the Crab lords, the young Fubatsu began studying with Qolsa in the Shinomen Mori.

New Mechanics

New Basic School: Temple of the Keepers (Monk)

The continuing influence of the Keepers of the Elements has begun to have an effect not only on the samurai of Rokugan, but upon the Brotherhood of Shinsei as well.

Many among the Brotherhood have begun to see the insight and strength of character that these men and women possess, and have begun to understand their achievements are not a fluke or a happy coincidence, but a true measure of their understanding of Shinsei's most fundamental teachings.

As of yet, only a single temple, located within Toshi Ranbo, has undertaken the study of why the Keepers have such an intuitive understanding of Shinsei's teachings. Many other, smaller temples have sent representatives to study at the Temple of the Keepers, and it is likely their unique methodology has begun to appear in other monasteries throughout the Empire.

PRIMARY DEVOTION: The Tao of Shinsei

HONOR: 2.5

SKILLS: Athletics, Defense, Jiu-jitsu, Lore: the Elements, Meditation, Spellcraft, Theology (Shintao)

TECHNIQUE: WALK WITH THE ELEMENTS

Brothers of the Temple of the Keepers are able to draw more heavily upon the essence of the Elements within them. Choose 1 Ring. When spending a Void Point to

Allies & Enemies

Akifumi is extremely influential in theological and monastic circles. Those who travel in such circles would find him an important ally, one worth 3-4 Points of Influence, and with a relatively high Devotion as an Ally. As a Sworn Enemy, he is more or less inappropriate, since his personality and history largely prevent him from seeking retribution against his enemies, no matter how great their offenses.

As a Naga, Qolsa has very little influence in the Empire. He is worth 1 Point in Influence as an Ally. However, because he is Naga and greatly values the alliance between his race and Rokugan, he is likely to place considerable importance on his alliances with any humans. A relatively high Devotion would therefore be appropriate for any characters whom he considers Allies.

The converse is true, however, and anyone he considers an enemy of the Naga will find him a dangerous foe indeed, although he will not go out of his way to kill them if it will risk worsening relations between the races. His value as a Sworn Enemy should depend exclusively on the relative Insight Ranks of both participants.

activate a Kiho of this Ring, you may make a Raw Ring Roll, against a TN equal to 10 + the Kiho's Mastery Level. If successful, your relevant Ring is considered 2 Ranks higher for the purposes of determining the Kiho's effect.

NEW CREATURE: CHOUCHIN NO ONI

Air: 5	Earth: 5	Fire: 5	Water: 5	Taint: 6
Rolls When Attacking: 10k5		Rolls For Damage: 7k2		
TN to be Hit: 25		Wounds per Level: 10		

SPECIAL: **Carapace 2. Multiple Attacks:** Chouchin no Oni can attack twice per round. **Fear 5. Immortal:** Chouchin no Oni cannot be permanently killed. If it sustains sufficient damage to kill it, its body is destroyed but it reappears somewhere within the Shadowlands to begin its quest anew. **Lanterns:** Chouchin no Oni frequently wears a lantern in place of its missing head. Without a lantern on its shoulders, it cannot see. Any lantern can be used in place of the demon's head. With 12 hours' time, however, the demon can craft Elemental lanterns which have special effects (see below). Chouchin no Oni must spend a Complex Action and make a successful Raw Ring Roll against a TN of 10 to use one of these lanterns. It can only use Elemental lanterns a number of times per day equal to its Rank in the relevant Ring. It can only target 1 person or item per use, but it can keep using 1 each round as long as it has not reached the limit on the number of times it may be used that day. **Oni Qualities.**

The region of the Shadowlands where the Tomb of the Seven Thunders was located is a particularly desolate, empty region, largely devoid of intelligent life because of the bloodthirsty nature of the mindless predators that dwell there. Even among the emptiness, however, there are a few particularly dangerous creatures that frequent the area, although apparently none ever discovered the Tomb's location. One such creature is the tortured monster known as Chouchin no Oni.

The beast called Chouchin no Oni is a singular creature, a lone entity cursed to walk the world forever, seeking something taken from it over a thousand years ago. It was once a powerful demon in service to Fu Leng, and fought against the Empire during the Dark Lord's first war, but it grew dissatisfied with service to the Fallen Kami and rebelled against him. His punishment was brutal, as Fu Leng severed the beast's head but did not allow it to die, cursing it to live forever until it could find its head — a

task most consider impossible, as it is believed that Fu Leng destroyed the head or possibly cast it into the Festering Pit. Since that time, the beast also known as the Lantern Demon has periodically plagued the southern Empire in its never-ending search.

Perhaps because of its unique affliction, the Lantern Demon has spent many centuries mastering the art of crafting powerful lanterns that it can use in lieu of its missing head. These not only assist it in compensating for its shortcomings, but allow it to use powerful magic to smite its enemies as it continues its fruitless search. The powers conferred by the various lanterns it can construct are as follows:

AIR: This lantern can be used against opponents to increase their sensitivity to sound, sometimes even causing auditory hallucinations. As a result, the everyday noises that most people fail to even notice gradually grow in strength until they become unbearably loud. On the first round that Chouchin no Oni uses this ability, the target must make a successful Raw Earth Roll against a TN of 10 or suffer 1k1 Wounds. The TN for this roll increases by 5 per round until the target dies, the effect ceases, or the target manages to escape into a closed building. This effect only works in open air. The effect lasts 1 round + 1 per Raise made when activating the lantern (see above).

EARTH: This lantern opens cracks in the earth, 5' wide, 10' long and 10' deep + 10' of additional depth per Raise made when activating the lantern (see above). Opponents in the area targeted by this ability must make a successful Raw Air Roll against a TN equal to the Oni's activation roll to avoid falling into the crevasse.

FIRE: This lantern extinguishes flames or fire within Chouchin no Oni's line of sight at the moment it activates. Line of sight is considered to be in the direction of the front of the creature's body (since it has no eyes). This effect may target a number of light sources equal to 1 + 1 per Raise made on the roll to activate the lantern (see above).

WATER: This lantern transforms any liquid touching the target's skin into a powerful sedative poison. The target may make a Raw Fire Roll against a TN equal to the Oni's activation roll to resist the poison; if he fails, his Water Ring is reduced by 1 + 1 per Raise made on the roll to activate the lantern (see above).

THE VACANT THRONE

RISE OF
THE SHOGUN

The events depicted in *Rise of the Shogun* represent a completely unprecedented upheaval in the social order of Rokugan, one that will have lasting effects for decades or perhaps even centuries. With the Emperor believed to be in seclusion, his half-brother Kaneka unexpectedly returns from his private journey to rejoin his forces in the Imperial City. Unlike his deferential disposition when he first entered the city, however, Kaneka declares his intent to govern in his brother's place, ostensibly to protect the throne from "those who might attempt to exploit the Emperor's absence." Many continue to support the Shogun because of his victories during the Blood Hunt, but others question his motives, and the eyes of the Empire turn on the capital. In an attempt to win the favor of the Great Clans, Kaneka extends to them a most curious offer: the fealty of his closest advisors and supporters in exchange for their support of his occupation.

Great Clans: Endorse his occupation of the city only so long as the Emperor remains indisposed, and in return the Clans will be served by the greatest of the Shogun's advisors and companions. It is a peculiar offer that piques the interest of many Clans.

The Unicorn Return to the Lion Lands

The Unicorn attempt a second incursion into the northern Lion lands, prompting the Akodo forces on their northern borders to relocate and ensure the security of the western border. This eliminates the blockade separating the Dragon forces at Nanashi Mura from their homelands, and they quickly move to the Kitsuki provinces to reinforce the front lines there. The Crane forces follow, but are unable to breach the Dragon positions and are forced back to Dragonfly River.

Year 1168, Month of the Monkey

The Shogun Returns to Toshi Ranbo

Kaneka unexpectedly returns to the Imperial City after an absence of almost two months. His return is, if anything, even more disruptive than his departure. Enacting orders prepared earlier, Kaneka extends an offer to each of the

Year 1168, Month of the Rooster

Mantis Complete Broken Wave City

After several months of rapid and outrageously expensive construction, the Mantis Clan completes its newest port, Broken Wave City. Built upon the newly formed Kaigen Island and governed from the extravagant palace Kyuden

Kumiko, Broken Wave City sits within sight of the Phoenix coastline, and serves as the Clan's hub for trading on the mainland. A paper lantern festival is held to celebrate the city's completion, and the revelry is visible and audible even on the coast.

The Lion Join the War of Silk and Steel

Akodo Shigetoshi and his forces arrive at the northern front to reinforce the Crane. The Dragon, exhausted and low on supplies, are unable to withstand the two-pronged attack, and are forced to fall back to Shiro Kitsuki.

Toturi III Enters the Shadowlands

The Imperial court is rocked to its core when Nezumi scouts arrive with a delegation from the One Tribe, insisting that the Emperor has been sighted entering the Shadowlands. The Empress reluctantly confirms the Emperor is not in seclusion, but is wandering the Empire in disguise in search of Enlightenment. The Emerald Champion immediately orders all Clans to send troops to the Crab lands to gather for an attempt to rescue the Emperor, knowing full well that doing so will take weeks, perhaps even months.

Year 1168, Month of the Dog

Asako Bairei Confronts Asako Kinuye

In the Phoenix lands, the new Master of Water Asako Bairei discovers disturbing discrepancies in the Isawa records concerning the so-called City of Tears, an abandoned city that entered the mortal realm from the spirit realms during the Battle at Oblivion's Gate. To discuss these discrepancies, Bairei first converses with and ultimately confronts his old friend, Asako Kinuye, who is exposed as a maho-tsukai and an ally of the Bloodspeakers. Their subsequent battle destroys Kinuye's sizeable estate, but Bairei is wounded and the Bloodspeaker escapes.

Toturi III Discovers the Tomb of Seven Thunders

After almost three months of wandering, hiding, and eking out a meager



survival in the most dangerous land in the mortal realm, Emperor Toturi III discovers the Tomb of the Seven Thunders and enters to investigate its contents. Protected from the Shadowlands Taint by his mystical tattoo, the Emperor spends weeks carefully studying the dozens of ancient artifacts entombed within, and reading the lost lore of the prophet Shinsei.

Year 1168, Month of the Boar

The Battle at the Tomb

The forces of the Empire, under the command of the Emerald Champion Yasuki Hachi and the Unicorn general Moto Chen, arrive in the Crab lands and push south into the Shadowlands in hopes of discovering the Emperor still alive. Led by Nezumi scouts, the army arrives at the mythical Tomb of the Seven Thunders only moments before a massive army of oni. A huge battle ensues, and countless samurai fall in the fighting despite unexpected assistance from the Lost. Ultimately the Emperor and the Emerald Champion sacrifice themselves so that the survivors can return to the Empire carrying a number of mysterious artifacts found in the Tomb, artifacts the Emperor and the Jade Champion believe are essential to the long-term survival of mankind. Other heroes also die alongside the Emperor, including Shiba Aikune of the Phoenix and Mirumoto Rosanjin, daimyo of the Mirumoto family.

Involving Your Character in the Events of Rise of the Shogun

The rise of the Shogunate in Rokugan is an unprecedented event. Up until the events listed in this chapter, the power of the Shogun was largely contingent and theoretical, and amounted to very little in terms of practical application. Toturi Kaneka had a title and resources at his command, but what he was to do with them was only vaguely understood because there was little immediate need for him to do anything. When Kaneka moved to occupy the Imperial City, however, he made a political gambit the likes of

which no one had ever seen. He staked his entire personal army on a bid to translate it into real political authority, and it shook the Great Clans to their core. The sudden interest in the Shogunate and those who served it creates a vast number of opportunities for player characters to become embroiled within the events of the Empire at large.

The characters may be members of the Shogunate from before Kaneka's move to occupy the Imperial City. If this is the case, they may be conflicted about their duty, or they may be enthusiastic supporters of Kaneka's gambit. In either event, they will likely find themselves approached by representatives of the Clans with inquiries about the Shogun's true motives — and perhaps even offers to spy on behalf of a Clan.

Conversely, the characters may be Imperial soldiers or civil servants whose primary loyalties lies with those who are directly opposed to the Shogun's actions. Among the Shogun's most vocal opponents at this point are the advisors closest to the Empress (who is reluctant to condemn Kaneka outright), and later in the winter, the agents of the beleaguered Protector of the Imperial City, Bayushi Norachai.

In other regions, characters in the Phoenix lands may become embroiled in the internal conflict taking place there, as the Clan attempts to purge itself of all Bloodspeakers and other corrupt elements. Magistrates or inquisitors will find this of particular interest, but the Phoenix are not inclined to allow outsiders to be party to the cleansing.

The Shogun's Advisors: An In-Depth View

As his army settled into its occupation of Toshi Ranbo, Toturi Kaneka was faced with the task of consolidating his military and political power. The die was now cast, and he could not back away from the change he had wrought in the course of the Empire's history. To gain the support of his most powerful potential foes, he offered each Great Clan the unquestioned fealty of one of his most trusted advisors in exchange for their support. Many suspected ulterior motives, of course, and worried the offer would eventually work to their disadvantage. In fact, those Clans who accepted his offer did so in hopes of gaining insight

into his plans through his subordinates. In time, however, the Great Clans discovered Kaneka's intentions were genuine, and the fealty of his former advisors was given freely and sincerely, with no subterfuge involved. Many of those advisors still serve the Clans they joined during this period.

Hida Otoya, the Veteran (Fifth Wind Tactician 3/Kaiu Engineer 3)

Eldest among Kaneka's advisors, Otoya is also the most enigmatic. He never speaks of his past, and even Kaneka knew little of it. What is known is that Otoya is one of the masters of the ronin brotherhood known as the Fifth Wind. Otoya's experience was a great asset to the Shogun, for throughout his lifetime he has worked for virtually every Great Clan – he even served the Steel Chrysanthemum and his Spirit Legions for a short time, before he betrayed them to serve the Lion in that conflict.

Kaneka met Otoya when the son of Toturi was a youth, a short time before his twentieth birthday. On the recommendation of Horiuchi Shoan, Otoya accepted Kaneka as a winter student at his dojo, where he taught any who wished to pay him for his many martial and tactical secrets. Ultimately Otoya dismissed Kaneka from the dojo, however, both because he felt the boy would not be able to overcome his deficiencies, and because he had paying students arriving shortly. Years later, Kaneka returned to him on several occasions to solicit his advice. Once he became Shogun, he placed Otoya on permanent retainer as one of his principal advisors.

Following Kaneka's offer to the Clans, Otoya joined the Crab and became known as Hida Otoya. His completely ruthless nature and breadth of tactical expertise has made him a valuable addition to the forces serving on the Kaiu Wall. In particular the Kaiu have welcomed his counsel, and he spends a great amount of time at Kaiu Shiro.

Naoharu, the Advisor (Master of Games 5)

Like Otoya, much of Naoharu's background is a mystery. Unlike the older man, Naoharu speaks of his life often; unfortunately, much of what he says is completely contradictory, and he rarely tells the same story twice. Deception is his stock in trade, and it is easy to imagine that Naoharu was a master merchant at one point in his life. In several of his stories, he has made allusions to a youth in service to a Great Clan, perhaps as a merchant or even

a courtier. If this is the case, however, surely he was cast out at a very early age, for one record hints at his mercenary employment by the Mantis as a youth near the end of the War of Spirits.

Naoharu encountered young Kaneka in the City of Lies, when the latter was being pursued by the Scorpion after they learned of his lineage. Although Naoharu did not know Kaneka, it was obvious the Scorpion were hunting him, and in a highly atypical show of benevolence, he advised the young man on how to deal with the situation in a manner that would save his life. Kaneka did so, and came again to Naoharu periodically after that to solicit his advice about particularly unpleasant social and political matters. Like Otoya, Naoharu entered Kaneka's service when he became Shogun.

In the aftermath of the Shogun's offer to the Clans, Naoharu came to serve the Crane. Although very much out of place among the refined Asahina, Doji, and Kakita Families, Naoharu easily found a place among the merchant vassals of the Daidoji. Within days of his swearing fealty, he seized command of the family's economic operations against the Crab. He has remained there, serving faithfully, handling any particularly important and difficult negotiations that the Clan requires of him, and enjoying himself all the while.

Fusami, the Duelist (Ronin Duelist 5)

Fusami's background is known to some, although few details are available. Based on scattered accounts she has given to various individuals, Fusami's father was a gifted student of iaijutsu and possessed of a keen political mind as well. The fruit of these gifts was his appointment as a provincial governor, possibly even the daimyo of a vassal family. Her father allegedly developed his own unique techniques, but for whatever reason he was disgraced and forced to commit seppuku along with his family. Only his young daughter survived, through what means is unknown. It is known that her father's techniques have been outlawed in the lands of the Clan he served, whatever Clan that might be, and while Fusami is the only living master of this style, she neither openly practices it or teaches it to others.

Fusami met Kaneka when they were younger. Distracted and drunk, Kaneka challenged her to a duel and was summarily defeated, although she acknowledged he had great potential as a duelist. She taught him for a time despite her younger age, and the two parted as friends.



Since she joined the Dragon Clan, she has become one of its greatest iaijutsu sensei, impressing even the Dragon masters at Iron Mountain Dojo. Fusami maintains a dojo at Shiro Kitsuki.

Ikoma Uchito and Shinjo Etsushi, the Brothers

(UCHITO: RONIN WARRIOR 3/HIDDEN SWORD 1/IKOMA TACTICIAN 1)

(ETSUSHI: RONIN WARRIOR 3/HIDDEN SWORD 1/SHINJO BUSHI 1)

Sons of the ronin hero Ryuta, Uchito and his younger brother Etsushi take great pride in the fact that their father is remembered as a hero by many even decades after his death. They met Kaneka when he joined the Hidden Sword ronin brotherhood, an honorable and respected group of which their father was the leader. The two brothers were inseparable companions even though they quarreled constantly, often to the amusement of their comrades. Kaneka joined their band in his youth and came

to look upon them as brothers. Tragedy struck the Hidden Sword when the Forest Killers bandit gang ambushed them. Ryuta was killed, and virtually no one survived other than Kaneka and the two brothers. The three parted ways so that Uchito and Etsushi could return their father's ashes to the village of their birth, in keeping with their family's traditions.

The three reunited years later and rekindled their brotherhood, although they were never again to travel together for any length of time. The brothers attempted to resurrect the Hidden Sword in order to take vengeance for their father, but found few ronin who could meet their exacting standards. When Kaneka called them, they left the fledgling organization in the hands of their subordinates and went to him. Uchito has since sworn fealty to the Ikoma and served with distinction in the Lion Clan's war with the Dragon and the Unicorn. Etsushi has become an Imperial magistrate in Zakyo Toshi, and when confronted with the treachery of a Scorpion Emerald Champion, he sought allies among the Unicorn, where he too was offered and accepted an invitation of fealty.

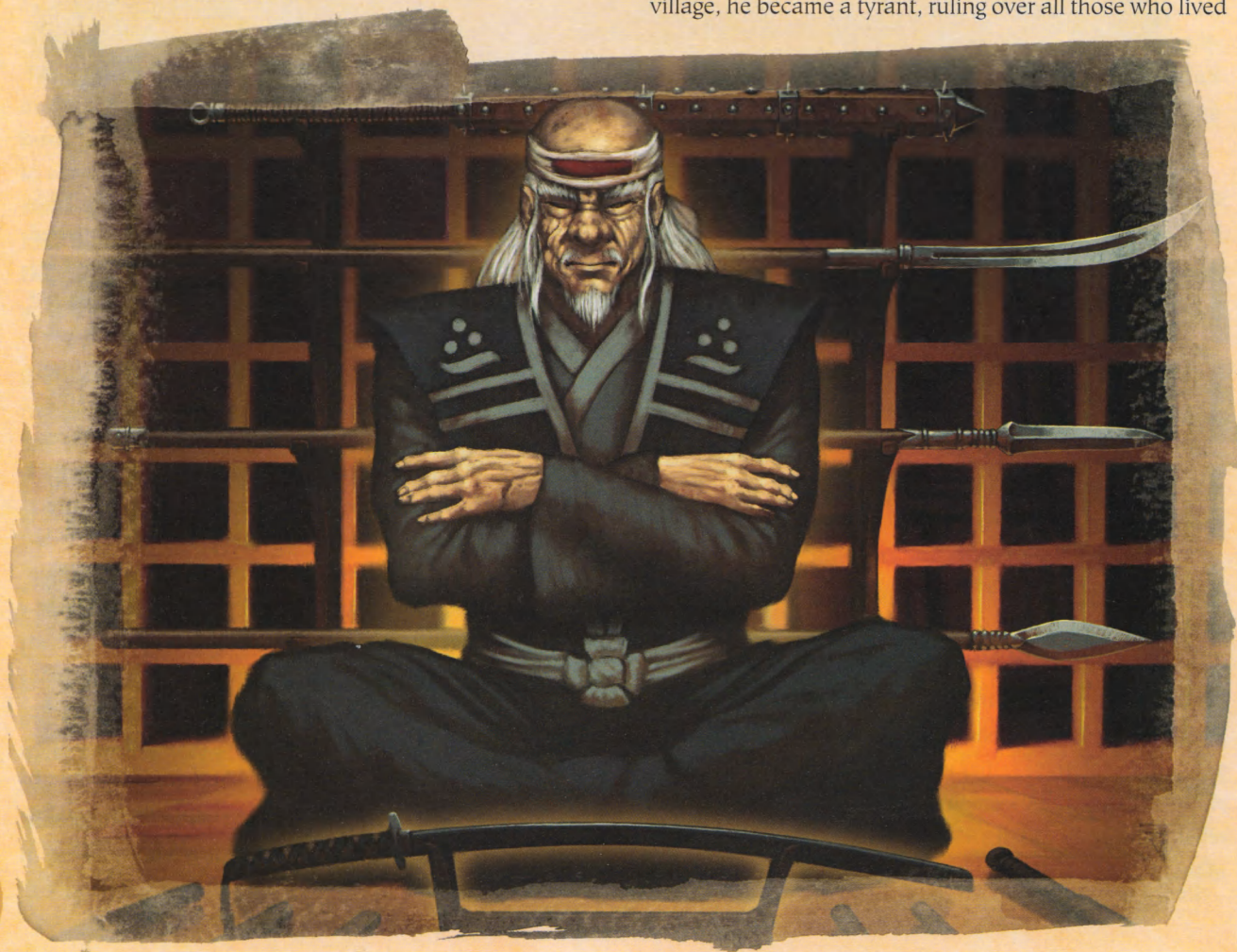
Yoritomo Sachina, the Geisha (Silken Promises Courtier 5)

The woman now known as Sachina was born to a lowly geisha, the illegitimate daughter of a prominent samurai. She and her mother had very little during her early life, and even as a child Sachina came to loathe poverty above all things. She swore she would not endure such conditions one moment longer than necessary, and as she grew older, it became apparent that she would possess the beauty and gifts necessary to ensure this oath was fulfilled. Sachina was employed in a number of different geisha houses throughout her youth, constantly gaining the influence and wealth necessary to move upward throughout the ranks of her profession. At some point she met and became romantically involved with the young Toturi Kaneka. He loved her, and hoped to marry her, while she had no notion he harbored such thoughts. When he proposed marriage, she found it all very amusing, and taught him a very difficult lesson on how power and money worked in the Empire.

Although Kaneka despised Sachina for years after she rejected him, they met again much later and reconciled somewhat. She became one of his representatives in court, and served as a sort of information specialist, using her ability to read others to the Shogun's advantage. Her oath of fealty to the Mantis Clan placed her in the Clan's entourage at Imperial Court, among such notable personages as Yoritomo Yashinko, Moshi Minami, and the infamous Yoritomo Yoyonagi. With Yoyonagi's ascension to the position of Amethyst Champion, an ascension in which Sachina had a hand, she has assumed leadership of the Clan's Imperial Court delegation.

Masakazu, the Bully (Ronin Yojimbo 5)

The massive, monstrous mountain of a man named Masakazu was born in Friendly Traveler Village, and lived there for most of his life. He traveled briefly during his youth, selling his sword as a ronin, but ultimately found life abroad distasteful and returned home. In his home village, he became a tyrant, ruling over all those who lived



there without question. The village magistrate, the only samurai who could possibly hope to stop him, had known Masakazu from childhood and was hopelessly browbeaten by the larger, stronger, and faster man. The village was completely under his sway save for brief periods during visits by Crab samurai who outranked the local magistrate, and even then the villagers dared not speak their fears aloud.

As a young man, Kaneka came to Friendly Traveler Village and found Masakazu's reign of terror intolerable. He attempted to stand up to Masakazu, and was very nearly beaten to a pulp because of his temerity. The only thing that saved him was the arrival of a patrol from the spirit armies of the Steel Chrysanthemum, who were looking for him. They killed the village magistrate, driving Masakazu into a killing frenzy – for he had inexplicably viewed the magistrate, and indeed the entire village, as his friends and protected vassals for years. Together Kaneka and Masakazu killed the patrol and then left the village to draw away pursuit.

Masakazu answered Kaneka's call and became a member of the Phoenix Clan as a result. He is the personal yojimbo of the dainty Isawa Ochiai, Master of Fire, and dotes upon her as one might a younger sister. She finds him amusing, if somewhat exasperating, and overlooks his loathing of her husband, the former Mirumoto Tsuge.

The Qelsaurth, the Naga (Cobra Jakla 5)

The Qelsaurth is physically a typical member of the Naga race, and in particular of his Cobra bloodline. He is possessed of a curiosity that is somewhat out of character for his kind, however, and he certainly lacks the aura of menace that so many other Cobra seem to radiate. He was awakened decades ago by a powerful Elemental occurrence, which turned out to be a visit by the Water Dragon to Kaneka to inform him of his lineage and set him on the path to his destiny. The Qelsaurth found the young man fascinating, and the two unlikely allies spent many days engrossed in complex conversations regarding many things, one of which was the concept of destiny itself. When their time was concluded, the Qelsaurth was determined not to return to sleep, but to solve the many mysteries of existence.

During Kaneka's absence, he left word for the Qelsaurth to have access to Daigotsu Soetsu, a prisoner of the Emperor in the custody of the Scorpion. The Qelsaurth

learned much of the Lost's philosophy, and when he left Soetsu, he traveled back to the Shinomen Mori and sought out the Spider Clan hiding there. The Qelsaurth has remained with them ever since, struggling to understand the dichotomy of human behavior. He has begun to suspect the Spider no longer wish him to remain with them, however, and has been contemplating how to leave without being noticed.

Horiuchi Rikako, the Shugenja (Traditional Priest 2/Horiuchi Shugenja 3)

Rikako was little more than a newborn, perhaps a few weeks old at the most, when her parents were killed during the very last days of the War of Spirits. Like many other young Unicorn orphans, she came to live in the orphanage constructed by the kind and caring Horiuchi Shoan. There, she met Kaneka, who was perhaps ten years her senior, and the two developed a kinship even as children. Unlike most who lived there, Rikako intended to make her own way in the world, and this resonated with Kaneka. Fortunately, her curiosity and prodigious talent with the kami made this a possibility for the young woman. Upon reaching her gempukku, she eschewed an oath of fealty to the Horiuchi and instead set out to experience the world.

Rikako remained Kaneka's close friend, unlike many of the other advisors, and she coordinated the announcement that led to their oaths. To her delight, she was offered fealty again to the Horiuchi, and she accepted it. Since joining them, she has discovered the secrets of the Heavenly Kobune of Suitengu, an artifact returned from the Tomb of the Seven Thunders, and used it to sail to the Celestial Seas of Tengoku. She continues to delve into new arcane mysteries, seeking to expand the knowledge of the Unicorn at all times.

Kazumasa, the Explorer (Ronin Warrior 2/Ichiro Bushi 2/ Minor Clan Explorer 1)

Kazumasa's background is largely empty, but not for the reasons one might expect. The young man places virtually no importance on his heritage or his interactions with others, instead remembering his life as a series of daunting physical challenges and explorations of new frontiers, recalled with great fondness. His peculiar mind does not even recall the name of the village where he was born,

although he does remember his mother was a geisha who was, as he was told as a child, "free with her favors." Throughout his entire life, Kazumasa has roamed the Empire in search of excitement and adventure, not through battle or intrigue, but through the natural world. He has climbed the highest peaks of the Northern Wall, the deepest chasms of the Spine of the World, and seen the depths of the vast Shinomen Mori. Others think he has wasted his incredible physical talents, but he pays them no attention. He is happy, and that is all that matters to him.

Months after Kaneka's offer to the Clans, Kazumasa continued his wandering, waiting to see if perhaps Kaneka would need him. He sailed north of the Empire alongside the Tortoise Clan and found evidence of curious goings-on with the Yobanjin tribes. This led to an encounter with the Badger Clan, and in a moment of impulse, Kazumasa accepted their offer to join their ranks. Since then he has served as a scout for the Badger and for the Minor Clan Alliance, and has enjoyed every moment of it.

Notable Samurai: Rise of the Shogun

SHIBA DANJURO, CHIEF SHIREIKAN OF THE SHOGUN

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

Honor: 4.1	Status: 5.2	Glory: 7.3
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SCHOOL/RANK: Shiba Bushi 3/Shiba Elite Guard 1

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Clear Thinker, Social Position (Chief Shireikan of the Shogunate)

DISADVANTAGES: Obligation (Shogun, Elemental Masters)

SKILLS: Battle 6, Defense 7, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Shugenja 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Polearms 2, Spears (Naginata) 3, Theology (Shintao) 2

KATA: Eyes of the Phoenix, Striking as Fire, Touching the Infinite

Shiba Danjuro would likely have found his career extraordinary under any circumstances, even if he had not though sheer happenstance become the first to join the Shogun's

banner after he swore fealty to the Phoenix Clan. He was always an exceptional student at the dojo, and gained the favor of his sensei at an early age. He was among the youngest samurai ever promoted to an officer's position among the guardians of Shiro Shiba, and it was there that he first met Kaneka when he arrived in the Phoenix lands. Danjuro impressed the despondent former Shogun, and months later when he began gathering new forces, Danjuro was the first name on the list he submitted to the Clan Champion. For years, he worked closely with Kaneka in the Shogun's encampment in Phoenix lands, training a steady stream of bushi from all across the Empire and sending them back once their training was complete, only to make room for a new group. As a result of his work within the Shogunate, Danjuro has become one of the most respected military officers in the entire Empire, having personally earned the regard of thousands of warriors over the course of almost a decade.

During the Rise of the Shogun, Danjuro finds himself in an extremely uncomfortable situation: as the second in command of the Shogunate, and with Kaneka frequently absent or unavailable, Danjuro is the target for many who wish to oust the Shogun from the Imperial City. In addition to his duties maintaining the military readiness and discipline of his forces, Danjuro must constantly fend off angry courtiers and those eager to forge an alliance with what they regard as a major new power in the Empire.

YORITOMO SINGH, IVORY KINGDOMS AMBASSADOR AND MANTIS COURT REPRESENTATIVE

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

Honor: 2.9	Status: 0.0*	Glory: 3.3
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SCHOOL/RANK: Ebonite Templar 2 (see *Legend of the Burning Sands*, p. 278, or substitute Ranks in the Yoritomo Bushi School)/Yoritomo Courtier 2

ADVANTAGES: Allies (numerous), Ambidextrous, Languages (numerous)

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (Gaijin), Social Disadvantage (Gaijin)

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Commerce 1, Craft: Sailing 2, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 4, Deceit (Intimidation) 2, Defense 3, Etiquette (Sincerity) 4, Hunting 4, Investigation 4, Jiu-jitsu 2, Lore: Law 4, Peasant Weapons 2, Swordsmanship 4, Theology 3, Underworld 1

** As a gaijin, Singh cannot have and gain Status; he is tolerated purely as a result of his association with the Mantis Clan, and permitted to attend the Imperial Court largely as a curiosity.*

Yoritomo Singh's past is shrouded in mystery, and not even those among the Mantis Clan who he calls friends know much about his personal history. He is a native to the distant gaijin nation known as the Ivory Kingdoms, a land with which the Mantis were once secretly at war. He speaks very little of his time there, but for whatever reason he was selected to serve as a representative of his people in the Empire of Rokugan. He spent some time as a guest of the Crane Clan, but eventually he was "rescued" by the Mantis and came to stay with them instead. This was a fortuitous occurrence for Singh, whose name at that time was Rama Singh, as the Mantis philosophy was much more suited to his temperament, and the Islands of Silk and Spice reminded him more of home than the pristine and delicate Crane lands.

Among the Mantis, Singh rapidly became a favorite of the Clan Champion Yoritomo Kumiko, so much so that her recent death in the war with the Phoenix has left him

Allies & Enemies

Shiba Danjuro is an incredibly powerful ally for any player character, skirting the upper limits of what should be possible to achieve with the Allies Advantage. He is easily worth 5 Points in Influence because of his position. Because of his honorable and virtuous nature, his Devotion can vary considerably. As a Sworn Enemy, Danjuro is unsuitable largely due to the same personality traits, and because he could easily destroy any player character who drew his attention.

Yoritomo Singh, on the other hand, is far less expensive to purchase because he commands virtually no influence whatsoever — only 1 or 2 Points in Influence. However, he is likely to place great value on friendships, and his Devotion could be purchased at a higher level. As a Sworn Enemy, he is dangerous simply because the Mantis will go to extraordinary lengths to protect him from harm. He is worth 3 Points.



in a state of mourning. The new Champion, Yoritomo Nai-zen, has accepted Singh as well, however, and extended an offer of fealty, which was accepted. Singh now serves in the Mantis Clan's delegation to the Imperial Court, a position that he finds extremely peculiar, but the other members both enjoy his presence and exploit the disquiet it sows among the delegations of other Clans.

New Mechanics

New Basic School: Fifth Wind Tactician (Ronin Bushi)

The Order of the Fifth Wind is a small and enigmatic group of ronin who operate in close to absolute secrecy. The group's origins are unknown, but there are some who believe they have existed for centuries, possibly even since the dawn of the Empire itself. Those who know of

the organization at all rarely speak of it, and the only ones with any genuine knowledge of it are its members, who do not break the veil of secrecy in which they have shrouded the order, even on pain of death.

The Fifth Wind is devoted to the study of tactics and strategy, ideally without any consideration for morality or scruples. The masters of the order, of which there are always five, believe that war is an art that can be mastered only when one has completely divorced oneself from all human concern for one's troops, one's resources, or even one's lands. The order has made calculated studies of the tactics employed by all Great and Minor Clans over the course of the Empire's history, and incorporated that knowledge into their own lore and teachings.

BENEFIT: +1 Perception

SKILLS: Battle, Horsemanship, Investigation (Notice), Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore: History, any one Skill

HONOR: 1.5

OUTFIT: Katana, wakizashi, any one weapon, ashigaru armor; well-worn traveling clothes and sandals, travel pack, 1 koku



Techniques:

RANK 1: WAY OF THE FIFTH WIND

The key to victory is observation and comprehension. For every round of a skirmish in which you take no Action other than remaining in the Full Defense posture and observing a single opponent who is actively participating in the skirmish, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to 1 Bugei Skill Roll made against that opponent. The number of bonus rolled dice that you gain in this manner may never exceed your Void Ring. Also, you gain a bonus equal to your Battle Skill to the total of your Initiative Rolls.

RANK 2: LESSON OF THE FIFTH WIND

War is the ultimate expression of all conflict, and in any conflict a tactician can find and exploit advantages. You gain a bonus equal to half your Battle Skill Rank (rounded up) to the total of all Bugei Skill Rolls.

RANK 3: WILL OF THE FIFTH WIND

The chaos of battle will cloud your mind and senses unless you know how to impose clarity on both. You gain a bonus equal to twice your School Rank to the total of all Contested Perception/Battle (Mass Combat) Rolls made during Stage Two of a Mass Battle. You may also ignore any negative Tides of Battle (the Mass Battle version rather than the Tides of Battle associated with Initiative) modifier that is equal to or less than your School Rank by spending a Void Point.

RANK 4: FURY OF THE FIFTH WIND

The call of battle is seductive, and when the Fifth Wind answers, its prowess is considerable. You may make an additional attack per round.

RANK 5: STRENGTH OF THE FIFTH WIND

The lessons of the Great Clans have been studied and mastered by the Fifth Wind. When acting as the general in a Mass Battle, you may spend a Void Point to negate the battle-related effects of an opposing general's Technique. You must spend 1 Void Point per Technique to be negated, and this effect will only negate Techniques from Basic Schools or New Paths of Rank 4 or lower.

New Basic School: The Silken Promises (Ronin Courtier)

Less an organization that a set of secrets passed down through the years, the Silken Promises are a loose association of the Empire's most successful and influential

women, including courtiers, courtesans, and even geisha. Individuals are taught the School's secrets when senior members decide to take them under their wing, and there are entire generations that have been trained without considering themselves to be part of a formal organization.

BENEFIT: +1 Awareness

SKILLS: Courtier, Deceit (Seduction) 2, Etiquette, Intimidation, any one Skill

HONOR: 1.5

OUTFIT: Tanto, extravagant kimono and clothing, traveling pack, 2 koku

Techniques:

RANK 1: THE SILKEN SMILE

The wiles of a geisha are virtually impossible to resist. You gain a Free Raise on all Courtier (Manipulation) and Deceit (Seduction) Skill Rolls. You also gain a bonus equal to your Air Ring to the total of all Social Skill Rolls.

RANK 2: THE POISONED WHISPER

The subtle whisper of a favored geisha can have a drastic effect on the mind. If you spend at least 6 hours over the course of a week with someone whom you choose to target with this Technique, you can cause him to manifest any 1 of the following Disadvantages: Brash, Compulsion, Driven, Jealousy, Lechery, Overconfident, or Sworn Enemy. The target gains no points for these Disadvantages, and they last for 1 month, although you may renew them by spending additional time with the target. The target may resist this Technique by making a successful Honor Roll against a TN equal to 5 + (5x your Rank in this School).

RANK 3: DANCE OF THE GEISHA

The ability of a Silken Promise to entrance and fascinate a target borders upon the supernatural. After at least 1 minute of demonstration of your art or conversation, you may make a Contested Willpower Roll against one member of the opposite sex, adding your highest Rank in the Perform Skill to the total of your roll. If you are successful, the subject is so entranced by you that he fails to notice things taking place around him, including people coming and going, thefts from his person, and similar events. Threatening or overt actions, such as someone trying to take his sword or threatening harm, allows him a second Contested Willpower Roll, this time adding his Honor Rank to the total of his roll while you do not gain the Perform bonus. If the action is an attack, this roll is made after the attack is declared, but before it is rolled. If the target succeeds at

detecting the attack, roll Initiative as normal and begin a standard skirmish.

RANK 4: THE DAGGER BEHIND THE FAN

Although words and wiles are the primary weapon of a member of the Silken Promises, none are so foolish as to be unable to defend themselves from over-amorous suitors. When wielding a knife, you may ignore all bonuses to an opponent's TN to Be Hit from armor, and from Techniques of Rank 3 or lower. You also gain a bonus equal to your School Rank to the total of all damage rolls made with a knife.

RANK 5: THE SIN OF DESIRE

When a member of the Silken Promises desires something, her attainment of it is a virtual certainty. You may spend a Void Point to gain a number of Free Raises equal to your School Rank on any Deceit (Seduction) Skill Roll.

New Path: The Hidden Sword (Bushi)

The Hidden Sword is a ronin organization devoted to justice and the defense of the weak. It was created early in the 11th Century by a valiant ronin who sought to protect the people of a small village from the predations of bandits. The man was not from the village, but they had been kind to him, and he could not bear to see them suffer when he might be able to prevent it. The ronin spent five years traveling the Empire, recruiting men and women to his banner who he believed shared his ideals. When the time came, they concealed themselves within the village and waited for the bandits to appear. When the bandits attempted to sack the village as they had done periodically for ten years, the Hidden Sword was ready, and the bandits were slain to a man. For generations since then, the Hidden Sword has protected the people of Rokugan against threats the Great Clans cannot see or will not acknowledge. On two separate occasions, the group has been virtually destroyed by its enemies, but each time it has been reborn stronger and wiser than before.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Ronin Bushi School at Rank 1

REQUIREMENTS: Honor 2.5

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

TECHNIQUE: I STAND WITH MY BROTHERS

The Hidden Sword prides itself on being a brotherhood in more than name, and they work together in battle to ensure all of them survive. Before making an attack or damage roll, you may reduce the roll by any increment of 5 to give an ally within 25' of you an equal bonus to his next roll of the same type. At the beginning of a round, you may do the same with your TN to be Hit and the TN to Be Hit of your chosen ally, but this penalty and corresponding bonus last until the end of the round. You cannot allocate more such 5-point reductions per round than your Insight Rank x5.

THE VACANT THRONE

THE KHAN'S DEFIANCE



The Unicorn Khan Moto Chagatai's ambition finally moves him into action. The Empire is in disarray due to the events of the previous months, and Chagatai believes a firm hand must guide it back into prosperity. He knows enemies of the Empire gather beyond the borders of Rokugan, and they must be prepared for what is to come.

His first choice for Emperor is the Shogun Kaneka. The two leaders were once close friends, and Chagatai knows that Kaneka has the steel within him to protect and defend the Empire. Kaneka also has the ability to bring everyone together under his rule, something Chagatai would never be able to do. Chagatai hopes his revolt and march to the Imperial City will spring Kaneka out of inaction, bringing him to the realization that he should sit on the Throne. If Kaneka will not or cannot depose the current Empress, Chagatai knows he will sit on the Throne instead.

The Khan's march catches the Lion Clan off guard. It is winter, and no one wars in winter. Careful planning and the Baraunghar's extensive secret spells allow the Unicorn army to bypass the Lion defenses. They destroy Kyuden Ikoma and continue onward toward the capital.

The Unicorn's victories are marred by sudden attacks into their southern provinces. The One Tribe of the Nezumi has begun to assault the Unicorn in retribution for their previous insults. The Junghar, last army of the Unicorn, struggle to defend their lands against the lightning-quick strikes of the stealthy ratlings. However, the attacks abruptly end as the Nezumi prepare to fight against the death of their entire race.

Meanwhile, Winter Court draws the eyes of the entire Empire as it opens in Kyuden Otomo. The Empress Toturi Kurako makes an appearance, and continues to struggle to consolidate her power. The Winter Court is very lively this year, but the festivities are interrupted when news of Chagatai's actions reach the court. Although unable to react swiftly, all the Clans move as best they can, and their armies begin to converge on Toshi Ranbo. The Lion wait for the end of winter and marshal all of their forces together to meet the Unicorn once the snows melt. There will be a battle, and there will be a reckoning. The Khan is ready to face it.

2 Year 1168, Month of the Rat

Final Preparations

The Unicorn Clan sends many scouts into the Lion lands ahead of the Khan's momentous project. The Lion's defenses are solid, but the scouts see many areas where they can take advantage of the terrain to gain advantage. Some of these scouting parties are caught by the Lion armies and killed. None betray any knowledge of the coming assault, and while the Lion are worried at these developments, they are not sure as to what is going to happen and take no action.

The Last Dreams of Shiba Mirabu

Since the death of his friend Shiba Aikune, the Last Wish has existed in the soul of the Phoenix Clan Champion Shiba Mirabu. Unfortunately, the Last Wish has never been a stable creation; only the soul of Shiba Aikune kept it sane and balanced. With the mixture of its friend's death and the effects of its exposure to the Shadowlands (despite Aikune's best precautions), the Last Wish has become even more unbalanced. It begins to affect Shiba Mirabu, sending him nightmares upon nightmares. Aikune, perhaps, would have been able to control the wayward nemuranai; Mirabu, still unfamiliar with the Last Wish's presence, is unable to do so.

Driven by his dreams, Shiba Mirabu heads toward Honored Treaty City. There he meets Isawa Sezarū, on the verge of executing a woman accused of being a Bloodspeaker. Influenced by the Last Wish, Mirabu attacks Sezarū. While Sezarū is one of the greatest shugenja of the day, the Last Wish is even more powerful. Sezarū is on the verge of defeat when Isawa Angai, Sezarū's wife, casts an illusion on her husband that changes his appearance to that of Shiba Aikune. The Last Wish's influence on Shiba Mirabu wanes, and the Champion is horrified by the damage he has caused to his people. He allows Sezarū to kill him. The Last Wish dies along with the fallen Phoenix, ending its tragic history.

The Tides of Madness

The war between the Crane and Dragon has slowed down due to winter, but the effects of the war are dwarfed by a sudden problem among the Dragon monks. Hitomi monks are becoming insane and increasingly violent. Many charge the enemy by themselves, recklessly seeking to kill as many Crane warriors as they can before they are killed in turn. The Crane quickly adapt themselves to the strange tactic. The Dragon wish to stop these suicidal charges, but they cannot figure out what is causing the madness.

The Death of the Harriers

Doji Domotai learns of the existence of the Daidoji Harriers, an elite unit of saboteurs who will do anything to protect Crane honor (even if it means breaking Imperial mandates). Horrified, she immediately orders the destruction of the order. While daimyo Daidoji Kikaze and the other Harriers are not pleased by her words, they stop their operations.

Year 1168, Month of the Ox

The Fall of Kyuden Ikoma

The Baraunghar use magic to manipulate a gigantic winter storm in the Lion lands, forcing them on the defensive. The Unicorn armies use this to their advantage and push forward. The Lion are unprepared for the ferocity of wind, snow, and Unicorn soldiers, and are pushed back further and further into their own provinces.

The Khan recognizes that Kyuden Ikoma can serve as a bastion of defense if the Lion are given enough time to catch their breath. His first action of the war is to assault Kyuden Ikoma with the force of his entire army. Despite a heroic defense led by Ikoma Otemi, the Unicorn succeed and force the Lion to retreat. The Khan torches the castle and takes all the supplies his army can carry, preparing them for the tasking months ahead. Otemi is critically wounded, but survives, carried away by his men.

Trade Manipulation

While the Crane are at war with the Dragon, they have not kept idle in other parts of the Empire. In previous months, the Crane Yasuki family has been manipulating the price of rice to cheat the Crab Clan from a large sum of koku. The Crab have become aware of the deceit and seek to gain payback for the offense.

Naoharu, newly sworn into the Crane's services, already sees the Crab's fledgling efforts and cuts them off at every turn. He gets rid of all evidence and disperses the people responsible into remote sections of the Crane lands, essentially getting rid of their possible testimony. The Crab cannot prove any wrongdoing, and they are forced to take back their claims of dishonesty.

Winter War

The Nezumi have never gone to war as a single race before. It proves an overwhelming sight as they begin their attack on the Unicorn Clan. The One Tribe has relocated to their Winter Warrens to prepare for the coming months. With their stronghold safe, they begin their assault on the southern Unicorn lands.



Shinjo Shono and his Junghar army do their best to protect the Unicorn lands, but he has too much territory to cover and not enough warriors. The ratlings use harrying tactics, attacking swiftly and pulling back before these second-line Unicorn soldiers can respond. The Unicorn suffer many casualties as they struggle to maintain their two-front war.

Winter Court Begins

The Winter Court begins at Kyuden Otomo with Otomo Hoketuhime as hostess. All eyes are drawn to Toturi Kuraiko as the interim Empress struggles to maintain her power. She makes an appearance on the first day and officially makes the Fuzake a family of the Monkey Clan. She also names Bayushi Norachai as the Protector of the Imperial City. She returns to Toshi Ranbo shortly thereafter.

Year 1168, Month of the Tiger

A Desperate Call

Bayushi Norachai hears of the Khan's plans. He knows he cannot publicly raise the subject of how to respond; the Khan's status is too high for such a reproach. Instead, he decides to take pre-emptive action. He sends a message to all of the Great Clans, asking for 2,000 soldiers to bolster Toshi Ranbo's defenses. Many of the Clans are appalled at the request, and since Norachai does not specify why he wants these reinforcements, most of them refuse outright.

Bayushi Yojiro's Murder

Disguising himself as Bayushi Moyotoshi, the former Scorpion Champion Bayushi Yojiro comes to Winter Court to seek the identity of a traitor to the Scorpion Clan. Unfor-

tunately, a samurai named Moto Shikenji has a grudge against the real Bayushi Moyotoshi over the assassination of his cousin Moto Ogedai. Shikenji murders Yojiro and confesses the crime, unaware that he has struck down not only the wrong man, but a true hero of the Empire as well.

Te'tik'kir Remembered

Kitsu Katsuko, daimyo of the Kitsu family, stands up in court and speaks to the Empire about the heroism of the Nezumi. They sacrificed much to bring Kitsu Nintai out of the dream of Corruption in which he had been trapped for a thousand years. The Nezumi shaman Te'tik'kir gave his life to return Nintai to his original state. The Lion decide to erect a monument to that great shaman, honoring both the Nezumi and the original kitsu race.

Love Blossoms

Isawa Ochiai and Mirumoto Tsuge meet and talk in the Winter Court. They had not expected to find much in common, but as they continue their conversations they begin to fall in love.

Tsume's Soul

Moto Akikazu, reincarnation of Moto Tsume, opens the ruby of Iuchiban with the help of the Lords of Death. With the spell broken, its prisoner is free to walk the earth once more. He is Iuchi Ietsuna, son of Iuchi Karasu, and he has been locked inside the ruby for more than twenty years.

The Death of 'Ide Jiao'

When news of the Khan's invasion of the Lion lands reaches Winter Court, Ide Jiao springs into action. He quickly denies all assertions of any wrongdoing by the Unicorn and aggressively seeks allies in court. Unfortunately, he missteps when he tells the truth to the Mantis delegation. He had hoped to sway them to the Unicorn position, but Moshi Amika is horrified by the Khan's plans.

Bayushi Kaukatsu, secretly an ally of the Khan, replaces Ide Jiao with a Shosuro actor who commits seppuku in his place. Jiao returns to the Unicorn lands in secret.



Year 1168, Month of the Hare

Tomorrow Comes

The Nezumi become aware of a threat to their way of life: the Realm of Dreams is under attack by mysterious creatures that resemble heavenly Dragons. If the Realm of Dreams is destroyed, the Nezumi Transcendent ancestors will die. They will lose their entire past. The One Tribe call a halt to the war against the Unicorn and tries to figure out a way to defend their past.

Yoritomo's Ascension

Horiuchi Rikako and Moshi Amika use the Heavenly Kobune of Suitengu to travel to Yomi, the Realm of Ancestors. There, they meet the famed hero Yoritomo, and travel together to Tengoku. Otaku Kamoko is pleased by their actions and rewards Rikako with a trinket that will summon the Battle Maiden to her side. Yoritomo remains in Tengoku to represent the Mantis as a Great Clan.

The Black Scroll is Opened

Bayushi Paneki orders Soshi Yukimi to unravel the secrets of the Black Scroll found within the Tomb of the Seven Thunders. By all that the Rokugani know, this Black Scroll should not exist. There are only twelve, used to seal Fu Leng's power, and this new Black Scroll is a thirteenth.

Soshi Natsuo opens the Black Scroll to please his mistress Yukimi. The event drives him completely insane and creates a field near the Crab lands that is entirely devoid of life. The Scorpion realize the immense power in their hands. More troubling to them is the fact that this Black Scroll is apparently not corrupted by the Shadowlands, but holds a different, sinister power instead.

Mobilization of the Lion Forces

The snows are beginning to melt and the Unicorn armies are being chased further away from the Imperial City. Matsuo Yoshino is pleased at this progress, but wants to crush the Khan under the full weight of the Lion war machine. More Lion armies are mobilized, and they chase the Unicorn forces further and further away from the capital. The Akodo send their army to Toshi Ranbo as defense in case the Khan uses trickery to bypass the Lion armies.

Kolat Forgery

Tsuruchi Etsui travels to Ryoko Owari, haunted by the last words of Toturi Naseru. The Emperor had told him the location of his last will and testament so that he would bring the news to the Empire and quell any unrest that might occur. He meets Kakita Kyruko, who is waiting for him, and they search for the will together.

The will names Kaneka as the successor to the Throne. Etsui is ready to take the will, but Kyruko stops him. She takes the true will and leaves a forgery that will better serve the interests of the Kolat. She then reveals her true identity as Master Silk and recruits Etsui into her service.

Involving Your Character in the Events of The Khan's Defiance

The events of the Khan's Defiance are world-changing in many ways. The paradigm of Rokugani warfare was changed when Moto Chagatai decided to begin his war during winter, a feat never been done before. Likewise, nothing will ever be the same again for the Nezumi, no matter how they respond to the threat to the Realm of Dreams. While this plot thread is mostly limited to Nezumi characters, sympathetic humans could certainly help them find their destiny. Despite the fact that there are many larger than life events occurring, there are many opportunities to fit a smaller campaign into this time period.

The most important event of these months is the beginning of the Unicorn assault on the Throne. Though it may seem too grand in scope to involve minor characters, the Khan's gambit is a good place for a campaign. There are many events that could spur the characters. They could gain early knowledge of the Khan's plans, forcing them to react in some way. Will they return to their superiors and inform them of the treachery, or will they keep quiet and support the Khan's actions? If they do support the Khan, they could stop others who would send word before the Unicorn Clan is ready to attack. Likewise, they could face agents of the Khan who would stop them from sending word to others. They could be a part of the Lion forces sent to defend against the strange, new tactics of the Unicorn assault. Shugenja characters could try to figure out the Ba-

raunghar's secret abilities that give the Khan's army such mobility, cutting off their efforts by pleading with the kami.

The second big event of this time is the Winter Court at Kyuden Otomo. This is a tumultuous time and the Winter Court was no different. In fact, the events of Winter Court of this time were decided by an interactive event held by AEG and the staff of Heroes of Rokugan. They conducted a Play by Forum RPG experience for the masses, allowing fans to play canon characters. They performed marvelously and created a truly unique and interesting tapestry of events for us to follow. Much more happened in that Winter Court than can fit inside this chapter, and it can be the same for your campaign. Winter Court is one of the greatest stages one can host for socially-fueled mystery or intrigue, and the Winter Court of 1168 hosted many of the most famous names of Rokugan. Your characters could mingle with daimyo and have the ability to influence their decisions. When news of the Khan's assault reaches the court, it will begin a chain of events that can be truly exciting.

The Khan's March: An In-Depth Look

The Khan had mapped out in advance as much of his campaign as he could, but he also left himself enough flexibility to counter a variety of Lion responses. An experienced and canny general, he knew that no plan ever truly survives the enemy's first gesture of resistance. As he traveled at the forefront of his army, he was able to quickly change course whenever he needed.

He had to be ready for several problems. The first of these was that he was planning something that had never been done before. War always stopped during wintertime. It was just too hard to maintain an army in the field in the cold and wet. As a largely cavalry force, the Unicorn armies needed even more supplies than a normal Rokugani army, as it was impossible to find suitable grazing along the line of march in wintertime. In a Unicorn army, the horses' health is just as important — if not more important — than that of the soldiers. Not only that, but the unpredictability of the Unicorn's path through the Lion lands meant that supply lines might suddenly be left exposed to the Lion.

The second problem was a fact that was hard to swallow for a fighting general like the Khan: He could not survive a stand-up fight against the Lion Clan. This incursion was the greatest assault the Khan had ever made, even greater than the attack on the City of the Rich Frog. The Baraunghar army and the Khol army combined forces to make the assault. However, he had to avoid pitched battles with the Lion if at all possible. If the Lion could bring him to battle, he might be able to defeat them, but it would bleed down his army to the point where they could not hope to assault the Imperial City. The point of the march was not to defeat the Lion but to bypass their lands. A victory against the Lion army would mean nothing if he could not destroy the Imperial City's defenders.

The third problem was that the Lion were the most capable opponent Chagatai could face among all the Great Clans, save perhaps the Crab. Once the Unicorn blasted past their defenses, the Lion would certainly guess the Khan's true objective and react accordingly. The Unicorn would be marching on Toshi Ranbo, but with a capable and implacable foe in their rear, largely intact. The Lion fight to their deaths for honor, but they would fight beyond that to protect the Empire.

To fix the first problem, the Unicorn undertook a bold and dangerous method of supply management. They smuggled the extra rice into the Lion territories; the Lion border wardens were mostly watching out for contraband moving in the other direction and missed the extra rice. The supplies were cached in carefully selected locations throughout the Lion lands. Only the Khan knew exactly where all of them were, but this network of secret depots was mapped out to allow the Unicorn a variety of routes through the Lion lands.

The third problem was the hardest to fix. Chagatai decided the answer was speed, to move faster than any army the Empire had ever seen. If he could surprise the Lion and race past them, he could reach Toshi Ranbo and seize the Imperial City before the Lion could come up behind him. He was not sure how he would solve this problem until he spoke to Iuchi Lixue, the general of the Baraunghar. The Baraunghar were the most magically inclined army in the Empire outside of the Phoenix Clan. Lixue knew a trick she had used in the past to come to the aid of the Crab. She was ready to share that secret with her Khan.

The Baraunghar knew several secret spells of teleportation. They could transport large numbers of men hundreds of miles across the Empire. It was not an easy spell and the toll for the ritual would be very harsh, but it would allow the Khan to appear instantly at the Imperial City's doorstep. If – and only if – he could get close enough for the spell.

The Khan gathered his army on White Shore Plain before they launched east through the Lion border. The Baraunghar summoned a gale of epic proportions, one that had rarely been seen in Rokugan before. They pushed this storm onto the Lion forces in front of them as they charged. There was little resistance as the Unicorn pushed into Lion lands.

But instead of heading immediately towards the Imperial City, the Khan decided to attack Kyuden Ikoma rather than leave that stronghold behind him untouched. With surprise and numbers on their side, the Unicorn army completely obliterated the Lion defenses. The Lion samurai retreated and let the Unicorn sack the castle. They took all the supplies they could and continued on southeast. After they avoided several Lion units, they summoned their supply trains to them with Baraunghar magic and moved north toward Toshi Ranbo.

By this time, the Lion figured out the Unicorn's plan and set up defenses along the path to Imperial City. The Khan moved northwest to avoid the defenses and continued north away from Toshi Ranbo. He almost reached Dragon lands before moving east once more to bypass both the Lion and the nearby Crane army. The Lion armies were drawing closer and closer, and though they were several hundred miles too far to allow Lixue's magic to land him right before the capital, Chagatai had no choice; he was running out of time and his enemies were bound to close in. He ordered Lixue and her shugenja to teleport them to the city. They managed to do so at great cost: dozens of shugenja lost their lives casting a spell of that magnitude. They sacrificed their lives to make sure that the Khan's march succeeded.



Notable Samurai: The Khan's Defiance

AKODO SHINICHI, YOUNG STRATEGIST

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

Honor: 3.9	Status: 1.5	Glory: 3.4
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SCHOOL/RANK: Akodo Bushi 2

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Irreproachable, Tactician

DISADVANTAGES: Contrary

KATA: Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Battle (Mass Combat) 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: History 3, Lore: Ancestors 4, Meditation 3, Storytelling 1, Tea Ceremony 2

Shinichi expects to achieve great things in his life. He is certain he will become one of the greatest samurai of the Lion Clan, among the like of Akodo Ginawa, Akodo Toturi, and Matsu Tsuko. Though he has only been serving in the Lion armies for a handful of years, his superiors have already noticed his instinctive grasp of both strategy and tactics.

Shinichi is the latest in a long line of true Akodo bushi. While many Akodo bushi came to being when Lady Moon, Hitomi, banished the Lying Darkness, Shinichi can trace his lineage to the first followers of Akodo. He is extremely proud of this fact and does not bother to hide his feelings. He believes himself superior because of his ancestry, and he treats others with condescension even though he may not mean to do so. He has remained without friends for most of his life. Shinichi has come to terms with that fact. They will flock to him, he reasons, once he becomes a hero of the Empire.

He therefore welcomed the chance to go to the rescue of Toshi Ranbo along with the rest of the Akodo. He was among the first to see the Unicorn armies appear in front of the Imperial City's walls.

DAIGOTSU REKAI, FALLEN WARRIOR

Air: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 5	Water: 3	Void: 5
			Strength: 4	
Honor: 1.4	Status: N/A	Glory: 5.5		

SCHOOL/RANK: Daigotsu's Legion 5

SHADOWLANDS TAINT: 6.6

ADVANTAGES: Benten's Blessing, Combat Reflexes

DISADVANTAGES: Dark Fate

SKILLS: Acting 3, Athletics 2, Battle 5, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Heavy Weapons 5, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 6,

Kyujutsu 7, Meditation 3, Theology 4

Note: The pact she made with the Shadow Dragon erased many of the Techniques she learned while she was still Daidoji Rekai. While the knowledge is still within her, she chooses not to use it, seeing it as a pitiful remnant of her past self.

The very existence of Daigotsu Rekai is a tragedy.

She was once Daidoji Rekai, famed samurai of the Crane Clan. She served with honor for decades through some of the most tumultuous years of the Empire. She fought on the Second Day of Thunder and she helped save the true Tao from extinction. No one, even the Crane's enemies, could deny her strength of will. As the daimyo of the Daidoji, she came to the aid of her allies no matter the obstacles. People sang her praises and her exploits were immortalized in dozens of poems and plays.

Then the Shadow Dragon came to her.

It whispered insidious thoughts to her, thoughts she dismissed at first without consideration. Every person has a weakness, however, and Rekai's weakness was her son. Daidoji Kikaze was the only reminder she had of her husband, who fell at the battle of Oblivion's Gate. He was the leader of the Harriers. His soul was at stake, whispered the Shadow Dragon. He would die a traitor to the Clan. His future was written. Unless, the Shadow Dragon gleefully said, Rekai became a Shadowlands monster, in which case Kikaze would have cause to become stronger.

He would avoid his fate. He would want to destroy her and become a better man.

Rekai accepted and became a Lost samurai in service to Daigotsu.

As a Lost Spider samurai, Daigotsu Rekai holds none of the allegiances or beliefs she had before her change. She is completely devoted to Daigotsu's well-being, and she no longer holds Bushido in her heart. She is a completely different person, one who only wishes to see the destruction of Rokugan.



Allies & Enemies

Akodo Shinichi is not a complex man, and despite his difficult personality it is really not very hard to gain his respect. If he believes you to be an honorable warrior and loyal to the Throne, he will trust you and help you as best he can. As an ally, he is worth 1 Point in Influence and 2 Points in Devotion. If you acquire him as a Sworn Enemy he will not do anything illegal to impede your progress, but he will do everything short of that to see you fall. He is worth 2 Points.

Daigotsu Reikai is not terribly suitable as either an Ally or a Sworn Enemy. It is very difficult to court her goodwill. You can get on her good side if she views you as a useful commodity, but she will also use you as such. Otherwise, she will not give a second glance. She will not commit to any action unless she knows she will benefit from it.

On the other hand, she will not go out of her way to spite her enemies. In fact, she enjoys toying with those who hate her and will not kill a person outright unless her life is threatened. She is pragmatic, but loves to play with her enemies too much; in fact, she has fallen into several traps because she lingered to taunt her foes.

New Mechanics

New Basic School: Ikoma Brawler (Bushì)

Before he followed Akodo, the original Ikoma lived life not as a samurai but as an eye-gouging, shin-kicking, nose-biting pit fighter. His tenacity and bravado are what impressed Akodo and truly cemented his claim as the "Strongest Man in the World." Though the Ikoma family has evolved into one of the most respected families in the Empire, a small group carries on the traditions of their founder. Ikoma's Eye, the urban center outside of Kyuden Ikoma, can be a rough place. The area is filled with teahouses, sake bars, and geisha establishments. As one might imagine, such establishments are always in need of someone to keep the peace. This is where the students of the Hundred Scars Dojo come in. The group

trains themselves in the original Ikoma's hand-to-hand fighting techniques in order to act as bouncers, peace-keepers, and magistrates within the city. Those so skilled in the ways of Ikoma are often an intimidating sight to a troublesome drunken ronin, to boisterous courtiers who get out of hand with a geisha, or to the occasional overzealous Matsu conversing with a Kakita at the sake bar. If a member of the Hundred Scars Dojo must be called in, the perpetrators are not soon likely to forget it, and will likely walk away with several scars of their own.

While the Brawlers specialize in single combat, many of them were ready to serve when war came to the Lion lands. They picked up arms and assisted in the defense of Kyuden Ikoma until it fell to the Unicorn forces. The Brawlers continued to serve in the Lion armies after the fall of the castle. They chased down the Unicorn armies with gusto. Their presence among the other men served as an encouragement to all, a testament to the strength of the Lion soul. Even when everything is taken away from him, a Lion does not falter or shirk from his duty. He continues on to serve the Empire.

The Brawlers returned to Kyuden Ikoma once the war was over and resumed their former duties. They helped rebuild the castle and serve as a mainstay of Kyuden Ikoma's community to this day.

BENEFIT: +1 Strength

HONOR: 1.5

SKILLS: Athletics, Defense, Jiu-jutsu, Kenjutsu, Lore: History, Storytelling (Bragging), any one High or Bugei Skills

OUTFIT: Katana, wakizashi, tanto, ashigaru armor; kimono and sandals, traveling pack; 3 koku

Techniques

RANK 1: CULTIVATING THE PERSONALITY

The Ikoma Brawler cultivate a reputation as fierce fighters and protectors of the Lion Clan to foster respect among those who would endanger the clan. This gives them a clear psychological advantage in a fight. You gain a bonus equal to twice your Glory Rank to the total of all unarmed attack and damage rolls. Additionally, you gain a bonus equal to your Strength to the total of all Storytelling (Bragging) Skill Rolls.

RANK 2:

THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD

The original Ikoma's tenacity and toughness were born

of a need to survive the harsh world that was Rokugan before the Kami fell, and the Brawlers revere those qualities and cultivate them in themselves. Your Wound Penalties are reduced by your Strength. Additionally, when calculating rolled dice for unarmed damage rolls, your Strength is considered to be 50% higher than its actual Rank (rounded down).

RANK 3: EVERY SCAR HAS A TALE

Each of Ikoma's scars held a tale of his victories over numerous foes. With each tale comes insight into the various styles of combat used in Rokugan and an understanding of how to defeat them. You receive a number of Free Raises per day equal to half of your Ranks in Storytelling (rounded down) that may be used on any unarmed attack roll or Opposed Strength Roll. Once used, these Free Raises are lost for the rest of the day. Additionally, you gain a bonus equal to twice your Strength to the total of all Storytelling (Bragging) Skill Rolls, replacing the bonus received at Rank 1.

RANK 4: I AM IKOMA

Ikoma was a crafty fighter who knew how to read an opponent and exploit their weakness. You may now make an additional attack per round.

RANK 5:

I DON'T KNOW MY MOTHER'S NAME

The original Ikoma could not be intimidated; he stood up to even the mighty Akodo and challenged him to a brawl in the street. When Ikoma claimed he would fight on until one of them shouted their mother's name, Akodo was shocked to find Ikoma did not know his own mother's name. This tenacity and braggadocio continues today in those who follow Ikoma's way. Opponents attacking you suffer a penalty equal to twice your Glory Rank to the total of all their attack and damage rolls against you. Additionally, you gain a bonus equal to triple your Strength to the total of all Storytelling (Bragging) Skill Rolls, replacing the bonus received at Rank 3.

New Path: Daidoji Heavy Regular (Bushi)

The Crane armies cannot stand toe-to-toe with the other Great Clans' armies. They simply do not have the manpower to defeat any of their peers. Even so, it falls to the Daidoji to protect the Crane lands from the others while the Doji advance the Clan's interests in the courts. The

Daidoji Heavy Regulars make up the solid core of the Crane's armies. Their training mimics that of the Crab Clan, as the Daidoji family still maintains a strong connection with that Clan. The Heavy Regulars die so that the Crane Clan may continue to thrive, and they do so with honor.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Crane Bushi School 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

TECHNIQUE: IRON CRANE STYLE

The Iron Crane are taught to devastate their foes without hesitation or mercy, for the Crane's enemies are countless. When using the Heavy Weapons Skill, you gain a number of Free Raises equal to half of your Insight Rank, rounded down. These Free Raises may only be used for the Increased Damage option.

New Spell: The Spaces In Between (Water)

MASTERY LEVEL: 5

DURATION: Instantaneous

AREA OF EFFECT: 100 men standing closest to the caster, or a single moveable object within range, below 500 pounds

RANGE: 50 miles

This spell instantly teleports the caster and the people closest to him to any location within its range. The caster must have the new location vividly in his mind and speak out loud the name of the targeted location to the kami. The location must be large enough to contain the targeted number of people. The image inside the main caster's mind must at least be close to the physical reality of the place; although the spell will work if there are mistakes within the image, the image cannot have multiple, large errors. For example: The type of vegetation may be incorrect, but all hills and buildings must be accurate. If any of these parameters are not correct, the spell fails and has no effect.

This spell may be cast as a ritual. The spell is a secret Unicorn spell; it has never been taught to outsiders, and the Unicorn zealously guard it.

RAISES: You may raise to increase the Range by 50 miles per Raise declared. You may also increase the Area of Effect by 100 men per Raise declared.

THE VACANT THRONE

THE
TRUEST TEST

The major event of this period occurs in the Month of the Dragon, when Moto Chagatai leads the Unicorn into battle for possession of the Imperial Throne. Chagatai's unprecedented decision to launch a military campaign in winter (which gave that season the poetic epithet "The Winter of Red Snows") and his intensive use of Unicorn travel magic combine to bring his forces to Toshi Ranbo long before its defenders thought possible. In the ensuing battle the Toturi Dynasty comes to an end, and it begins to look like the city itself will share in that fate. This is prevented by the timely intervention of the Phoenix, who use their vast power over the Elements and the blessings of the Dragon of Fire to stop the battle and install themselves as protectors of the Imperial Capital.

Elsewhere in the Empire, a small force of Crab cavalry led by Hida Kisada begins to raid villages in the southern Scorpion lands. Kisada has grown tired of dealing with the many attempts against his life, and though he doesn't consider them a real threat they are unquestionably an insult to the Crab Clan. The Scorpion are still weak from their divinely-inspired famine and cannot muster an effective defense. This drags on for months until Shosuro Higatsuku obtains peace with the Crab by taking responsibility for the assassination attempts. Kisada kills Higatsuku, but before dying the courtier sets in motion a plan to sow conflict between the Crane and the Crab Clans.

The Nezumi have become aware of the threat to their Transcendents — and to all of reality — that is somehow centered in Yume-do. Gathering at the Shinomen Forest, the Nezumi One Tribe send their spirits into the Realm of Dreams and succeed in stabilizing it, preventing further harm to all of the linked spirit realms. Victory has its price, however, and during the course of the battle the connection between the spirits and bodies of the Nezumi fighters is destroyed. Their bodies dead, they are now permanent residents of Yume-do.

Meanwhile, two Clan Champions face serious internal problems, albeit for very different reasons. Dragon Champion Togashi Satsu realizes that the odd behavior of the Hoshi and Hitomi monks is due to their tattoos, which link them to purely divine patrons. He orders them to join the Togashi and receive new tattoos from him to mitigate these effects. In the Crane Clan, Doji Domotai becomes concerned that Daidoji Kikaze is not following her orders regarding the Harriers, and sends her special magistrate to deal with the situation. The Harriers are disbanded completely and most are sent to serve in other Crane military units.

The final major event of this period was the Test of the Emerald Champion, in which Kakita Noritoshi concedes the final duel to his opponent, a mostly-unknown Scorpion named Shosuro Jimen. Speculation runs rampant afterwards as to why, but Noritoshi leaves soon after without explaining his actions.



Year 1168, Month of the Dragon

Death of Kyofu

Fulfilling a vow to Hida Kuon, the former Onisu Kyofu leads his army of the Damned against the forces of the Shadowlands. Facing Kyoso no Oni in battle, he wounds the Oni Lord severely before being killed himself. Afterward the survivors discover that the City of the Lost has been abandoned.

Hida Kisada Attacks the Scorpion

Wearied and insulted by the Scorpion Clan's attacks on him, Hida Kisada takes a hundred Tsuru's Legion cavalymen and goes raiding. He and his force spend the next two months attacking and burning Scorpion villages.

The Khan's Gambit

After spending the winter maneuvering around the Lion provinces, Moto Chagatai finally has his armies in position to attack the Imperial City. Iuchi Lixue and the Baraunghar enact a ritual that transports them and the Khol army to the plains outside of Toshi Ranbo. Lixue and many of the other participating shugenja perish, but the spell is successful.

Battle of Toshi Ranbo

The Khan leads his forces against the city's defenders, seeking to capture the city and place either Kaneka or himself on the Steel Throne. The Lion defenders, led by Akodo Shigatoshi, hold firm against the assault and begin to push the invaders back before the Mantis intervene on the side of the Khan.

The Death of Kaneka

Determined to fulfill his duties as Shogun in spite of the Empress's opposition, Kaneka gathers together the twenty men of his honor guard and goes out to find Chagatai.

He refuses to side with the Khan and the two men fight. Chagatai kills Kaneka, though he is severely wounded by the Shogun.

The Death of Isawa Sezar

Already grief-stricken over Naseru's death and made even more fragile by his obsession with hunting Bloodspeakers, Sezar is finally overwhelmed with fury by the thought of an attack on the Imperial Capital. He appears in the sky over the city hurling down destruction and threatening to destroy everyone and everything in the area. His wife Angai appears, speaking quietly to him, and calms him enough to allow her to approach. Promising to help bring him peace, Angai stabs Sezar with a dagger made from the final fragment of the Last Wish. The Dagger explodes, killing them both and destroying the city for several blocks.

The War of Silk and Steel Ends

Togashi Satsu appears at Doji Domotai's estate in Toshi Ranbo, requesting to speak with her. The two Champions discuss their Clans' conflict and Satsu advances the argument that since Domotai has disbanded the Harriers and ordered their gaijin pepper stores destroyed, there is no reason for the war to continue. Domotai is surprised at first, and then agrees.

The Death of Toturi Kurako

The Unicorn forces reach the Imperial Palace, battling with the Seppun, Crane, and Lion forces defending it. Determined not to allow Chagatai to take her as a hostage, the Empress commits jigai. With her passing, the Toturi Dynasty comes to an end.

The Phoenix and the Fire Dragon

Concerned that the fight will destroy Toshi Ranbo, the armies of the Phoenix Clan move in to end the battle. Isawa Ochiai, speaking for the Council, announces they are taking the city under their protection. She uses the Egg of the Void to summon a manifestation of the Dragon of Fire from the Celestial Heavens to protect the city. Saddened by the bloodshed and destruction already caused, the Phoenix insist Chagetai and the Unicorn forces should be allowed to withdraw safely. The Lion first protest this, but when Lion Champion Matsu Yoshino arrives he permits it, after publicly swearing that in a year's time he will kill Chagetai on Unicorn soil.

Asahina Sekawa Resigns as Jade Champion

Asahina Sekawa and the Keepers return to Toshi Ranbo with Rosoku's child, who they have discovered after a lengthy search. Sekawa informs Doji Domotai that he is retiring from the Jade Championship and the Crane Clan so that he may devote himself to raising the child and preparing him to carry on his family's legacy. Sekawa leaves the city the next day wearing the simple robes of a monk

Year 1168, Month of the Serpent

Nezumi Travels

All around Rokugan Nezumi begin to travel toward the Shinomen Forest, called to wage a war against Tomorrow. They speak to few humans as they travel, and they refuse to explain what Tomorrow is or why they must fight it.

The Three Become One

After months of studying the problem, Togashi Satsu concludes that the divine blood in the tattoos of the Hoshi and Hitomi orders is overwhelming the minds of the monks bearing them. He orders them all to become members of the Togashi Order and gives them new tattoos made with ink bearing his own blood to give them stability. Only Hitomi Kagetora is excused from this order. Because of his long devotion to Lady Moon he is permitted to retire to a temple and live out the rest of his days in her service.

The Cleansing of Shiro Giji

Concerned by evidence that Daidoji Kikaze is disloyal to her, Doji Domotai appoints Daidoji Fumisato as her 'special magistrate' and sends him and her personal guard to deal with the Harrier dojo at Shiro Giji. Fumisato executes any Harrier who knows how to manufacture gaijin pepper, as well as any who resist his authority, then turns the rest of the Harriers over to Daidoji family magistrates so that their own family daimyo can judge them. In the course of the raid Fumisato uncovers evidence that it is not Daidoji Kikaze who is obstructing Domotai's orders, but Kikaze's hatamoto Shihei.

Year 1168, Month of the Horse

Oracle of Jade Finds the Legion of the Jade Hand

Omen, the Oracle of Jade, is asked by Hida Kuon to protect the Tao of Fu Leng. He gathers together a number of honorable Crab samurai in a remote tower. From them he creates the Legion of the Jade Hand and commissions them to guard the foul artifact.

End of Crab-Scorpion Hostilities

Scorpion courtier Shosuro Higatsuku meets with Hida Kisada in the Scorpion lands. Higatsuku confesses his responsibility for the assassination attempts on Kisada and absolves Bayushi Paneki from any blame. He presents the Great Bear with two scrolls. One bears an apology from Paneki; the other Higatsuku describes as a "peace offering" containing information of interest to the Crab. Kisada kills Higatsuku, takes the scrolls, and returns home to the Crab lands.

Year 1168, Month of the Goat

Birth of the Spider Clan

Having moved the majority of his followers to the Shinomen Forest, Daigotsu declares them to be the Spider Clan and establishes a new city there to be the base of his operations.

The Last Harrier

In a show of loyalty to his Champion, Daidoji Kikaze finds and kills his hatamoto Shihei. With the threat of Shihei's conspiracy ended, he now turns to integrating the other former Harriers into the regular Daidoji forces.

The Battle of Tomorrow

Kanok'ticheck leads the forces of the One Tribe into Yume-do to protect the Nezumi Transcendents. When the

leaders of the One Tribe realize it is the Realm of Yume-do itself that is in danger they join with the Transcendents to restabilize it. They succeed, but the cost is high: All of the Nezumi involved are now trapped in Yume-do. As far as the people of the Empire are concerned, the Nezumi have all but ceased to exist – only the tiniest handful of the race did not participate in this great sacrifice.

The Test of the Emerald Championship

In a tournament sponsored by Otomo Hoketohime, Scorpion courtier Shosuro Jimen becomes the new Emerald Champion. The oddity of the tournament's final round is discussed for months afterwards: Jimen's opponent was the Crane iaijutsu master Kakita Noritoshi, but he conceded to Jimen before the duel even began.

Involving Your Character in the Events of The Truest Test

It isn't every day that an Imperial Dynasty comes to and end, so having your character in Toshi Ranbo before, during, or after the battle for the city presents many interesting possibilities. Unicorn characters in the city for reasons unrelated to the Khan's gambit would find people very tense in their presence, and any Lion they run into would be a possible source of challenge. A Lion character might be ordered to bolster the city's defenders during the attack, but when allowed to stand down could wander the city looking for Unicorn samurai to challenge. When the attack occurs, characters of any Clan could find themselves assigned to defend (or attack) some tactically important area in the city.

The events outside of Toshi Ranbo offer different opportunities. The Nezumi traveling towards the Shinomen will be traveling light and pilfering supplies as they go. A character who owns a village or two might investigate who has been stealing the grain set aside for taxes. A Phoenix character, or one in service to the Phoenix, might be dispatched to the Shinomen by Shiba Ningen to investigate what happened to the Nezumi.

Characters who have picked up some Taint might be assigned to join Kyofu's assault on the Shadowlands. It will almost certainly mean a grim death, but it is a suitably heroic way of retiring a problematic character from play. In the remote event that Tainted characters survive the battle with Kyoso no Oni's forces, they could help explore the abandoned City of the Lost.

The Emerald Championship offers opportunities to characters as candidates, as someone in service to a candidate, or as part of a Clan delegation sent to witness the event. Important people are always present at this prestigious event, so there will be plenty of politics, intrigue, and scandal. For generic information about the Test of the Emerald Champion, see *Art of the Duel*, Appendix, Page 181.

The Battle of Toshi Ranbo: An In-Depth Look

Moto Chagatai bypassed the bulk of the Lion armies at great cost to his secondary army, the Baraunghar. His forces stood ready in front of the gates of the Imperial City. Moto Chagatai had one simple goal in mind: Toturi Kurako must die, and the man of strongest will and conviction must stand in her place. Failure was not an option, and he charged toward the city with his greatest warriors by his side. The Khol army was his personal army, filled with barbarous samurai and deadly berserkers. The remnants of the Baraunghar, wearied from their constant magical intervention, rode beside them in case they were needed to bypass the walls of the Imperial City.

Bayushi Norachai and the city's garrison were undermanned and unprepared for the Khan's sudden arrival. Though Norachai had asked for a contingent of soldiers from each Clan, only the Mantis had answered in kind. Norachai had at his disposal only his Seppun guards, a thousand Mantis soldiers, and the Akodo legion led by the family daimyo Akodo Shigetoshi. It would have to be enough. The Mantis contingent was stationed on the eastern portion of the city to keep them away from the bulk of the fighting.

The Shogun had sent 500 of his best soldiers to help defend the capital. Unfortunately, the Empress Kurako sent them away mere hours before the start of the battle for fear of betrayal from within. Those men traveled south to meet the rest of Kaneka's forces and were not able to return in time to make a difference in the fighting.

The attack began when the Unicorn army advanced on the main gate. This was not a proper assault, however, as the Unicorn horse archers simply rode about just within bowshot of the walls, testing the defenders. Akodo Shigetoshi's men answered with desultory long-range archery, not wishing to spend all of their arrows, and neither side took many casualties. Chagatai's forces seemed to



make only half-hearted attempts to get close to the walls and each attempt was countered by the Akodo army.

After an hour of this, however, the weather changed dramatically and with it, the course of the battle. It began to rain heavily; visibility dropped drastically and accurate archery became all but impossible, especially at long range. Suddenly, the western garrison exploded in a flash of lightning and thunder. Akodo Shigetoshi realized with horror that the change in weather was not an act of nature but an incantation to the Elements. Lightning strikes blew apart the western wall, creating a large breach.

That, of course, was the Unicorn's cue. They immediately began a general assault on the city walls, intending to stretch Shigetoshi's forces to the breaking point. With few reserves available to him, Shigetoshi could not reinforce the breach in the western wall. The Moto soldiers of the Khol overwhelmed the Akodo at the breach and surged into the city. They seemed to have a specific goal in mind: the Imperial Palace.

Akodo Shigetoshi realized the change in weather could only have originated from a tower overlooking the western garrison. He rushed to the tower and encountered sev-

eral Mantis shugenja coordinating a ritual to maintain the torrential downpour. He slaughtered the casters and then found himself confronted by Yoritomo Naizen, the Mantis Clan Champion. Their single combat was equally matched, and the stuff of legend. In the end, Naizen overcame the Lion leader, but decided not to kill his foe, out of respect for both his abilities and his loyalty to the Empire. Naizen considered he had already fulfilled his obligation to Chagatai, and the rest was up to the Khan.

The weather cleared up at the start of the third hour. Unicorn forces continued to pour through the gap in the western defenses. Without the heavy rain to confuse them and hinder their movements, however, Lion soldiers quickly reinforced the struggling defenses and even counterattacked. The Unicorn fought with reckless abandon, knowing time was not on their side. The western garrison soon turned into a slaughterhouse, with hundreds dying on both sides.

The Unicorn who had penetrated the outer defenses found themselves within the merchant quarter of the city. They quickly traveled through the winding streets toward the Imperial Palace, outrunning the defenders who had



to pursue them. The Khan himself rode at the forefront of the charge. He stopped on his way to the Palace, however, when he caught sight of the Shogun's personal banner waving in one of the side streets. He waved his men on, and the Unicorn moved on without him, splitting up into smaller groups to reach the Palace through side streets and shortcuts. Some would fall to Seppun warriors on the way, but most reached the steps of the Palace unscathed. A group of Moto killed Doji Seishiro along the way, only to be slaughtered by his grief-stricken friend Akodo Setai.

Moto Chagatai approached Kaneka and spoke to him. They had once treated each other as blood brothers. Chagatai implored his old friend to join his side against the Empress. Kaneka had the strength to guide the Empire, and with the Unicorn to back him, none would oppose them. Kaneka refused the offer, calling it treason. There was nothing left to say. The old two friends began a kenjutsu duel.

Kaneka quickly gained the upper hand in the duel. He had readied a killing blow when a monstrous thunderclap filled the air. His brother Isawa Sezarū had arrived. The shugenja had finally gone insane, his delicate mind shattered by the events wracking the Empire. He began to rain down fire and destruction on the city without discrimination. His wife Isawa Angai appeared in the sky with him and pleaded for him to stop the destruction. When he refused to do so, she used the final remnant of the Last Wish to kill them both, causing a great explosion in the sky.

Chagatai took advantage of the disturbance and sprang away from his opponent. When Kaneka turned back to press his attack, two White Guard samurai barred his path. The Unicorn warriors died on Kaneka's blade to give their lord enough time to recover. Chagatai killed Kaneka with his next blow.

The events outside began to draw attention from those who remained inside the Imperial Palace. The Imperial Chancellor Bayushi Kaukatsu stepped out on to a balcony to better view the events. Suddenly, *gaki* appeared on the balcony, having been spurred by Daigotsu Rekai months before to murderous intent. The spirits ripped Kaukatsu to shreds.

Meanwhile, the fight raged on in other parts of the city. 50 Crane warriors, led by Daidoji Gempachi, arrived at the Imperial Palace to reinforce the Empress' Guard. This small but determined force constituted the last defense of the Toturi Dynasty.

The Empress heard the commotion just outside of the palace and grew despondent. She never trusted the Empress' Guard, as they were mere Crane and not proper Lion warriors. She believed they were no match for the Unicorn invaders. To avoid the shame of surrender, Toturi Kurako committed seppuku. In reality, the Empress' Guard and Gempachi's men held off the Unicorn in a desperate fight, killing twice as many as they lost. The Imperial Palace still stood, though it would only be a bittersweet victory.

A second thunderclap shattered the air as shugenja from the Phoenix Clan arrived. They subdued all the fighting within the city with powerful magic. Those who wanted to keep fighting stopped as a wondrous sight filled the air — the Fire Dragon appeared in person above the skies of Toshi Ranbo. Isawa Ochiai proclaimed an immediate truce and demanded the Unicorn forces withdraw from the Imperial City. The Battle of Toshi Ranbo came to a sudden and dramatic halt, punctuated by the arrival of Matsu Yoshino, who declared the Lion Clan would respect the truce imposed by the Phoenix, but that Moto Chagatai was a traitor in their eyes, and in a year's time they would march on Shiro Moto and burn it to the ground.

Notable Samurai: The Truest Test

DAIDOJI GEMPACHI, HEAVY REGULAR

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 3
		Agility: 5	Strength: 5	
Honor: 3.7	Glory: 3.0	Status: 3.0		

SCHOOL/RANK: Daidoji Yojimbo 2/Daidoji Heavy Regular

ADVANTAGES: Way of the Land (Daidoji Provinces), Ally (Daidoji Yaichiro), Balance

DISADVANTAGES: Can't Lie, Obligation (Hida Masatori)

SKILLS: Battle (Skirmish) 2, Defense 4, Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu (No Dachi) 5, Kyujutsu 2, Spears (Yari) 5, Athletics 2, Hunting 2, Poetry 1, Games: Shogi 1, Jiu-jutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 1

Gempachi's family always served in the armies of the Crane Clan; in fact, in the Clan War an entire generation of them were nearly wiped out when the Crab led their Shad-

owlands armies through the Crane lands. His first thought when he learned that his sensei had selected him for further training on the Kaiu Wall was that reports of the Fortune of Irony's death had been greatly exaggerated. He wasn't happy about the idea but with no honorable way to refuse, he went.

The first weeks on the Wall were difficult; Gempachi saw no reason to hide his opinion of the Crab and the Hida returned the favor. He was shielded from the worst of it by his gunso, Hida Masatori, who made it clear that anyone who rendered the new Crane unfit for duty would be standing Gempachi's watches as well as his own. As time went on things improved, but Gempachi never lost the feeling of being the outsider.

When Kosatan Shiro was destroyed he was recalled to the Crane lands to serve in the war against the Dragon. While traveling to his new assignment he stopped at what remained of Kosatan Shiro's castle town, and here he received a great shock. A Daidoji magistrate who was investigating the castle's destruction sought him out for a detailed discussion of the Shadowlands, and Gempachi learned that Daigotsu Rekai had been secretly imprisoned in the castle at the time it was destroyed. The news outraged him, and he promised the magistrate that he would send word if he came by any useful information.

It is a promise that so far has gone unfulfilled. His time has been filled with battle; first against the Dragon in their mountains and then at Toshi Ranbo against the Unicorn. But it does not bother him. If the Fortunes will that he is to help destroy his family's shame, they will bring him to the right place for it.

BAYUSHI NORACHAI, PROTECTOR OF THE IMPERIAL CITY

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 5	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes: 5			Strength: 4	
Honor: 2.5		Glory: 4		Status: 6



SCHOOL/RANK: Bayushi Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Ally (Doji Nagori), Crafty, Higher Purpose (Defend Empire)

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Fortune, Unlucky (3 points)

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Law 5

As a youth, Bayushi Norachai was an excellent student and all of his sensei agreed he had a bright future ahead of him. Upon his gempukku he was given a post in the Emerald Magistrates where his job was to serve as a yoriki to a distinguished senior magistrate – or to make sure that said magistrate did not intrude into Scorpion business, depending on who you asked. Norachai was good at both, and so he rose steadily in the Emerald Magistrates and the opinion of the Scorpion leadership. Eventually he was picked to be the shadow of the new Emerald Champion, Yasuki Hachi.

Norachai was pleased to be chosen as the Emerald Champion's aide and he expected to have no trouble handling Hachi, a man whose previous highest post was gunso in the Crane armies. Very quickly he realized things were not so simple. Hachi was determined to be a good Emerald Champion regardless of what anyone else thought. It wasn't that he didn't understand the situation he was in — Hachi was a very intelligent man — it was simply that

he didn't consider it a good reason to abandon his responsibilities. Norachai's attitude went from disbelief to scorn and then slowly to respect. Eventually he found himself in the difficult position of trying to serve two lords while betraying neither. It was a challenge he relished, both for the heights of skill it demanded of him and the satisfaction of truly serving the Empire.

When Hachi left for the Shadowlands to defend the Emperor, his last command to Norachai was to protect the Empire, regardless of what it took. When Empress Kurako decided to revive the office of Protector of the Imperial City Norachai set about scheming to get the position. With the matter of succession still unresolved, Toshi Ranbo would be at the center of everyone's plans, and Norachai was determined to have a say in its fate.

What he didn't plan on was the Khan's unorthodox winter campaign, or the Mantis Clan's treachery, both of which made shambles of his plans for defending the capital. It is a failure he cannot excuse. As he looks over the ash-covered wreckage of the city, he wonders how he can live up to Hachi's faith in him when he no longer has faith in himself.

Allies & Enemies

Daidoji Gempachi's family has no land to speak of, but he is a military officer with several noted actions to his credit, making him worth 2 Points of Influence. What he's willing to do for an ally is sharply limited by his intense loyalty to his family and Clan, making him worth 1-2 points of Devotion. As a Sworn Enemy he's worth 2 Points due to his limited influence.

Bayushi Norachai's influence is somewhat limited at the moment, but an Imperial appointment always conveys a certain amount of power, making him worth 3-4 Points in Influence. His typically Scorpion distrust of other people's motives has been sharpened by recent events, which limits his Devotion to 1-2 Points. As a Sworn Enemy he's worth 3-4 points, because over the years he's had a lot of practice at dealing with enemies.

New Mechanics

New Advanced School: The Stone Fangs (Shugenja/Monk)

Since the attack of the Tsuno, the Kitsus have learned well that they cannot neglect the more martial ways of life entirely. The kami serve the shugenja, but to ask them for strength without seeking to increase one's own inner strength is disrespectful. After the desecration of the Hall of Ancestors in 1159, one man asked if the attendants could have prevented it if they were stronger. Kitsu Ryukinzen founded this small sect of shugenja to form a secret defense for those places sacred to the Kitsus.

In addition to their responsibility to protect the most sacred temples of the Kitsus, the Stone Fangs are also entrusted to guard a sacred Lion temple in Toshi Ranbo. This temple long predates Toshi Ranbo becoming the Imperial City; it was dear to the Lion back in the days when they and the Crane fought constantly over possession of the city. The fact that so many Lions perished defending it over the course of history makes it even more valuable to them now, thus warranting its defense by the Stone Fangs, who acquitted themselves particularly well during the Unicorn attack.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAITS: Earth 4, Water 4

SKILLS: Juijutsu 4, any other Weapon Skill 4, Lore: Ancestors 5

OTHER: Honor Rank 3.5

SPECIAL: Ranks in the Stone Fangs count as Ranks in the Kitsu Shugenja School, but the Stone Fangs Advanced School grants no Affinity and removes any Deficiency for Earth that the shugenja might have previously possessed. The Stone Fangs Advanced School has the Monk descriptor for non-shugenja who enter it.

Techniques:

RANK 1: THE BITE OF STONE

A fang of stone bites deeper than that of any beast. You gain 1 Free Raise per School Rank for use on any Bugei Skill Roll. You also gain a bonus equal to your Water Ring to the total of all of your damage rolls. If you possess

Ranks in any other School with the Monk descriptor, you also gain 1 Martial Kiho for which you meet the Mastery requirements at no cost.

RANK 2: THE GUARDIAN LION'S MAJESTY

Evil spirits flee the sight of mighty stone shi-shi guardians placed before a gate. Your Wound Ranks are calculated as though your Earth Ring was 1 Rank higher. You may spend a Void point to gain a +1k1 DR bonus to 1 unarmed attack as if you were wielding a katana. You must declare that you are using this ability (and thus spend the Void Point) before you make the attack roll. In addition, you gain a +2k1 DR bonus to all unarmed attacks against targets with an Honor Rank of 0 or with at least 1 Rank of Shadowlands Taint.

RANK 3: THE SCULPTOR'S WILL

A swordsmith knows that his work is imbued with a part of his own nature, just as a master stone carver etches strength and righteous wrath into the material of a guardian statue. You gain a bonus equal to twice your Water Ring to the total of all of your damage rolls, replacing the Rank 1 bonus. You gain 2 bonus Void points per day that may only be spent to reduce damage taken or increase damage dealt. If you possess Ranks in any other Schools with the Monk descriptor, you gain an additional Martial Kiho, for which you meet the Mastery Requirements, at no cost. This supplements the bonus gained at Rank 1.

New Path: The Empress' Guard (Bushì)

Historically, the Emperor of Rokugan has entrusted the protection of his wife and children to an elite cadre of warriors known as the Empress' Guard. Traditionally drawn from the ranks of the Crane Clan's finest warriors — likely as a nod to the tradition of the Emperor's wife being a Crane — the Empress' Guard has a reputation as one of the most prestigious and honorable warrior sects in the Empire. The number of times that the wife of an Emperor has been lost to assassins or other nefarious ends can be counted on a single hand, thanks in part to the vigilance and diligence of the Empress' Guard.

After the death of Emperor Toturi III, the Empress' Guard became the personal bodyguard of his wife and regent, Empress Toturi Kurako. During the Unicorn siege, they stood as the last line of defense against the Unicorn invaders. Under the command of Kakita Matabei, the Empress' Guard kept the Khan's soldiers from entering the throne room, but were slain almost to a man. Unfortu-

nately, the Empress believed Unicorn victory was inevitable, and committed seppuku rather than allow herself to be used as a hostage. In the process, she disgraced the surviving members of her Guard.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Daidoji Yojimbo 2, Doji Magistrate 2, or Kakita Bushi 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 3

TECHNIQUE: HARANOBU'S BLESSING

Members of the Empress' Guard are blessed with the legendary stamina and alertness of its founder. Your Stamina Rank is doubled when you roll to resist disease, fatigue, or poison. You also gain a bonus equal to your Honor Rank to the total of your attack rolls and Perception Rolls. When defending the Empress, either in person or her honor, you may spend a Void Point to gain an additional attack in that round.

New Path: The Legion of Stone (Bushì)

The Legion of Stone is the bodyguard of the Avalanche Guard, the Earth magic specialists of the Phoenix Clan's legendary Elemental Guard. As such, its members are intimately familiar with the brutal, cataclysmic nature of the magic practiced by their shugenja cousins. The Legion of Stone was particularly important in assisting their colleagues during the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, as the Avalanche Guard could not unleash their full power without endangering the buildings of the Imperial City.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Shiba Bushi 2 or Shiba Yojimbo 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 3

TECHNIQUE: BORN OF THE EARTH

The Legion of Stone draws its strength from the shugenja of the Avalanche Guard. When an allied Phoenix shugenja within your line of sight casts an Earth spell, you gain a number of Void Points equal to the spell's Mastery Level. You may only use these Void Points to enhance rolls involving Stamina or Willpower (including Skill Rolls for Stamina- or Willpower-based Skills), or to ignore the effects of Wound Penalties. You may only gain bonus Void Points from one spell at a time, and you may not gain additional bonus Void Points until you have expended all of your current bonus Void Points. These bonus Void Points may exceed your normal total number of Void Points.

THE VACANT THRONE STRONGER THAN STEEL



During the months covered by *Stronger than Steel*, the Empire begins to recover from the massive upheavals that culminated at the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, and the Clans look toward the future. With the Khan repelled and his armies struggling to return to the Unicorn provinces, the Clans begin to squabble without a common enemy or Imperial oversight. Seeing their chance to claim new power, or simply to reunite the Empire, contenders for the Throne begin to marshal their strength. The Scorpion are among the first to act: Emerald Champion Shosuro Jimen, arguably now the most powerful man in the Empire, sets the groundwork for the Scorpion to either sit on the Steel Throne or control whoever does eventually sit on it.

Other factions have their own ideas, of course. Many among the Dragon and Scorpion point to Togashi Satsu, grandson of the Kami Togashi and the closest living mortal to the Divine Heavens, as their chosen candidate. Otomo Hoketuhime, Naseru's former lover and the daimyo of the Otomo family, takes it on herself to appoint new Imperial officials in the absence of an Emperor, and, in doing so, positions herself in the public eye as a contender for the Throne. Among the Phoenix, Shiba Yoma is put forth as a contender, while the Lion begin to search for a candidate among the Imperial Legions worthy of their trust.

While the courts gossip, both the Empire and the Heavens teeter on the brink of chaos. Several peasant revolts are put down, as the lower classes of Rokugan chafe under the lack of central authority. The Heavens themselves seem in turmoil, though if the cause is merely the lack of

an Imperial Dynasty or something much greater, no astrol-
og-ger can say. Finally, in the shadows of the Shinomen For-
est, a new threat emerges: Daigotsu's Spider Clan begins
to weave a web of intrigue across the Empire while estab-
lishing a new home both in the forest and in the Tainted
ruins of Otsan Uchi, the former Imperial capital.

Year 1169, Month of the Monkey

The Fall of the Mad Dragon

A large peasant revolt is put down by ronin forces, with the aid of several Dragon tattooed monks. The peasant rebels are led by Kokujin, the ancient and insane ise zumi and foe of the Dragon Clan. Kokujin fostered the revolt in his attempt to confront Togashi Mitsu, the Oracle of Thunder, and gain immortality. Kokujin is finally betrayed and struck down by his apprentice, Bayushi Shinzo, while battling Togashi Matsuo, the student of Mitsu. Before he dies, Kokujin delivers a final prophecy of doom for the Dragon Clan.

A Web is Spun

Agents of the Spider Clan begin infiltrating the courts of the Great Clans, some of them ultimately gaining invitations to the upcoming Winter Court in Kyuden Otomo. At the same time, the Spider begin surreptitiously hiring bandits to raid



peasant villages, only to confront and destroy the raiders with their own samurai. In this way, the Spider begin to gain the trust of the peasant classes throughout Rokugan.

Conflict in the Imperial City

Lion and Mantis forces faced each other on the battlefield during the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, and neither Clan is known for letting go of old grudges. The presence of peace-keeping forces from both Clans in the Imperial City leads to conflict, as small groups of Lion and Mantis magistrates and soldiers scuffle in the streets. The Phoenix, backed by the power of the mighty Dragon of Fire, intervene in the conflicts. Mediation between the two parties fails, resulting in the Phoenix banishing much of the remaining Lion and Mantis forces from Toshi Ranbo.

A Family Dispute

With the death of Yasuki Hachi, the contentious Yasuki family finds itself leaderless. Crab Champion Hida Kuon meets with Crane Champion Doji Domotai and demands the undivided allegiance of the Yasuki family and control of all of their holdings. He presents evidence, given to him by the Scorpion as recompense for their attack on Hida Kisada, that the Yasuki, and their rich lands, belong solely to the Crab. Domotai takes this claim as a slight against her late father's honor, and both daimyo leave the meeting to prepare their Clans for war.

Year 1169, Month of the Rooster

Ambition and Rebirth

With the Emperor and his brothers dead, the Empire begins to realize that the Toturi line may have come to an end. As conflicts throughout the Empire reach a boiling point, each Clan realizes that a new Dynasty must soon sit on the Imperial Throne, lest the Empire fall into chaos. Several individuals begin to gather their resources and seek to bolster their own claims to the Throne, including Otomo Hoketuhime. Among the Clans, the Scorpion are the first to mobilize their resources. However, rather than putting forth a strong contender, the Scorpion initially aim to prevent any other faction from ascending to the Throne.

The March Begins

At the end of the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, Lion Champion Matsu Yoshino vowed to take Kyuden Moto within a year in order to punish the Unicorn for the Khan's treason. True to his word, Yoshino prepares his armies to invade the Unicorn lands. The Lion press the retreating Unicorn army, hoping to cut it off and destroy it before it can regroup. The Unicorn commander, Shinjo Shono, evades them, though only with great effort.

A Prophet's Words

Kitsuki Taiko and Kakita Hideo, a pair of young magistrates barely past their gempukku, travel to the edge of the Shinomen to answer the request of the tiny Fox Clan. What they find among the Kitsune family is surprising indeed: a young woman named Narako who is gifted (or perhaps cursed) with the exceedingly rare ability to prophecy. In order to protect her from a group of bandits that has repeatedly set upon the Fox Clan, the two magistrates offer to take her with them to the upcoming Test of the Jade Champion.

Year 1169, Month of the Dog, 1169

Test of the Jade Champion

In hopes of dispersing some of the power of the new Scorpion Emerald Champion, Shosuro Jimen, Otomo Hoketuhime holds the Test of the Jade Champion, the highest office held by shugenja in the Empire. The winner is the fierce Witch Hunter, Kuni Daigo, but more surprising is the appearance of a young Kitsune prophet. For more information on the Jade Championship, see Chapter Eight.

The Strange Soul of a Smith

A Naga shugenja travels from the Shinomen Forest to the Crab lands, in search of an unlikely target: Hida Fubatsu, a young samurai hoping to gain access to the Hiruma school. Zamalesh, the Naga, reveals that Fubatsu's soul is that of a reincarnated Naga hero. Fubatsu leaves to train with the Zamalesh, and finds that he has a strange gift for the forge.



Year 1169, Month of the Boar

The Courts of Winter

The Clans each hold winter courts, but the most popular and influential court ends up, predictably, being that of the Otomo, where Otomo Hoketuhime begins laying the groundwork for her candidacy for the Throne. The Crane offer tentative support to the Lady Otomo, while Doji Domotai gathers support for the Crane's imminent conflict with the Crab.

The Third Yasuki War Begins

The Crab begin to send their military forces into the Yasuki lands in the hopes of claiming them before full-scale war erupts. In order to prevent the Crab from gaining too much ground, several Crane commanders strike preemptively

or simply destroy valuable holdings before the Crab can occupy them. One notable instance of the latter tactic takes place at the Cherry Blossom Snow Sake House, where the Crane kill the sake master to deny the Crab access to the revenues from sale of the rare sake.

Involving Your Character in Stronger Than Steel

Stronger than Steel shows the Empire in a state of flux and waiting; the massive upheaval that followed Toturi III's death and the Khan's attack on Toshi Ranbo (and the subsequent death of the remaining Winds) is beginning to settle, and the conflict over the Throne has not yet truly begun. Vast opportunities are available for player character involvement in events that will have consequences for the entire Empire and the course of Rokugani history.

Player characters may be involved in the burgeoning Race for the Throne. While the average character probably has no real designs for taking the Throne himself, an established, high-Rank group could certainly put a candidate forward. Alternatively, the player characters may throw their support behind an existing candidate – for example, a group with a heavy Crane or Imperial presence may support Otomo Hoketuhime and become involved in her organization of tournaments and other official events. If the characters are especially gifted, they may find themselves approached by potential candidates looking to gain their support; alternatively, if they have come out in support of a candidate, they may find themselves in conflict with other samurai who don't agree with their particular choice of Emperor.

Shosuro Jimen, the Emerald Champion, is an ambitious man, and he wastes no time in re-organizing the Emerald Magistrates in his image. If the characters are already Magistrates, they may find themselves in conflict with

some of Jimen's new appointees, who will likely have less scrupulous views on how their jobs should be conducted (and may be there solely to advance the Scorpion Clan's interests, as well). Conversely, new characters with ambitious natures may find themselves in the position to rise rapidly in the ranks, provided they can prove themselves useful to Jimen.

The characters may find themselves caught up in the final days of the various peasant uprisings throughout the Empire – either as sympathetic ronin or as Clan soldiers sent to put the rebellion down.

For GMs who want to run a more courtly game, Toshi Ranbo is a hotbed of action during this time. Characters will have opportunities to help the rebuilding effort, take part in the conflict between the Lion and Mantis, aid in the Phoenix's peacekeeping efforts, or serve as new appointees to the Imperial Court, replacing samurai who died in the Battle of Toshi Ranbo.



Peasant Revolts: An In-Depth Look

In the official history of Rokugan, the only individuals unhappy with their station in life are villains and monsters. In the Ikoma histories, the only time rebellious peasants are mentioned is when they are under the command of either a Bloodspeaker or a bandit, and while the Shosuro histories are somewhat more pragmatic, only the largest incidences of peasant uprising are mentioned, and their scope and cause are often ignored. Despite these attempts to de-emphasize the frequency and role of peasant uprisings, the fact remains that peasant revolts are a regular and somewhat expected part of Rokugani life. Most revolts are small affairs, quickly resolved without having to call in military force to put them down, but there have been several examples of larger upheavals that spread throughout the entire territories of individual Clans, and at least five uprisings that threatened the stability of the entire Empire.

The specific causes of peasant revolutions are manifold, but most can trace their roots to general hardship and ill fortune. Rokugan has an agriculture-based economy, with a rice-based representative currency, yet most of the wealth is concentrated in the hands of the Kuge and Buke samurai classes. This is accomplished through heavy taxation: In most years, the average small farmer pays 40-60% of his expected crop yield as taxes to his feudal lord, with the exact amount based on the quantity and quality of land provided to him. At least one-third of the taxed rice is passed on to the larger Clan and another one-third is given to the Imperial Families.

This is viewed as a right and proper representation of the Celestial Order: The farmer works the land owned by his lord, who in turn has all of his land granted to him by his Clan, and all of the lands of the Empire are owned by the Emperor and his family. In theory, this works very well; the peasant will make just enough to feed his family for the entire year, with a small amount available to trade for necessities. In years of bountiful harvests, or with more efficient work, farmers may even make enough to sell for hard currency, allowing them access to a wider range of goods and services.

Unfortunately, theory and hard reality are not always the same. In years of bad harvest, most samurai lords will allow their charges a reprieve and lower their tax burden. This, unfortunately, does not describe all lords; many are poor themselves, or refuse to alter their extravagant lifestyles in times of shortage. This, unsurprisingly, can lead to resentment in the peasant class.

In times of war, Clan or Imperial armies may "live off the land" and seize food without compensation, or draft farmers into makeshift units. Ashigaru granted land for their service may be called back into regular duty, leaving their neighbors with the responsibility to work the land. War may drive peasants from their homes, or destroy their farmlands, leaving them dispossessed and angry.

In times of famine, the healthy may be overworked, forced to care for greater than usual numbers of sick or dying while still tending to the fields. Since so many peasants are superstitious, they may blame poor harvests or plague on those higher up in the Celestial Order — if the land is stricken with disease, many peasants reason, then surely it is a sign the Heavens are displeased with their samurai lord and have seen fit to punish his subjects.

Finally, a particularly charismatic and ambitious individual born into the Bonge may acquire subversive ideas about the just order of things, and attract followers among the downtrodden or overworked who will help him put them into practice. Strangely enough, this often happens in time of great prosperity; for when the peasantry has more time for leisure, they also have more time to gather and plan. In order to avoid this, some lords may actually raise taxes in times of prosperity to keep their peasants working hard. More crafty samurai may hold longer and more elaborate harvest festivals to occupy their people and get them to spend or donate most of their newly-earned wealth.

Monks have a peculiar relationship to the phenomenon of peasant revolts. Technically, members of the monastic caste are little more than peasants themselves, but they have the ability to interact with both the samurai caste and the lower classes. This allows them to act as intermediaries between peasants and lords, and they are generally willing to do so. Sworn to poverty and simplicity themselves, monks feel a certain kinship with the peasantry, and many monks are willing to side with peasants against samurai, or even lead revolts. Since many monastic orders contain retired samurai and/or teach martial skills of their own, monk-led revolts are far more dangerous than

the average peasant uprisings. To avoid this, some lords bar the travel of monastic orders known for militaristic tendencies through their lands; most notably, the Soshi and Shosuro ban monks of Osano-Wo from their provinces, despite the close proximity of the southern Temple to Osano-Wo to the Scorpion lands.

Ideally, samurai lords prefer to mobilize local militias to neutralize peasant revolts rather than waste their best warriors, but those militias are usually drawn from the same body of peasants who are rebelling, and are therefore unreliable. So regular Clan assets usually have to be diverted to the task as well. This can prove a very unwelcome distraction if a Clan is involved in a proper war against another Clan. A peasant revolt can therefore become a weapon that one Clan wields against another, and some wartime peasant revolt leaders are agents of enemy Clans or Imperial agents sent to interfere in a conflict. In times of relative peace, the Imperial government may assume responsibility for quelling rebellious peasants, although the Imperial Legions are rarely sent. More often, ronin bands are hired for the task. A surprisingly large percentage of peasant rebellions are solved peacefully – after the initial wave of destruction, many lords are willing to surreptitiously make deals with their peasants, exchanging promises of better conditions for the lives of the ring-leaders. Such compromises allow both sides to save face.

The era represented by the Samurai Edition story arc and Stronger than Steel in particular saw the end of one of the largest peasant rebellions in the history of Rokugan, inspired by the evil monk Kokujin. Kokujin sought to create as much conflict as possible throughout the Empire, and used several agents to inspire rebellion among the lower castes. He found this easiest in the lands of the Scorpion, who suffered famine due to the wrath of the fortune Bishamon, and the lands of the Lion, whose peasants grew weary of the Clan's seemingly endless war with the Unicorn. Kokujin directed the rebellion at the lands of the Dragon, where he hoped to draw out the new Oracle of Thunder, Togashi Mitsu, in a mad plot to steal his blood and gain immortality. His rebellion was finally put down by a joint effort between the ronin Legion of Two Thousand, an army headed by Crab magistrates, and a group of Dragon tattooed monks.

Notable Samurai: Stronger Than Steel

AKODO SETAI, FAILED DEATHSEEKER AND COURT REPRESENTATIVE

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

Honor: 4.1	Status: 5.6	Glory: 7.1
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SCHOOL/RANK: Akodo Bushi 1/Lion Deathseeker 1/ Master of Games 1

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Death Trance, Luck (3 points), Strength of the Earth (4 points), Allies (Doji Domotai, Doji Seishiro)

DISADVANTAGES: Obligation (Serve the Lion, Matsu Nimuro), Overconfident, Unlucky (3 points)

Kata: Fury Without End

SKILLS: Battle 4, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 3, Defense 6, Etiquette (Sincerity) 5, Games: Go 6, Heavy Weapons 2, Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Bushido 4, Storytelling 3, Lore: History 2, Tea Ceremony 2

Very few samurai can claim to have a life as interesting as Akodo Setai, and Setai would be the first to admit that an interesting life can be a curse. Setai is among the most famous Lion in the Empire, but for most of his life he hoped his name would be forgotten.

When he was a young man, he was partially responsible for one of the few defeats the loyal Clans suffered in the final days of the War of Spirits. Setai was in charge of a local garrison in the southern lands of the Lion, and had a reputation as a brash and boisterous young man. One night, after indulging in a bit too much sake, he was involved in a fistfight with a traveling ronin. Neither man was too badly hurt, but, unfortunately, the following day a village only a few hours' march from Setai's garrison found itself under siege by a wandering band of displaced spirits. Setai was too busy nursing his wounds and hang-over to realize what was going on, and the village was sacked, a large number of its inhabitants killed. To atone for the shame of his actions, Setai requested permission



to commit seppuku, but his superior's son died in the attack, and the angry father declared Setai's shame was too great. Setai forsook his name and family and enlisted in the Deathseekers.

However, no matter how recklessly Setai fought, no matter how badly the odds were stacked against him, he always survived to fight another day. Setai outlived the first two units to which he was assigned, and he began to garner a reputation: He was the Deathseeker who could not die. There is no glory in the life of a Deathseeker, but Setai's name was whispered among the Lion, and his bloody exploits became something of a legend among the Matsu.

For twelve years, Setai served on the front lines of the Lion's armies. He battled the Tsuno and the Unicorn, fought soldiers and bandits, and was among the first to breach the city of Toshi Ranbo during Matsu Nimuro's campaign to take it. No matter what odds he faced, his units were always victorious, even if he was the only survivor of the confrontation.

Finally, while returning to Lion lands with the survivors of his unit after Daigotsu's assault on Otsan Uchi, Setai came upon a group of bandits assaulting an Imperial Herald. Setai sprang into action, and while he suffered grievous wounds and most of his allies fell in battle, he managed to bring the wounded



courtier to Matsu Nimuro's court. In honor of his deeds, Nimuro declared Setai had regained his honor, and assigned him to accompany the Herald to the reforming Imperial Court.

Since that day, the Deathseeker who could not die has become one of the most respected and influential figures in the Lion Clan. He has served his Clan with dignity and honor, and the keen mind that once saw him through two dozen battles has adapted itself to the no less dangerous battlefield of the Imperial Court. Many courtly opponents have underestimated the former Deathseeker, hoping to prey upon a brash nature that, unbeknownst to them, died years before. He is quite fond of challenging young courtiers and visiting military officials to games of go, and he is considered one of the foremost experts of the game in Toshi Ranbo.

Doji Seishiro, a member of the Court with a similarly impressive military background, became one of his closest friends. Seishiro died during the Khan's assault on Toshi Ranbo, and, with his death, Setai found that some of the old fire in his heart still burned. During the Stronger than Steel period, Setai's lingering anger at the Khan and his would-be allies in the Mantis led to conflict, as well as the

eventual the expulsion of the Lion's peacekeeping forces from the Imperial City by the Phoenix. Setai held a grudge against his own failings for a dozen years; none can say how long he will hold a grudge against those he now views as enemies of the Empire.

TAWAGOTO, IDEALISTIC RONIN

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

Honor: 1.9	Status: n/a	Glory: 3.8
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SCHOOL/RANK: Ronin Warrior 2/The People's Champion 1

ADVANTAGES: Hero of the People, Leadership, Ally (Akihiro)

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic, Dark Secret (Killed Seppun Sugita), Social Disadvantage (Ronin), Obligation (Mother and Daughter)

KATA: Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind

SKILLS: Acting (Disguise) 1, Battle 4, Courtier 1, Deceit 1, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 2, Ken-jutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Bushido 2, Spears 3, Underworld 2

Shinsei says, "The man who has nothing is the man who will soon find something, even if it is his own death." Tawagoto is such a man — a son of a hero, a man who served under the direct command of an Emperor, a man who has now lost his wife and family, a man who has lost his faith.

Tawagoto comes from a line of ronin who served the Toturi Dynasty. His grandfather was an ashigaru who fought in Toturi's Army and was elevated to a samurai. His father discovered a plot concocted by the Army of Spirits against Toturi I and died fighting the assassins. In honor of his father's sacrifice, Toturi Tsudao gave young Tawagoto a place in the First Legion.

Not all was well, however. He loved his wife, a beautiful daughter of a merchant, terribly, but was unable to see her more than a few weeks a year. Worst of all, he was not present for the birth of his daughter. The birth was a difficult one, and Tawagoto's beloved died shortly after as a result of complications. Despite this, Tawagoto was faithful to his duty.

Tawagoto served until Tsudao's death, but he had seen enough death on the battlefield and at home. When the Legion was disbanded, he took his leave and did not join it when it reformed. He returned home and used his pay to purchase a small inn in Nikesake, a village at the edge of the Phoenix lands, which he ran with the aid of his blind mother. Soon enough, war again took its toll on the Empire, as the dark sorcerer Iuchiban and his Bloodspeaker forces tore the Empire apart from within. As the War of Fire and Thunder raged, few visitors passed through Nikesake, and he was forced to seek employment elsewhere to support his mother and daughter.

Unfortunately, his source of employment was an ambitious Seppun named Sugita, who ordered Tawagoto to "investigate" a village that was behind on paying its taxes, an "investigation" that carried with it an implied requirement of violence. Tawagoto realized the village almost certainly missed its payments due to the war and a famine; his fears were confirmed when he traveled there and saw the desperation in the villagers' eyes. He attempted to fool the Seppun, but his deceit did not have the desired effect: Sugita decided to wipe the village out to destroy what he saw as a group of rebels. Tawagoto, with the aid of the villagers, ambushed Sugita and his men, killing them to the last man.

After that day, Tawagoto knew he could never return to his home or family. He enlisted with a group of ronin

bounty-hunters, most of whom he had served with in the First Legion, and found himself swept up in a series of peasant revolts in the lands of the Scorpion. Rejecting Bushido, which he now saw as a cause of suffering, he sided with the angry peasants, many of whom were starving due to famine and cruel lords. He found he had a gift for speaking with the downtrodden, a gift used by his friend, Akihiro, to inspire many peasant warriors to his banner.

Unfortunately, Akihiro himself was being manipulated by the tattooed madman, Kokujin, a self-titled Prophet of the Dark Lotus. When Tawagoto discovered this, he left his former allies and joined with the newly reformed Legion of Two Thousand. It is believed Tawagoto died facing Kokujin's rebels, his life buying time for the Legion to descend upon Kokujin's lair, but the truth of his final fate is uncertain.

Allies & Enemies

Akodo Setai has vast influence within his Clan, and is quite popular in the Imperial Court, but he is somewhat limited in his ability to influence the Empire as a whole. He is worth 2 Points of Influence. As an intensely honorable man and former Deathseeker, he puts the honor of his family and his own honor above the needs of his allies, making him worth only 1 Point of Devotion.

As a Sworn Enemy, Setai is immensely dangerous, and would likely be worth 5 Points. He is both physically formidable and influential; if a young bushi draws his ire, he would likely need a powerful ally or mentor to avoid finding himself maneuvered into a dangerous position.

Tawagoto lacks influence outside ronin and the lower castes, but he has shown himself willing to sacrifice his own honor for causes he considers worthy. He would likely cost 1 Point for his Influence, and he could be given the full range of options for Devotion.

As an enemy, Tawagoto is significantly more dangerous (as Seppun Sugita discovered first-hand). His ability to inspire devotion in the local peasantry can make things difficult for any landed samurai, and his willingness to do what must be done means that any sworn foe could find themselves at the end of his sword. He is worth 3-4 Points as a Sworn Enemy.

New Mechanics

Peasant Characters

Compared to samurai, Rokugani peasants often live a short and painful life, with less access to medical care, fewer educational opportunities, and a guaranteed life of difficult labor. Their lives are never glamorous, and rarely exciting. Even so, if you wish to have peasants in a campaign as player characters, it is possible, if somewhat perverse. You should consult *Emerald Empire: The Legend of the Five Rings Companion* for cultural and social information on the peasant class. It is not recommended that peasant and samurai player characters mix except in the most unusual circumstances, as the samurai have a distinctive advantage in both mechanical ability and social status in the setting, and peasant players may find themselves marginalized or even abused by samurai characters.

But for players who wish to experience the life of a peasant in the Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition game, here are some basic guidelines.

CHARACTER CREATION. Peasant player characters should be far more heroic and able than a typical peasant, or at least a product of extraordinary circumstance. A truly typical Rokugani peasant works in the field by day and hangs around his village or town by night; his life is not the stuff of an exciting roleplaying campaign. If you insist on playing a peasant, give your character a strong back-story, a powerful reason (whether internal or external) why he embarks on a life of adventure.

One possibility is to create a True Ronin character with the Dark Secret Disadvantage, to represent a peasant who has stumbled upon (or stolen) a samurai's daisho, perhaps from the remains of a battlefield. Otherwise, use the following character creation guidelines.

CHARACTER POINTS AND COSTS. Peasant player characters have 35 points to spend on Skills, Traits, and Advantages. They have no access to Kata or starting Schools.

RINGS AND TRAITS: As heroic characters, Peasant player characters begin with the standard 2 Ranks in all Rings and Traits. This is different from most peasants, who

should begin with all of their Rings at 1 Rank and certain attributes at 2 Ranks, depending on class (laborers and warriors begin with their Physical Traits at 2, and entertainers and servants begin with their Mental Traits at 2).

SKILLS. Peasant starting Skills are limited based on their professions. Peasants may not have more than 8 different Skills at character creation, and at least 1 Skill must be a Craft Skill. No Skills may exceed 3 Ranks at character creation. Only budoka, ashigaru, and outlaws should have weapon Skills. The skills you choose for your peasant should illustrate his background in some way: a farmer overseen by a Crab lord will likely have a Rank of Lore: Shadowlands or Lore: Superstitions, while an eta geisha will have Ranks in Courtier or Etiquette. Conversely, it is wise to avoid Skills that would be out of place in your peasant character, such as giving the Courtier Skill to a Unicorn farmer – and, remember, trying to optimize a peasant character with powerful Skill combinations rather misses the point of playing a peasant!

The following Skills are forbidden for starting peasant player characters: All weapon Skills other than Chain Weapons, Knives, Spears, Staves, and Peasant Weapons; Iaijutsu; Tea Ceremony; Know the School.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES. The best Advantages and Disadvantages for peasant characters are ones representing physical or spiritual traits. Large or Quick Healer are flavorful, as are the various Blessings and Curses of the Seven Fortunes. Great Destiny or Dark Fate can be a nice explanation for why a peasant character may be interacting with samurai PCs. However, which Advantages and Disadvantages are allowed to peasant characters is ultimately up to GM discretion. Some Advantages may not be appropriate for peasant characters in a specific campaign, while others (such as Forbidden Knowledge) would simply require a higher point cost to justify them.

However, peasant characters should be barred from taking the following Advantages and Disadvantages: Death Trance, Different School, Gaijin Gear, Imperial Spouse, Inheritance, Ishiken-Do, Multiple Schools (see the exception below), Perceived Honor, Sacred Weapon, Sage, Servant, Servant of the Law, Authority, Social Position, Tactician, Wealthy, Ascetic, Bitter Betrothal, Black Sheep, Deathseeker, Forced Retirement, Hostage, Social Disadvantage, Spoiled, and any Advantage or Disadvantage dealing with social position or specific trappings of the samurai caste.



HONOR, STATUS AND GLORY. Peasant characters do not usually follow the code of Bushido. Because of this, all peasants begin at 1 Honor, though they may raise it to 1.5 by spending 2 character points. Since they are ignorant of Bushido, peasants do not normally gain Honor – lower any Honor gained by 3 Points, and Honor lost by 1 Point. A peasant with at least 1 Rank in Lore: Bushido may elect to follow the code of Bushido, and thus gain and lose Honor normally. Beware, however, as some haughty samurai may see a peasant adhering to the warrior's code as an affront!

Peasant characters begin with Status of 0.1 and Glory of 0. Peasants may raise their Status by 1 Point by paying 1 character point, up to a status of 0.4. Peasants may raise their Glory to 1 by paying 3 character points.

Peasants do not normally gain Status, and may not gain it above 0.4 and remain peasants – 0.4 is typically reserved for the highest-ranked ashigaru and craftsmen. Halve any Glory a peasant may gain, before any other

modifiers. Glory losses (and the subsequent entry into Infamy) are not affected.

TECHNIQUES. Peasants do not learn Techniques. If peasants are lucky or skilled enough to find a teacher, or daring enough to attempt developing Techniques on their own, they may attempt to do so at Rank 2 (i.e., 150 Insight) by buying the Multiple Schools Advantage. Peasants may normally only enter into Ronin Schools or the People's Champion Path (see below), though some other ronin-oriented paths may be appropriate, at GM discretion.

New Path: The People's Champion (Bushii)

While bushi are considered the primary warriors of Roku-gan, ashigaru make up a large part of the Empire's armies. Because of this, some samurai are taught specific tech-

niques for leading ashigaru or budoka, or develop them on their own after years of training the lower classes to be warriors. Additionally, while peasants are usually expected to follow the orders of their betters, some are naturally gifted at leading their fellows. This Path represents both the learned techniques for leading peasant armies and the natural skills of peasant rebel leaders.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Bushi School at Rank 1. Additionally, peasant characters may enter this School by buying the Multiple Schools Advantage when they reach Rank 2.

PATH OF EGRESS: Same School at next rank, or any Ronin Bushi School at Rank 1.

TECHNIQUE: THE INSECT'S BITE

Even insects can kill if they know where to bite, and a group of peasants can defeat samurai if they know where to strike. The People's Champion is a hero who can inspire even the humblest of warriors, or a villain who can make even the most frightened servant fight to the death. While in a skirmish, you may choose to inspire your troops as a Complex Action. You make an Awareness/Battle Roll with a TN equal to 10 plus twice the number of peasants, ashigaru, or budoka under your command who are directly involved in this skirmish. If you succeed, your peasant, ashigaru, and budoka subordinates gain a Free Raise on all attack rolls and Defense Skill rolls, and gain a +5 bonus to their TN to Be Hit. This effect lasts until your next turn.

Characters may only be inspired by 1 such Champion per round; this effect does not stack.

Alternatively, if fighting with a unit of ashigaru or budoka in a Mass Battle, you may, once per mass battle round, re-roll a Battle Opportunity Roll, keeping the roll of your choice.

New Advantage: Hero of the People (2 points)

You have a particularly positive reputation among the peasantry of the Empire. You may be a war hero, or a popular and merciful lord, or a patron of a well-known monastery, or simply known for helping the lower classes. This reputation may not extend to your fellow samurai, who will probably think the peasants' devotion to you odd, but they will not think ill of you for it. When dealing with subjects of the Empire who are not samurai, your Glory is treated as if it is 2 Ranks higher.

New Disadvantage: Monstrous Nobility (1 or 3 points)

You have a particularly terrible reputation among the peasantry of the Empire. Perhaps your family has a reputation for abusing their retainers, or you performed a particularly vile act to a peasant, or you were a brutal ashigaru leader who threw away his soldier's lives with little human regard. Samurai may know of this reputation, but as you have done nothing out of place, they do not usually treat you poorly. With the 1 Point version of this Disadvantage, your Ranks in Glory are treated as Infamy when dealing with the peasant classes. With the 3 Point Disadvantage, your ranks of Infamy are your Glory + 2, and you are equally reviled by members of the monastic caste as well.

THE VACANT THRONE



EMERALD & JADE

"Though many brave samurai rushed into the depths of the Shadowlands to save his life, Emperor Toturi the Third died during the year 1168. Toturi the Third chose to sacrifice his life to give his beloved Empire a chance for survival. Still, he did not die alone. The Emperor's personal champion Yasuki Hachi stood in front of the ravenous hordes, holding his ground to give his lord a chance for a dignified death. His behavior is a shining example of honor and duty that will be remembered forever. When the Clans recovered from the tragic loss, they sent their worthiest samurai to select one to bring law into the land in the Emperor's absence. Five days later, the Empire found its newest Emerald Champion."

— The Miya Histories

Following the death of Emperor Toturi III, and Emerald Champion Yasuki Hachi, there was a great power vacuum in the Empire. This was compounded when Asahina Sekawa resigned from his duties as Jade Champion in order to protect and teach Rosoku's heir. Sekawa considered this a more important duty than serving as Jade Champion because it would ensure that Rokugan would one day again have the guidance of the line of Shinsei. However, it left the Empire quite rudderless, as all three of the highest offices in the land were empty with no obvious successors in sight.

Knowing that the process of filling the vacant Throne would be quite arduous, Otomo Hoketuhime held a tournament to fill the empty Emerald Championship. Since the mechanism to fill the role was quite well defined, she felt that a Test of the Emerald Championship would bring

some stability to the Empire by ensuring the legitimacy of the new Emerald Champion. However, she had reason to regret that decision when Shosuro Jimen won the position against her expectation and desire.

Following her disappointment in the new Emerald Champion, Hoketuhime immediately announced a tournament to fill the Jade Championship. Her reasoning was that she could bring some balance to the Empire if the new (and equally legitimate) Jade Champion could counteract the political sway of the new Emerald Champion.

She did not expect that the appearance of a new prophet at the Test of the Jade Championship would foretell even greater events to come.

Year 1169, Month of the Goat

Shosuro Jimen Becomes Emerald Champion

Otomo Hoketuhime recognizes that a lack of strong leadership will only lead to an unstable Empire. To fill the void she orders a traditional tournament to decide on a new Emerald Champion. She is not entirely a neutral observer however, as she favors Kakita Noritoshi. Noritoshi is widely regarded as the likely winner in any event, and the Test of the Emerald Championship will confer on him a much-needed aura of legitimacy.





Aug 07

The Order of Thunder, a monastic order dedicated to the teachings of Osano-wo, hosts the tournament on the Plains of Thunder. Representatives of all the Great Clans attend, as well as some Minor Clans and ronin, and Miya Shoin presides over the entire competition.

Kakita Noritoshi is the talk of the field. His skills seem to surpass the other competitors by a wide margin. One competitor – Yoritomo Buntaro – even takes back his letter of entry rather than embarrass himself by challenging Noritoshi.

The ronin Tamago has doubts about competing and allowing himself to fall under scrutiny that could expose him as the true Matsu Nimuro, but his companion Utagawa urges him onwards, while also telling him she is aware of his ruse.

Daigotsu Iemitsu and Daigotsu Eiya enter the tournament at the behest of Daigotsu, disguised as ronin sponsored by the ailing Otomo Kotone. Iemitsu sincerely wishes to become the new Emerald Champion, but Eiya has a slightly different goal – the death of Kakita Noritoshi.

Hiruma Todoru is invited to attend, but instead he investigates the unearthing of a former Hiruma Dojo that housed the lost Hiruma Techniques.

During the leadership tests Shosuro Jimen goads Shiba Majushi into an inappropriate outburst by asking about a young Scorpion Majushi had encountered at the Topaz Championship. This is a strong indicator of how Jimen will negotiate his way through the difficult competition.

During the Championship Mirumoto Chojiro encounters Yoritomo Eriko and Yoritomo Sachina. In Eriko's features Chojiro recognizes a woman with whom he had a dalliance many years prior. Sachina, brooding over a recent unsuccessful negotiation with the Crab over tea prices (and possibly jealous of the attention given to her yojimbo), manipulates the conversation so that it sounds as if Chojiro is insulting both Eriko's mother and the Mantis in general. Despite seeing through the attempt, Eriko is forced into challenging Chojiro to a duel, a duel she cannot possibly win. As the unsanctioned duel is joined, Chojiro realizes that Eriko is actually his daughter, the offspring of his long-ago romance. In that moment he is unable to strike her down, and actually stumbles into Eriko's stroke, so a duel that meant to be to first blood takes his life.

On the way to the final bout, Shosuro Jimen faces off with Kakita Hideo and not only defeats him, but embarrasses him for his inexperience and brashness.

Kakita Noritoshi's path includes defeating Bayushi Hisako, the wife of the legendary Bayushi Kwanchai, and Daigotsu Eiya, in his disguise as a ronin. Eiya's attempt to take Noritoshi's life comes to naught when the Crane proves too talented a duelist for him. Noritoshi severs Eiya's hand, and Eiya flees the arena.

When Shosuro Jimen faces Kakita Noritoshi he rightly surmises that the onlookers assumed he would concede, recognizing the clearly more talented man. Instead, as they stand ready to draw their swords, Jimen speaks to Noritoshi. He tells the Crane that the Scorpion know of the Harriers and their dishonorable actions. He tells him that if Noritoshi were to win, the Scorpion would do everything they could to dishonor the Crane Champion over the actions of the Harriers, as well as connect Noritoshi to it, thus sully his position as Emerald Champion. Seeing that he had created an opening, Jimen continues by telling Noritoshi that his son has been slowly poisoned and that if he were to step aside, Jimen would provide the antidote. Noritoshi concedes.

Shosuro Jimen offers Noritoshi a position as a one of his chief magistrates, but the Crane refuses. He commits himself to protecting Doji Domotai from Scorpion accusations and his own family from Jimen's threats. When that is done, Noritoshi intends to take Jimen's life.

Otomo Hoketuhime, appalled at the turn of events, realizes that Shosuro Jimen as Emerald Champion will not ensure the stability she hoped for. She orders a Jade Championship tournament, hoping the new Jade Champion can counter his influence.

Year 1169, Month of the Dog

Kuni Daigo Becomes Jade Champion

Representatives from all of the Clans reconvene to name a new Jade Champion. Otomo Hoketuhime wanted the position filled in order to counteract the political power of Shosuro Jimen, but in the intervening months she grows worried that a Jade Champion who is too focused on the specific duties of the position will fall under Jimen's sway, either directly or indirectly. Each Great Clan sends three candidates. Daigotsu also sends three Spider candidates,

masquerading as ronin. A smattering of Minor Clan representatives attend as well.

Shosuro Atesharu, who has no desire to actually take the position and feels it is a mistake for the Scorpion to even try for it, uses his skills in deception to defeat one of the leading Mantis candidates, Moshi Sayoko.

Katsu of the Spider risks exposing himself when he faces Kitsune Aiko. He has to convince a kitsune spirit that he intended her no harm before it will back down. Facing that spirit would have shown his power to be more than he was letting on.

Agasha Tomioko defeats Asahina Nizomi when the offspring of Naka Tokei concedes rather than reveal the full extent of his power.

Yogo Reiko defeats Kitsu Ineko to reach the final round, where she faces Kuni Daigo. Daigo simply overpowers Reiko, not giving her the opportunity to construct a defense. Once again, the Jade Champion is a Crab shugenja, as has been the case for most of the last century.

Kuni Daigo has already made it public that if he becomes Jade Champion, he will create an army of shugenja to attack the Shadowlands rather than remain perpetually on the defensive. This stance, while well intentioned, will be manipulated by Hida Kuon as a weapon in his war against the Crane. Meanwhile, Shosuro Jimen sees that Kuni Daigo will not be a direct threat to his political power, as his attentions obviously lie elsewhere.

During the Jade Championships Seppun Shogo is murdered at the restaurant called the Mikado. The ensuing investigation condemns Bayushi Takaharu as the killer.

Involving Your Character in the Events of Emerald and Jade

The Emerald and Jade Championships have numerous opportunities for players to involve themselves in the greater workings of the Empire. Occasions like these, which offer built-in reasons for bushi and shugenja from all Clans to come together in one place, are fairly rare. Courtiers have their winter courts, but such gatherings are less common for those who follow the way of the blade or the call of the Elements.

It would be relatively simple to have a character participate in the Emerald Championship. As can be seen with

characters like Kakita Hideo, one does not have to be a proven samurai to attempt to achieve greatness. While it is unlikely that any character not as skilled at iaijutsu as Kakita Noritoshi or even Shosuro Jimen could win the event, characters can still gain some glory if they acquit themselves well.

It will be much more difficult for player characters to gain invitations to participate in the Jade Championship. Each Clan sends only three delegates, and to get one of the positions, a player character would have to somehow convince their daimyo or Champion that they are worthy of one of those few spots.

One of the first things that happens when a new Emerald or Jade Champion assumes office is that they appoint a number of new magistrates. Player characters could try to put themselves in position to impress likely new candidates in order to gain one of these prestigious positions.

There are certain activities surrounding these events that a perceptive character may be able to use to his advantage. Candidates representing the Spider hide their true identities with great care. Exposing or threatening to expose them could grant great recognition, but it could also create an implacable and very dangerous enemy.

Death at the Mikado: An In-Depth Look

A Scorpion vassal named Aotora Minowa was given a tea-shop to use as a front for investigations he was doing into various herbal concoctions that one could add to tea for various purposes (some of those purposes were nefarious, of course, but not all of them). While he continued his studies, the shop became very successful. Some of Minowa's customers suspected he was adding outside substances to his tea to make it addictive and drive sales, but this was not true. In fact, Minowa was fairly oblivious to the success of the shop.

Eventually Minowa was made aware of how much koku was being brought in and how he could use that money to better finance his studies. Through the good management of his underlings, one teashop became a chain of teahouses and inns throughout Ryoko Owari Toshi.

The business took on a life of its own. Minowa became very wealthy and he learned to leave the business alone and let his underlings take care of everything. He came to trust their judgment completely, so when they presented him with the unique idea of the Mikado, he agreed to it without giving it any thought.



The Mikado was a restaurant made of the finest materials available in Rokugan. Beautiful wood paneling, inlaid mosaic floors, burnished teak tables and silk brocade cushions created an atmosphere that would not have seemed out of place in the finest palaces in the Empire. In addition, the Mikado employed the finest cooks and staff available. They were hand picked from the other establishments in Minowa's ventures so that patrons of the Mikado were always guaranteed the best of everything.

None of this was what made the Mikado so unusual, however. A restaurant, however opulent, was still just a restaurant. What made the Mikado so special was its location.

The building was put together in such a manner that the whole place could be disassembled, packed up, and moved to a new location in a period of weeks. Wherever the most powerful men and women of Rokugan were assembled, there was the Mikado. As its fame grew, the Mikado became a destination of choice in and of itself; it no longer needed to follow the wealthy and powerful because they would come to it. In the winter, the court where the Mikado chose to set up would often become the most prestigious of the courts for that season.

The staff of the Mikado were smart about it, though. If there was a reason a certain court was a step ahead of the others, they did not fight it.

It did not have to be in a city, either. When the best and brightest of Rokugan gathered on the Plains of Thunder to name a new Emerald Champion or a new Jade Champion, the Mikado was right there, giving the elites a place to unwind after a long day of contests.

During the Month of the Dog in 1169, the Mikado sat on the Plains of Thunder, at a respectful

distance from the arenas where the great shugenja of the Empire vied with each other for the Jade Championship. Before the tournament ended, Seppun Shogo, a brusque, unlikable Imperial who had many enemies nearby, brought scandal to the Mikado when he was found murdered there.

It seems that he was poisoned by a Scorpion.

Or possibly he was burned by an angry shugenja.

Or maybe he was impaled by a dagger that seemed to be of gaijin design.

Or Seppun Shogo died in any one of a dozen other ways that floated on the gossip throughout the Mikado that night, in the guise of testimony.

The investigation was led by Seppun Katsura, the head of the Seppun magistrates and the master sensei of the Sapphire Blade Dojo. After collecting testimony from everyone within the restaurant that night, Katsura realized he had more than a typical murder on his hands. It seemed that every person he questioned had a different version of what had occurred that night. Some even tried to implicate people who were not within hundreds of miles of the Plains of Thunder at the time.

Katsura enlisted the services of Moto Hotei, a magistrate of the Unicorn. The two men sorted through the testimony and found that one of the few common threads implicat-

ed a Scorpion in the poisoning death of Shogo. When Katsura gathered the occupants of the Mikado to announce his verdict, he first spoke with disgust about the poorly veiled attempts to use the murder investigation as a way to eliminate or discredit rivals. Then he announced the murder had been committed by Bayushi Takaharu.

Among those assembled, some were shocked, while others felt vindicated in their beliefs. But nobody questioned the justness of the verdict as Seppun Katsura's word was above reproach and he used the testimony of the people present at the Mikado as his proof.

Katsura publicly thanked Moto Hotei for his aid in the investigation. Privately, Hotei was rewarded for his efforts by the Seppun sensei.

Takaharu was executed for the crime, and very few people thought about it afterwards... until eight months later. The Jade Championship was long finished so there was no longer a group of samurai looking for sustenance and luxury on the Plains of Thunder. The Mikado had been dismantled and moved to a new location, but certain memories did not leave.

Bayushi Kwanchai had spent the time since Moto Chagatai's assault on Toshi Ranbo looking for a way to exact revenge on the creatures who killed Bayushi Kaukatsu. As he looked for information on how to do that, he followed the trail to reports of a gaki that haunted the spot where the Mikado had stood. Once there he used a Toritaka spirit ribbon and an Imperial scroll to hold the gaki so he could question it.

This denizen of the Realm of the Hungry Dead was once Bayushi Takaharu, executed for the murder of Seppun Shogo. Kwanchai's reason for binding it had nothing to do with that crime, but while it was held Kwanchai asked it, "Did you, in fact, kill Seppun Shogo?"

The gaki that was once Takaharu laughed and said, "Ask your precious Emerald Champion."

Kwanchai thought about that for a moment, but then banished the gaki and went back to his original mission. He did not investigate Takaharu's comments, and now he



is in no position to pass the message on to anyone who could.

So, what really happened that night?

Did Takaharu kill Shogo? Did he do so on the orders of Shosuro Jimen? Was he just a convenient scapegoat? Does anyone, including the Emerald Champion, know the truth?

We may never know.

Notable Samurai: Emerald and Jade

DAIGOTSU EIYA, THE ARTIST OF DEATH

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

Honor: 0.2 Status: 1.0 Glory: 3.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Kakita Bushi 2/Obsidian Blade Duelist 3

ADVANTAGES: Fu Leng's Blessing, Combat Reflexes, Heartless

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation, Benten's Curse, Driven, Missing Limb, Shadowlands Taint

SKILLS: Defense 3, Iaijutsu 5, Intimidation 2, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Dueling 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3 (Note: Eiya had more skills once, dealing with his artistic side, but they have been forgotten.)

Kakita Eiya was a handsome and talented young man. When he studied at Shiro Sano Kakita, he showed great aptitude with a brush. He was a skilled painter, but his real talent seemed to be in the art of calligraphy. Each brushstroke could have been a painting all on its own, with all the expressiveness it displayed. His sensei marked this talent and encouraged him to become one of the great Crane artisans. Eiya did not ignore the Clan's other teachings, though. He followed the iaijutsu classes with great interest, and while he was talented in that area, he was merely one of many talented students. Or he was, until one day he made a breakthrough in the understanding of his art.

While moving through his practice kata, Eiya suddenly made the connection between the movements of his calligraphy brush and the movements of his katana. The sensei watched Eiya as his kata changed seamlessly. He was no longer following the movements set out for him. The sensei was about to admonish Eiya for his lack of discipline when he noticed the fluid grace and beauty of the movements. Eiya had spontaneously created new kata that challenged some of the movements done by the Crane for centuries. In that moment, Eiya ceased being an adequate iaijutsu practitioner and instead opened up a path to being a true master.

While Eiya was diligent in his studies, he still had outside interests. Primary among them was Kakita Chiyeko. Kakita Eiya had loved Chiyeko from the moment he first met her. They trained together but she took no special notice of him until he developed his new grace in swordplay. When he did so, however, no student of iaijutsu could fail to notice. Eiya was delighted by her attention, and they grew closer, until they were both granted their request to have the same posting, in order to spend more time together.

Eiya and Chiyeko enjoyed many months together in service, working side by side each day and delighting in one another's company, although never to the extent that they allowed it to compromise their duties. Eventually, Eiya petitioned for permission to marry Chiyeko, and while both were fearful that their families would find little reward in allowing the two to marry, they permitted themselves to be optimistic about their chances. Sadly, the day they would receive the news for which they were so eagerly waiting never came.

The Rain of Blood came. The black magic that fueled the Rain of Blood caused all who suffered its touch to be confronted with their in-

nermost darkness. Eiya was overwhelmed with feelings of violence and hatred, but he fought them off. It was Chiyeko's face that gave him the strength he needed to combat the sensation. To his dismay, when he recovered, he discovered that she had not been so fortunate. She had succumbed to the Rain, killed two of their colleagues, been grievously wounded, and then disappeared into the wilderness, a bloodied and raving madwoman.

Eiya's mind was broken by the loss of his love; grief and anguish literally drove him mad. He wandered away from his post one day, never to return. Instead he went into the wilderness, perhaps seeking his lost love. He eventually crossed into the Shadowlands and, in time, came to the City of the Lost. He was there for nearly a week before anyone realized that he was not yet Tainted, protected as he was by some jade trinkets he had absently pocketed after killing a Crab magistrate who tried to stop him from entering the Shadowlands. Eiya killed the first man who tried to detain him in the City of the Lost, apparently without effort. Unsure of what to do, his colleagues called for Mirumoto Taki, the great sensei of the Lost dojo.

Taki immediately realized that he had something unexpected delivered to him. Eiya was not compelled to come to him, as others who fell to the Rain had been. He also did not come asking for something in return, as was the norm for the greedy and the weak. Eiya was a blank slate on which he might create something new.

Taki took a special interest in Eiya's training. The former Crane grew ever more talented and deadly, using some of his former artistry as a starting point, but becoming more economical in his movements. In Eiya, Taki saw a perfect killing machine.

Originally Eiya was kept safe from the Taint around him. It was felt that if they could finish his training and indoctrination without his succumbing to the Taint he could be a very valuable tool for Lord Daigotsu to use against Rokugan.

That ended abruptly one night when Eiya, staring at himself in a mirror shard for too long, took it and slashed repeatedly at his own face. When he was found he was lying in a pool of his own blood, no longer recognizable as the man he once was, and very close to death.

Taki took him to Omoni and asked for his help. The flesh sculptor saved Eiya's life, with three lasting effects. First, his face was now horrible to see. The damage from the glass was severe, and the cure did nothing to improve

his appearance. Secondly, Eiya, who spoke little in any event, had gone completely mute. Lastly, the Taint was now embedded deep within him. Daigotsu's plans for Eiya were discarded.

Eiya now felt he had truly put his old life behind him. In fact, he could barely remember it. He swore allegiance to Daigotsu, taking the Dark Lord's name for his own. Later he fought beside Kayomasa against an attack on the Temple of the Ninth Kami by Munemitsu no Oni. Daigotsu rewarded him by giving him the blade Nokemono to wield on behalf of the Dark Lord.

Eiya continues to serve Daigotsu loyally, even losing a hand in his service during the Emerald Championship. Some thought the Eiya might eventually challenge Taki to be sensei at the Temple of the Forsaken, but he has shown no inclination to do so. He is content to simply serve and kill in Daigotsu's name. The life of Kakita Eiya is lost to him.

MOTO HOTEI, UNICORN MAGISTRATE

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Void: 3
Reflexes: 3	Intelligence: 3	Perception: 3		
Honor: 2.4	Status: 1.9	Glory: 2.5		

SCHOOL/RANK: Moto Bushi 2

ADVANTAGES: Ally (Seppun Katsura – Influence 2, Devotion 1), Different School (Sapphire Blade Dojo), Hotei's Blessing

DISADVANTAGES: Gullible, Idealistic, Meddler

SKILLS: Courtier (Gossip) 4, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2

Moto Hotei was an unremarkable Unicorn bushi who accidentally found himself in a circumstance that benefited him greatly.

Hotei received a typical Moto education as a youth. He passed his gempukku, with enough distinction that he was granted his request to become a Clan magistrate. He truly believed it was calling to bring justice to Rokugan through clear thinking, measured thought, and firm but fair punishment. His duties, however, were not what he had expected.

Rather than investigate crimes, he was assigned to a unit that traveled to locations threatened by bandits and eliminated the threat. It filled his need for justice, but it only used his military skills, not the mental abilities he was more keen to develop. Still, he performed his job adequately, without any complaint. He married and sired a son, but his life was not as fulfilling as he had hoped.

In time, however, he stumbled upon an opportunity more to his liking. When the Emerald Championship was announced, Hotei's unit was assigned to accompany the Unicorn contingent. Hotei performed his duties earnestly, but once at the Plains of Thunder, there was little need for his services. Imperial magistrates performed their official functions, while Clan magistrates amounted to little more than decoration. He returned to the Unicorn lands and his usual duties, somewhat disappointed by his experience.

A few months later, when the Jade Championships were announced, Hotei's unit was again chosen to escort the Unicorn contingent. While much less enthusiastic about the prospect, Hotei did his duty without complaint, as always. This time, things were a little different. Moto Hotei had decided to treat himself this time, and dined one evening at the Mikado, the luxurious traveling restaurant. While he was there, Seppun Shogo was discovered, murdered.

Seppun Katsura arrived quickly on the scene to conduct the official investigation, and Hotei saw a chance to take part in the sort of magistrate investigation he had hoped for since completing his gempukku. He offered his assistance to Katsura, who quickly accepted when he saw the depth of the task ahead of him.

Hotei aided in the collection of testimony. He took each witness at their word, because why would a samurai lie? As a result, he became somewhat discouraged when there were so many conflicting testimonies. It was even worse when Katsura told him someone had even tried to implicate Moto Chagatai, who was not present at the tournament!

Eventually, as Hotei sat down with Katsura to make sense of the information they were given, he saw that one man was named more often than any other. It is true that not everyone believed Bayushi Takaharu was the guilty party, but the weight of testimony certainly ran against him, and Hotei concluded he was the murderer. Katsura agreed and Takaharu was summarily executed.

Afterward, Seppun Katsura was not stingy in showing his gratitude for Hotei's help. Katsura was the master sensei at the Seppun's Sapphire Blade Dojo and he extended a rare offer: Both Hotei and his son would be given the opportunity to come and train at the Imperial dojo.

Things are finally starting to look up for Moto Hotei.

Allies & Enemies

Daigotsu Eiya does not normally have allies. Instead, to him, there are two kinds of people, enemies and not-enemies. He is not really suitable for the Ally Advantage. As a Sworn Enemy, however, Eiya is incredibly dangerous, since he will be unrelenting in his desire for revenge. Your only hope of avoiding his wrath is that his fractured mind moves past you so he no longer remembers your existence. He would be worth 4 Points as a Sworn Enemy.

Moto Hotei has little influence. Circumstances have given him the ear of Seppun Katsura and he could use that to the benefit of an ally. He is worth 2 Points in Influence, and a variable amount of Devotion. To gain Hotei as a Sworn Enemy you would need to appear to him as an obstruction to justice. He takes threats to his worldview much more seriously than he would threats to his person. He would be worth 2 Points as a Sworn Enemy.

New Mechanics

New Basic School: Ancestral Hiruma Bushi School

The Hiruma have recently recovered the lost secrets of their ancient style from the Shadowlands, centuries after they were lost in the fall of Shiro Hiruma. The discovery is well known among the Crab, but not generally discussed among other Clans, who in all honesty would have known little about the matter in the first place. It is not until the Emerald Championship that it becomes known to outsiders, as the first students of the newly rediscovered style, including the family daimyo Hiruma Todoru, demonstrate their techniques before the Empire.

BENEFIT: +1 Willpower

HONOR: 2.5

SKILLS: Athletics, Battle, Hunting, Kenjutsu (Katana), Kyujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, Stealth

OUTFIT: Katana, wakizashi, bow and 20 arrows (any type), ashigaru armor; black body paint, one finger of jade, kimono and sandals, traveling pack, 2 koku



Techniques:

RANK 1: TORCH'S FLAME FLICKERS

The Hiruma focuses his strikes while protecting himself. As long as you are not in the Full Attack posture, you gain a bonus equal to your Fire Ring to your TN to Be Hit, and to the total of all attack rolls, damage rolls, and Bugei Skill Rolls.

RANK 2: WOLF'S LITTLE LESSON

Hiruma close on their enemies and withdraw again so smoothly that it all appears part of the same motion. You may make Raises on an attack roll in order to increase your TN to Be Hit. For each successful Raise made in this fashion, you increase your TN to Be Hit by 5, plus an additional amount equal to your Rank in Athletics, until the beginning of the next round.

RANK 3: HUMMINGBIRD WINGS

The Hiruma know how the hummingbird can move in any direction. Once per round, after an opponent makes an attack roll against you, you may spend a Void Point to make an Agility/Defense Roll against a TN equal to the total of the opponent's attack roll. If successful, you dodge the attack outright. On your next action you may only attack once, with a penalty of -10 to your roll. You cannot use this Technique while you are in the Full Attack posture.

RANK 4: SHARK SMELLS BLOOD

No animal waits to see the effect of its first attack before pressing its advantage. You gain an additional attack per round. As long as you are not in the Full Attack posture, you may gain a bonus equal to twice your Fire Ring to your TN to Be Hit, and to the total of all attack rolls, damage rolls, and Bugei Skill Rolls. This replaces the bonus gained at Rank 1.



RANK 5: DAYLIGHT WASTES NO MOVEMENT

The Hiruma learns to use no more energy than is needed to kill his opponent. If you inflict more Wounds than necessary to kill your target, you may apply the excess Wounds as a bonus to your next attack roll. This carry-over effect does not last beyond the end of the current skirmish.

New Advanced School: Aotara Poison Master

Although the sinister Shosuro Jimen, Emerald Champion of the Empire of Rokugan, has a reputation among the Scorpion as a master of poisons, he is but one of many in that Clan. The Aotara, an obscure vassal family, possess knowledge at least as deadly as Jimen's. Very few outside the Clan of Secrets know about the Aotara, and even fewer know detailed information about the duties they perform. Until recently, most Scorpion outside of the family paid little heed to the small school and their gardens. Shosuro Jimen's achievements have brought the study of such subjects greater respect and an influx of interested students, many more than the small school is equipped to handle. However, this has prompted the Clan to devote greater resources to the school which has allowed the expansion of its gardens.

Students of the school often seclude themselves in maintaining the gardens, which are closed to all without express orders from the Clan Champion. There are countless plants in these gardens that cannot be found anywhere else in the world, and many are deadly. The poison masters experiment with various combinations of these plants, as well as breed new and strange varieties. They catalogue and chronicle the herbs and poisonous substances and their effects, which they test on criminals and other vermin.

Naturally, only the most careful and attentive Scorpion are allowed to join the school, lest outsiders learn about its secrets.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAITS: Intelligence 5, Perception 5, Stamina 5

SKILLS: Medicine 5, Poison 5

ADVANTAGES: Jurojin's Blessing

OTHER: The advantage requirements may be waived by increasing the Stamina requirement by 1.

Techniques:

RANK 1: PLANTING

At this early stage in the poison master's career, he is not yet trained to handle the most harmful of substances. He is instead taught the lesson learned by the founder of the family who, in his studies, exposed his family to a deadly compound that only he would survive. To save them from such a mistake, Aotara poisoners are first trained in the mixing and development of antidotes. You gain a bonus in rolled and kept dice to your Medicine Skill Rolls equal to your School Rank. Also, your Stamina Rank is doubled when you roll to resist poison.

RANK 2: GROWING

When an Aotara's training as a poison master begins in earnest, he is still not trusted with the school's deadliest compounds, but he is taught the basics of mixing adulterating substances. Among his lessons is the creation of addictive compounds. You may create an addictive compound by making a successful Intelligence/Poison Roll against a TN of 15. It affects anyone who ingests it as a poison. The TN to resist the addiction is 15. You may make a Raise to increase this TN by 5. If the target is affected by the substance, treat him as if he has the Disadvantage Compulsion.

RANK 3: REAPING

You are finally allowed into the most private corners of the garden where the deadliest of compounds are kept and their results speak for themselves. When making Poison or Medicine Skill Rolls, your 8's and 9's explode as well as 10's. This effect may be used only once per die per roll. Thus, if you roll an 8 and then re-roll a 9 on the same die, it does not explode again. However, if you roll an 8 and then re-roll a 10, the 10 explodes normally. Additionally, because you now have access to compounds unknown anywhere else, the TN (for anyone other than a Poison Master) to create an antidote to your poisons is increased by 5 x your Insight Rank in addition to the effects of any Raises you make on your Poison Skill Roll.

THE VACANT THRONE



HONOR'S VEIL

Since the death of the Empress and the end of the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, the Phoenix Clan have controlled the Imperial City for all practical terms. The Throne remains empty during all this time. They maintain their tight grip on the Imperial City with the backing of the Fire Dragon. Such an endorsement of a Great Clan by a Celestial being has never been seen in Rokugan's history, and all the Great Clans fall in line while the Fire Dragon stays in the sky. That changes once the Dragon returns to the Heavens, however; the Great Clans feel free to assert themselves again. The Lion are first to challenge the Phoenix's power, and they will not be the last.

The Phoenix Clan itself experiences considerable turmoil during these months. They lose their absolute control of the Imperial City. But not all of the news is bad for them. After a year of hiding, the Soul of Shiba returns to the head of the Clan as Shiba Tsukimi. The Phoenix also begin a highly ambitious plan to rid the world of one of their greatest threats: the Dark Oracles.

The Spider Clan also begins to exert its influence during this time. The Spider have been active around the Empire for many months, but in a surreptitious manner. Their name has spread through word of mouth, through the efforts of ronin and peasants whose hardships have been ameliorated by their presence. But now, the Spider put into action plans to introduce themselves to the pumping heart of Rokugani power, and the first step is to reveal themselves to the Great Clans as an equal.

But before they can claim success, the Scorpion's vigilance threatens to bring them up short. So far, through hard work and a great bit of luck, the Spider have managed to hide their true colors. This almost comes to a crashing halt when Bayushi Paneki infiltrates an agent into their ranks. Bayushi Eisaku kills a Spider samurai and discovers the dead warrior is Tainted, news that troubles the Master of Secrets. Unfortunately, he cannot know if the Spider Clan as a whole is Tainted or if this was an isolated case. He is ready to put the Scorpion's resources to discovering the truth. If they are a threat, Paneki vows, the Spider will die.

The prophet Kitsune Narako has revealed her great prophecy at the Jade Championship and now she returns to her home in Kitsune Mori to rest and relax. Her guardians travel with her, as they are sure that she still needs some protection from the nebulous forces that surround her. The enemies that exist within the forest have stayed dormant, but upon her arrival they begin to move again. It becomes apparent that she will need more samurai at her call. Luckily, there are many others who are willing to defend a true prophet.

Year 1169, Month of the Rat

Prophet, Returned

Kitsune Narako, fresh from her experiences at the Jade Championship, returns home to Kitsune Mori. She is weak from her latest ordeal and wishes to rest. Unfortunately, the creatures in the forest also seem to have returned. Her helpers return to their own lands to ask for permission to remain as her guardians.

The Heavens Retreat

The Celestial Heavens have shown their approval of the Phoenix Clan in recent months with the unprecedented appearance by the Fire Dragon. Its presence over Toshi Ranbo has kept many arguments and conflicts at bay within the Imperial City. However, the Fire Dragon cannot stay indefinitely, for mortal man must choose its own path. It leaves its perch in the sky above the Imperial City and returns to Tengoku.

The Triumphant Return

Unsatisfied with their ejection from the Imperial City, the Lion Clan views the disappearance of the Fire Dragon as a sign from the Heavens. Matsu Kenji leads courtiers and omoidasu back into Toshi Ranbo in direct violation of the Phoenix Clan's previous edict. Shiba Naoya stands in her way with superior numbers.

The situation is tense, and it looks as if the day will end in bloodshed. Then Doji Masako steps forward from the crowds and speaks eloquently against the impending violence. After deliberation, Naoya and his forces step aside, and the Lion find themselves in the Imperial City once more.

The Lost Blade

Young warrior Shinjo Dun comes across a man who claims to be one of the lost Moto, a member of an ill-fated excursion into the Shadowlands. Filled with remorse over the crimes he has committed, the Moto hands over Kiro, the Ancestral Blade of the Ki-Rin Clan, to Dun. Dun does not fully trust this traitor and brings the blade to his superiors. The sword proves to be real, however, an ancient artifact

long considered to be lost to the ages. Many rejoice at its return.

Escalation of the Race For the Throne

Across the Empire, the Great Clans continue to plot for their chance at the Throne. The Crane vigorously support Otomo Hoketuhime as the rightful heir. In an unexpected turn of events, the Scorpion also back the Otomo daimyo.

Year 1169, Month of the Ox

The Soul of the Phoenix

Though Shiba Naoya acted with the interests of the Empire at heart when he barred Matsu Kenji and his entourage from entering Toshi Ranbo, his actions placed both the Lion and his own Clan in an unnecessarily difficult position, creating conflict where perhaps none was necessary. Naoya submits to the authority of the Elemental Council and is ready to accept any punishment they deem appropriate.

Suddenly, Shiba Tsukimi steps out of the crowd. She calls a stop to the proceedings and reveals herself as the new bearer of Shiba's Soul. The Elemental Council verifies her statement and acknowledges her as the new Phoenix Clan Champion.

The Hunt Begins

With the Oracles gone from Ningen-do, what would happen if a Dark Oracle died? Would he be replaced by a new horror, or would the position remain vacant? A group of Phoenix shugenja are determined to figure out the answer. They know it will be a difficult task, but they are willing to risk the dangers to help Rokugan.

The Benevolent Spider

The southern Unicorn lands have been plagued by bandits for several months. Daigotsu Gyoken leads a unit of trained Spider Clan samurai (disguised as a ronin band) to eliminate the threat. In return for the favor, he demands a seat at the court of Shiro Ide. Daigotsu Susumu will represent the Spider's interests in the Unicorn lands.

The Decline of Togashi Satsu

The power of foresight becomes more and more of a burden to Togashi Satsu. His powers make him something greater than a normal, mortal man, but now he no longer feels comfortable proceeding without knowing the consequences of the action. He becomes less decisive, and the Dragon Clan becomes less and less active.

The Threat of the Spider is Discovered

The rumors of a mysterious organization operating throughout Rokugan reach the Master of Secrets. Paneki sends several samurai undercover to learn more about them. Bayushi Eisaku successfully infiltrates a Spider cell within the Scorpion lands. Unfortunately, he is forced to attack them when he realizes the Spider are involved in treacherous activity. The other Spider samurai disappear, but Eisaku realizes the samurai he killed is afflicted with the Shadowlands Taint. Though he is unsure what this says about the Spider as a whole, he returns to his Champion and reports his findings.



Before the day is over, Orika is found murdered. No one catches her killer.

Death of Art

Kuni Daigo wishes to gather enough jade for a major invasion of the Shadowlands. Hida Kuon is unwilling to spend all of the Crab Clan's resources on such a risky venture and directs him elsewhere. In response, Hida Sozen marches into Shinden Asahina and demands priceless pieces of jade art to help support the war effort. The Crane refuse to give up centuries-old masterpieces. In response, Sozen destroys the art and takes the remnants back to the Crab lands.

Year 1169, Month of the Tiger

Kakita Matabei Marries

Kakita Matabei was once dishonored for his failure, but his star has risen once more because of the influence of high-ranked Crane samurai and Shosuro Jimen. His marriage to Kitsuki Orika draws the most important names of the Great Clans. Orika brings forth the journal of Toturi III, found in a concealed place in the Imperial Library, and presents it to Doji Domotai.

Year 1170, Month of the Hare

Shinjo T'sao Wins the Topaz Championship

Despite a Bloodspeaker plot to kidnap the most promising samurai participating in the tournament, the Championship tournament continues without a hitch. Shinjo T'sao becomes the newest Topaz Champion.



The Mantis Enter the Third Yasuki War

Though the Mantis Clan remains publicly neutral, they insert themselves into the Third Yasuki War between the Crane and the Crab. Yoritomo Utemaro and Yoritomo Buntaro spearhead the new effort. They sell the shoddier equipment available to the Crane Clan at exorbitant prices, while saving their best items for the Crab, to whom they sell at almost at their own cost.

Death of A Lioness

Matsu Ketsui has lived to see her sons murdered and her daughter corrupted by the Dark Oracle of Water. Despite these setbacks, she remains a strong leader and advisor. However, her Tainted daughter Satomi returns to end her family line. Satomi murders Ketsui and is in turn destroyed by Matsu Kenji.

To make matters even worse, Satomi is accompanied by a horde of goblins. One injures Matsu Robun; his wound festers and becomes infected by the Taint. Robun

must retire to a monastery for the rest of his life. His promising future has effectively ended.

Kwanchai's Last Madness

Bayushi Kwanchai cannot face the fact that his ineptitude cost the life of his charge and uncle Bayushi Kaukatsu. He opens a portal to Gaki-Do to destroy the spirits that killed Kaukatsu. His great spirit and fierce determination releases Bayushi Shoju's soul from that damned realm.

But Kwanchai is never heard from again.

Involving Your Character in the Events of Honor's Veil

The events of Honor's Veil are shrouded in mystery and intrigue, making this period the perfect setting for a game set within the courts. Big, tumultuous political events frame the chapter, from the Lion's push against the Phoenix Clan's authority to the Mantis' intervention in the Third Yasuki War.

Player characters could be present at the showdown between Matsu Kenji's Lion contingent and Shiba Naoya's forces. Both sides were ready to die to prove their dedication to their cause. Which side is in the right, and which one is wrong? In the end, the situation was resolved by the quick thinking and oratory skills of a single Doji courtier. If your players felt strongly about either side, their actions tip the scales one way or another. If a peaceful resolution cannot be found, Kenji and her badly outnumbered companions would most likely die in the ensuing fight. This would certainly spark a war between the Phoenix and Lion Clans.

The return of Shiba Tsukimi as the Phoenix Clan Champion will also affect Phoenix characters and possibly offer them the chance to get involved in their Clan's affairs at a high level. For the past year, the Elemental Council has ruled without question among the Phoenix. Now that the Clan has a Champion again, they must give up their authority. Are the Isawa ready to give up leadership of the Phoenix, or have they too well enjoyed tasting the authority that has traditionally belonged to the Shiba?

The Mantis Clan has secretly begun an economic war against the Crane Clan, partly to spite the allies of the Lion. Effectively, they have decided to side with the Crab in the Third Yasuki War, although covertly. If the Crane Clan were to find out about their duplicity, they would certainly retaliate against the Mantis. If the player characters were to find evidence of the Mantis' actions, they would have the fate of the Third Yasuki War in their hands. Would they reveal it to the Crane? Or will they keep quiet, watching as the Mantis drain the Crane coffers by selling them sub-par goods at inflated prices?

The last subplot that occurs during Honor's Veil is the advent of the Spider. Daigotsu has been trying for months to insinuate his agents in the court of a Great Clan, but without much success. But when Susumu and Gyoken defeat the bandits in the southern lands of the Unicorn, their actions gain them access to powerful samurai in the Unicorn Clan — just what Daigotsu wants. Would the player characters support these strange ronin from nowhere, who have only performed benevolent acts until now, or would they be suspicious of their sudden appearance?

Inner Gifts Prophecy: An In-Depth Look

The Empire of Rokugan has strayed too far from the path of Heaven, and now the Gods above will rain down their Light upon us...

There have only been a handful of true prophets in Rokugani history. Just about every shugenja can develop a limited ability to defeat the limitations of time and place through divination techniques, which allow them to ply the kami for information. But this is not the same as true prophecy, which is a gift directly from Heaven — or a curse, depending on how one looks at it. Divination is very limited in scope, as the Elemental kami (though not bound by mortal limitations) lack the power of the Heavens; and in any event, not even the most powerful shugenja can bend them completely to his will and get them to reveal all that they know all the time. A true prophet's visions can encompass the entire Empire and cross centuries. Furthermore, they cannot be deliberately invoked, for the true prophet is a vessel for this power from the Heavens, and he is more or less at its mercy.

The first prophet, Uikku, lived in the First Century in the Phoenix lands. His life was not particularly happy by any conventional standard; when the Phoenix found him, he was an abandoned orphan boy who was prone to weird trances and spoke little, except to quote whole sections of the Tao of Shinsei from memory (and this at an age when most Rokugani children had yet to learn how to read). He had little to no ability to interact with other humans, except to recite from the Tao and, when he grew older, deliver cryptic statements that eventually revealed him as one with the true gift of foresight. He never learned to function in normal human society without close supervision, and the Isawa cared for him in a cloistered setting until he died at the age of 22.

Uikku remained an enigma throughout his life and even after; no rational explanation has ever been produced for his incredible grasp of the Tao, nor for his ability to extrapolate from Shinsei's wisdom and see into the future

of the Empire. And yet there is no doubt that his unique wisdom held the Empire in good stead even centuries later, for he saw in his visions the Doom of each Clan that foretold the great weaknesses within themselves they would have to overcome in order to defeat Fu Leng on the Second Day of Thunder.

After Uikku, centuries passed without a true prophet manifesting himself. One cannot be exactly sure why this was so; it is not as if the Empire was spared crises so great that one with a prophet's gift would have been a blessing. The coming of Iuchiban, the debacle of the Battle of the White Stag, and even the numerous wars and feuds between the Great Clans, could have all been ameliorated by the wisdom of a prophet.

One hypothesis is that Uikku's visions were so great that the Celestial Heavens chose to withhold that power until they came to pass. Another is that there simply was not a person who could bear the terrible burden of prophecy. Visions that reveal the future may be useful to the Empire as a whole, but they take a great toll on the unfortunate human who must channel them. Each vision drains his health and soul. Even a strong and disciplined mind will find it difficult to survive the power of a direct connection with the Heavens. Perhaps some were born with the power but never manifested it, dying before they could get the chance.

The next prophet, Isawa Norikazu, lived in the early 12th Century. Even during the Clan War, he was possessed by visions of what would be the Empire's next great crisis, the War Against the Darkness. He could not control these visions and damned them to his dying breath, but his insights helped keep the Empire together in the years following the Second Day of Thunder. Like Uikku, he lived in the Phoenix lands and was nurtured by their shugenja for all of his life.

The next prophet, Agasha Hamanari, did not share such a welcome fate. Even without the prophetic gift that manifested itself relatively late in life, Hamanari would have entered the annals of the Empire as the Agasha daimyo who left the Dragon Clan in defiance of his Champion (Hitomi, then possessed by the Lying Darkness) and led his family into the Phoenix Clan. He had always used divination techniques according to standard shugenja training, but after the War Against the Darkness ended, he became possessed by visions that foresaw the return of Iuchiban and the onset of the Rain of Blood. His warnings helped save thousands of Phoenix, as the Elemental Council pro-

tected their lands from the nefarious Rain of Blood. But the terrible visions he received taxed Hamanari and he fell into a coma. He had begun to recover when Isawa Sezaru executed him based on false charges that he himself was a Bloodspeaker.

The madman Kokujin declared himself a prophet during the Age of Enlightenment. He fashioned himself after Uikku, devising a series of statements he called the Second Doom of the Great Clans. While some of the events described in the Second Doom have come true, it is not certain that Kokujin was a true prophet. He was definitely more than a mortal man, infused with a part of Togashi's soul, but only time will tell if his ravings will come true.

The latest prophet, Kitsune Narako, is the first to live outside the Phoenix lands. In fact, when news of her talent spread across the Empire, many Phoenix shugenja demanded that she be turned over to the Phoenix Clan's care so that her gift of prophecy would not be squandered. The Mantis Clan refused on her behalf and kept her home. She is the youngest to manifest true prophecy, as she was barely past her gempukku when she saw her first vision, which foretold the end of the Fox Clan.

True prophets are treasured by the Rokugani people and seen by the Clans as a great asset (hence the Mantis' reluctance to part with Kitsune Narako). Uikku's contributions were so great that they became a part of Rokugani religion, and it remains to be seen if Narako's words will have an equal impact on Rokugan. She has all of her life in front of her to prove it, if she can survive the hazards of a prophet's existence.

Notable Samurai: Honor's Veil

KITSUNE NARAKO, TORMENTED PROPHET

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 3
Awareness: 4	Intelligence: 4		Perception: 4	
Honor: 3.4		Status: 1.1		Glory: 5.6

SCHOOL/RANK: Kitsune Shugenja 1

ADVANTAGES: Inner Gift: Lesser Prophecy

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Health

SKILLS: Calligraphy 2, Defense 1, Hunting 2, Kenjutsu 1, Medicine (Herbalism) 1, Meditation 3, Spellcraft 1



SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Summon, Cloak of Night, Earth's Stagnation, Earth's Touch, Heart of Nature, Nature's Touch, Path to Inner Peace, Purify Water, Speed Growth

Narako always knew she was a special girl.

Even as a young child, she could hear the whispers of the land. The Elements spoke to her as an equal and they were her companions. She did not know then what the kami were but it only seemed natural to her. When her parents found out, there was a large celebration and she was lauded by all the people. To her, the festivity seemed odd. After all, it was an effortless part of her.

Her other abilities manifested themselves later on in her life. She was a normal girl (albeit smart, and touched by the kami) until her gempukku. The night after the gempukku ceremony, she had her first vision. She did not understand it at first and only saw vague enemies creeping in the night. She informed her superiors. Those enemies manifested in the form of assassins who had come to kill

Narako. Something out there already knew that she was special.

The visions grew more and more frequent over the years, and the attacks on her person grew worse and worse. At the depths of her despair Narako wondered if her visions were a curse that only brought out the worst in the world. Her very next vision was of a pair of samurai who would bring about her salvation. It was her first hopeful prophecy: a prideful warrior and a healing dragon would come to her side. Kakita Hideo and Kitsuki Taiko arrived weeks after she uttered those words.

Narako is, in fact, a true prophet and touched by the Heavens. Her prophecies have continuously proven correct. She has given two great prophecies to date: one at the Jade Championship in front of the greatest warriors of the Emerald Empire, and another in private in front of a small group of her friends. Both prophecies will change the fate of the entire Empire. Such a burden is hard to bear and Narako is only human. However, she grits her teeth



and refuses to give up. She fights tenaciously to bring the news of these prophecies to the world so that they may make a difference.

MIRUMOTO YOZO, HEART OF REVENGE

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
			Agility: 5	Strength: 4

Honor: 2.1	Status: 1.5	Glory: 3.4
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SCHOOL/RANK: Mirumoto Bushi 3

ADVANTAGES: Heart of Vengeance (Lion Clan)

DISADVANTAGES: Cruel

KATA: Striking as Fire, Striking as Water, Striking as Wind, My brother's Soul, Thunder and Steel

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle (Skirmish) 2, Calligraphy 1, Etiquette 2, Hunting 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Know the School: Akodo Bushi 2, Know the School: Matsu Berserker 2, Kyujutsu 2, Meditation (Void Recovery) 3, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 2

The death of the Dragonfly Clan signaled the beginning of the end of Yozo's tale.

Before Toturi I's death, Yozo was a typical Dragon bushi. He loved to travel alone into the wilderness and appreciate the wild and deadly aspects of nature. He held a very close relationship with his family, all respected courtiers who worked to bring the Dragon Clan close to its allies.

When war with the Phoenix Clan broke out on, Yozo immediately joined Mirumoto Junnosuke's army, which undertook an invasion of the Phoenix lands. He found out on the battlefield that his entire family had been killed in the Lion assault of Kyuden Tonbo. They were not warriors, yet they stood in the Lion's way. Yozo's soul died when he heard the news. His heart no longer beat for anything but for one goal: the destruction the Lion Clan.

He has spent the last five years of his life serving his Clan and honing his skills. He is an honorable man and continues to perform his duties, but his eyes burn with cold rage whenever he sees a Lion samurai. He deliberately provokes them so they will challenge him, and with his years of training he will always prevail.

New Mechanics

New Basic School: Baraunghar Ghost Guard (Shugenja)

Among the shugenja of the Baraunghar, trained to assist and improve the Unicorn troops' movement, there are some who specialize in supplementing their army's strength in a more direct way. Unafraid to get into the thick of battle, dressed in white robes and white-painted faces, they are the Ghost Guards. Unicorn armies are famous for the unrivaled speed with which they move across battlefields, thanks to their mighty steeds. The Baraunghar Ghost Guards strive to match this pace and focus their studies on casting spells swiftly to aid their comrades or grant the blessings of the Lords of Death to their opponents. They are a much more militant breed than the typical Iuchi shugenja, and are often as skilled as the bushi of their Clan in mounted archery.

While the Baraunghar were devastated in the Khan's campaign against the Imperial City, the Ghost Guard has managed to live on. As they are a new School among the Unicorn, they were considered too inexperienced to be included in the Khan's army in great strength. The Ghost Guard have begun to rebuild, and while they number only in the dozens, their sensei are sure they will once again stand proud among the Unicorn on the battlefield.

BENEFIT: +1 Perception

HONOR: 2.5

SKILLS: Calligraphy, Horsemanship, Kyujutsu (Horse Archery), Meditation, Spellcraft, Theology (Shi-Tien Yen-Wang), any one High or Bugei Skill

OUTFIT: Wakizashi, bow and 20 arrows (any type), gaijin riding horse, white facial paint, white traditional robes and sandals, scroll satchel, traveling pack, 8 koku

AFFINITY/DEFICIENCY: Baraunghar Ghost Guards have an Affinity for Water spells, and a Deficiency for Air spells.

Allies & Enemies

Kitsune Narako's greatest allies are the young samurai of all of the Great Clans who have come to defend her against the mysterious enemy that stalks her forest. While she is young and officially does not have much Status, she is highly influential due to her unique abilities. Treat her as an Ally worth 2 Points of Influence. Her Devotion would depend on how much you are willing to help her.

She does not really qualify as a Sworn Enemy. In fact, she does not care enough about others to have incurred any in her life.

Mirumoto Yozo has no influence except that which he can carve out with his deadly blades. But he will come running, breaking everything but his oaths, to aid an Ally. He costs 1 Point in Influence, but 3 Points in Devotion.

On the other hand, he is a proud man and it is not hard to become his Sworn Enemy. Ironically, in many ways, he can act like the stereotypical Lion. Because of his implacable hatred for the Lion Clan, he is worth an extra 2 Points as a Sworn Enemy if your character is a Lion bushi, an extra 1 Point if you are a Lion shugenja or courtier.

TECHNIQUE:

THE LORDS OF DEATH'S HUNGER

In battle, speed is crucial to achieving victory. When you cast a spell, you may spend a Void Point to reduce the casting time by your School Rank (to a minimum of 1 round). Also, you gain a bonus equal to your Water Ring to the total of your Initiative Rolls.

SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Water spells, any 2 Fire spells, any 1 Earth spell

New Treasure: Kiro, The Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin

The Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin has a long and troubled history. It is almost as old as Hayai, the Unicorn Clan Ancestral Katana that belonged to Shinjo herself. Kiro was once in Shinjo's hands, though she never claimed it as her main weapon. It was forged in the Burning Sands, among the Ujik-Hai, the tribe that joined the Unicorn Clan in their quest. It disappeared when Moto Gaheris led his



forces into the Shadowlands and was presumed lost forever, even after the Dark Moto forces were finally crushed. Only the efforts of Shinjo Dun and the mysterious Moto warrior brought it back into Unicorn hands.

When the Ujik-Hai joined the Unicorn Clan, their leader and Lady Shinjo crafted Kiro together. Its design combined their personal crafting styles, and it was a beautiful and deadly work of art. When the Unicorn and the Ujik-Hai parted, Kiro remained with the Ujik-Hai who remained with the Rokugani. It was a symbol that two tribes were still blood, and they would remain tied forever.

The blade passed from Champion to Champion and then Khan to Khan until the reign of Moto Gaheris. Gaheris took Kiro with him to the Shadowlands when he went to fight against the undead horde of Moto Tsume. He dropped it in order to save the life of Moto Amadare and could not recover it.

Kiro remained pure in the Shadowlands for decades. The Free Ogres found the blade and took it to their lair, unaware of the history of the treasure they now held. When the Free Ogres were killed by Tainted samurai, their leader – a Moto – recognized the blade and picked it up. The purity of the sword pained him and forced him to take it back into Rokugan, and return it to its rightful place.

Treat Kiro as a heavy scimitar with a DR of 4k3. It must be wielded with two hands, though like a normal scimitar a Moto bushi may wield it with one hand. The bearer can feel the honor of Shinjo, the hard work of the Ujik-Hai, and the magic of Iuchi within him. If your Honor Rank is 3 or higher, you will find it responds to your inner soul. Opponents who have an Honor Rank of 0, 4, or 5 cannot strike with full force if you wield Kiro. If such foes make a successful attack roll against you, all of their damage dice that roll higher than 8 are reduced to 8. This means their damage dice cannot explode against you.

THE VACANT THRONE

WORDS AND DEEDS



The four months represented by Words and Deeds are a time of painful transitions. The Celestial Heavens finally make their will known, and much of the old order is swept away by Divine intent. Hida Kisada is found dead, and many of the remaining representatives of the Celestial Order in Ningen-Do – including the Kami Togashi himself – find themselves called to return to Yomi. The Lion Clan's conflict with the Unicorn reaches its final climax, and the Khan is forced to confront the results of his actions. The Emerald Champion's schemes begin to bear fruit, and the Scorpion begin their play for the Throne from a position of strength. Signs and omens appear across the Empire; a Thunder meets with her faithful, while the Heavens themselves tremble with a strange and mighty conflict.

The Race for the Throne is in full swing, but the contenders each find themselves faced with personal challenges and internal strife – and not all survive the initial struggle. However, the death of one of the major contenders for the Steel Throne is not the most dramatic shift that takes place during the early summer of the year 1170: The Empire is shocked to see Lord Sun himself fall from the Heavens, marking the beginning of the end of the Age of Man.

Year 1170, Month of the Dragon

The Death of Shinjo Shono

As Yoshino makes good on his promise to lay siege to Shiro Moto, Shinjo Shono, commander of the Unicorn's Junghar legions, attempts to end the assault by killing the Lion Champion and his senior subordinates. Akodo Shigetoshi blocks the attempt and defeats the Shinjo lord in single combat.

The Lion and The Unicorn

With Shiro Moto burning around them, Matsu Yoshino finally confronts Moto Chagatai in the Khan's own welcoming chamber. Yoshino, in order to fulfill his vow of honor, confronts the Khan alone, and finds himself outmatched. He sacrifices himself to the end of the Khan's scimitar in order to wound Chagatai, and dies fulfilled, knowing that he has gained a victory for the Lion rather than falling victim to the curse that seems to fall on his line.

Chagatai is shaken by the young man's sacrifice, and realizes that even if he survives the grievous wound given to him by the young Lion, his family will be drawn into war as long as he lives. Rather than allow his Clan to suffer further for his glorious failures, Chagatai dies in his



ancestral home. His last hope is that his death will buy his family time to rebuild and one day succeed where he failed.

Moto Chen and Akodo Shigetoshi are elevated to the position of Champion in their respective Clans.

The Death of Otomo Hoketuhime

Otomo Hoketuhime is found dead in her chambers at the Imperial Palace. Alongside her fallen form is a strange gaijin implement called a spoon — an item last seen in the possession of a Dragon representative to the Winter Court. The presence of such evidence, however, matters only to the Kitsuki, and rather than investigate the strange item, the Seppun magistrate present instead opts to ask for the testimony of the Dragon contingent to the Court.

Year 1170, Month of the Serpent

Conflict in the Heavens

Agasha Miyoshi, one of the Phoenix Clan's prestigious Dragon Channelers, finds her sleep plagued with dreams of Celestial beings in conflict. Meanwhile, throughout the Empire, astrologers note a series of strange omens and conflicting messages in the skies, as many heavenly bodies do not seem to match up with their expected locations for the late spring months. Otomo Yasunori, the Imperial Astrologer, attempts to understand these troubling data, but he cannot make sense of them right away.

The Battle for Sunset Tower

The Keeper of Fire appears and gifts Kitsuki Berii with the Book of Fire and a warning: Chosai, the Dark Oracle of Fire, is preparing to attack the northern Dragon provinces. The Clan's best hope of preventing this assault is to deny Chosai access to the Dark Covenant of Fire, which would allow him to lift the compulsion that prevents him from entering the Empire.

Megumi, a Lost former Crane, serves as Chosai's agent within the Empire, but her forces are detected by the Crane, who hope to rid the Empire of the shame she represents. The three forces find themselves in conflict, and all three sides suffer losses; Megumi is ultimately cut down by Kakita Kensho-in while Berii recovers the Dark Covenant. In the end, the conflict is quelled peacefully: Young dueling prodigy Mirumoto Ichizo is assigned to guard the Covenant, while Mirumoto Narumi returns with the Crane as a hostage.

Skirmishes in the Shinomen

In order to solidify their control of the Shinomen Forest, the Spider begin to turn the nearby Clans against one another, including the Crab and Unicorn. However, Daigotsu's plans are not without complications: after receiving aid from the Spider while hunting a particularly dangerous bandit gang, the Mantis turn on their remaining Spider "allies" and destroy them.

Betrayal and Death

Acting under orders from Shosuro Jimen, Bayushi Sunetra stalks the former head of the Kakita Dueling Academy, Kakita Noritoshi, in the hopes of catching him off-guard. She manages to kill Noritoshi's wife, Kakita Mai, and terrorizes Noritoshi's young son. Ultimately, though, her overconfidence gets the best of her, and she is cut down by the iaijutsu master while mocking him from hiding.

Year 1170, Month of the Horse

A Thunder Speaks

Kitsu Katsuko, the daimyo of the Kitsu, summons Matsu Benika and Matsu Kenji to the Hall of Ancestors for an urgent audience. The three samurai-ko are contacted by

Matsu, the first Lion Thunder, who warns the Lion and the Empire that the Heavens are planning to cast out the influence of mortals and render their judgment upon those who have violated the Celestial Order.

The Lost Library of the Kitsu is Discovered

The Nezumi crew of the *Deathless*, captained once again by Ikoma Otemi, discover a lost treasure on a forgotten island: the ancient library of the Kitsu race, the noble spirit creatures that gifted the Lion family with their name and bloodline.

Kuni Daigo Prepares to Invade the Shadowlands

Kuni Daigo, the Jade Champion, hunts a gang of bandits near the southern edge of the Shinomen and is pleasantly surprised to find they have a large stockpile of jade. Along with the jade requisitioned across the Empire, this is enough for his plans, and he prepares the Jade Magistrates for one of the most ambitious strikes against the Shadowlands in a decade.

The Sun Falls

Hida Yakamo, the Divine Sun, is defeated by the Jade Dragon and cast down from Tengoku. He lands in the provinces of the Crab, where the visiting Moshi daimyo, Moshi Amika, discovers his resting place and hears his final words. Yakamo attests he was defeated in honorable combat, and delivers a final prophecy: "A third will fall, and in its place a darkness will grow. The fire is a lie." The Crab mourn the loss of their greatest hero, but his final gift is his body itself: a huge stockpile of immortal jade, fully resistant to the Taint.

Year 1170, Month of the Goat

Togashi Ascends

For several years, the Kami Togashi has inhabited the body of his grandson, Togashi Satsu, offering him strength and guidance. Unfortunately, Togashi's divine influence has grown stronger over time, and his desire to maintain his prophetic vision has made Satsu indecisive and prevented the Dragon from acting.

Togashi is confronted by the Seven Fortunes, acting on behalf of the new Celestial Order, which seeks to return the Divine to its proper place in Tengoku. While the individual Fortunes themselves may not present a threat to Togashi, Satsu sees that defying the judgment of the entire Celestial Heavens would not be prudent for the Dragon, and he reminds his grandfather of Togashi's original vow to Shinsei by standing at his side. Togashi agrees to return to the Celestial Heavens, and Satsu finds himself with a newfound hope for the future, even if he is less certain about what may come.

Enemies Gather

Far to the north, Chosai's army of burning Yobanjin prepare themselves for their assault on the Empire. In the distant Jewel of the Desert, the Ebon Daughter consolidates her strength.

The Legion Finds a Home

The Legion of Two Thousand, led by the ronin Utagawa, throws their support behind the Lion Clan's bid for the

Throne. Akodo Shigetoshi accepts their support, and assigns them to defend the lands of the Monkey Clan.

A Strange Discovery

Moto Jin-Sahn and his unit encounter an injured Yasuki Jinn-Kuen during a patrol of the northern mountains. For their aid, Jinn-Kuen rewards them with a strange set of scrolls detailing a long-lost Minor Clan. Meanwhile, a mysterious being, the last disciple of the Dragon Pan-Ku, joins the Unicorn, disguised as one of their own.

Hand of Jade, Voice of Jade

Omen, the Oracle of Jade, finds himself called by Tengoku and takes on a new identity: the Voice of the Jade Sun. He marches to the capital city, and his first act as a new representative of the Celestial Heavens is to grant a gift to a particularly honorable samurai: Matsu Benika. She receives a new Jade Hand, a gift from the Heavens to inspire and aid the mortal realm in times of trial.



Involving Your Character in the Events of Words and Deeds

The time represented by Words and Deeds is a time of great upheaval, which offers both challenges and opportunities for players and GMs alike. For instance:

Both Shosuro Jimen and Kuni Daigo are very active during the early summer months. Player characters who are Emerald Magistrates will find themselves with plenty to do, from investigating the murder of Otomo Hoketuhime, to possibly trailing Kakita Noritoshi. Jade Magistrates will be very occupied in the retrieval of jade for Daigo's upcoming campaign – especially near the Shinomen, where several bandit gangs are rumored to be guarding stockpiles of the precious mineral.

Unicorn and Lion characters have an obvious plot hook available to them, as the war between the two Clans finally comes to an end. Lion characters could be responsible for scouting the area around Shiro Moto, or they could participate in the assault on the Unicorn stronghold (a good opportunity for those who enjoy Mass Battle situations). Unicorn characters could be part of the beleaguered garrison, or they could be tasked with safely transporting the Moto children to the Shinomen before the castle falls.

After the war, characters from various Clans can be involved in the rebuilding effort. Phoenix or Dragon characters might travel to Unicorn lands to tend to the wounded, while a Crane might visit with Lion allies to study their successful battle plans.

One trend during this period is the discovery of strange artifacts and hidden caches of knowledge in the islands surrounding Rokugan. This gives characters with maritime skills a chance for adventure as guides, sailors, explorers, or marines.

Omen, now the Voice of the Jade Sun, travels the length of the Empire, meeting with honorable and just warriors and presenting Benika with the Jade Hand. The player characters may encounter this new supernatural voice for good during their travels; perhaps the Voice tests them to determine their virtue, or requests a heroic deed be performed in the honor of the new Jade Sun.

Rules of Succession in Rokugan: An In-Depth Look

Rokugan is a place of long-held tradition, respect for familial history, and rigid social hierarchies. Because of this, it is no surprise that most samurai Families have relatively rigid and consistent rules for the succession of positions of power. While the rules of succession vary from family to family, most Clans are reasonably consistent in their process of choosing heirs, from inheritors of small estates to the daimyo. The most common method of succession is by hereditary line, though, in some cases, this is overridden.

The Imperial Families

For most of Rokugani history, the Imperial Line was descended directly from the first Hantei Emperor. Typically, the eldest son of the previous Emperor was groomed to be the next Emperor, but there are at least three cases of a firstborn daughter being named the Hantei heir. Normally, prior to gempukku, the first two to three children of a Hantei Emperor were considered “Children of Heaven,” to account for the risk of child mortality or other issues that might render an heir unfit to rule (or the heir apparent declining the rightful succession, an event that happened several times during recorded history). Preference, however, was normally given to the first child, and only the first child was considered an “infallible Son of Heaven.”

Imperial siblings who came of age traditionally took the name of one of the other three Imperial Families, depending on their talents. This practice was adopted to prevent ambitious siblings from conspiring against the Son of Heaven; once they officially left the Hantei family, they had no claim to the Emerald Throne. This, however, was not always successful, as the example of Otomo Jama (known more commonly as the dread sorcerer Iuchiban) shows. Most second-born sons became Seppun, while later siblings became Otomo or Miya. Seppun siblings of the Hantei usually served in the Imperial Guard, and often took command of the Guard when the Emerald Champion was not present. Otomo siblings often took a prominent place in the court, and Miya siblings oversaw much of the day-to-day operations of the Empire.

The Toturi Dynasty began in a non-traditional fashion, and its practices regarding the succession during its short reign may best be described as improvised out of necessity. Toturi I served as the Emperor twice – once during his initial reign, and again when he returned from the Realm of the Dead through Oblivion's Gate. Toturi finally died again without naming a successor or establishing a new tradition for passing authority. The resulting struggle of the Four Winds has become one of the most famous eras of Rokugan's history.

While Toturi Tsudao is considered the second Toturi Emperor for her brief reign during the struggle, the ultimate successor to Toturi I was not the eldest child (the Imperial bastard, Kaneka), nor the oldest living child (Sezaru), but Naseru, the youngest. Naseru's death was quickly followed by the deaths of Kaneka and Sezaru at the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, exterminating Toturi's bloodline and ending his dynasty.

The new Imperial Dynasty, that of the glorious Iweko, has not existed long enough to establish a new line of succession. In fact, it is unknown how long the divinely empowered Empress will reign, or if she will even need traditional heirs.

The Clans

Unsurprisingly, the diverse Great Clans each maintain their own methods for choosing successors, but most follow traditional hereditary lines of succession, where the eldest child, regardless of gender, becomes the head of the household on the previous leader's death or retirement. Most Clans, particularly the Crab, Crane, Phoenix, Scorpion, and Unicorn, choose their Clan Champion from a single ruling family, usually the primary bushi family.

Those Families that do not use this method rely either upon strictly patrilineal or matrilineal succession, or choice based on merit. The rarest of these methods is matrilineal succession, and it is practiced primarily by the Moshi and the Utaku. Patrilineal Families include the Moto and the Ikoma, though they do not typically choose successors outside of the previous daimyo's immediate familial line if he has no male heirs. Meritocratic methods are the most common of the alternate methods of choosing heirs, and many Families are willing to choose a viable candidate regardless of bloodline rather than potentially doom their family to mediocrity through poor leadership.

The Crab are, unsurprisingly, pragmatic in their choice of heirs: The Clan has a history, stretching back to Osano-

Wo, of not being afraid to choose the most effective leader over the first-born of the previous leader. Since death is common on the Wall and effective leadership is needed at all times, positions of importance (including family daimyo and Clan Championship) are often passed to the most closely related experienced adult rather than waiting for a young heir to come of age. Regencies are very common among the direct descendants of Hida, as the Clan simply does not have time to coddle a child until he is old enough to take direct command. While the Hida are not officially patriarchal (as successful daimyo like Hida O-Ushi have shown), the majority of daimyo and heads of household are male. This is often accomplished by legitimizing illegitimate sons — more than one Crab lord has cited Osano-Wo as an example and named a favored bastard as their heir.

As the self-styled creators of Rokugani culture, the Crane follow the standard hereditary method of succession the most faithfully. Most daimyo are the eldest child of the previous daimyo, or their siblings if the daimyo does not have surviving children or the children are too young. The only exceptions are the Asahina daimyo, who are always the eldest shugenja in the ruling bloodline, and the Kakita daimyo, who is often the Master of the Kakita Dueling Academy.

The Dragon have an unusually sparse record of succession, as two of the Clan's major Families have had less than five rulers in their entire history. Typically, the daimyo of every family has been chosen by the Togashi daimyo. Both the Mirumoto and Kitsuki follow normal rules of succession, though both Families have had their expected choices overruled by the Clan Champion. The Togashi, as a strange family of monks, rarely has hereditary lines or traditional households. The Tamori are descended from the direct family line of the Agasha. The Dragon are more likely than any Clan other than the Unicorn to adopt children into their Families; the current Tamori daimyo, Tamori Shimura, is one such adoptee.

Technically, the Clan has been led by only five individuals: Togashi, Hitomi, Hoshi, Satsu, and now Mirumoto Kei. Of those five Champions, three (Togashi, Hitomi, and Satsu) have shared part of the original founder's soul and wisdom. However, throughout the Clan's history, the Mirumoto daimyo have taken a more active part in the day-to-day dealings of the Clan than the Clan Champion.

Despite being the Empire's greatest traditionalists, the Lion have decidedly unique methods of determining lead-

ership. The Matsu and Kitsu follow strict rules of hereditary succession, but the Matsu are often matrilineal (the eldest son typically becomes the defender of the Hall of Ancestors) and the Kitsu often pass the position of daimyo on to the Sodan-Senzo with the most direct link to their kitsu ancestors. Through most of the Clan's history, the Akodo were the default Clan Champion, but the Akodo daimyo was usually the child of the previous daimyo with the greatest skill and promise, not necessarily the eldest. After the Akodo were disbanded, the Lion became even more of a meritocracy; the new Champion is either named by the old Champion, or chosen by consensus of the various family daimyo. This means that the Clan Champion of the Lion need not be a family daimyo – a rare occurrence in other Clans.

The Mantis are the Lion's opposite. They choose their Clan Champions from the Storm Legion, the secret descendants of Gusai and Kaimetsu-Uo. They prefer to follow principles of hereditary succession, but there is often conflict amongst the members of this exclusive group, as members with less direct links to the original lineage have shown themselves willing to eliminate rivals with more legitimacy. Since the ascendancy of Yoritomo, the succession has become more orderly, although the conflict over Yoritomo Naizen's ascendancy has shown a return to the old ways.

Since the Phoenix follow the example of Isawa, they tend to favor merit over lineage in their leadership succession; the Council of Five are supposed to be chosen from the most gifted shugenja available, and the Soul of Shiba chooses the Phoenix Champion. The Agasha are the only family that follows traditional hereditary succession.

As befits the Clan of Secrets, the Scorpion are deliberately closed about who will inherit their leadership positions. One of the first acts of any Scorpion Champion or daimyo is to determine who would be their most suitable successor. This information is typically kept secret, although close observers can usually tell who is being groomed as a future leader.

Finally, the Unicorn are surprisingly traditional, as well; their only unique tendency is that they adopt children more frequently than other Clans. This ensures that Unicorn lines are rarely broken, even if they are not technically consistent by blood. The Unicorn, however, are one of the few Clans whose Champion is no longer directly descended from the Clan's Kami: when Shinjo returned during the War Against the Shadow, she named the Moto as the new ruling family.



Notable Samurai: Words and Deeds

ISAWA SAWAO, FORMER AMETHYST CHAMPION AND IMPERIAL MAGISTRATE

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 5	Water: 2	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4		Perception: 4		
Honor: 4.1		Status: 4.2		Glory: 6.8

SCHOOL/RANK: Isawa Shugenja 3 (Mastery: Fire)/Jade Magistrate 1

ADVANTAGES: Friendly Kami (Fire), Irreproachable

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Obligation (Jade Champion, Elemental Masters, Students)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 4, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Lore: Shugenja 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Spellcraft (Fire) 5, Theology (Fortunes) 3

SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Summon, Counter, Importune, Banish, Biting Steel, Extinguish, Fires of Purity, Katana of Fire*, Purity of Shinsei, Aura of Flame, The Fires from Within*, Fire Kami's Blessing, The Fist of Osano-Wo, Essence of Fire, Fire Walking, Symbol of Fire, Follow the Flame, By the Light of Lady Moon*, Speed of the Kami, Secrets on the Wind, Gift of the Wind, Path to Inner Peace, Armor of Earth, Jade Strike*, Tomb of Jade, The Wolf's Mercy*



Isawa Sawao serves as a shining example to the Empire that an unremarkable life is not a reliable predictor of who will and will not achieve greatness. Sawao was born humbly, the son of ashigaru, and elevated by the Phoenix when Naka Kuro spotted his talent for speaking with the kami. Sawao trained alongside Isawa Hochiu, and later served under the Master of Fire, but Hochiu burned brightly and often overshadowed his peers. For over 25 years, Sawao served his family and, later, the Emerald Magistrates loyally. Sawao never dishonored himself or failed at his duty, but neither did he distinguish himself.

All that changed at the outbreak of the War of Fire and Thunder, when the Phoenix assigned him to Toshi Ranbo as their liaison to the Jade Champion. When Sekawa discovered the Book of Five Rings, Sawao's inquisitive nature allowed him to quickly understand the Book's teachings, granting him a small measure of Enlightenment. During the final months of Toturi III's reign, Sawao explored the northern peaks of the Spine of the World mountains, and found the cursed artifact known as the

Crown of the Amethyst Champion on the body of its unfortunate previous wearer. Sawao's affinity with the Elements allowed him to commune with the spirit of thenemuranai and finally put the angry kami to rest. Since that day, he has been called the Amethyst Champion, a title that was once a sardonic joke because of the curse that came with it, but now given a new, honorable status within the courts of the Empire. In Sawao's honor, the Phoenix and the Otomo have begun jointly holding an annual contest to grant the title to samurai capable of solving even the most impossible disputes.

With the departure of Sekawa, Sawao was chosen to head the Phoenix's dojo in the Imperial Capitol, a duty that came with many added responsibilities once the Phoenix became the self-appointed protectors of Toshi Ranbo. When the Khan attacked the city, Sawao distinguished himself yet again, singlehandedly halting the fighting outside a major shrine with a wall of tightly-controlled flame. He disarmed both sides, but refused to harm either Moto or Lion, a fact that made him popular amongst the Unicorn.

The Phoenix's new mission to hunt down and exterminate the Dark Oracles has forced the Clan to once again call upon Sawao's expertise, as the Elemental Council has decided to capitalize upon the Unicorn's goodwill by appointing Sawao to lead an expedition to the northern Unicorn provinces in search of evidence of the Dark Oracle of Fire's activities.

IUCHI IETSUNA, PRISONER OF THE RUBY

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

Honor: 3.2 **Status:** 2.2 **Glory:** 3.7

SCHOOL/RANK: Iuchi Shugenja 3/ Jade Magistrate 1

ADVANTAGES: Precise Memory

DISADVANTAGES: Unlucky (3 points), Bad Fortune (Trapped in the Ruby)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Shugenja 2, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 2, Spellcraft (Water) 5, Theology (Fortunes) 3

SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Summon, Counter, Importune, Banish, Extinguish, Fires of Purity, The Fires from Within*, Essence of Fire, By the Light of Lady Moon*, Speed of the Kami, Secrets on the Wind, Gift of the Wind, Armor of Earth, Jade Strike*, Tomb of Jade, Bo of Water, Castle of Water, Heart of Nature*, Path to Inner Peace*, Speed of the Waterfall, Rejuvenating Vapors, Ride Through the Night, Wave-Born Speed, Ashim's Rainbow Shield, Near to Ice, Torrential Rain, Master of the Rolling River, The Emperor's Road

While many samurai simply aspire to be like their ancestors, Iuchi Ietsuna often behaves like the ancestors of many modern Unicorn. This is because Ietsuna is a man out of time: While he looks no older than twenty years of age, Ietsuna was born nearly 40 years prior to the modern era. Ietsuna's unnatural youth is not a blessing; instead, he spent twenty years trapped within the malevolent artifact known as the Ruby of Iuchiban.

Ietsuna's father was the famous Clan War shugenja Iuchi Karasu, a cursed man who belonged to the ancient order of hunters known as the Doomseekers. Seeking to follow in his father's footsteps, Ietsuna sought to hunt down and destroy malevolent immortal beings, be they khadi or undead, but he lacked his father's training and skill. When confronting a high-ranking member of Iuchiban's Bloodspeakers, Ietsuna was caught unawares. Before he could react, Ietsuna's soul was trapped within the Ruby.

Decades passed and the Bloodspeaker lord was defeated by the Wolf, Isawa Sezar, but Ietsuna remained trapped within the Ruby, completely unaware of how the world outside his prison was changing. Finally, Moto Akikazu, the High Priest of the Lords of Death, discovered the Ruby while confronting the physical shell of his reincarnated soul, Moto Tsume. After months of study, Akikazu managed to destroy the Ruby, nearly losing his own life in the process. Ietsuna was returned to the realm of the living, confused but otherwise unharmed.

Now, Ietsuna struggles to adapt to a vastly changed Empire. He has missed the rise and fall of the Toturi Dynasty, and while he was born only shortly before the Moto were given control of the Unicorn Clan, he did not experience the evolution of the Clan under Moto Chagatai. However, Ietsuna brings with him an innate gift for the Kami and some of the knowledge of his father. Ironically, his imprisonment makes him a valuable resource for the Unicorn: since he has no association with Chagatai's rule or the new Priests of Death, many within the Empire may trust him more than one of the modern Iuchi. Either way, Ietsuna will almost certainly play a role in the Unicorn's future.

Allies & Enemies

As an Ally, Isawa Sawao is faithful, but rarely compromises his honor. He is worth 2 Points for Influence, but only for 1 Devotion. As an enemy, he rarely pursues disputes, hoping instead to resolve them peacefully; therefore he is inappropriate as a Sworn Enemy.

At present, Iuchi Ietsuna has little practical value as an Ally; he is still adjusting himself to the fact he missed two decades of the Empire's history. There is a real limit to how much aid he could offer, and he is still uncertain about whom he can trust. Similarly, his disorientation limits his value as a Sworn Enemy.

New Mechanics

New Basic School: Otomo Astrologer School (Courtier)

The Otomo Astrology School was founded by Otomo Seimei during the reign of Hantei XXIV. The previous two Hantei Emperors both had dangerous and strange supernatural occurrences during their lives; Hantei XXII was attacked by a maho-tsukai disguised as his would-be bride, while Hantei XXIII found himself led into another realm by a kitsune disguised as a small child. Seimei was the younger brother of Hantei XXIV, and the fourth in the line of Imperial succession. At a young age, he was stricken with a consumptive sickness that prevented him from being able to learn the way of the sword, or even leave the Palace until he reached the age of gempukku. However, his oldest brother always treated Seimei with kindness and respect, and Seimei loved him dearly. As he grew older, his greatest wish was to repay the Emperor by devoting his life to protecting him.

Unfortunately for Seimei, he was too weak to train as a Seppun Guardsman, and he had no gift for speaking with the kami. Inspiration came to him one night while he looked up at the stars: As an Otomo and brother to the Emperor, he was one of the mortals closest in relation to the Celestial Heavens themselves. Of all the mortals in the Empire, would he not be among the best at understanding their hidden meanings? At Seimei's request, hundreds of sages were brought to the Imperial City as candidates to become his sensei. Unfortunately, most turned out to be charlatans or shugenja relying on the whispers of the kami rather than the hidden messages of the Heavens.

After five years, however, a true sage finally appeared: an ancient member of the Kitsune family of the Fox Clan taught Seimei how to read the Heavens, and Seimei spent the rest of his life refining the old man's teachings, learning the proper methods of divining the future. Seimei's legacy is the Otomo Astrology School, a small but important group of courtiers who defend the Emperor from supernatural threats and divine the Heaven's intent. While

most members of the small school come from Imperial Families, members of the Kitsune family have an open invitation to train at the school, in honor of Seimei's wise teacher.

BENEFIT: +1 Perception

HONOR: 3.0

SKILLS: Calligraphy, Divination (Astrology), Etiquette (Sincerity), Theology (Fortunism), Lore: Spirit Realms, Tea Ceremony, any one High Skill

OUTFIT: Wakizashi, Fine Kimono, traveling pack, map of the heavens, kawaru coins, tall hat

Techniques

RANK 1: THE HEAVEN'S WILL

The primary technique of the Otomo Astrologers is to divine the Heaven's plans for an individual, and then guide him towards achieving those plans. This is done through a complex process of divination and association between that person's date and time of birth and the position of the Celestial Bodies.

Every night, you may divine the short-term destiny of a single person. In order for the divination to be successful, you must first interview the subject so that you know his full name, birth name, family ancestry, and date and time of birth. Once you know these things, you must examine the night sky for half an hour and make an Awareness/Divination (Astrology) Roll against a TN of 15.

If you succeed, you may grant the subject a benefit if you speak to him by the following sunset; usually the message will take the form of a riddle or koan. The subject may re-roll 1 non-Bugei Skill Roll as if he has the Luck Advantage, but he must use this benefit before sunset on the same day that you impart it to him, or he loses it. You may Raise to grant the subject a +2 bonus to his re-roll for each Raise that you declare.

RANK 2: I KNOW YOUR DESTINY

Knowledge is a double-edged blade: Just as the Astrologer allows the subject of a divination to know his future, so does the Astrologer come to know his subject in ways that the subject may not welcome. When you make a Contested Roll using a Mental Trait against an individual whose destiny you have read in the past, you may re-roll the result. You must keep the new result. You may use this ability once per day per subject.

RANK 3: DIVINING THE EARTH'S ENERGIES

Seimei did not defend the Imperial family with knowledge of the Heavens alone; he also learned many of the secrets of Ningen-do. Students of his School have refined this knowledge into techniques that allow them to properly arrange the flow of energies within a household.

You may spend 1 day observing a home, then spend a Void Point and a day's work re-arranging the objects within the home to maximize the flow of chi. Larger households, like palaces, may take several Astrologers several weeks of work. You then make a Perception/Divination Roll against a TN of 15. If you succeed, all residents of the home gain the house's blessing for 1 week. You may Raise to increase the duration of the blessing by 1 week for each Raise you declare. Every morning, each resident of the home gains 1 bonus Void point. This Void point may only be spent while in the structure, and only to gain a +10 bonus to a Contested Roll involving a Mental Trait. No resident may have more than 1 such bonus Void Point at a time.

RANK 4: DIVINING THE NATURE OF MAN

At this Rank, the Astrologer has gained an impressive understanding of basic human nature, as well as technique. You may now use any divination technique you know (including, if appropriate, Kowari coins and Omens) as the divination method of your Rank 1 Technique. You also gain a bonus equal to your Divination Skill to all Awareness and Awareness-based Skill Rolls.

RANK 5: BANISH ALL EVIL

At this Rank, the Astrologer has gained full understanding of the movements of the Heavens and Earth, and is able to compel that which is unnatural to vanish from his sight. You may spend an hour re-arranging the objects inside a room and any number of Void points, then make a Willpower/Divination Roll against a TN equal to 5x each 10' square area of the room. For a number of days equal to the Void Points spent all spirit creatures are banished from the room as long as you remain inside it.

This does not cause the kami within objects to flee, but it does silence them. No spells, kiho, or maho may be cast within the room, and shugenja may not use School Techniques. Spells cast on the room or its inhabitants are negated, and ongoing spells are canceled. Oni and natural residents of other spirit realms may not enter the room, and if they are in the room when you commit to spending the Void Points on this ritual, they are banished to

their home spirit realms. Individuals possessed by spirits are cleansed of their influence. All individuals touched by other spirit realms, including creatures with the Shadowlands Taint, are affected by a Fear effect every round they remain within the room; this effect has a strength equal to the number of Void Points you spent.

New Item: The New Jade Hand

A gift from the Voice of the Jade Sun, the new Jade Hand is distinct from the one once worn by Yakamo. It symbolizes the covenant between the new Sun and the heroes of the Empire, and serves as an example to all of those who uphold Bushido and virtue. Rather than create a new artifact, the Voice of the Jade Sun simply transforms the hand of a worthy bearer into jade. It is unknown if the hand could be removed, or if it would retain its power separate from the new bearer; it is safe to believe, however, that even if it cannot, the Voice of the Jade Sun could easily select another bearer and give them a similar gift.

Like the old Jade Hand, the new Hand can be used as a weapon using Juijutsu, and has a DR of 1k3, or 3k3 when used against Tainted targets. It also ignores the target's invulnerabilities. The Hand itself glows with the light of the Jade Sun and blinds the wicked, giving its wearer a TN to Be Hit bonus equal to twice the bearer's Honor Rank.

Additionally, since the Hand reflects the nature of its current bearer, Matsu Benika, it gives her a deeper connection with her lion allies. All of Benika's lion allies in a skirmish may also ignore any invulnerabilities or other damage reduction in Tainted foes, as her honorable nature and the Hand's strength is lent to her pets.

New Item: Yakamo's Last Gift

When Hida Yakamo, once the Sun, was defeated by the Jade Dragon and fell from the Heavens, he did not forget about his loyal adherents in the Crab Clan. In true Crab fashion, Yakamo gave everything for his beloved Clan and Empire: his final gift was his body itself, which transformed into pure, mystical Jade immediately after his death. The jade from Yakamo's body resembles the Jade from his former replacement hand, and functions in almost all ways like normal jade. However, it is eternal jade, and never will taint or rot; additionally, a single sliver will protect the bearer from both passive Taint caused by remaining in the Shadowlands and any Taint caused by a spell or outside effect that would infect its target (except for Maho cast by the user).



Finally, any spell cast by a shugenja holding a finger of Yakamo's eternal jade gains a Free Raise as long as the target of the spell has at least 1 Rank of Taint. At the GM's discretion, this effect may scale with larger pieces of the jade; Kuni Daigo, the Jade Champion, used one of the largest chunks of Yakamo's Last Gift – the piece believed

to once be Yakamo's Jade Hand - to cleanse the ground around the previously unredeemable Tower of Fear. This act was one of tremendous power, but it also required a great price: the section of Yakamo's Last Gift used must remain forever in the earth outside the Kaiu Wall, or the Tower will begin to regrow where it once stood.

THE VACANT THRONE

DEATH

AT KOTEN



The events described in this chapter refer to a specific series of incidents, united only by the end result and the machinations of a single, sinister individual. They do not reflect the goings-on in the greater Empire. For information on more global events during this two-month span, see the previous and succeeding chapters.

Having studied extensively the information related to the Black Scroll the Scorpion retrieved from the Tomb of the Seven Thunders, the brilliant and reclusive priest Yogo Kazunori formulates a theory about the true nature of the scroll, and realizes that the Empire is in dire danger that no one else recognizes. Kazunori enacts a multi-layered plan thick with deceit and deception that will allow him to deal with the possible threat as best he is able, using unwitting pawns as his hands.

Through Kazunori's machinations, an Imperial magistrate of considerable renown works alongside many of the Great Clans to hunt and confront one of the direst threats in the Empire, the demon lord Kyoso no Oni. Using an experimental ritual that costs many lives, the Phoenix in attendance sacrifice themselves to bind the demon's essence into a scroll, creating a new Black Scroll. But Kazunori reckons without the dogged perseverance of his pawns, and he is captured in the process, resulting in his dire punishment by the Scorpion Clan for betrayal and treachery on a scale even they are unwilling to condone.

Fortunately, Kazunori's story lives on as a cautionary tale for young Scorpion, particularly coming from the

enigmatic new masked sensei teaching young Bayushi at Deception's Veil Dojo in the family's more sequestered provinces...

Year 1168, Month of the Dragon

Death of Hida Kisada

Hida Kisada, the Great Bear of legend, is found dead in his home at Koten. His residence shows signs of terrible fighting, and enough blood is present to indicate that he killed more than a dozen attackers, but no bodies are discovered. His sentries prove to have been the victims of a spell that rendered them unconscious during the fighting. 24 Crab warriors commit seppuku in shame over Kisada's death.

Seppun Tashime Investigates

News of Kisada's death spreads quickly and exacerbates poor relations between the Crab and Crane at the Yasuki Palace. Two courtiers enter a heated debate and end up having their champions duel to the death. In the aftermath, the Imperial magistrate Seppun Tashime discovers that a Dragon attendant has taken his own life and left an ominous death poem linking him to the dead Crab duelist. Tashime sets out for the Dragon lands to discover more.

In the Dragon lands, Tashime discovers that the dead Crab and the Dragon were brothers, and descendants of Agasha Kyoso, the Dragon samurai who inadvertently created the Oni Lord Kyoso no Oni centuries ago. Concerned by the possibility that the oni could be influencing her distant family via a blood connection, Tashime quickly goes to speak to the Phoenix about such a possibility.

Year 1168, Month of the Serpent

Kyoso no Oni is Bound

At the recommendation of the Phoenix, Tashime travels to speak with the Kitsu family and gain their assistance. Kitsu Ineko travels to the spirit realms in search of answers, but finds none, and Tashime is caught up, against his wishes, in the Clan's battle with the Unicorn.

Further consultation with the Phoenix leads Tashime to believe that it is in fact possible for the Oni Lord to exert her will over her mortal descendants. Horrified by the idea, the Phoenix offer an unprecedented solution: bind the demon's essence into a new Black Scroll. Tashime cautiously agrees, fearful of what might happen but unwilling to risk the demon's continued influence on the Empire.

With his Phoenix and Dragon allies, as well as Mantis mercenaries and Crab scouts, Tashime locates and battles Kyoso no Oni. Casualties are nearly overwhelming, but two Phoenix give their lives to complete the ritual and bind the demon into a new Black Scroll. Inexplicably, the mortal Agasha Kyoso remains behind, confused and disoriented by what has happened and with no memories of the past few centuries.

In the battle's aftermath, Tashime discovers and apprehends Yogo Kazunori in the area, somehow convinced that the Scorpion was involved in the events.

Year 1168, Month of the Horse

Yogo Kazunori Departs, Agasha Kyoso Returns

After hearing the testimony of Imperial magistrate Seppun Tashime, the Scorpion Clan Champion sentences Yogo Kazunori to Traitor's Grove, and his name is stricken from all Clan records. Speaking his name within the confines of Kyuden Bayushi is declared a criminal act for any Scorpion samurai.

After some deliberation on the part of the Seppun magistrates, custody of the restored Agasha Kyoso is granted to the Dragon Clan over the vigorous protestations of the Phoenix and the Agasha family, who petition to study her in order to determine what could have resulted in her return. Ultimately, however, she is determined by Imperial Law to be a Dragon, and it is to the Dragon's custody she is remanded.



Involving Your Character in the Events of Death at Koten

Embroiling your character in the events depicted in the Legend of the Five Rings graphic novel *Death at Koten* will be somewhat more difficult than normal, because the events depicted there are restricted to a small number of very specific individuals. Still, there are opportunities for others to be involved in a tangential manner.

Perhaps the characters are attendants, assistants, or otherwise in the employ of Seppun Tashime. This is the most direct means of involving them in the events of this story, although it will likely somewhat change the manner in which those events unfold. Perhaps Tashime sends the characters to the Dragon or Lion lands in his place, or leaves them in the Imperial City to consult with the Phoenix during his trip to the Lion-Unicorn war zone.

The characters might be in the employ of the Yoritomo captain who transports Tashime and his associates to the southern reaches of the Crab lands, from which they enter the Shadowlands to hunt Kyoso no Oni. Alternatively, they may simply be passengers on the same kobune when Tashime commandeers it. This may derail their current plans and cause some resentment, but Tashime possesses more Status than any player character is likely to possess. If they acquit themselves well in the ensuing conflict they may impress Tashime, which can pay dividends later in the campaign if they need him to return the favor.

Or perhaps the characters are attendants of Hida Kisada, serving at Koten. This is a particularly difficult choice because, in theory, they should be required to commit seppuku when Kisada is murdered. If they were out of the temple as part of their official duties, of course, they would be exempt from this, but they may still be required to look into the matter as part of their ongoing service to the Crab. This option may actually place the characters in opposition to Tashime or Kazunori, both of whom can prove exceptionally dangerous adversaries (albeit for very different reasons).

New Black Scrolls

The original twelve Black Scrolls are among the most infamous and powerful artifacts in existence. Only the

Bloodswords have the same degree of fear and loathing associated with them in the minds of most Rokugani. Despite their power and notoriety, however, few have any real concept of what the Black Scrolls were other than that they contained the power of the Dark Kami, Fu Leng. The secret of their creation was lost with the singular intellect of Isawa when he perished in combat against Fu Leng in the Shadowlands over a thousand years ago. Phoenix scholars have studied the possible means by which these scrolls were created for nearly as long as they have existed, but the secret contained two aspects that eluded even the most brilliant among them. First and foremost, the means by which Isawa drained the essence of Fu Leng into the scrolls was unknown. Even if that had been overcome, however, only scrolls that contained spells of incredible power and potency could have any hope of containing such power. It has only been in the past century that the Phoenix have begun to delve into the mysteries of the universe to such an extent that scrolls of this power level have been created, and even then the lack of Isawa's original ritual has prevented the creation of additional Black Scrolls, even assuming the Phoenix had any need or desire to create them.

Until now.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Hida Kisada, and the revelations that came to light shortly thereafter, gave the Phoenix Clan reason to suspect the threat posed by the oni lords might be even more dire than previously imagined. Unwilling to risk the possibility of further interference from such insidious opponents, Master of Water Asako Bairei, called by some the most brilliant man in the Empire, delved into the mysteries of creating a Black Scroll and, in a shockingly short period of time, was successful in creating a ritual that would accomplish the same effect. Under different circumstances, it is possible that such a ritual would never have been possible. Spurred on by the rumor that the Scorpion may have recovered a new Black Scroll from the Tomb of the Seven Thunders, and by virtue of the sheer enormity of Bairei's academic curiosity, the endeavor was successful, although ultimately not as efficiently as the original ritual used by Isawa. For Bairei's ritual to be completed successfully, the caster would be forced to sacrifice his life. Fortunately for Tashime's quest, and perhaps for the sake of the Empire, there are no shortage of members of the Asako Inquisitors who consider sacrifice in the name of destroying an oni lord a most worthy duty.

The Thirteenth Black Scroll

Although it has no formal name, the thirteenth identified Black Scroll was taken from the Tomb of Seven Thunders and is known informally as the Essence of Jigoku among the few Scorpion who know of its existence. The scroll was retrieved from the Tomb of the Seven Thunders by Shosuro Aroru during the battle that took the life of Emperor Toturi III. He returned the scroll to his Champion, Bayushi Paneki, who in turn commissioned some of his most trusted vassals to determine what the scroll was and how it might have been created. The Kuroiban were responsible for its supervision, and Soshi Yukimi personally granted two of her less stable vassals, Soshi Natsuo and Soshi Korenaga, permission to study it, largely because she considered them expendable assets.

Natsuo and Korenaga, the first a former conspirator with the Shadowed Tower and the latter an unstable mind unhinged by studying the scroll and its power, took considerable liberty with their mandate and opened the scroll. The scroll had never been opened before, according to Yukimi's research, and as such could not have been one of the scrolls Isawa created to contain Fu Leng's essence. Instead the scroll appeared to contain the essence of some other entity, as yet unknown. Korenaga and Natsuo hoped that by opening the scroll they might divine the origin of its power, and were willing to make the necessary sacrifice to gain that information for their clan, but they were ultimately unsuccessful. Both men were terribly rav-

aged by the spell's power, suffering significant mental and physical trauma, as well as being contaminated by the Shadowlands Taint. The region in which they opened it, a rural section of the northern Crab lands, was instantly blighted by the spell's effects as well. The two shugenja, although severely censured by their Champion, who nearly demanded the seppuku of their master Yukimi as well, were correct in their assessment of the scroll and its origins. Unfortunately, they were also correct in their fear that the being whose power was bound within the scroll would detect its release.

Virtually every aspect of this scroll's creation remains a mystery. It is unknown who created it, or how, and even more pressing, how it is that it came to contain a portion of Kali Ma's power. One possible theory is that Isawa and the other Thunders encountered something from the Ivory Kingdoms during their search for Fu Leng, some avatar of Kali Ma that was attracted by the creation of the Festering Pit and the demon hordes of Fu Leng. This seems unlikely, however, as the Scorpion believe that the descendants of Shinsei have been visiting the Tomb intermittently over a thousand years, and it could have been placed there at any time. Since the possibility exists that the Little Prophet was also the man called Mekhem in the Burning Sands, it is possible that he passed on the secrets of creating the Black Scrolls to the sahir there, and one of them managed to destroy one of Kali Ma's creatures by creating this particular item.



The Fourteenth Black Scroll

The most recently created Black Scroll was created when Seppun Tashime and his associates, among them an Asako Inquistor named Asako Fosu and a young yojimbo named Shiba Kosuko, confronted the demon lord Kyoso no Oni in one of her lairs in the Shadowlands. Only a handful of Scorpion are aware both of its existence as well as the existence of the Essence of Jigoku, and it is only they who refer to this one by its technically proper name, the fourteenth Black Scroll. Unfortunately, not even they understand the true nature of the scroll, because perhaps only one man in the entire Empire, Yogo Kazunori, is aware of what it might really be.

The Fourteenth Black Scroll contains the essence of the entity known as Kyoso no Oni, long regarded as the most sinister and devious of all the oni lords. That much is in fact correct. The confusion stems from the fact that Roku-gan as a whole is gravely mistaken about exactly what Kyoso no Oni is. According to historical record, Agasha Kyoso was a young and powerful Dragon shugenja who was jilted by her betrothed. In an attempt to exact vengeance, she stole forbidden lore confiscated by the Dragon in an earlier century and used it to summon an oni to take revenge. Ultimately she lost control of the demon and it consumed her, devouring her soul and becoming an oni lord. While this is close enough to the truth that no difference has been noticed in centuries, the truth remains far more insidious and presents a greater threat to the Empire than Kyoso no Oni ever has on her own.

In reality, the scrolls that Agasha Kyoso discovered and used were forbidden, but not because they were a form of blood sorcery, as she supposed. They were confiscated from Yobanjin raiders and were determined to be dangerous. The scroll that Kyoso used was a ritual taken from the Cult of Ruhmal in the city of Medinaat al-Salaam. The ritual did not summon an oni, but rather drew upon the power of Kali Ma, the wrathful aspect of the Ivory Kingdoms deity Shiva the Destroyer. Kyoso was transformed by the power, her personality rendered subordinate to an extremely powerful and malevolent intelligence that, because of its ignorance of its own existence, came to accept that it was in fact the oni lord others believed it to be. Thus it existed for centuries before anyone began to suspect that its origins were not the commonly accepted version, until a man named Yogo Kazunori took careful stock of the information compiled on the Thirteenth Black

Scroll and compared it to a number of different historical and theological texts.

It was Kazunori's realization that the thirteenth Black Scroll contained a tiny fragment of arcane power stemming from the essence of some divine being in a distant realm that led him to research the possibility of a link between Kali Ma and Kyoso no Oni. As a man accustomed to delving into shadows and operating in ever increasing rings of intricacies, Kazunori knew that the similarities between the two entities, as determined by an ancient and forbidden text from the Ivory Kingdoms that the Scorpion had acquired from the Mantis, were too significant to be discounted. It was only through his sheer determination and complete lack of scruples that the mastermind was able to acquire all the information he required, and even then most men would not have seen the pattern that he recognized at once. Kazunori instantly began plotting a means by which Kyoso no Oni could be neutralized without destroying her. Destroying the demon outright, or allowing it to remain free until such time as Kali Ma found her, whenever that might take place, ran the risk of allowing Kali Ma to regain her full power, something the Empire of Rokugan would likely not survive. Kazunori was determined not to allow that to happen.

Notable Samurai: Death at Koten

HIDA KISADA, THE GREAT BEAR

Air: 4	Earth: 8	Fire: 4	Water: 5	Void: 4
Honor: 3.6		Glory: 9.9		Status: 7.9

SCHOOL/RANK: Hida Bushi 5/Hida Avenger 3/Blessed Guard 2

ADVANTAGES: Bishamon's Blessing, Crab Hands, Clear Thinker, Large, Leadership, Magic Resistance (6 points), Sage, Strength of the Earth (8 points), Tactician

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Dark Fate

KATA: Kisada knows all Crab kata for which he meets the prerequisites.

SKILLS: Battle (Mass Combat, Specific Enemy: Shadowlands) 6, Deceit (Intimidation) 6, Defense 5, Heavy Weapons (Dai tsuchi, Ono, Tetsubo) 7, Hunting 3, Investigation 4, Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Her-

aldry 3, Lore: History 4, Lore: Law 3, Lore: Shadowlands 9, Lore: Spirit Realms 6, Theology (Shintao) 5

There is little that can be said about the legendary Hida Kisada that is not known throughout the Empire already. The man is as much myth as reality, and his accomplishments over the last century have been more than some bloodlines have achieved in a dozen generations. He is respected by virtually everyone, and those few who do not respect him at least have the wisdom to fear him.

Hida Kisada is perhaps one of the most remarkable figures in all of Rokugan's history. During his mortal life as Crab Champion, he turned the tide against the Scorpion Clan during their failed coup in Otosan Uchi. His one true regret is that he was deceived by a trusted subordinate into forging an alliance with the Shadowlands during the early days of the Clan War, a move that cost the life of his youngest son. Kisada turned his back on the alliance, but not before the reincarnation of Fu Leng buried a sword in his stomach. Kisada lived for two years with a wound that would have killed any other man instantly, and upon his death was declared the Fortune of Persistence by the Emperor Toturi I.

Kisada's existence as a Fortune was a curious one, and one that is difficult for him to describe to others who lack the same frame of reference. When the folly of mankind over several generations led to the birth of a new spirit realm, the Realm of Thwarted Destiny, the forces of evil threatened to turn it into a twisted realm that would alter the balance of the universe. Kisada was one of those who joined the Legion of the Dead to fight against the pawns of Jigoku. And it was Kisada who returned to the mortal realm through Oblivion's Gate in order to stand against the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban and make things right. To Kisada's vast surprise, when the deed was done and the blasphemer dead, the Great Bear remained alive.

Kisada's second life confused him. Hida Kuon, his grandson, offered him the Crab Championship, but he refused it. It soon became apparent, however, that his presence at Kyuden Hida overshadowed Hida Kuon, and so Kisada retired to Koten, a shrine to the ancestors of the Crab Clan, as his primary residence. Many remained loyal to him nonetheless, even though his youth and vigor rapidly diminished as he began returning to the age he had been at the time of his first death.

When Kisada's second death came, he met it with the fury of a Fortune, and slew nearly two dozen of his attackers in unarmed combat.

SEPPUN TASHIME, IMPERIAL MAGISTRATE

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
	Willpower: 6	Agility: 5	Perception: 6	
Honor: 4.2		Glory: 3.5		Status: 4.9

SCHOOL/RANK: Seppun Guardsman 4/Seppun Magistrate 1

ADVANTAGES: Allies (numerous), Absolute Direction, Clear Thinker, Obligation

DISADVANTAGES: Sworn Enemy (numerous criminal groups)

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle 4, Courtier 4, Defense 6, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Sincerity) 4, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation (Interrogation, Notice, Search) 7, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Heraldry 5, Lore: History 4, Lore: Law 6, Spears 2, Theology (Shintao) 3, War Fans 4

In a time in which the Great Clans, tempted by the vacant Imperial Throne, seem all too prepared to embrace ruthless practicality, there are far too few men like Seppun Tashime. A legend among the Imperial Families and even other Families with magisterial traditions, Tashime is one of the most prominent members of the Seppun Magistrates and a personal friend and student of Seppun Katsura, Master of the family's magistrate dojo. His career as a young man was extraordinary, and he rapidly rose through the ranks to become one of the senior members of his order.

By sheer happenstance, Tashime was in attendance at a court in the Yasuki lands when news of Hida Kisada's death arrived. Relations between the Crab and the Crane, already tense, was drastically worsened by the news, and mutual recrimination led to an iaijutsu duel in which a Crane champion killed her Crab counterpart. A mysterious suicide by a member of the Dragon entourage led Tashime to the Dragon lands to investigate the link between the dead Dragon and the dead Crab duelist. By consulting the Kitsuki records, Tashime learned that the two samurai were not only long-lost brothers, but also distant relatives of Agasha Kyoso, the woman who lost her soul to a summoned demon and created Kyoso no Oni, the most insidious of the Oni Lords. Concerned that the demon might be able to exert influence over those connected to it by blood, Tashime delved further into the matter.

Tashime's investigation led to places he could never have imagined when he first set out. No one he spoke to could rule out the possibility that an Oni Lord could



YOGO KAZUNORI, SCORPION MASTERMIND

Air: 5	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Willpower: 5		Intelligence: 6		Perception: 5
Honor: 1.6		Glory: 3.7		Status: 2.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Yogo Shugenja 4\Mastermind 2

ADVANTAGES: Blackmail (numerous), Clear Thinker, Cruel, Friend of the Elements (Air), Heartless

DISADVANTAGES: Overconfident, Sworn Enemies (numerous)

SKILLS: Animal Handling (Falconry) 3, Artisan: Sculpture 3, Calligraphy 3, Commerce 4, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Deceit (Intimidation) 7, Etiquette (Sincerity) 6, Knives 4, Lore: History 4, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Meditation 3, Perform: Poetry 3, Spellcraft (Maho) 6, Theology 3

SPELLS: Kazunori possesses a vast library of spells, many of which he has memorized and no longer requires scrolls to cast. He has created a number of his own spells as well, most of which are particularly insidious. In particular, Kazunori can cast many spells of other elements as Air spells, with the Mastery Level increased by 1.

The story of Yogo Kazunori is a cautionary tale for members of the Scorpion Clan, lest they allow their own agendas and ambitions to overcome their sense of duty and loyalty. It is also a tale of treachery and deceit to the other Clans,

exert influence through its mortal bloodline, a terrifying possibility, particularly to the Phoenix Clan. As a result, the Phoenix resolved to destroy Kyoso no Oni. Of course, Tashime recognized that such a thing was nigh impossible, and so instead the Phoenix created a means by which its essence could be bound forever, much as Fu Leng's had been a thousand years ago; in short, they created a new Black Scroll by binding Kyoso no Oni and ending her threat forever.

Throughout the entire process, Tashime felt the hand of some unknown party. His every instinct insisted that he was being manipulated, although he could not yet tell by whom. The final battle against Kyoso no Oni was terrible, and cost the lives of many of Tashime's brave allies. He knew the architect of this incident would be nearby. Long experience told him that someone who cloaked himself in such secrecy could not resist the urge to see the fruits of his labor. Tashime struck without warning, and captured the man he knew in his heart was responsible for the events, a previously obscure Scorpion priest named Yogo Kazunori.

who use his example to justify their loathing of the Scorpion. Yet for all that, Kazunori's story is known only in its outline, and for one catastrophic failure that resulted in the ultimate punishment.

Kazunori's youth and early history remain largely a mystery. If any records of his early exploits existed in the Scorpion histories, they have been destroyed. Some within the Clan who dare to speak of such things have conjectured that Kazunori might have been one of those who assumed the role of Bayushi Nomen when the Scorpion were attempting to secure support to claim the empty Throne. Whether this is true or not, no one other than Bayushi Paneki can say for certain, and the topic of Yogo Kazunori is not one that is safe to mention in the company of the Scorpion Champion. What is known about the villain Kazunori is a sordid and treacherous tale.

It appears that Kazunori spent almost a year preparing the rituals necessary to overcome Hida Kisada's safeguards

at Koten, and he counted the assassination a success even though the Great Bear killed nearly two dozen of his agents. He then murdered a young Dragon samurai and made it appear to have been seppuku. When the Dragon and

Phoenix attempted to locate information related to the abilities of Oni Lords and their mortal bloodlines, they found flawless forgeries prepared and placed by Kazunori months or even years in advance; thus, they came to believe exactly what he wanted them to believe. Every step that his pawns took, he manipulated. Their every movement was as he had planned.

Ultimately, the seeds of Kazunori's downfall were sown in his desire to see the completion of his plans. He witnessed the destruction of Kyoso no Oni, and the creation of the Black Scroll that would, in his estimation, save the Empire in the trials to come.



Unfortunately, his single failing in the construction of his plot was underestimating the prowess and perception of his principle pawn, Seppun Tashime. The magistrate sensed the hand of someone else in the affair and, at the critical moment, struck down Kazunori's protection and took him captive. To destroy the magistrate and his few surviving attendants would have weakened him to the point that he could not have returned alive from the Shadowlands, and he dared not risk the loss of the Black Scroll he had worked so hard to have created. And so it was that Yogo Kazunori was tried for his crimes by the Scorpion and sentenced to the worst manner of death within Traitor's Grove.

Just as Kazunori's contingency plans had anticipated.

Allies & Enemies

Hida Kisada is a figure unlike any other in Rokugan, literally a god made flesh. To say that he commands significant influence would be a gross understatement. His Influence as an Ally would easily be 5 Points. But in his second life, he is reluctant to interfere in the lives of mortals, and so his Devotion to anyone outside of immediate family or close confidants is worth no more than 2 Points.

As an enemy, Kisada is exceptionally dangerous, mostly because he commands such loyalty that the enmity of his followers will be both vigorous and relentless. He is worth 4-5 Points as a Sworn Enemy for that reason alone.

Seppun Tashime has considerable influence among the highest circles of the Imperial bureaucracy. As a senior Seppun magistrate, he can easily gain the ear of the Emerald Champion. Tashime is easily worth 3-4 Points of Influence as an Ally. As an enemy, Tashime is intimidating and well-connected, but his honor prevents him from using his position against an opponent outside of his duty as a magistrate. As a Sworn Enemy, he is worth 3 Points.

Yogo Kazunori should not be available for purchase as an Ally because he rarely puts the needs of others ahead of his own machinations. As an enemy, however, Kazunori is perhaps the most dangerous character of this era, as he will stop at nothing to destroy anyone who opposes him. He is worth a minimum of 5 Points as a Sworn Enemy.

New Mechanics

New Rules: Sacrificial Magic

The history of Rokugan includes stories of shugenja achieving impossible feats of magic through the sacrifice of their lives in the ritual casting process. It is a rare occurrence, almost certainly because only the most powerful shugenja possess the degree of communion with the Elements necessary to understand how such a thing might be accomplished. Even then, such an act is committed very rarely because no one can predict the outcome with certainty. If you surrender your soul to the kami, does it cross to the next world? Is it reincarnated? Or is death final? No one, not even the wisest among the Phoenix, can say for certain.

Mechanically speaking, sacrificial magic is an occurrence that takes place when a shugenja knowingly gives up his life in order to dramatically increase the effects of a spell that is being cast. Once this decision has been made, it cannot be reversed; the shugenja will die when the spell is concluded, and cannot be resurrected under any circumstances (not that any honorable soul would ever consider an act as blasphemous as resurrection). The mechanical results of this agreement, this decision, are as follows:

You gain a number of Free Raises equal to twice your Shugenja School Rank to be used on the Spellcasting Roll.

You gain a number of additional Void Points equal to twice your Shugenja School Rank. These bonus Void Points may only be used on the Spellcasting Roll.

You may double any 1 aspect of the spell being cast. This may be the duration, range, area of effect, number of targets, or any other aspect deemed suitable by the GM.

New Advanced School: The Mastermind

There are those in the Empire whose personal ambition is without limit. Some of them are able to rein in their personal impulses and use their manipulative genius solely for the benefit of their family and Clan, while others care

for nothing but their own agenda. These individuals can easily become criminals of the most devious sort; others may become shrewd merchants. Some even become magistrates, which can result in abuses of power of the worst sort.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAITS: Awareness 4, Willpower 4

SKILLS: Courtier (Manipulation) 6, Etiquette 6, Deceit 6

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Cruel, Heartless

OTHER: Members of the Scorpion Clan may ignore one Advantage requirement

NOTES: The Techniques associated with this School do not represent actual secrets passed down from sensei to student. Instead, they represent the power and inherent abilities generally developed by those who take Ranks of this School when they devote time to their own machinations. The lack of advancement in your Basic School represents time spent on your own agenda rather than continuing your proper training.

Techniques:

RANK 1: TRAP THE CARELESS

With proper preparation, there are few things outside the abilities of a true mastermind. Magistrates and other opponents who find themselves opposing you or your agents in court discover their tasks are more difficult, and you and allies in your immediate presence gain a +10 (for you) or +5 (for your minions) bonus to all Contested Rolls.

RANK 2: CRUSH THE FOOLISH

To make an enemy of a true mastermind is a mistake that will likely prove lethal. When an opponent fails an Investigation Skill Roll or an attack roll against you, all subsequent rolls of that type made by that opponent against you suffer a penalty equal to the amount by which he failed the first roll. For Investigation Rolls, this penalty lasts 1 month. For attack rolls, it lasts for the remainder of the skirmish, and only the highest such penalty applies.

RANK 3: VICTORY IS INEVITABLE

Even in a mastermind's defeat, there is no victory for his enemies. If a plot of yours has been thwarted, or your machinations exposed by an enemy, then your agents and minions each gain a number of bonus Void Points equal to your School Rank, which may only be used on actions taken against the party responsible for thwarting your will.

New Path: Guardian of the Bear

After the return of Hida Kisada to the mortal realm, there were those among the Crab who did not consider that his mortality had been returned upon his arrival. To them, he was a legend made flesh, a god that walked the earth. They pledged their lives and loyalty to him forever, without question. Despite the fact this would seem to weaken his authority as Champion, Hida Kuon understood all too well their feelings and grouped them together into an honor guard for his grandfather. This was a largely ceremonial position at first, but as Kisada began aging at a preternatural rate, their duties acquired more weight over time.

The death of Kisada shamed the Guardians. Most of the group was in attendance at Koten on the night of his death, and cannot account for their failure. They committed mass seppuku under the watchful eyes of their Champion. Only a handful, those who were absent from Koten at the time, remain.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 4

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Crab Bushi School at Rank 3

REQUIREMENTS: Earth 4, Strength 5, Jiu-jutsu 5, Heavy Weapons 5

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same School at Rank 4

TECHNIQUE: STRENGTH OF THE BEAR

Those who follow the great Kisada draw their strength from him and live in his honor. You may spend a Void Point to use your Earth Ring in place of any Ring or Trait for a Raw Ring Roll or Raw Trait Roll. You gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Earth Ring, and you gain a number of additional Wounds in your first Wound Rank equal to your Earth Ring.

THE VACANT THRONE

THE
HEAVEN'S WILL

Years of recent Rokugani history culminate in the events of The Heavens' Will. The Heavens will no longer tolerate the chaos that has troubled the Empire since the death of the Emperor. They bestow their blessings on those who deserve it; Kakita Kensho-in receives the Obsidian Hand, and Matsu Benika receives the Jade Hand. The vacant Throne will now be filled by an Empress chosen and approved by the Heavens. Events accelerate and become more volatile as the end of the struggle draws near.

The most important single event of this time is the Celestial Tournament and the ascension of Empress Iweko I. The Obsidian Moon and the Jade Sun call upon their representatives on Ningen-do to spread word of the Heavens' displeasure in the state of affairs. Humans continue to make a mess of things, and the Empire must no longer be allowed to spiral out of control. The Heavens will take the succession crisis into their own hands; Omen and Shosuro Maru will oversee a tournament on Seppun Hill to choose the most worthy samurai for the Throne. The contestants will be judged on their behavior throughout the day and their overall worthiness, not the results of the martial contests. Moto Jin-Sahn wins the tournament, but Kitsuki Iweko is deemed the right person to receive the Mandate of the Heavens.

The Spider Clan also come closer to their goal of becoming a legitimate presence in the courts of the Empire, using a cruel and cunning ruse to secure the favor of the Unicorn. Using a khadi spell, Daigotsu coordinates hundreds of assassinations of those who oppose him. The only

Clan to remain unaffected by this massacre is the Unicorn Clan. Representatives from the Spider claim that it was a preemptive strike against those who would harm the Unicorn, made as a gesture of friendship. Furthermore, they reveal evidence that proves Ide Tang's duplicity as a life-long double agent for the Scorpion Clan. Grateful for their assistance, the Unicorn Khan Moto Chen vows to introduce them to the Imperial Court.

The Scorpion Clan finally excise a devious threat to the Empire by destroying the Hidden Temple of the Kolat. The Kolat had been thriving for centuries, and this blow is the worst attack the organization has ever suffered. The majority of the Kolat Masters are killed in the assault and others are hunted down in the weeks that follow. Few Kolat Masters survived the massacre, and the organization may finally be extinct.

Year 1170, Month of the Monkey

Phoenix Intervention Rejected

When the Phoenix Clan declare their intention to stop the Third Yasuki War, both the Crab and the Crane feel affronted by the idea. The war is a matter of honor between the two Clans. The fact the Phoenix feel the desire to intervene means they do not trust the combatants to resolve

the matter of honor amongst themselves. The Crane send a tersely written note demanding the Phoenix withdraw. The Phoenix quietly refuse.

When a Phoenix army led by Shiba Tsukimi appears in the war zone and interposes itself between the warring parties, Tsukimi is mystified when her samurai keep dying in droves. Suddenly, she realizes the Crane and Crab are working together to destroy her force. The Phoenix withdraw from the field.

Infiltration of Kyuden Ikoma

Kyuden Ikoma receives reinforcements to help defend its walls. Among them are the famed Legion of Two Thousand and a band of ronin called the Hidden Sword. Unbeknownst to the Lion, a unit of Spider assassins poses as a ronin band and infiltrates the castle.

Cryptic Book

Akodo Itoku and Matsu Watako uncover a strange book in a gaijin language. After some deliberation, they determine that it is a book of Yodotai strategy in the Senpet language. Not being fluent in Senpet, they find it difficult to decipher, but they vow to discover its secrets.

After two months of mostly fruitless labor, they find a book written in Senpet by the general Abresax after his defection to the Scorpion Clan. This gives them a key for translating Senpet into Rokugani.

The Night of the Spider

Daigotsu's grand plan to destroy the Rokugani elite finally unveils itself across the empire in one bloody night. He will make them fear the darkness and the enemies that stalk Rokugan. Assassins assault some of the greatest samurai in all of the Great Clans, and the bloodiest night in recent history begins.

Ide Tang Exposed

The Unicorn Clan is the only Clan unaffected by the Night of the Spider. Reports of the murders spread like wildfire. The Spider reveals themselves as the hidden allies of the Unicorn Clan. Additionally, they provide yet another boon to the Unicorn Clan when they reveal Ide Tang's true identity as a Scorpion spy. Chen executes Tang and promises to introduce the Spider at the Imperial Court.

Casualties of the Night of the Spider

Except for the Unicorn, every Great Clan lost important leaders and other personages. Here is a list of the most important victims of the Spider's massacre. It does not reflect the many guards, servants, and soldiers who also died.

CRAB CLAN: Hida Sakamoto, Kaiu Umasu

CRANE CLAN: Asahina Nizomi, Doji Jorihime

DRAGON CLAN: Tamori Shaitung, Tamori Nakamuro

LION CLAN: Akodo Hachigoro, Ikoma Korin, Kitsu Katsuko

MANTIS CLAN: Moshi Amika, Tsuruchi Ki

PHOENIX CLAN: Tamori Nakamuro, Shiba Ritsuo, Shiba Yoshimi

SCORPION CLAN: Soshi Uidori

UNICORN CLAN: None

Year 1170, Month of the Rooster

Assault on the Hidden Temple

Togashi Satsu has lost his divinity, and with it the Dragon Clan has also lost its foresight and protection against Kolat infiltration. Hoshi Kaelung no longer believes his secrets are safe. He sends a book filled with the Tiger Sect's secrets to the Scorpion Clan Champion in hopes that he will be able to put it to good use. Paneki has been waiting for such an opportunity for years and leaps into action.

Bayushi Tsimaru, Bayushi Muhito, and Bayushi Kyuichi lead a force of elite Scorpion warriors and ninja to the Kolat's Hidden Temple in the Phoenix lands. They neutralize the Kolat threat and kill everyone they find — including the majority of the Kolat Masters. The powerful nemuranai known as the Oni's Eye falls into the hands of the Scorpion. Tsimaru brings the item to his Champion, who must now consider how best to utilize it.



The Last Words of the Moon

Tsuruchi Etsui and Kakita Kyuruko are en route to the Hidden Temple when they hear word that it is under attack from Scorpion forces. While Kyuruko is flustered and put off guard from the news, Etsui takes the opportunity to kill his tyrannical master. He is drawn to a disturbance within the mountains and sees the fallen form of Hitomi. She has been ejected from her seat in the Heavens by the Obsidian Dragon. She wastes no time in delivering a final warning to the Rokugani: build a wall to the north.

Something is coming.

The First Dark Oracle Falls

Isawa Takesi, Isawa Mizuhiko, and Isawa Oharu travel to the hidden lair of Yasuki Nokatsu, Dark Oracle of Earth. They face the dangerous villain together. Nokatsu's power is undeniable; he kills Isawa Oharu with a single word. However, the clever Phoenix cast a spell to prevent his speech, separating him from his abilities. They slay Nokatsu, leaving one less Dark Oracle to menace the Empire.

Shosuro Maru Bestows the Obsidian Hand

The Voice of the Obsidian Dragon, Shosuro Maru, disappears from her home in the Scorpion lands. She travels toward the Imperial City and meets Kakita Kensho-in. She sees the Crane's soul and sees that Kensho-in has lied and murdered in the name of the Crane Clan. Her dedication to her Clan, no matter the cost, makes her the perfect recipient of the object of the Obsidian Dragon. Kensho-in's right hand transforms into the Obsidian Hand.

The Proclamation

The Voice of the Obsidian Dragon and the Oracle of the Jade Dragon appear together in the Imperial Court. They state they will decide the identity of the perfect samurai to carry the Mandate of the Heavens. They will host a tournament in one month on Seppun Hill, where the Kami fell so many centuries ago. The winner of the tournament may not become the new Emperor, however; the role will fall to the one who most exemplifies Bushido.

Year 1170, Month of the Dog

Fall of Thunder

The Thunder Dragon leaves the Heavens and comes to Ningen-do. It calls out to Yoritomo Naizen, who still bears its blessing. The Mantis Clan Champion immediately drops everything and goes to protect the Celestial being with his entire fleet. Ningyo appear to help Naizen in the defense.

Anvil of Despair Returned

The Asahina daimyo Asahina Keitaro has held the dreaded Anvil of Despair for years now without harm, yet he can do nothing to protect himself when its master returns to claim it. Daigotsu Yajinden slays Keitaro and takes his creation. It is now back in his hands for the first time in centuries.

The Celestial Tournament

The Celestial Tournament draws the most celebrated personages of the Empire as they compete in iaijutsu, kenjutsu, and other contests. The heads of the Lion Clan withdraw from the tournament, however, as they hear word of a grave threat in Otsan Uchi. Representatives of the Spider Clan reveal their true identity in front of Shosuro Maru and Omen; they are unashamed to admit that they worship the Ninth Kami, a brother to those who founded the Great Clans. Maru and Omen allow the Spider to participate in the tournament.

Moto Jin-Sahn is the surprise winner of the tournament; his devotion to the Lords of Death allows him to participate in front of the avatars of the Heavens without hesitation. However, at the end of the tournament, a bright light fills the air and infuses Kitsuki Iweko with divinity. She is now Iweko the First, Empress of Rokugan.

Iweko I immediately chooses those to fill high-ranking positions left vacant in the tumult of the past year. Moto Jin-Sahn is the new Shogun. Wily Bayushi Hisoka is the newest Imperial Chancellor, filling the large shoes of Bay-



ushi Kaukatsu. Yoritomo Utemaro will manage the economy as the Imperial Treasurer, and in a surprise move Daigotsu Susumu will be the Imperial Advisor. Togashi Satsu steps down as the Dragon Clan Champion to serve his new Empress as her Voice.

Year 1170, Month of the Boar

The First Command

Iweko gives her first order to her new Shogun: Rid the Empire of the Tainted Spider Clan. Jin-Sahn gathers his forces – made of twelve Lion legions, several Unicorn legions, and the late Kaneka's army – and heads toward the Shinomen Forest. Daigotsu sets the forest ablaze and retreats to a second hidden fortress to avoid pursuit.

Narako's Vision

The Shadow Dragon withdraws his forces from Kitsune Mori, as the Kitsune prophet's defenses are much too reliable to defeat. That danger has subsided, but it is far from over: Narako is struck with her strongest vision yet. Once she recovers, she tells the young warriors around her that they must immediately tell the portents to the Empress. Only she can divert disaster.

Involving Your Character in the Events of The Heavens' Will

The events of these tumultuous months are grand and world-changing, but they can still give player characters a chance to determine the outcome. In the canon, Kitsuki Iweko is chosen to be the next Empress, but others certainly stood out in the tournament. Moto Jin-Sahn rose from relative obscurity to become Shogun of the Empire in one swift stroke, and such a reversal of fortune could occur to the lucky (or determined) player character. You must take care if you choose to make such alterations, however, as the results of the tournament will have far-reaching effects for the Imperial bureaucracy and the distribution of high leadership positions throughout the Empire.

Even if the players do not change the results of the tournament, they will still have the chance to meet the greatest names of each Clan, as they are all present at Seppun Hill. It is the perfect opportunity to win important allies and gain their favor. There are plenty of sub-plots that occur during the tournament that could draw your characters' interest. The Lion's defense of Ootosan Uchi from maho-tsukai is perfect for a military campaign, while the politics of the Celestial Tournament (and all the important celebrities who attend) are perfect for a courtier campaign.

The Night of the Spider struck all across Rokugan; if the players are within any major city or landmark, they might run across the assassins on their bloody business. If the players intervene, they may garner favor with the important personages who were targeted. The assassins do not expect to survive their missions and will fight back with vigor. If the players manage to stop a murder, they may decide to pursue the lead and attempt to figure out the head of the conspiracy.

The fall of the Kolat is an important sub-plot that could draw in a party. The devastating assault on the Hidden Temple requires the utmost secrecy to maintain its effectiveness. The players could be a part of those who mean to destroy the Kolat, or they could be hapless pawns of the Kolat who uncover the plot. The Kolat organization is insidious and very powerful. If they catch word of the Scorpion's plans, they would be able to make a preemptive strike and cripple the budding plan. The players' actions could determine whether or not the Kolat are permanently destroyed.

The Jade Sun and Obsidian Moon: An In-Depth Look

The Celestial Order affects the mortal realm and dictates the rules of society. But man may also change the order of the Heavens. The Emperor has the power to create new Fortunes by decree. This power was used sparingly during most of Rokugan's history, but it has been used, and sometimes with considerable audacity. The reviled Emperor Hantei XVI created gods to humiliate his deceased foes, such as the Fortune of Dung. Because he was the Emperor, his word was law in the Celestial Realms and

Ningen-do. The Fortune of Dung could not be rescinded nor could he be ignored. Monks still maintain a small shrine in the Ten Thousand Temples to the poor Fortune, giving him the respect and honor his position demands.

In fact, the mark of man (and other mortals) can be found throughout the Celestial Realms. The Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, gods who were once gaijin superstitions, hold court over Meido and all its functions. Onnotangu and Amaterasu were both killed and replaced by those who were once humans. The Nezumi ancestors exist in Yume-do and still affect current affairs in Ningen-do.

Perhaps it was inevitable, then, that the Heavens would try to push back against mortal influence. The Jade Dragon and the Obsidian Dragon spearhead the effort to return the Celestial Heavens to its natural order. The first to be affected by this campaign were the Nezumi; the Realm of Dreams fell to mysterious creatures that threatened to destroy all of the Nezumi who lived there. The One Tribe, under the Chieftain Kan'ok'ticheck, traveled from Ningen-do to fight in defense of their ancestors. They succeeded in saving their race but their connection to Ningen-do was forever severed. Those who left for Yume-do were never seen again.

The next upheaval occurred in Tengoku with the Sun and the Moon. The Jade Dragon challenged Lord Sun, the former Hida Yakamo, for the position. The Jade Dragon is a purely Celestial being and holds the approval of Tengoku on his side. It defeated the former Crab hero and ejected him to Ningen-do. Yakamo died shortly after the fall, but with his last breath of divinity he warned Moshi Amika of war in the Heavens and trials that stood ahead for Rokugan. The Oracle of Jade Omen was immediately affected by the ascension of his patron; he has become the Voice of the Jade Sun.

The next to fall was Yakamo's counterpart Hitomi. She had been prepared for the confrontation ever since the death of Yakamo and went on the offensive as soon as the Obsidian Dragon appeared to challenge her. The odds were stacked against her, as they were against Yakamo. She could not win when her opponent carried the favor of the Celestial Heavens. The Obsidian Dragon became the Obsidian Moon and his Oracle Shosuro Maru became its Voice. Hitomi plummeted to the mortal realm and was able to send off one warning before she too succumbed to her wounds.

The final realignment occurred when the Voices of the new Sun and Moon initiated the Celestial Tournament to

fill the vacant Imperial Throne. While the Heavens had given their blessing to the Toturi Dynasty, the Toturi were human and fallible, and their mistakes had cost the Empire dearly. The new Imperial Dynasty would be different from the beginning.

When Omen and Shosuro Maru chose Kitsuki Iweko as the next Empress, the power of Tengoku flowed into her. She immediately became more than human and gained knowledge of the Heavens. Iweko's line would be similar to the foundation of the Hantei line; the new Emperor's line would be divine, forever set apart from the rest of Rokugan. This new arrangement suits the Celestial Heavens, but it is a mixed blessing for the new Empress. Because she is now divine, she can no longer interact with other humans, and so she is not only elevated, but isolated. She must rely on her Voice, Togashi Satsu, to relay her intentions to the rest of the Imperial Court. But this isolation comes with the great gift of wisdom to follow the right course.

The recent upheavals in the Heavens have changed little for the common peasant or merchant. Life still goes on. Their lives will become less dangerous as the conflicts that raged during the Imperial power vacuum subside. But otherwise, the changes in management mean little. The sun still rises in the east and sets in the west. They must work to feed their families and they must serve their lords when they are called to do so.

The lives of the average samurai likewise remain little changed by the alterations. They must still follow the edicts of Bushido and they must also serve their lords. The fact that the Throne no longer remains without guidance is a relief to the average samurai, but he never had the opportunity to interact with the Emperor in the first place. What does it matter that he can no longer hear the words of the Empress directly? Her words are law, whether it comes from her or from Togashi Satsu. The changes in the Heavens mean that he prays to a different Sun and a different Moon. But that is all.

The changes will be most noticed by those who interact in the Imperial Court on a daily basis. The Emperor used to hold court in their presence. He was their ruler, but in the end he was just a man like them. They now stand in the presence of one who is nearly a god. They wonder, could she hold their concerns in the same light, considering that she is above them? Additionally, the Voice of the Obsidian Moon and the Voice of the Jade Sun remain in the Imperial Court to guide the new Empress. Their pres-



ence is a continual reminder of the changes the Emerald Empire has seen in recent months. Few courtiers may address the Empress and those who do are answered by Togashi Satsu. It will take years for everyone to become accustomed to the new arrangement. But the Heavens are patient and will wait for man to fall in line.

Notable Samurai of The Heavens' Will

TOGASHI SATSU, VOICE OF THE EMPRESS

Air: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 6
		Agility: 5	Strength: 4	
Honor: 4.2	Status: 9.5	Glory: 8.2		

SCHOOL/RANK: Togashi Tattooed Man 5/Mirumoto Bushi 2

ADVANTAGES: Hands of Stone

DISADVANTAGES: Soft-Hearted

KATA: Striking as Fire, Striking as Earth, Striking as Void Striking as Water, Striking as Wind

KIHO: Breaking Blow, Freezing the Lifeblood, Wind's Truth

SKILLS: Artisan (Tattooing) 4, Athletics 4, Courtier 4, Defense 6, Etiquette 5, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 7, Jiu-jutsu 7, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 5, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shugenja 5, Meditation (Void Recovery) 6, Theology (Shintao) 4, Staves 5, Stealth 3, Tea Ceremony 3

TATTOOS: Arrowroot, Bat, Cloud, Dragon, Ocean, Pine

He was once a god and a Clan Champion. He has laid both burdens down, but continues to serve his Empire selflessly with his unique talents.

His story has been told time and time before. He is the son of Hoshi, the half-Dragon son of the Kami Togashi. He grew up knowing his illustrious heritage and was not intimidated by what it foretold for him. When he was still a young man, an encounter with the villain Kokujin brought his abilities to the forefront. The soul of Togashi bloomed within him, an experience that altered the way he looked at the Empire.



Unfortunately, his grandfather's soul also began to change the way he interacted with the Empire. He became more and more detached from his people as he took the long view on everything. He could see the entire future except for events blurred by his personal interaction or those that strayed outside the Empire. He began to view his people as pieces on a shogi board, to be moved and manipulated for the greater good. He refused to take action in trivial matters (such as when bandits began to harass his lands) so that he could prepare for the moments that would change the world.

When the Fortunes approached Togashi and asked him to return to the Heavens, Satsu's grandfather refused to budge. He did not believe he had done anything wrong, and Satsu could see his point. Ultimately, however, he persuaded his grandfather to return to Tengoku, and for the first time in years Satsu was his own man. He is now entirely mortal, though glimpses and flashes of his previous divinity remain with him. His understanding nature and his long experience of being merged with his grandfather has made him the perfect candidate for the Voice of the Emperor.

MATSU BENIKA, BEARER OF THE JADE HAND

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 3
	Willpower: 5	Agility: 5	Strength: 5	
Honor: 3.9		Status: 5.1		Glory: 7.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Matsu Berserker 3/Matsu Beastmaster 2

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Inner Gift (Animal Ken)

DISADVANTAGES: Antisocial

KATA: Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Animal Handling (Warcats) 6, Athletics 6, Battle 2, Courtier 1, Etiquette 1, Jiu-jitsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 2, Medicine (Nonhuman Medicine) 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 3, Peasant Weapons 3, Spears 5, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 2

Matsu Benika was a simple samurai with no aspirations for anything higher than the lot to which she had been born. Her destiny held different ideas. While she proclaims she has simply been at the right place at the right time, the coincidences in her life cannot be mere chance. Her life has been her proving ground. Now, with the bless-

ing of the new Jade Sun on her person, she has the chance to truly become a hero for the ages.

When Benika was a young girl, her poor health prevented her from interacting with those of her age. She was too frail to tumble with her mates and instead spent much of her time alone. Her isolation grew until she became a painfully shy child incapable of social interaction. Her health improved but she never compensated for her late start in human relations.

However, she showed a natural affinity for the prides of lions under her family's care and spent most of her free time with them. Her sensei noticed her calm in the presence of the ferocious beasts and requested she be trained as a Beastmaster.

While she has never sought out glory, Benika's exploits have begun to spread across the Empire. She was among the contingent of samurai who leapt into the heart of the Shadowlands in search of the lost Emperor Toturi III. She brought back an urn with the ashes of Lady Matsu, a valued treasure of her Clan. When the Kitsu family daimyo summoned Lady Matsu to Ningen-do, the spirit personally requested the presence of Benika for her portents. Recently, her purity of spirit has drawn the attention of Omen, who blessed her with the Jade Hand. This affirmation from the Heavens has filled Benika with newfound confidence and poise.

New Mechanics

New Item: The Armor of Light

The Armor of Light appeared in one of the armories of the Kaiu Wall shortly after the second death of Hida Yakamo. It appears to be a gift from the Lord Sun to those who were once his family, so they may endure the trials that lie in their future. It is engraved with a strange mark in some otherworldly language and the entire object constantly glows from within. No warrior has yet claimed the armor and some believe it will always rest in a place of honor within Kyuden Hida.

Treat the Armor of Light as Heavy Armor that grants a +12 bonus to your TN to Be Hit. You suffer a +5 TN penalty to all Skill Rolls involving Agility or Reflexes as normal. Additionally, if your Honor Rank is 3 or higher,

Allies & Enemies

Togashi Satsu is an incredibly hard person to create as an Ally, though such a feat is not impossible. He appreciates those who speak their mind, a rare property for those who interact with the Imperial Court. If he believes you are worthy, he will view you as a friend. He is worth 4 Points in Influence, but only 1 Point in Devotion because his primary loyalty must be to his office and the Empress.

Deceit and failure to adhere to Bushido are inexcusable flaws in Satsu's eyes, but he will not act out against even a Sworn Enemy unless the stakes are truly high. He is worth 4 Points as a Sworn Enemy, but only because of his status in the Imperial bureaucracy.

Matsu Benika remains humble and is courteous to all those who approach her. She will befriend anyone she believes has a pure heart; unfortunately, her new status might give her duties to perform, separating her from her allies for months on end. She is worth 2 Points in Influence, but only 1 Point in Devotion.

She is an easy-going woman and hard to gain as a Sworn Enemy. But she is also a Matsu, and for that alone, she is worth 1 Point as a Sworn Enemy.

you may focus the purity of your soul into one heartfelt action. Once per day as a Simple Action, you may gain a bonus equal to double your Honor Rank to the result of 1 Skill Roll or attack roll. The Armor grants another benefit, one that you must declare at the beginning of your round if you wish to use it that turn: You gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to twice your Honor Rank until the beginning of your next round. Abilities that ignore your armor (such as the Akodo Bushi School's Rank 1 Technique) do not affect this bonus. You cannot use both of these abilities in the same round, however.

New Item: Katana of Twilight

Scouts discovered the Katana of Twilight in the mountains of the Phoenix near the site where Hitomi fell back to the world. It appeared in perfect condition with no scuffs or marks, and the blade glowed red, like the sunset. Shugenja have verified that the blade is not corrupted nor obsidian. No one knows exactly who or what crafted this wondrous blade. Some theorize it is one of the last gifts of the fallen Lady Moon before she lost her divinity.

The Katana of Twilight is a katana with a DR of 4k2. While in an iaijutsu duel, your opponent may not learn any information about your skills or Traits during the assessment stage.

New Item: Oni's Eye

The Oni's Eye played a huge part in the survival of the Kolat conspiracy. Without its powers, the Kolat could have never coordinated their countless undercover agents spread across the Empire. The item is not without its dangers, but the Kolat have always been prepared to sacrifice much for the sake of their nefarious goals. The Scorpion Clan has recently gained control of the nemuranai but they are unable to use it to its full potential. Bayushi Paneki has assigned much of his resources to the task and he hopes that one day it will be a powerful boon to the Clan of Secrets.

The Oni's Eye is believed to have fallen to earth from the sky centuries ago, prior to its discovery by the Kolat. Some believe it may have been created by one of the pre-human civilizations, most likely the zokujin. It is a massive sphere of pure crystal that seems to focus all the surrounding kami into it. It is simultaneously connected to the land and air and pulses with the beat of Ningen-do. The Kolat retrieved the object, transporting it to their hidden temple, and have used it ever since.

The Oni's Eye can see any part of the world that is specified by the user. The user must be very detailed in his directions for the item to work; the command, "Ryoko Owari" would not work, but, "the first floor of the Dancing Pony gambling house in Ryoko Owari" would be acceptable. It cannot see into any area corrupted by the Shadowlands Taint, no matter how slight the corruption. It cannot see past the mainland of Rokugan, as its sight does not reach beyond the sea.

The Oni's Eye can create objects dubbed the Oni's Tears. They are miniature versions of the nemuranai and can be carried in the palm of the hand. Holding the Oni's Tear in contact with your bare skin allows you to speak to anyone who operates the Oni's Eye. The Tears disintegrate back into the earth exactly one month after they are created.

Using the Oni's Eye comes at a great cost, however. Those who spend prolonged amounts of time near the nemuranai lose a bit of themselves to the powerful item. At the end of each hour spent activating the Oni's Eye, you must make a Willpower Roll against a TN of 5x the total number of hours you have spent near the nemuranai within the last week. If you fail, you gain the Compulsion (Use the Oni's Eye) Disadvantage at 4 Points, but you cannot purchase character options with those 4 Points. You suffer a +5 TN penalty to all rolls. The Disadvantage and the penalty disappear once you successfully spend the same amount of time away from the item.



THE VACANT THRONE GLORY OF THE EMPIRE



Glory of the Empire includes the first major court convened under the rule of the Divine Empress Iweko I. It also includes her first major sojourn into the Empire since her ascension, an important event because until this point only those present at the Tournament of the Heavens and her subsequent arrival in the Imperial City have seen her person, and have experienced the unmistakable aura of divinity that surrounds her in accordance with her blessing by the Heavens.

Also during this period, the samurai of Rokugan have their first exposure to the vast Army of Fire assembled by the Dark Oracle of Fire in the mountains north of the Empire. Even as the Empress holds court, representatives from the Badger Clan race south to reach her and warn her of an impending invasion, one perhaps more dangerous than any Rokugan has ever seen.

Year 1170, Month of the Rat

The Phoenix Step Between the Lion and the Unicorn

A delegation from the Phoenix Clan, braving the winter weather and intent on assisting the Unicorn in rebuilding their infrastructure and treating the wounded from their

long war with the Lion, is halted at the Lion Clan border. The Lion are gravely concerned that the Phoenix will once again interfere with the natural course of war, as they did at the Battle of Toshi Ranbo and in the Third Yasuki War.

A Warning From the North Arrives

An ambassador from the Badger Clan arrives uninvited in the Bayushi provinces, claiming to have important information for the Empress. The Scorpion are adamant in preventing him from reaching the Court. But he perseveres until the matter comes to the attention of the Imperial Advisor, who recommends to the Empress that she hear his case. The Badger reports a huge army of Yobanjin massing in the northern mountains, preparing to invade the Empire, and cautions that the Badger will not be able to hold the line against such overwhelming numbers.

Year 1170, Month of the Ox

The Empress Declares Peace

Empress Iweko I issues her first formal Imperial Decree, mandating that all conflicts between the Great Clans must stop within one week's time, and that an accord signed by the warring Clans must be submitted to the throne.



The day following the announcement, the Crane delegation submits an accord indicating that the fighting between the Crab and Crane over the Yasuki lands is at an end, with the Crane retaining control of the land. The Crane Champion's choice to administrate the lands, the Crab Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, is a choice that most samurai find peculiar indeed.

As an addendum to her decree, the Empress instructs the Lion Clan to ensure the peace by securing all Clan borders and making certain that large armed forces are not permitted travel without specific Imperial consent. Likewise, she commands the Mantis to secure all ports and ensure that no attempts to move forces by sea are undertaken without Imperial consent.

The Shogun Moves Against the Spider

Vast portions of the Shinomen Mori are set ablaze as the Shogun's forces attempt to locate and destroy the Spider strongholds within it. The bulk of the Spider escape, but a number remain behind to ambush the Empire's forces. Many Naga perish in the blaze as well, which is eventually quelled by the arrival of the Phoenix. Among the notable dead are Roshungi, the legendary dark monk, and Nintai, the last living kitsu.

Year 1170, Month of the Tiger

The Army of Fire Strikes

The Northern Towers of Flame, the northernmost boundary of the Dragon Clan holdings specifically constructed to watch for potential incursions by the Dark Oracle of Fire's minions, falls to his Yobanjin servitors. Although the Dragon fight with honor, the sheer volume of the Dark Oracle's forces is unprecedented, and the Dragon border is overrun.

The Shogun's forces arrive in the southern Dragon lands and begin moving northward, reinforcing the Dragon lines and assisting in the evacuation of refugees fleeing before the Army of Fire. Before the legions can even reach the front, however, they receive word of similar attacks in the Ox, Badger, and Phoenix lands, with the threat beginning to move toward the Unicorn border as well. The Shogun sends a request to the Emerald Champion for additional forces.

Year 1171, Month of the Hare

The War of Dark Fire

The Army of Fire continues its advance into the northern reaches of the Empire, laying waste to everything in its path and ravaging lands belonging to the Badger, Dragon, Ox, Phoenix, and Unicorn. The Shogun receives reinforcements from the Imperial Legions, as well as the Lion, Crane, and Scorpion. Word that the Mantis fleet is en route and the Crab are marching north give the assembled forces hope, and they attempt to hold back the Dark Oracle and his minions.

Despite the war in the north, the rest of the Empire attempts to maintain a semblance of normalcy. The annual Topaz Championship is held in the Crane city of Tsuma, and a young Shinjo samurai emerges victorious. He is lauded as one of the finest young students of tactics to participate in the tournament in recent memory, impressing even the Lion with his acumen.

Involving Your Character in the Events of Glory of the Empire

The Glory of the Empire period has two primary arenas in which major events unfold, both very different. On the one hand, characters can be a part of the Divine Empress' Winter Court at Kyuden Bayushi. On the other, they might be involved in the War of Dark Fire in the northernmost reaches of the Empire.

The characters may be minor attendants at the Winter Court, filling secondary roles such as yojimbo, scribes, artisans, or the like. As such, however, they are witness to the major events of the season, and they can easily become embroiled in the conflicts between the Lion and the Phoenix, or become involved in ongoing negotiations such as those between the Dragon and the Mantis. Intrigue abounds prior to the onset of the War of Dark Fire in the north.

The characters might be appointed to safeguard the Badger Clan representatives who arrive to warn of the im-

pending invasion. If so, then the characters may be among the first in the Empire to get a lengthy first-hand account of exactly what it is that the Empire must face, and the Badger ambassadors may beg them to assist in convincing the other Clans of the dire nature of the threat.

Your characters may be magistrates attached to one of the Imperial Legions, who fight alongside the Dragon in the early, desperate stages of the war. Despite accounts from the Dragon, the Shogun will doubtless want independent confirmation, given how almost preposterous the claims seem of a vast army of barbarians, some of whom are on fire.

Characters who possess magistrate status, or any other official position in a Clan other than the Dragon, may be guests in the Dragon lands at the time that the Northern Wall collapses. Heavy losses early in the campaign will cause confusion among the Dragon leadership, and the local populace or even rank-and-file Dragon soldiers may look to the characters for leadership.

The Yobanjin Tribes of the Northern Mountains: An In-Depth Look

The great Northern Wall Mountains are the natural barrier that separates the Empire of Rokugan from the varied lands that lie north of it. Perhaps most importantly, they are a natural barrier to prevent the slow expansion of the vast wasteland known as the Burning Sands. To many in the Empire, the world as they know it ceases at the Northern Wall. To others, however, there is a world between that of the Empire and the Burning Sands, a self-contained and distinct world that exists within hundreds or even thousands of square miles of mountains, plains, and plateaus. It is in these hidden places that the Yobanjin tribes make their home.

The Yobanjin are something of a sore topic for the people of Rokugan, and most consider it easier just to pretend they do not exist. This is not something that the northernmost Clans can afford to do, however; the Dragon, Phoenix, Badger, Ox, and Unicorn clans all have shared borders with the tribes' lands.

There are many tribes of Yobanjin, but only a small number are large and well known. But despite their fame among the Yobanjin, very few in Rokugan have ever heard of any of these tribes, given as they are to ignoring the existence of their distance cousins in the northern lands.

Daughters of the Flame

Unusual but not unique, the Daughters of Flame are a matriarchal tribe famous throughout the Yobanjin lands for the number and power of their shamans. Unfortunately for the Daughters of Flame, the tribe made its home near an active volcano, which was an essential part of their theological beliefs. It was in this volcano that the Dark Oracle of Fire made his home when he began his conquest of the Yobanjin lands.

He demanded the tribe submit to his will, and they of course refused. The conflict that ensued was as short as it was one-sided, and only a handful of survivors fled into the burning night. The eldest daughter of the chieftess survived and took control of the few who remained. They traveled to the lands of their allies, the Mountain Wind Tribe, and informed them of what had taken place. It is possible that these two tribes, well regarded almost universally among the Yobanjin, might have been able to unite the other tribes against the Dark Oracle, but they were betrayed by the ruthless and ambitious Sons of the Mountain, who willingly sided with the Dark Oracle in return for the power they so desperately craved.

In the aftermath of the treacherous attack, there are only a handful of Daughters of Flame left living, far too few to hope to rebuild their tribe. They are an extinct people, and they know it. Rather than allow this to bring them to despair, the Daughters have embraced their fate, and work toward the only thing left for them: vengeance. Daughters of the Flame shamans are often seen accompanying scout groups of the Mountain Wind tribe, always working against the Dark Oracle and frequently working alongside sympathetic Rokugani forces.

Mountain Wind Tribe

The Mountain Wind are likely the Yobanjin tribe best known by the Rokugani, although that is not a particularly strong distinction. Still, the tribe has had diplomatic relationships with both the Badger Clan and, surprisingly, the Crane Clan.

The alliance with the Crane was forged largely by the efforts of Daidoji Hohiro, who dwelled in the northern mountains for years before finally being brought home. During that time he brokered an alliance with the Mountain Wind tribe, who were in possession of the long-lost seal of the Empress.

Perhaps because of their relationship with the Clans of Rokugan, or perhaps because they have an inherently

more honorable nature than other tribes, the Mountain Wind were the first to denounce the Dark Oracle of Fire and his conquest. The Mountain Wind stood at the forefront of every battle in the Yobanjin lands, and as a result they have suffered more than any other tribe save for the doomed Daughters of Flame.

The remnants of the tribe have fled their home in the wake of the Dark Oracle's conquest, and have offered their services as scouts and guides to the Great Clans. Because of the xenophobic nature of most samurai, however, their offers have been refused save by a handful of Badger and Crane officers. Many forbid any association with them, fearing that they are in fact spies for the Dark Oracle. Those who have seen them fight against the Army of Fire, however, have no doubt as to where the Mountain Wind tribe's loyalty lies.

Sons of the Mountain Tribe

Militant and ambitious, the Sons of the Mountain have long desired to rule a nation of Yobanjin. A few years ago, they were part of a tenuous alliance that included members of both the Tortoise and Mantis Clans, although that arrangement came to an end through the intervention of Yasuki Hachi, the Emerald Champion at the time. Hachi infiltrated the Tortoise and Mantis forces and defeated one of their principle agents stationed in the northern mountains, a samurai named Yoritomo Chimori. This was a great setback for the tribe, which had considered the alliance the first step in gaining enough power to realize their dream of a unified Yobanjin nation.

Perhaps it was his abilities as a Dark Oracle that allowed Tamori Chosai to perceive the ambition within the Sons of the Mountain, or perhaps it was simply a case of a man's ability to recognize those like him. Regardless, he approached the Sons of the Mountain diplomatically, rather than with the brute force that he used to subjugate his other vassal tribes. It took very little time for him to convince the chieftain that he would make the Sons of the Mountain first among his vassals, and that they would lead a vast army unlike anything ever seen in the Yobanjin lands. This appealed to their avarice and ambition, and they became the first tribe to embrace the rule of the Dark Oracle without reservation.

The Sons of the Mountain are extremely capable warriors and more than passable tacticians. They are the officers and commanders of the Army of Fire. The fact that they are essentially pawns of the Dark Oracle means little



to them, for they are more than willing to bide their time until one day the Sons of the Mountain will be the true lords of all Yobanjin.

Tribe of the Sky

Although no one in the Empire knows their name, the Tribe of the Sky is one of the most sensational groups to ever fire the imagination of Rokugan. Characters and villains inspired by them have appeared in countless plays, poems, and stories over the centuries, but they are never called by their proper name. Instead, they are known by the name given to their most illustrious warriors: the Hawk Riders.

The Tribe of the Sky makes its home in the peaks of the northern mountains, rarely coming down into the valleys and steppes occupied by the other tribes. The tribe has learned the secret of domesticating the great northern hawks, massive raptors that dwell among the peaks. These creatures are large enough to consume a man whole, or even dine upon livestock and steeds, but the Tribe of the Sky can raise, train, and ride them like mounts, to spectacular effect. Although the Hawk Riders have come into contact with Rokugan only rarely, the image of them flying to the attack captivates the Empire each time it happens.

The Tribe of the Sky serves the Dark Oracle under duress. The tribe's traditional lands have been seized by the Dark Oracle's loyal forces, and their children as well as the nests and eggs of the great hawks have been seized as hostages. If the Hawk Riders fail to serve the Army of Fire, this will be the last generation of their kind to fly the skies.

Children of the Frozen Peaks

Even higher in the peaks than the Tribe of the Sky, in the most remote snow-capped heights of the northern mountains, the Children of the Frozen Peaks make their home. They are as radically different from the other Yobanjin tribes as the tribes are from the samurai of Rokugan, and have rarely if ever taken part in the affairs of the Yobanjin as a whole. Still, when matters of such import have arisen that they have required the attention of all the tribes, the Children of the Frozen Peaks have always sent a representative to participate, and they have the respect of the other tribes. Unfortunately, their frigid climate made them particularly susceptible to the attack made by the Dark Oracle of Fire.

Even by the most conservative estimates, the Children of the Frozen Peaks will be completely extinct by the end

of the War of Dark Fire. For reasons known only to the Dark Oracle himself, he has chosen the Children of the Frozen Peaks as his favored vassals. Unfortunately for them, that means they are the first among his legions to bear his gift of everburning flame. Driven mad with pain, the Children are the madmen who burst upon the front lines of the Dragon armies, charring everything in their path and taking as many of their foes with them as possible before finally succumbing to the sweet release of death.

Notable Samurai of Glory of the Empire

KAKITA KENSHO-IN, BEARER OF THE OBSIDIAN HAND

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

Honor: 2.1	Status: 2.6	Glory: 4.4
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SCHOOL/RANK: Kakita Bushi 3

ADVANTAGES: Benten's Blessing, Strength of the Earth 1

DISADVANTAGES: Dark Fate

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Deceit 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 2, Meditation 2, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 3

Kakita Kensho-in was not a well-known samurai prior to her selection by the Voice of the Obsidian Moon to bear that entity's favor. Many look upon her and wonder if perhaps being bestowed the Obsidian Hand has not had a detrimental effect on her mental well-being. But those who have known her throughout her lifetime recognize it is not the hand's influence that has changed her; she has always been this way. As a child, Kensho-in would play with other children, but delighted in getting them into trouble. She realized early that this resulted in having no one to play with, however, and so she learned to curb this tendency. It did allow her to get out of trouble with little effort whenever her circles of friends strayed into difficulty.

The first significant incident that demonstrated Kensho-in's ruthless nature as an adult happened mere months

after her gempukku ceremony. She was in attendance at a Phoenix court when there was a disagreement between a Crane courtier and a Scorpion, which ultimately led to a duel. Kensho-in's cousin was slated to fight in the duel, but she knew he would be defeated. She sabotaged his bokken so it would break and injure him, preventing him from participating, then took his place and emerged victorious.

A few years later, when she discovered one of her fellow students at the Kakita dojo was addicted to opium, she killed an opium merchant in the city and framed the student for his murder, eliminating both a disgrace to her Clan and a personal rival.

It was incidents such as these that brought Kensho-in to the attention of the Voice of the Obsidian Moon, the woman formerly known as Shosuro Maru. Maru found Kensho-in's ruthlessness and acceptance of her own sins refreshing and delightful. At the behest of her master, she bestowed upon Kensho-in the ultimate mark of the Obsidian Moon's favor: the new Obsidian Hand. Its presence was difficult to accept at first, and Kensho-in kept herself in seclusion for weeks under the pretense of illness. Once she became accustomed to it, however, she began to understand its capabilities and, perhaps more importantly, what it represented. The new Empress and her sanction by the Jade Sun and the Obsidian Moon had changed the political and theological landscape of the entire Empire, and with the Obsidian Hand, she now commanded significant influence and prestige simply because she bore the obvious sign of the Heavens' favor.

YORITOMO UTEMARO, IMPERIAL TREASURER

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

Honor: 1.9	Status: 8.2	Glory: 4.3
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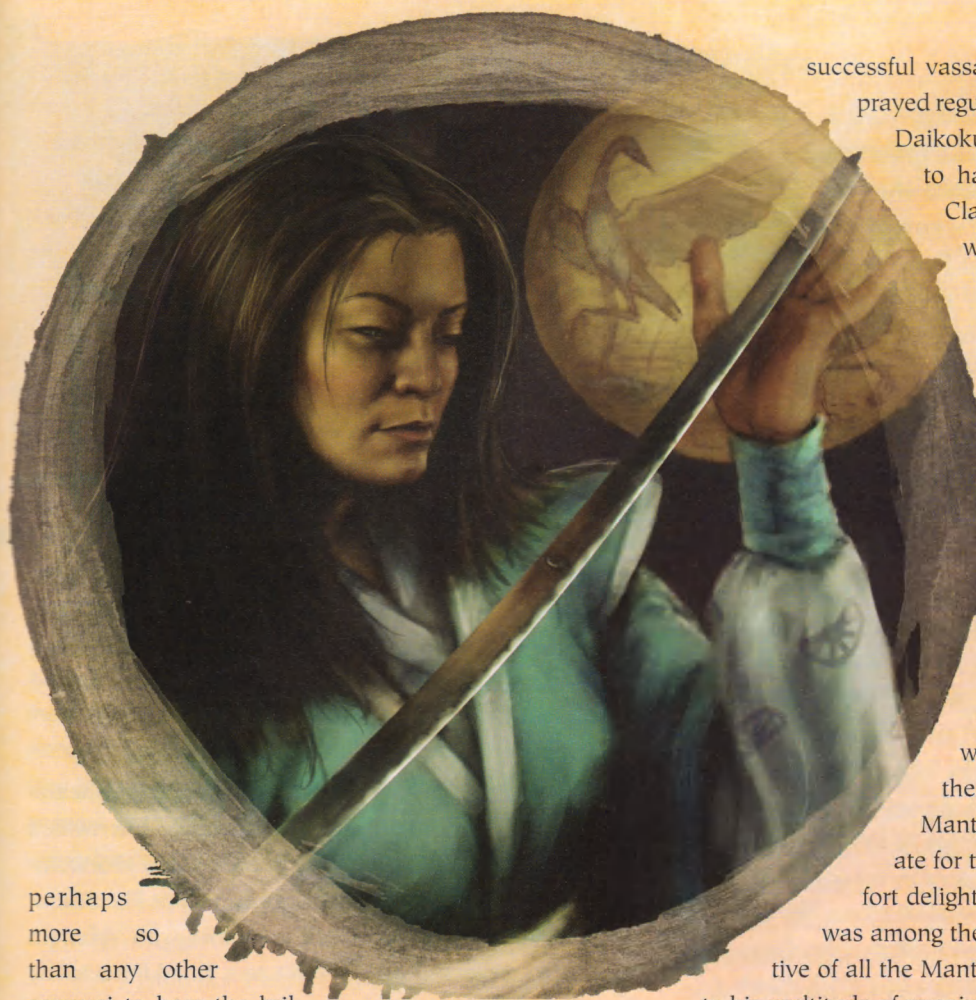
SCHOOL/RANK: Yoritomo Bushi 3/Yoritomo Courtier 1

ADVANTAGES: Crafty, Multiple Schools

DISADVANTAGES: Fascination (Money), Greedy

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Battle 4, Commerce 6, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 4, Craft: Sailing 2, Deceit (Intimidation) 4, Defense 3, Etiquette (Sincerity) 5, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 3, Peasant Weapons (Kama) 5, Underworld 4

If there is a word that best describes Yoritomo Utemaro, then surely that word is versatile. In his years of service to the Mantis Clan Champion, he has filled a wide variety of roles,



perhaps
more so
than any other
samurai to bear the bril-

liant green colors of his Clan. In the past few years, he has served as a military officer in Toshi Ranbo, an infiltrator behind the lines of the Akodo army, and the governor of Broken Wave City. His unwavering devotion to his duty and his absolute ruthlessness have made him a favored vassal of Yoritomo Naizen as well as his predecessors Yoritomo Kumiko, Yoritomo Kitao, and even Yoritomo Aramasu.

Utemaro first began to make a name for himself during the latter portion of Yoritomo Aramasu's war in the Ivory Kingdoms many years ago. Little more than a child then, Utemaro quickly developed a reputation as one who would attempt any task, no matter how grim the chances of survival. Many attributed this to unbridled courage on the young man's part, although others blamed it on stupidity or a selfish desire for glory in battle.

The truth was altogether different, however: Even as a young man, Utemaro was fascinated with wealth and its excesses, and he would undertake even the most suicidal missions in order to reap the rewards frequently offered to

successful vassals by Mantis lords. Utemaro prayed regularly to the Fortune of Wealth, Daikoku, and was extremely grateful to have been born into the only Clan in which such material rewards were routinely offered.

But as he grew older, Utemaro discovered that wealth accrued for himself had little meaning, and instead he became more concerned with the acquisition of wealth on behalf of his Clan. Many in the Empire still looked down upon the Mantis because of their origins. Yet when the Clan controlled a vast multitude of wealth and resources, those who would otherwise sneer at them were forced to come to the Mantis with false smiles and negotiate for trade and treaty. Their discomfort delighted Utemaro, and for years he was among the most successful and productive of all the Mantis Champion's agents, leading to his multitude of appointments and duties.

The ascension of Empress Iweko I changed everything.

Perhaps because of the wisdom bestowed upon her by the Heavens, the Divine Empress knew that Utemaro alone was ideally suited to deal with the matters of koku and the greater economic issues that plagued the Empire. She removed the duties of the Emerald Champion related to acquiring, documenting, storing, and deploying tax revenues and created the position of Imperial Treasurer. Utemaro was granted the position. At first he lamented the loss of his beloved games, but he quickly realized this was the beginning of a much greater game, one he could control completely, and he rejoiced at his good fortune.

Since his appointment, Utemaro has worked tirelessly to streamline the long-standing procedures for determining taxation rates and the process by which said taxes are collected. Already he has earned the respect of many mercantile groups. For now, Utemaro is content for them to perceive him as an ally and a servant of the throne. While he may certainly be the latter, however, how much of the former he may be remains to be seen.

Allies & Enemies

Kakita Kensho-in is an ally of questionable value, primarily because the influence she wields is very closely tied to the degree to which others value her place in the theology of the Empire. Many do not regard her as a particularly impressive individual, while others consider her a favored child of Heaven, much like the Empress herself. As an enemy, however, she is almost universally regarded as someone extremely dangerous, due not only to her status but her personality as well. As an Ally, Kensho-in might command 2-3 points worth of influence. As a Sworn Enemy, however, she is easily a 5 point Disadvantage for characters of equal or lesser Insight Rank.

Yoritomo Utemaro is an exceptional ally because of his recent and meteoric rise to success. Those who knew him before had an ally they could depend on, even if he was a bit peculiar about money. Now, however, they are allies with one of the most powerful men in the Empire. As an Ally, Utemaro is worth at least 4 points in terms of Influence. He is unlikely to place tremendous value on any relationship, however, and so he would be worth perhaps 2 points at most in terms of his devotion. Like Kensho-in, Utemaro is a fearsome enemy, and easily worth 5 points as a Sworn Enemy Disadvantage.

New Mechanics

The New Obsidian Hand

Created by the Voice of the Obsidian Moon, the new Obsidian Hand is a visible mark of favor from the Obsidian Moon, one of the most powerful entities in the whole of the Celestial Heavens. The new hand was created when the Moon's Voice touched the hand of its recipient, Kakita Kensho-in, which then transformed to obsidian in a matter of seconds. It is unknown if the hand can be removed while Kensho-in lives, or the effect its power will have on the one who bears it. In the new Empire re-forged by the Heavens, the bearer of the hand holds considerable political and spiritual power in addition to its as yet unknown supernatural abilities.

In fact, wearing the Obsidian Hand grants you a bonus of +2 Ranks in Status and a bonus of +2k0 to all Deceit (Intimidation) Skill Rolls simply because of the hand's presence. The hand is indestructible, and may not be severed or destroyed by any known means. Using the Obsidian Hand to make an unarmed attack roll grants a +2k2 bonus to the unarmed damage DR.

The Hand's most significant ability, however, is its power over others. As the bearer of the hand, you may select 1 target within your line of sight. As long as that individual remains within your line of sight, any rolls they make to attempt to resist sinister urges are substantially more difficult. Any attempts to resist the effects of Disadvantages (such as Greed or Lechery) suffer a +10 TN penalty. Targets making Contested Rolls against opponents utilizing the Temptation Skill likewise suffer a -10 penalty. If this Contested Roll is made against the bearer of the Obsidian Hand, the penalty is -25.

Yobanjin Tribes

Much like the Families of Rokugan, individual Yobanjin tribes represent a small number of heavily intertwined bloodlines, each with their own strengths and shortcomings. Mechanically speaking, a Tribe functions like a Family, with its own benefit, which combines with Yobanjin Schools to create individual characters. In addition to the two Basic Schools listed below, Yobanjin characters may make use of the Ronin Warrior School and the Matsu Beastmaster Advanced School (see *Masters of War*, p. 109). The latter represents the ability of some Yobanjin tribes to subjugate powerful creatures such as the mountain wyrms and the great northern hawks.

Daughters of the Flame

BENEFIT: +1 Intelligence

Mountain Wind Tribe

BENEFIT: +1 Agility

Sons of the Mountain Tribe

BENEFIT: +1 Strength

Tribe of the Sky

BENEFIT: +1 Reflexes

Children of the Frozen Peaks

BENEFIT: +1 Stamina



New Basic School: Yobanjin Warrior (Bushu)

Although largely discounted and despised by the Empire, the Yobanjin tribes of the northern mountains have a proud warrior tradition. Because of the nature of their existence, they are far less concerned with honor and much more interested in survival than samurai, however, and their wild, uninhibited combat style reflects this philosophy.

BENEFIT: +1 Agility

HONOR: 1.0

SKILLS: Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Jiu-jitsu, Kenjutsu (Ring Sword), Yomanri (Oyumi), any one Skill

OUTFIT: Ring sword, oyumi, leather armor (equivalent to light armor), warm clothing.

Techniques

RANK 1: SON OF THE STEPPES

Yobanjin warriors have a reputation for barbarity that is not entirely undeserved. However, the Yobanjin consider themselves great warriors who defend their people with everything at their disposal. You gain a Free Raise on any attack roll using a ring sword or an oyumi, the traditional weapons of your people. You also gain a bonus equal to your Fire Ring to the total of all of your damage rolls.

RANK 2: FURY OF THE WYRM

A Yobanjin warrior is taught from birth to fight for his tribe as if his own life meant nothing. You gain a Free Raise on any attack rolls made while in the Full Attack posture, and you gain a bonus equal to your Earth Ring to your TN to Be Hit while in the Full Attack Posture. This ability stacks with the Rank 1 Technique.

RANK 3: SPEED OF THE HAWK

A true son of the tribes is as swift as the wind as it whips through the mountains. You may make an additional melee attack per round.

RANK 4: WILL OF THE TRIBES

The sons and daughters of the mountains depend upon one another for survival. You may spend a Void Point to transfer the benefit of 1 Technique to any other allied Yobanjin warrior within 10' of you. An individual may only benefit from this Technique once per round.

RANK 5: SOUL OF STONE

You are a true son of the mountain, and an unstoppable warrior for your tribe. Your attack rolls never suffer a penalty due to your Wound Ranks.

New Basic School: Yobanjin Shaman [Shugenja]

The Yobanjin tribes possess magic of their own, although it is not generally as powerful as the shugenja traditions in the Empire, and is not tied in any way to their various theological beliefs. Like shugenja, only a few among the Yobanjin possess the gift of magic, but for them it is about possessing the sheer willpower to command the Elements to do their bidding, rather than the natural ability to speak to the kami.

BENEFIT: +1 Willpower

HONOR: 1.0

SKILLS: Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Knives, Spellcraft, Theology (Yobanjin), any one Skill

OUTFIT: Knife, leather satchel, thick traveling clothes

AFFINITY/DEFICIENCY: The Yobanjin are a primal folk who survive only by living off of the land. Their unique brand of shamanism and reclusive nature is best represented by an Affinity for Earth spells and a deficiency for Air spells.

Note: Yobanjin Shamans do not use spell scrolls.

Technique: Spirits of the Mountain

The wrath of the mountains is terrible when invoked by the shamans of the Yobanjin. When casting any Earth spell, you may expend a spell slot of one other Element to gain a DR bonus to the Earth spell effect equal to your School Rank in both rolled and kept dice. This may be used to add damage effects to spells that do not normally inflict damage.

SPELLS: Sense, Banish, Summon, 3 Earth spells, 2 Fire spells, and 1 Water spell

New Creature: Shafir no Oni

Air: 3 **Earth:** 4 **Fire:** 2 **Water:** 2
Rolls When Attacking: 4K2 **Rolls for Damage:** 4k2

TN to Be Hit: 5 **Wounds per Level:** 8

SPECIAL: **Carapace:** 5. **Fear:** 3. **Fire Consumption:** Due to its overwhelming hunger for heat, Shafir no Oni feeds on any Fire kami that come near it. It is immune to damage from any form of fire, normal or magical, and all Fire spells cast within 30' of Shafir no Oni automatically fail. All creatures or persons within 15' of Shafir no Oni have their Agility and Intelligence alternately (beginning with Intelligence) reduced by 1 at the end of each round, with consequent effects on their Fire Ring. **Heart of Fire:** When Shafir no Oni suffers enough wounds to be destroyed, the Fire kami it has consumed are released in a torrent of heat and flame. All creatures or persons within 30' suffer 5k5 damage. However, everyone within the area of effect may make a Reflexes/Athletics Roll against a TN of 25 to suffer only half damage. **Oni Qualities.** **Undying Ember:** A final gift from the Dark Oracle of Fire, Shafir no Oni can never be truly destroyed. If it is defeated and consumed by its Heart of Fire, it will return to life at the beginning of the following winter. **Water Stagnation:** As the Fire Kami are drawn into Shafir no Oni, the Water kami in the area become sluggish and dormant. Water spells cannot be cast within 30' of Shafir no Oni unless the caster declares 2 Raises. All creatures or persons within 15' of Shafir no Oni have their Strength and Perception alternately reduced (starting with Perception) by 1 at the end of every other round, with consequent effects on their Water Ring.

Shafir no Oni bears the appearance of a large, demonic creature encrusted with thick layers of ice. The numbing chill of its touch matches its terrifying visage, and its existence has given Yobanjin tribesman an unnecessary reason to stay close to their warm homes and not wander through

the frigid mountains. Shafir no Oni itself has begun to migrate southward towards the borders of Rokugan, seeking to satisfy its unique appetite and its master's desire for vengeance.

Shafir no Oni was created by Agasha Chosai, who succeeded his brother Tamori as the Dark Oracle of Fire. Banished from the Empire by the power of the Dark Covenant of Fire, Chosai went north and found servants among the Yobanjin tribes. Some followed him willingly, coveting the power he offered. Others fell to his manipulation and machination.

If the winters of Rokugan are unforgivably brutal, then there are no words available to describe the season's affects on the Yobanjin territories. The cold inflicts terrible suffering, and death is common. It was during one of these winters that Chosai encountered a hapless shepherd, lost in the blinding snow and numbing frost. Feeling the undeniable heat emanating from the Dark Oracle, the shepherd begged for his assistance. He pleaded with the former Dragon, terrified that he would die from the cold and never again feel any warmth. With a menacing smile, the Dark Oracle of fire fulfilled the Yobanjin's request.

With the shepherd's willing consent, he was bonded, body and soul, with a voracious oni from the depths of Jigoku. It no longer concerns itself with death, and fire and heat can easily be taken, provided the oni can find a source. However, it will never find enough to sate its unending hunger or to eliminate the icy chill that forever torments it. Shafir no Oni will be forever driven to hunt down anything that could offer even the smallest amount of warmth.



THE VACANT THRONE

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EMPIRE AT THE END

OF THE SAMURAI ARC



The Crab Clan

As the Samurai arc comes to a close, the Crab Clan have had the opportunity to reassess their role in the Empire and strengthen their resolve to keep Rokugan safe from the threats of the Shadowlands.

One of their greatest victories of this period has to be the appointment of Kuni Daigo as Jade Champion. Daigo continues to look for the opportunity to take the struggle across the Wall, into the enemy's territory. There are many, including Hida Kuon, who feel this is a rash plan that weakens their defenses with little probability of success in return. Daigo's fervor is strong, though, and Kuon respects his desire to end the threat of the Shadowlands. So he aids Daigo in what ways he can while still trying to rein in his most intemperate ideas. Also, Kuon does not want to alienate Daigo, who gives the Crab as much influence in the Imperial bureaucracy as they have had in generations, even though he realizes the Jade Champion is not an effective counterweight to Shosuro Jimen.

The Third Yasuki War has come to an end, though not in a way that satisfied the Crab Champion. The Crab continue to control the Yasuki family and lands, but at some cost to their prestige. The idea that the Crane could defeat the Crab in battle was ludicrous to Kuon, and his armies were victorious throughout the war, yet in the end shortages of food meant he had to either admit defeat or order the Damned to join the conflict. Kuon refused to do the unthinkable, and did not turn the Tainted samurai under his command against Rokugani samurai. Thus he avoided

a severe moral defeat, but surrendering to what he sees as a weaker force does not sit well with Kuon. Under different circumstances, Kuon might pick a fight with another Clan so that the Hida could re-establish their self-respect in battle, but he must bow to Empress Iweko's order to stop inter-Clan squabbles.

The previous conflict with the Scorpion Clan is also no longer active, though the ill will between the two Clans runs very deep. The second death of Hida Kisada left a deep cut that goes to the very core of the Clan. The Crab have not been able to pin the crime on the Scorpion but they have their suspicions.

Neither of these wars ended to the satisfaction of Hida Kuon, and while he does not crave war, he does crave the opportunity to reemphasize the strength of the Crab. For now, he is doing so by reemphasizing the Crab's original mission – the defense of the Empire against incursions from the Shadowlands. The main reason the Crab were unable to devote their full resources to either war is that they had to leave the bulk of their armies along the Kaiu Wall, where they must remain at all times. Kuon has chosen to use this fact to his Clan's political advantage, reminding the rest of the Empire that the Crab shed their blood to everyone else's benefit.

The Crab respect the new Empress and would never question her elevation by the Celestial Heavens. However, they are not so disposed toward some of her top advisors. It is clear even to Kuon (who has never been known as politically astute) that Shosuro Jimen is using the position for his own purposes.



Bayushi Hisoka as Chancellor creates his own problem. He is a Scorpion, and therefore untrustworthy in the eyes of the Crab. However, he was appointed by the Empress herself, and the Empress is, by definition, infallible. This makes it hard for Kuon to judge Hisoka using the same standard as Jimen, who clearly and publicly manipulated his way to the position.

The Empress' advisor, Susumu, is also hard for Kuon to judge. He came from a group of ronin that are the source

of some disturbing rumors, yet if the Empress trusts him, should not all of her subjects? It is a confusing time.

As for their relations with other Clans, the Crab at present have no major conflicts or alliances. The Unicorn still bear the stigma of their attack on Toshi Ranbo, but with the death of Moto Chagatai, Kuon is willing to let Moto Chen create his own alliances or mistakes.

The Dragon are an interesting case. Kuon has no strong opinion about them either way, yet he was told by his grandfather that he has a cousin within the Clan. He agreed to let the woman live her life independently of the Crab, though Kuon would give her a position of respect within the Clan if she would allow it. Her mere existence means that Kuon will avoid conflicts with the Dragon if at all possible.

Kuon respects Yoritomo Naizen and the Mantis. The two Clans have had differences in the past but Kuon admires the fact that the Mantis have held onto their place and position through strength rather than political posturing.

The Phoenix are an enigma to Kuon. They seem to wield great power, yet choose to not use it. When they do act it is invariably to get involved with something that does not concern them. Kuon believes the Phoenix had no place interfering in the Third Yasuki War and he will not allow them to take such actions in the future.

The Lion take pride in force of arms, which Kuon can respect, but he also knows that if the war between the Crab and Crane had escalated, the Lion would have been much more likely to come to the aid of the Crane than not. This means Kuon cannot trust them fully.

Kuni Daigo's strategy to take the battle against the Shadowlands into their own territory has two components. One is to create an army of shugenja trained in the

HIDA KUON, CRAB CLAN CHAMPION

Air: 3 **Earth:** 6 **Fire:** 3 **Water:** 4 **Void:** 4
 Reflexes 4 Strength 7

Honor: 2.7 **Status:** 8.4 **Glory:** 8.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Hida Berserker 2/Hida Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Large, Strength of the Earth (8 points), Way of the Land (Crab Lands)

DISADVANTAGES: Driven (to punish the Shadowlands)

SKILLS: Athletics 6, Battle 4, Defense 6, Dai Tsuchi 7, Hunting 4, Intimidation 6, Jiu-jitsu 5, Kenjutsu 5,

LORE: Nezumi 3, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Tetsubo 8

style of the Kuni. The second requirement is for Daigo to gather enough jade to protect such a large army. Gathering the jade is a relatively straightforward task, although there is always the chance that the Empress will overrule his commands.

Creating a shugenja army is a whole other matter. The Kuni family is not large enough to provide such a force by itself and Daigo is not sure whether the shugenja from other Clans are properly prepared for what they would face beyond the Wall. He realizes he will have to assess the readiness of other shugenja Families before he can go ahead with his plans.

Elsewhere within the Clan, Yasuki Jinn-Kuen is both daimyo of the Yasuki family and the master of their lands. He also continues as Master Coin of the Kolat, even though the Kolat's activities have been severely curtailed. Of course Jinn-Kuen's true loyalty lies with neither the Crab nor the Kolat; it lies firmly with Yasuki Jinn-Kuen.

As a result of the agreement that ended the Third Yasuki War, Jinn-Kuen has been betrothed to a Crane bride, with the remaining Yasuki lands as her dowry. He assumes she will be a spy, reporting back to Doji Domotai, but this is not the case. Instead her goal is to keep Jinn-Kuen constantly aware of all of his duties as the daimyo of a Great Clan family, and by doing so, keep him too occupied to engage in troublesome plots and plans.

On the other side of the wall, at Hiruma Castle, Hiruma Todoru continues to reestablish the Hiruma Dojo after the discovery of the lost Hiruma Techniques. It may be some time before full units of those trained in these returned teachings will be available, but Todoru has taken to his new task with fervor and devotion.

Through all of their recent hardships, the Crab face the new Celestial era in much the same way they faced every new age – standing on the Wall, ready for any threat from outside the Empire to reveal itself.

The Crane Clan

The time between the beginning of Doji Domotai's reign as Crane Clan Champion and the War of Dark Fire saw many changes in the Clan's circumstances. The most visible of those changes is the Clan's loss of high offices in the Imperial bureaucracy. The Emerald Champion is now a Scorpion, the Jade Champion is a Crab, and the Imperial Advisor is a ronin of the self-styled Spider Clan. None of the other high-status positions in Empress Iweko's court are held by Crane.

Without question, this is a blow to the Clan's prestige, and it makes influencing Imperial policy both complicated and expensive. On the other hand, the Crane's great political strength had always been its ability to acquire and trade favors, and this continues unabated. It allowed Domotai to engineer the dramatic public announcement of the end of the Third Yasuki War during Iweko's first Winter Court at Kyuden Bayushi. This event demonstrated to the more perceptive members of the court that while the Crane are no longer the preeminent Clan in Imperial politics, they are not to be disregarded as a force either.

However, the Doji take pains to conceal that while they retain their skill in favor-trading, they currently have fewer than the usual amount with which to trade. War against the Crab is never an easy proposition, and the Third Yasuki War was extraordinarily expensive. While Domotai and her advisors do not fear for the Clan's welfare, they do recognize that for the next few years they must think carefully about what goals they want to pursue and how much they can dedicate to them.

Internally the Crane Clan is far more cohesive than in the recent past. Despite Daidoji Kikaze's deep personal antipathy toward her, Domotai has succeeded in reining in the Daidoji family and realigning them with the ideals of the rest of the Clan. While the Daidoji have always been the most pragmatic of the Clan's Families, the era of the Toturi Dynasty saw them drift further into questionable acts — a drift that accelerated when the Harrier-trained Kikaze became the Daidoji daimyo. The disbanding of the Harriers was a forceful reminder there were some things no Crane samurai should do. Very few of the former Harriers survived the war with the Crab; most requested place-



ment in front-line units and found useful ways to die.

Having disposed of the Harriers, Domotai worries most about the Kakita family. Kakita Noritoshi did not explain his reasons when he requested her permission to go on a lengthy journey, but it did not take long for her to realize he was embroiled in a feud with Shosuro Jimen, the new Emerald Champion. This puts Domotai in a difficult position: From everything she knew of Noritoshi he had to have an excellent reason for opposing Jimen, but having a high-ranking Crane daimyo in conflict with the Emerald Champion is politically difficult. Jimen himself is not inclined to move against the Clan because of his feud with Noritoshi — he is too shrewd to give up the advantages of having Crane allies — but there is the danger of subordinates trying to ingratiate themselves with Jimen by causing trouble for the Crane.

In military matters the Crane are in a reasonably good position. Their armies suffered heavy losses to the Crab, especially in ashigaru units, but the survivors gained unmatched battlefield experience. With the war in the south concluded the Crane once again have secure borders, giving them time to build their units back up to strength.

DOJI DOMOTAI, CRANE CLAN CHAMPION

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

Honor: 3.9 Glory: 8.2 Status: 8.4

SCHOOL/RANK: Doji Courtier 2/Kakita Bushi 3/
Matsu Berserker 1

ADVANTAGES: Dangerous Beauty, Multiple Schools,
True Love

DISADVANTAGES: Dark Secret (the Harriers), Driven
(overcome her mother's treachery)

KATA: Kakita's First Stance, One Leg Stance, Striking
as Air, Striking as Fire, Victory of the River, Victory
of the Wind

SKILLS: Artisan: Ikebana 2, Battle 4, Calligraphy 2,
Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 4, Etiquette (Con-
versation) 6, Iaijutsu 6, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana)
5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History 3, Lore: Law 3, Medita-
tion 3, Storytelling (Poetry) 4, Tea Ceremony 2

The Dragon Clan

The Dragon enter the new Age of the Glorious Empress in a position of great strength and greater uncertainty. Many Dragon point to the Divine Emperess Iweko I and her chosen Voice — their former champion Togashi Satsu — as a sign of the Heavens' favor of their Clan. The wise among the Clan, however, note with unease that interesting times often mean sorrowful times; it was not without reason that Togashi refused to involve his Clan in the affairs of the Empire. The Dragon, ultimately, remain a Clan of strong individuals united under a single authority, but for the first time in the Clan's history the Dragon are not overseen by Togashi, his blood, or a Champion guided by his spirit.

The Dragon's mettle will soon be gravely tested: Chosai, the Dark Oracle of Fire and a former Tamori, has gathered an army of barbarians to the north, and granted them a fraction of his power, presumably in another attempt to reclaim the Dark Covenant of Fire and re-enter the Empire. As their old enemies begin to gather, new ones emerge: Many among the Spider see the Dragon as their primary rivals, particularly the monks of the Order of the Spider, and not all among the Dragon's old allies the Scorpion are pleased with Iweko's unexpected ascent.

While danger looms in the near future, the Dragon remain optimistic. After all, seeing the future is the Clan's specialty, and since the Clan remained apart from the major wars of the Race for the Throne, it occupies a position of relative strength it has not seen since the end of the Clan War. Mirumoto Kei, the new Champion, led the Clan in its past two military campaigns, and has the direct approval of Togashi Satsu himself.

Rather than crumbling under the loss of their Kami and the death or promotion of three of the Clan's four family daimyo, the Dragon enter the Celestial era with a high level of morale, due, in no small part, to their recent good fortune. Iweko's replacement, Kitsuki Berii, is the bearer of the Book of Fire, and, like his predecessor, he is an accomplished investigator and magistrate. A young shugenja named Tamori Shimura has been named the head of the Tamori family following the murder of his adopted parents, former Tamori daimyo Shaitung and her husband, the Phoenix Elemental Master of Air, Tamori Nakamuro. He is brash and untested, but extremely gifted at speaking with the Kami. Mirumoto Mareshi has become the sole family daimyo of the Mirumoto following the appointment

of his wife to Clan Champion, while Togashi Maya, a devout former member of the Hitomi family, has taken an interim position as the head of the Togashi while Satsu performs his duties as the Voice of the Emperor.

In recent years, the Dragon's closest allies have been the Scorpion. However, during the Race for the Throne, the Scorpion viewed the Dragon as potentially their greatest rivals for the Throne, given Satsu's direct divine heritage. This strained the alliance, as the Scorpion worked to undermine any claims the Dragon might have, possibly even framing the Dragon for murder.

The Phoenix are perhaps the closest Clan in temperament to the Dragon, but their geographical proximity has led to dire conflict in recent memory. While the marriages of Nakamuro to Shaitung and Ochiai to Tsuge did much to heal some of the wounds between the two Clans, many Dragon still resent the Phoenix for taking in the Agasha after the family left the Dragon. As time passes, and the departure of the Agasha and the Dragon-Phoenix war recede into history, the two Clans will certainly grow closer; however, whether Tamori Shimura allows the old wounds to heal remains to be seen.

The Lion and Unicorn both share grievances against the Dragon which must be addressed in the near future. Mirumoto Kei made no small number of enemies during the Dragon's intervention in the War of the Rich Frog, and the Dragon's refusal to aid the Khan only worsened their relations with the Unicorn. Fortunately, both Clans respect Kei's military prowess, and overt war seems unlikely. The Lion in particular are more than willing to aid the Dragon against outside forces, but how they react when (or if) the Army of Dark Fire is defeated will set the tone for relations between the two Clans.

Strangely, the Mantis will likely be the Dragon's most obvious rivals in the near future. The Kitsuki have long had philosophical differences with the Tsuruchi, and recently magistrates in both Clans have clashed. In one of his final acts as Champion, Satsu forbade the presence of Mantis magistrates in the lands of the Dragon, and the ambitious Yoritomo Naizen almost certainly will see that declaration as a challenge.

The Crane have reestablished friendly relations with the Dragon after the end of the War of Silk and Steel, and it is unlikely the two Clans will come into conflict, or even interact beyond the defense against the Army of Dark Fire. However, with the first "true" Mirumoto Clan Champion,

the Dragon may find the Kakita more eager than ever to test the two families' friendly rivalry.

The Spider, of course, remain bitter enemies of the Dragon, though it would be easy to see the two Clans as mirror images: Both are guided directly by their founding Kami, and both place equal emphasis on monastic principals and the way of the sword. However, where the Dragon seek wisdom, the corrupt Spider respect only strength, and the bitter rivalry between Togashi and Fu Leng will certainly continue to play out in the lives of their followers.

MIRUMOTO KEI, DRAGON CLAN CHAMPION

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

Honor: 4.1 **Status:** 8.0 **Glory:** 7.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Mirumoto Bushi 5/Nightingale Samurai 1/Student of the Tao 1

ADVANTAGES: Ally: Togashi Satsu, Ambidextrous, Clear Thinker, Combat Reflexes, Tactician

DISADVANTAGES: Contrary, Driven

KATA: Endless Strike, Forest of Blades, Spirit and Steel, Time Between Breaths, Standing on the Heavens, Victory of the River, The World is Empty

KIHO: Embrace the Stone, Fall Before the Master, Grasp the Earth Dragon

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Combat) 6, Courtier 3, Craft: Weaponsmith 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 2, Investigation (Notice) 3, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 6, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Bushido 3, Lore: Dragon Clan 2, Iiujutsu 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Meditation 4, Theology (Shintao) 3

The Lion Clan

The Lion found themselves at war almost constantly during this period. They aided the Crane in their war against the Dragon, battled the forces of the Khan as he moved his armies through the Lion lands, defended Toshi Ranbo, and finally attacked Shiro Moto in revenge for the Unicorn's march on the Imperial City. For most of the Clans this would represent a crippling challenge; for the Lion it was a matter of doing what they did best for a slightly longer period of time than normal.

No Clan is immune to change, however, and time brought one dramatic change to the Clan: the return of the

Clan Championship to the Akodo. Since that family was disbanded at the time of the Clan Wars the Lion Champions had come predominantly from the Matsu family, with the Kitsu and Ikoma holding the position for short periods. When the Akodo were reestablished some had raised the possibility of reverting to the ancient tradition whereby an Akodo always led the Clan. Akodo Ginawa, the daimyo of the reformed family, firmly rejected the idea. However, when Matsu Yoshino became concerned that the troubles afflicting his family line might come to harm the entire Clan, he decided the prudent course of action was to pass the Championship to Akodo Shigetoshi, the Akodo daimyo. Shigetoshi had already established a reputation as a capable general, and as the son of the revered Lion sensei Akodo Quehao he had an excellent grasp of Bushido.

The rest of the Clan for the most part accepted Shigetoshi's ascension. While some Lion are distressed by the number of Akodo who have no known ancestors — a distress he understands completely — Shigetoshi himself has a flawless ancestry going back to Akodo One-Eye himself. He also has the weight of history in his favor; the Matsu reigned over the Lion for decades, but the Akodo did so for centuries.

When Empress Iweko I ascended to the throne she named a Unicorn as her Shogun, much to the general disgust of the Lion Clan. Nothing could shake Lion's loyalty to the Empress, but that announcement, coupled with her other choices of Imperial office-holders, made some wonder what role honorable samurai would play in her government. These fears were greatly reduced when Iweko announced a ban on warfare between Clans without her prior approval, and then appointed the Lion Clan as the enforcers of her will in this. No one missed the significance of this decree: Any Clan which transgressed the Empress's commands would face the armies of her Right Hand.

Devotion to one's lord has no limit, however. When word reached the Empress's court of the attack on the Empire's northern border, the Lion were the first to petition her for permission to reinforce the Dragon armies. Some would question this as an unnecessary drain on the Clan's resources, but to Shigetoshi and the other Lion daimyo the honor of the Clan trumps all other concerns. Their resources, their lives, are all to be used in the Empress' service. If the Empire is in danger, the Lion must be there to defend it.

**AKODO SHIGETOSHI, LION CLAN CHAMPION**

Air: 3 **Earth:** 4 **Fire:** 5 **Water:** 4 **Void:** 4
Reflexes: 5 **Perception:** 6

Honor: 4.4 **Glory:** 8.6 **Status:** 8.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Akodo Bushi 5/Akodo War College 2

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Death Trance, Leadership

DISADVANTAGES: Nemesis, Sworn Enemy (Yoritomo Naizen)

KATA: Fury Without End, Gentle Blade of Winter, Matsu's Vengeance, Striking as Fire, Striking as Water, Tsuko's Storm

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Combat) 8, Calligraphy 1, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 5, Iaijutsu 4, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: History 5, Lore: Yodotai Tactics 4, Polearms 3, Spears 4, Storytelling 3, Theology (Ancestor Worship, Shintao) 4, War Fan 5

The Mantis Clan

The Mantis find themselves in a strong position following the ascension of the Divine Empress. Although they began the Era of Enlightenment in a long and costly war with the Phoenix, they escaped the time of the Vacant Throne with relatively few injuries, most of them minor.

In fact, the Mantis gained territory, annexing the island they call Kaigen's Island, after the master sensei of Tempest Island who died in its creation at the culmination of the War of Fire and Thunder. The Phoenix insist upon referring to it as Sachi's Anvil, but they recognize the Mantis' claim to it. The island is now home to the rapidly-constructed City of Broken Waves, ruled by the extravagant and beautiful palace Kyuden Kumiko, and within a short period of time has become one of the major Mantis ports in the entire Empire, as well as the only Yoritomo holding within sight of the mainland.

The island also serves as a staging point for the Clan to expand further onto the mainland, and it allowed them to both seize control of Dragon Guard City in the unaligned lands, and to construct Houritsu Mura as a headquarters for the Tsuruchi magistrates. While the latter was done

as a means of garnering support for a Mantis to take the throne, it nevertheless benefited a great number of people and won the Clan the adoration of many peasants.

Far more damaging to the long-term perception of the Mantis Clan, however, is Naizen's approval of the Unicorn Clan Khan's attempt to take the Throne. Honoring a debt the Clan owed to the Unicorn, and genuinely agreeing with Moto Chagatai's assertion that the Empire needed strong leadership, Naizen positioned himself and some of his finest troops throughout Toshi Ranbo, ostensibly in a show of support for the Protector of the Imperial City. When it appeared the Lion Clan's defense of the city would be successful, Naizen unleashed his shugenja on the walls and opened the city's defense to the Unicorn. Naizen himself fought a duel against Akodo Shigetoshi, and defeated him. Ultimately, however, the battle was lost, and the Mantis were spared the vengeance of the Akodo only by the intervention of the Phoenix Clan. Few Champions have forgotten Naizen's role in the attack, and the Mantis delegation to the Imperial Court must work even harder to compensate for their Clan's damaged image.

Shortly before the ascension of the Divine Empress, Naizen received word from his patron the Thunder Dragon that it required his assistance. The Champion and his most trusted advisors soon discovered the Thunder Dragon now dwelt in the mortal realm, having been banished from the Heavens for ceding its rightful place among the divine to the spirit of Yoritomo. Although still enormously powerful, the Dragon was exhausted from its descent, and in theory vulnerable to destruction, so the Mantis vowed to protect it. In return for their service, the Dragon passed knowledge of an ancient ritual to the shugenja of the Clan, one that allowed them to share the Dragon's strength, lending their vitality to it when it needed to recover, and drawing upon its power in the casting of their spells. Rumors of these new, strangely powerful shugenja began to circulate throughout the Empire in a matter of weeks.

Despite all the setbacks suffered by the Mantis in terms of their reputation, the Clan's tireless efforts during the War of Dark Fire have gone a long way toward restoring them in the eyes of the Empire. From their headquarters at Kyuden Kumiko, the Third Storm range up and down the coastline north of Rokugan, striking at key supply points for the Yobanjin tribes and completely destroying at least three ports. Numerous landing parties go overland to harass the Army of Fire's rear, distracting them and gaining

precious respite from the invasion. Mantis magistrates, who were familiar with the Dragon lands, also serve as guides for the Imperial Legions and other of the Empire's forces responding to the invasion.

The reign of the Divine Empress has thus far proven to be interesting for the entire Empire, but particularly for the Mantis, who have grasped an unexpected chance to reverse their political fortunes.

YORITOMO NAIZEN, THE SCOURGE OF STORMS

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

Honor: 2.2	Status: 8.5	Glory: 8.8
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SCHOOL/RANK: Yoritomo Bushi 5/Yoritomo Kobune Pilot 1/Yoritomo Marine 1

ADVANTAGES: Large, Quick Healer, Wary, Way of the Land (the seas)

DISADVANTAGES: Contrary, Insensitive, Sworn Enemy (Akodo Shigetoshi)

KATA: Boundless Fury, Howl of the Son of Storms, Prayer's End, Strength of Waves, Strike of the Cliff's Edge

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Battle 5, Chain Weapons 3, Commerce (Appraisal, Merchant) 5, Craft: Sailing 7, Deceit (Intimidation) 4, Defense 6, Hunting 4, Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 2, Peasant Weapons (Kama) 8, Stealth (Sneaking) 4, Theology (Fortunes) 4, Underworld 5

The Phoenix Clan

For much of the Age of Enlightenment and the Race for the Throne, the Phoenix focused on bringing peace to the Empire rather than raising their own station, and that is likely to continue into the Celestial era and beyond. While the Phoenix are no longer the sole caretakers of Toshi Ranbo, their movement into magisterial and peacekeeping activities have proven more permanent. Shiba Tsukimi's failed attempt to intervene in the Third Yasuki War has not dampened the Clan's enthusiasm to serve as an active peacekeeping force throughout the Empire, and the Elemental Council is determined to root out the causes of the fire that ravaged the Shinomen and the source of the wave of assassinations that struck prior to the Celestial Tournament.



Many in the Clan view the ascendant Divine Empress and the restoration of the Elemental Dragons, the Fortunes, and the Heavenly Court as re-affirmation of the Phoenix's reverence of the Celestial Order. For the first time since the Clan War, the Phoenix are at full strength without being embroiled in immediate conflicts with another Clan, and that simple fact has energized the Clan to move towards great new things.

Most importantly, the Phoenix have been at the center of a campaign that has suddenly proven essential to the Empire as a whole: the hunt for the Dark Oracles. The War of Dark Fire has made the threat of the Dark Oracles very obvious to the other Clans, and the research and scouting done by the Inquisitors may hold a key to defeating the Dark Oracle of Fire. Meanwhile, the Phoenix have discovered a direct way to harm the seemingly immortal Dark Oracles – the Bloodsword wielded by Isawa Mizuhiko. Unfortunately, this weapon cannot be used without hazard, and time will tell whether the price is too dear.

The Phoenix, as always, are led by the Elemental Masters, though the Champion, Shiba Tsukimi, seems to be more interested than most past Champions in making her voice heard. Isawa Ochai, the Master of Fire, and Isawa

Emori, the Master of Earth, provide steady hands and clear heads to guide the Clan, while the seemingly ageless Master of Void, Shiba Ningen, continues to provide the Phoenix with his enigmatic wisdom. Asako Bairei, once considered an unlikely choice for Master of Water, has flourished in his new role, and his substantial knowledge has been called upon many times to help the Clan. Isawa Mitsuko, the new Master of Air, provides her Inquisitorially-trained investigative skills to the Council, while her fiery nature serves as an ironic counterpart to the Master of Fire's cool control. Asako Bushiken, a monk and martial arts prodigy, has begun taking on the duties of leading the Asako, while Agasha Chieh remains both a source of strange knowledge and a resource for the Clan's Inquisitors and magistrates in her position as daimyo of the Agasha.

The Phoenix currently have generally positive relations with the other Clans, though their "helpful activism" often thrusts them into conflict. The Crab and Crane both appreciate the aid the Clan's shugenja and artisans provide on the Kaiu Wall and in the Court, respectively, but both Clans also resent the Phoenix for attempting to in-

tervene in the Third Yasuki War. However, they respect the Phoenix's position, and were grateful that the Phoenix ultimately backed down from their peacekeeping efforts. Kuni Daigo, the Jade Champion, has professed great respect for the work of the Asako Inquisitors, and fully supports their hunt for the Dark Oracles.

Despite having a rocky relationship with the Dragon Clan in the past, the Phoenix generally view the Dragon as brothers in the search for knowledge, if a bit misguided and inward-focused. However, some bad blood still exists in the Dragon over the Agasha's defection to the Phoenix decades earlier, and the new Tamori daimyo, Shimura, reminds many Phoenix of a young Shaitung (his foster mother) more than his foster father, Isawa Nakamuro. If this assessment is true, it could lead to a renewal of conflict between the two Clans: Shaitung was not known for her love of the Phoenix before she married Nakamuro, and Shimura seems to blame the Phoenix for the death of his birth parents.

Relations with the Mantis remain cool but friendly since the conclusion of the War of Fire and Thunder, despite the desire of both Nakamuro and Naizen to continue the conflict. The peace between the two Clans is enforced primarily by Phoenix diplomats sent to Kyuden Kumiko. It remains to be seen if the rivalry between the two Clans – or their Champions, Tsukimi and Naizen – will be renewed.

The Lion remain one of the greatest threats to the Phoenix. The Phoenix fear the Lion remain angry over their expulsion of the Clan from Toshi Ranbo, and the Lion once again view the Phoenix as cowardly pacifists who have called their honor into question. While full mobilization is unlikely, the Phoenix have begun posting more guards to their southern borders. As the Lion view the Dark Oracle of Water as their personal nemesis, many among the Phoenix wonder if the Lion will view the Phoenix as rivals or provide welcome aid during their hunt for the Dark Oracles.

Relations between the Phoenix and Scorpion are cool but not unfriendly; as the Phoenix were not interested in the Throne and did not become involved in the battles for succession, they believe themselves beyond the notice of the Scorpion.

The Unicorn, however, have a surprisingly positive relationship with the Phoenix. With the acknowledgment of the Lords of Death as proper Fortunes, the Phoenix have opened a strong diplomatic channel with the Moto and Iuchi priests, and the Phoenix's selfless offer of aid to

the wounded of the recent conflicts has further cemented the friendship between the two Clans. Since both Clans border the Dragon provinces and the Spine of the World Mountains, the conflict against the Army of Dark Fire will likely bring the two Clans even closer.

SHIBA TSUKIMI, PHOENIX CLAN CHAMPION

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

Honor: 4.4 Status: 8.3 Glory: 8.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Shiba Bushi 5/Shiba Yojimbo 3

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Benten's Blessing, Clear Thinker, Great Destiny, Inner Gift (Soul of Shiba), Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Sworn Enemy (Yoritomo Naizen)

KATA: Deeper Reflection, Eyes of the Phoenix, The Phoenix's Haven, Striking as Wind, Swoop of the Wing

SKILLS: Artisan 2, Athletics 4, Battle 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 4, Defense 7, Etiquette 5, Horsemanship 2, Investigation (Notice) 4, Instruction (Shiba Bushi) 3, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History 3, Lore: Phoenix Clan 3, Jiu-jutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Spears (Naginata) 6, Theology (Shintao)

The Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion Clan have suffered great setbacks over the last several years. Four years ago, they held the majority of the power in the Imperial Courts, and the Imperial Chancellor was a Scorpion. The Clan was strengthening both its military capability and economic influence. But then the Imperial Chancellor, Bayushi Kaukatsu, died. Their military failed miserably against the returned spirit Hida Kisada. The Clan was visibly humiliated when Kisada marched through Scorpion lands with impunity. The Fortune Bishamon cursed their lands with famine.

Despite these setbacks, the Scorpion have risen again in recent months to a strong position. In fact, they begin the Celestial era as quite possibly the strongest of the Great Clans.

It helps that a former Kitsuki has ascended to the throne. The Scorpion have been staunch allies of the Dragon Clan for decades. Iweko I does not seem unusually well-disposed toward the Scorpion for one who was born into

the Kitsuki, but the connection has already strengthened the Scorpion position in the eyes of the other Great Clans. The new Imperial Chancellor is also a Scorpion, Bayushi Hisoka. He has much work to do before he can fit into Kaukatsu's shoes, but he is young and brilliant and ready to bring glory and power to his Clan.

The Kolat has always been a thorn in the Scorpion Clan's side. When the opportunity arose, Bayushi Paneki destroyed the organization at its roots and tore it asunder. Crippling this longtime threat to the Empire gives the

Scorpion glory and prestige — and the Oni's Eye, as well. If used properly, this nemuranai will give the Clan extraordinary power to spy on the other Clans, as well as external threats to the Empire. Paneki has already diverted much of his resources to deciphering its secrets.

The Clan's intelligence assets have grown stronger over the past few years. They have even grown outside of Rokugan's borders with the construction of a new Dragon Clan embassy in Medinaat-al-Salaam. The Scorpion have infiltrated their agents to keep an open line of information back into their own ears, using their unique knowledge of the great city of the Burning Sands and connections formed during their exile there. They have begun to hear whispers of a grand army, one that stretches from horizon to horizon. They hear whispers of an Ebon Daughter.

The Scorpion Clan gathers more information to be sure, but they will stand ready before the threat can appear at their doorstep.

BAYUSHI PANEKI, MASTER OF SECRETS, SCORPION CLAN CHAMPION

Air: 5	Earth: 3	Fire: 5	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes: 7	Willpower: 4	Agility: 7	Perception: 5	

Honor: 1.6	Status: 8.9	Glory: 9.2
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SCHOOL/RANK: Bayushi Bushi 4/Shosuro Shinobi 2/Bayushi Courtier 3

ADVANTAGES: Combat Reflexes, Daikoku's Blessing, Dangerous Beauty, Heartless, Higher Purpose (Protect the Empire at all costs), Language (Senpet), Quick, Perceived Honor (4 Points), Wary

DISADVANTAGES: Lost Love (Toturi Tsudao)

KATA: Striking as Earth, Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind, Striking as Water, Striking as Void

SKILLS: Athletics 6, Battle 4, Calligraphy 2, Commerce: Appraisal 5, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 7, Deceit (Intimidation, Seduction) 7, Defense 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation, Sincerity) 6, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation (Interrogation, Search, Notice) 4, Know the School: Akodo Bushi 3, Know the School: Bayushi Bushi 4, Know the School: Hida Bushi 2, Know the School: Kakita Bushi 3, Know the School: Moto Bushi 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Law 3, Medicine (Wound Treatment) 3, Meditation 3, Ninja Ranged Weapons 4, Poison 5, Stealth (Ambush, Sneaking) 6, Storytelling (Oratory, Poetry) 3, Underworld 7



The Spider Clan

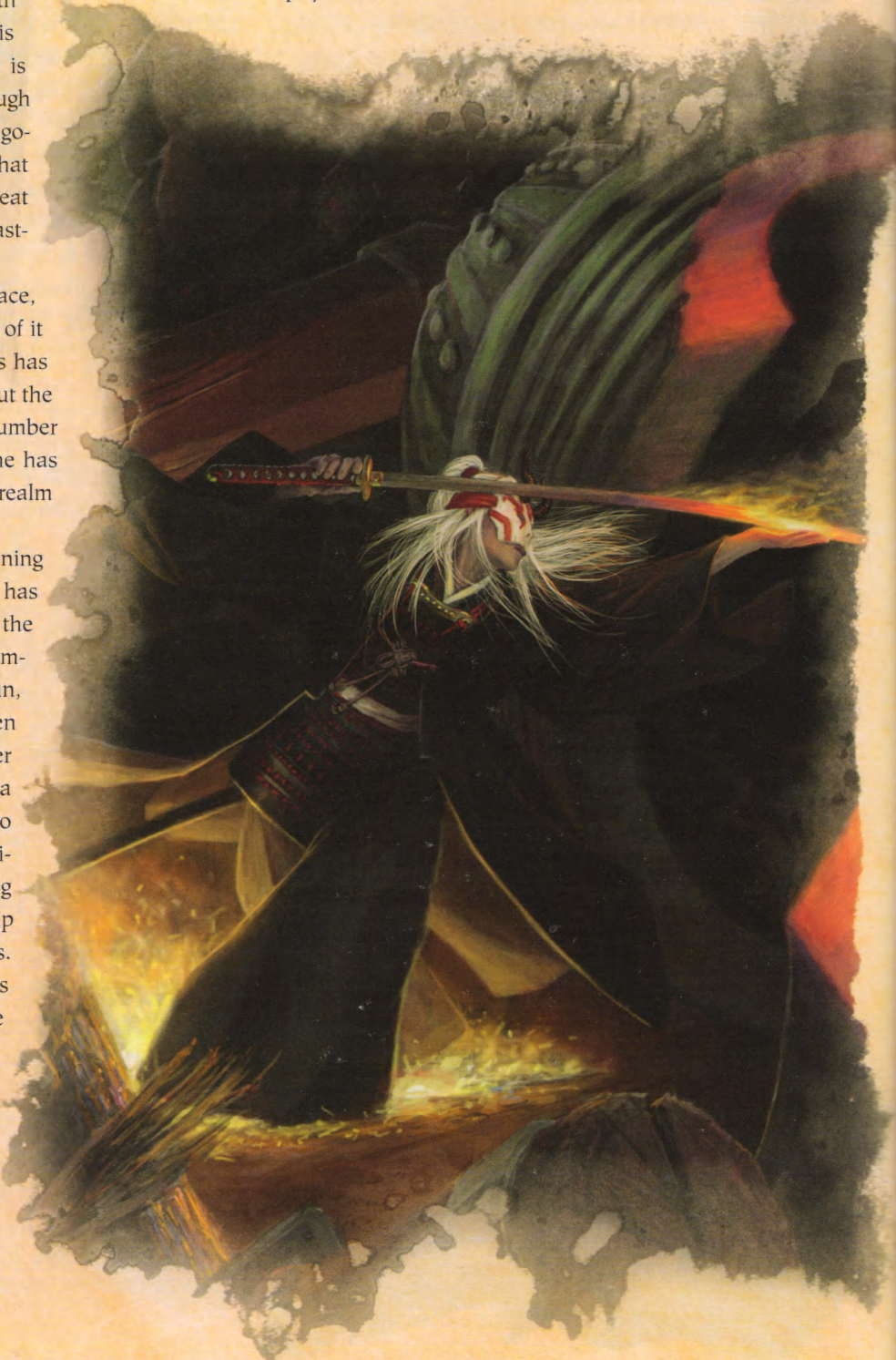
The Spider, a Clan whose status is denied by most of the Empire, have been dealt a devastating blow. When Iweko was elevated by the Celestial Heavens to become Empress, she learned the truth about the Spider and what they were trying to accomplish. Years of effort came to naught and Daigotsu was left with less than he had started with. His ability to infiltrate the Empire is much less than what it was, though not wholly eliminated. If he is going to manipulate events so that the Spider can be named as a Great Clan, he will have to employ a vastly different strategy.

The Spiders' only saving grace, though Daigotsu was not aware of it immediately, is that the Empress has not announced her findings about the Spider publicly. Only a select number within the Empire know why she has named them enemies of her realm and reign.

It is not only political positioning that has changed, for Daigotsu has found his major holdings within the Empire compromised. When Empress Iweko sent the new Shogun, Moto Jin-Sahn, into the Shinomen Forest to ferret out the Spider hiding within, Daigotsu used a scorched earth stratagem to two purposes. The first was to eliminate the possibility of leaving behind anything that could help the Empire decipher his plans. The second was to give the forces coming after him something else to worry about while the Spider escaped the forest.

And if Daigotsu were being honest, leaving a lasting mark on the Empire suited his ego as well.

As effective as this strategy was, something happened that may have hurt Daigotsu's longer term goals. As they covered their tracks, some of the Spider forces found the Temple to Te'tik'kir, and killed all who defended it. In a moment of savagery, they not only killed Nintai, the last living Kitsu, they skinned him, and took his pelt as a trophy.



Daigotsu is not in any way an opponent of such tactics, and embraces the use of terror as a useful tool, but in this case his followers may have made a mistake. The kitsu are revered, and not just by the Lion Clan. As the information spreads through the Empire, it is possible more and more Clans will learn who the Spider truly are and pursue revenge against them.

The Spider no longer have a base of operations within Rokugan, but they still have strongholds in the Shadowlands. And their presence within Rokugan has not been absolutely purged. Not every agent of the Spider has been discovered. There are some, like Daigotsu Rintaro at Kyuden Tonbo, who have been exposed, but are unaware of it, while the Empress keeps a close eye on them. There are many others, however, like Chuda Chiaki at Kyuden Suzume, who remain in deep cover, completely free from suspicion.

All of these moles are inactive at this time, as Daigotsu tries to determine how much Empress Iweko really knows. His best source of information about the Empress is also her best source of information about him. After Iweko ascended, she named Daigotsu Susumu (though not using his family name) as her Imperial Advisor. This was not an error on her part, for she was fully aware of where his loyalties lay. Instead, she, and those around her who know what he is, have made it very clear to him that his continued existence is only possible as long as he remains useful to her, and provides her with the information she requests.

Susumu is not an unintelligent man and he knows he has to play the role of double agent in order to survive. He is using the position to his advantage, however, and plans to get information to Daigotsu whenever he can. It was a message from Susumu, passed through Daigotsu Usharo and Daigotsu Sahara, that warned Daigotsu that Moto Jin-Sahn was headed for the Shinomen with a large army.

It is not the Empress' discovery of his true intentions that most disturbs Daigotsu, however. Instead, it is his lack of connection with his Kami, Fu Leng.

Daigotsu is an ambitious person, but personal glory is not his primary driving force. Instead he is motivated by his devotion to the dark god Fu Leng (and perhaps the desire to create a legacy for his son). Daigotsu has found himself unable to call on his Kami's thoughts and energy, a deeply upsetting development, though he has hidden it from everyone, including his wife Shahai. Even after his

plans began to unravel, there was nothing from Fu Leng.

Daigotsu fears the knowledge that Fu Leng has abandoned him would cause a drop in morale and raise questions about his leadership. This is no time for either. Privately, though, the Dark Lord is as close to despair as he has ever been. Exposure by the Celestial Heavens was just a setback, but being severed from Fu Leng affects Daigotsu in ways well beyond his plots and schemes. His faith in Fu Leng remains, but he fears that Fu Leng's faith in him has wavered, or worse.

Other members of the Spider continue, unaware of this problem. Shahai still encourages Daigotsu's desire to create a new world for their child, Kanpeki, to inherit. Her ways are more direct and less subtle than her husband's, but she has complete faith in him.

Katsu and Daigotsu Keigo are still missing, trying to find their way back to the Spider after fleeing Seppun Hill. Their lack of Taint makes it easier for them to move undetected through Rokugan. But they know it did not save Daigotsu Susumu from being discovered, so they bear no illusions about how easy it will be for them to get past the forces of the Shogun and the others who came to fight the fires of the Shinomen, and rejoin their leader.

Other forces, while not under the Spider banner, still stand as strong allies. Chosai, the Dark Oracle of Fire, continues to amass an army past the northern border of Rokugan. His attempt to retrieve the Dark Covenant of Fire was foiled by the intervention of both the Dragon and the Crane, but he has not allowed that to stop his campaign for revenge against his former Clan and the Empire.

The Oni Lords have been quiet of late. The battle near the Tomb of the Seven Thunders took the life of the Maw at Oni no Akuma's hands, but Akuma was grievously wounded and retreated to recover. Even worse, Kyoso no Oni has been bound into a new Black Scroll. The other Oni Lords have mounted no major new offensives against Rokugan. But the creatures of the dark continue to test the Crab defenses. The Crab know better than anyone that the evil deep in the Shadowlands never sleeps. If they are not making their presence known it is because they are preparing for something bigger, and more dangerous for Rokugan.

And across the world other dark forces move and turn their attention to Rokugan. There are threats from further away that will bring upheaval and war to the Empire. None within her borders yet knows the name of the Ebon



Daughter, but they will, sooner than they would like. The peace imposed by the new Empress stands on a precipice and the machinations within the Empire will soon have to look outwards to much greater threats. Things are not always as they seem. In the words of the fallen Lord Sun, the former Hida Yakamo, "The fire is a lie."

DAIGOTSU, DARK LORD

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

Honor: 0.0 Status: 0.0 Glory: 10.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Maho-Tsukai 12

ADVANTAGES: Ally: Fu Leng (8 points), Benten's Blessing, Clear Thinker, Leadership, Strength of the Earth (8 points)

DISADVANTAGES: Driven (to elevate Kanpeki), Driven (to serve Fu Leng)

SKILLS: Battle 5, Courtier 5, Deceit 6, Defense 5, Etiquette 6, Iaijutsu 7, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Jigoku 10, Lore: Shadowlands 9, Meditation 7, Spellcraft (Maho) 9

SPELLS: Daigotsu can cast all Maho spells without shedding blood.

The Unicorn Clan

How the mighty have fallen.

The Unicorn were arguably the most powerful of the Great Clans at the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment. They held economic advantage over the rest of the Great Clans. They had great political connections and many unlikely supporters. Their three armies were battle hardened and eager to fight. At the dawn of the Celestial era, none of those assets remain to them. Moto Chagatai paid the ultimate price for his ambition, but the Unicorn Clan continues to pay for his mistakes.

It would be a different story if the Unicorn Clan had succeeded in their quest to take the Throne. Instead, the Phoenix Council took power over the Imperial City and sent the Unicorn stumbling back toward their home, defeated in body and spirit. The Baraunghar effectively sacrificed themselves to make the Khan's assault on Toshi Ranbo possible. The Khol suffered heavy casualties in the attack. The last army, the Junghar, suffered great losses fighting rearguard actions against the Lion to cover the retreat of the first two. The Unicorn's military might is lower than it has been at any time since the Moto from the Burning Sands joined them 40 years ago.

The assault cost the Unicorn dearly in both economic power and political goodwill. The Khan spent a vast fortune in waging his winter war. Any wealth they had left went to the Dragon and Scorpion Clans to persuade them to stay out of the fight. The public's opinion of the Unicorn Clan has soured considerably, as the memory of the Khan's Defiance is still fresh in everyone's mind.

Finally, the alliance they had maintained with the mysterious ronin group called the Spider was exposed as quite ill-advised. The Spider manipulated the Unicorn every step of the way. They coerced the Unicorn into heralding them in the courts. Few people know the true nature of the Spider, as yet, but repercussions for their ill-thought actions may still fall upon the Unicorn.

There are, fortunately, several bright points in the Unicorn's future.

Their relationship with the Lords of Death has never been better. The rulers of Meido gain influence as more Rokugani accept them into their culture. The Shi-Tien Yen-Wang's blessings grow more powerful and the inventive Unicorn shugenja find more ways to use their spells.

Moto Jin-Sahn performed marvelously in the Celestial Tournament because of the blessing of the Lords of Death. The tacit approval of the Voice of the Obsidian Moon and the Jade Sun will increase the acceptance of the Unicorn gods among the rest of the Empire.

The reputation of the Shinjo family has finally recovered. The heroic sacrifice of Shinjo Shono in the face of overwhelming odds has proven to the Empire that not all Shinjo are treacherous dogs. And the Utaku Battle Maidens are still respected across the Empire even following Chagatai's attack.

And a Unicorn is now Shogun, filling Kaneka's old role as the strong arm of the Empire. Moto Jin-Sahn is still young, but he is smart and listens to his advisors. His relationship with Matsu Fumiyo will go a long ways towards healing the rift between the two greatest military Clans in the Empire. It is much too soon to believe that they will heal all between them, but it is a start.

Hints of an assault on Rokugani lands are slowly growing in whispers around the Empire. The Unicorn forces may be significantly decreased from their previous numbers, but their knowledge of gaijin warfare will prove invaluable when the attackers finally arrive.

MOTO CHEN, KHOL GENERAL, UNICORN CLAN KHAN

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

Honor: 3.6	Status: 8.2	Glory: 6.7
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SCHOOL/RANK: Moto Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Great Potential (Kenjutsu), Quick, Tactician

KATA: Striking as Fire, Howl of the Moto, Moto's Burning Strike

SKILLS: Athletics 5, Battle (Mass Combat) 4, Commerce 1, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 6, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu (Katana, Scimitar, Wakizashi) 7, Kyujutsu (Yomanri) 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 3, Stealth 3, Tea Ceremony 2, Underworld 4

Other Factions of the Empire

The months immediately following the ascension of the Divine Empress are a period of unprecedented good fortune for the Imperial Families of Rokugan. Over the past 50 years, conflict after conflict in the military and political spheres of the Empire has marginalized them in the eyes of many, leaving their ancient prestige as their only effective asset. With the ascension of Kitsuki Iweko, however, and the obvious favor of the divine she carries, the sanctity of the Throne is restored and with it, the illustrious position of the Imperial Families.

The Seppun, easily the most numerous of the Imperial Families, find their role has changed very little. They remain the guardians of the Throne, and they have taken solemn vows to protect the new dynasty with their lives. Should anything happen to the Divine Empress, it is likely that hundreds of guardsmen throughout the Imperial City would take their own lives in disgrace over their failure. The aging patriarch of the family, Seppun Kiharu, is seen by many as the elder statesman of the Imperial Families, and he is respected throughout the Empire for his wisdom and devotion to theology.

The Otomo family find themselves somewhat out of place following the ascension of a new dynasty. Traditionally, the family's role has been to pit the Great Clans against one another in order to ensure the Throne's au-

thority is not threatened. With the obvious blessing of the Heavens, however, it seems unlikely that any Clan will go against the Empress' wishes, much less attempt to unseat her. And if such an unthinkable act did occur, it is even more likely the other Clans would unite against such a blasphemous action.

The relatively young daimyo of the Otomo family, Otomo Taneji, has not shied away from this fact. He has steered his family toward staffing the Imperial bureaucracy and supporting the activities of the Emperor's Chosen, the elite group of counselors consisting of the Imperial Advisor, Imperial Chancellor, Imperial Treasurer, Voice of the Empress, and the Shogun of Rokugan.

The role of the Miya family is as it ever has been, to carry the word of the Empress to her people. The Miya rejoice in their service to the Divine Empress, and their



SEPPUN KIHARU, MASTER OF TEN THOUSAND TEMPLES

Air: 4 **Earth:** 4 **Fire:** 3 **Water:** 3 **Void:** 6
Willpower: 6 **Intelligence:** 5

Honor: 4.8 **Glory:** 5.2 **Status:** 9.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Seppun Shugenja 5/Four Temples Monk 3

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Hotei's Blessing, Sage

DISADVANTAGES: Can't Lie, Idealistic, Soft-Hearted

KIHO: As a master of a major Brotherhood sect, Kiharu has access to virtually any Kiho he requires. As with his spell selection, however, it is extremely unlikely for Kiharu to ever employ a harmful Kiho, and he will almost never use a Martial Kiho for any reason.

SKILLS: Calligraphy 5, Courtier 4, Defense 2, Divination (Kawaru, Omens) 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 6, Instruction (Four Temples Monk, Seppun Shugenja, Theology) 7, Investigation (Notice) 5, Jiu-jutsu 1, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: History 6, Lore: Law 6, Meditation 7, Spellcraft 6, Storytelling 3, Tea Ceremony 4, Theology (Ancestor Worship, Fortunes, Shintao) 8

SPELLS: Given his position and prestige, there are few spells that Kiharu does not have access to if he desires to use them. However, he vastly prefers to use non-lethal spells and would only cast a spell that harmed or killed another if his life or the lives of innocents depended upon him doing so.

presence throughout the Empire has become a beacon of hope to her subjects, who are desperate for word of their new blessed ruler after decades of strife and uncertainty. Miya Shoin, the Imperial Herald, has been a regular fixture in the Imperial Court, a setting he has avoided as much as not since his ascension to his current position years ago.

The Toturi family, once the rulers of the Empire, are virtually extinct now, and with the passing of the current generation they will join the name of Hantei as a lost bloodline. Many throughout the Empire greatly loved the Toturi line despite its short tenure upon the Throne, and they are remembered with fondness.

Those few who were granted the privilege of fealty to a member of the Toturi, and who yet linger in the mortal world, are afforded great respect by the new dynasty. Toturi Shigekawa, commander of the Seventh Imperial Legion and perhaps the most influential living soul to bear the Toturi name, has offered the Empress his life in order to remove the name of her predecessors completely from the Imperial bureaucracy, but the Divine Empress has declined.

The Minor Clans have also responded positively to the new Empress. Unfortunately, two among their ranks, the Badger and Ox, are already suffering terribly during the War of Dark Fire. The Badger, so recently revitalized after years of hardship, now seem on the brink of extinction once again. The Ox have suffered similar losses, but assistance from the Scorpion Clan (of all parties) has bolstered

them. Other Minor Clans contribute all they can to the war, and are rewarded for their loyalty with the Empress' favor and a permanent place in her court for representatives from the Minor Clan Alliance.

The Celestial Era So Far...

The first few months of the reign of the Divine Empress have not been easy. Although the samurai of the Great Clans have universally and enthusiastically embraced her rule — a benefit of the obvious blessings of the Heavens that accompanied her ascension — there have been difficulties no one in the Empire could have anticipated.

Years ago, the incredibly powerful Dark Oracle of Fire, an Elemental incarnation of evil more powerful than any mortal shugenja, was compelled by an ancient artifact known as the Dark Covenant of Fire to flee the Empire and never return. So long as the Dark Covenant remains intact, and the Dark Oracle cannot possess it, he is bound by its command never to set foot within the Empire of Rokugan. To do so would destroy him instantly, even if he were capable of defying the compulsion placed upon him. But after years of planning, the Dark Oracle discovered another means of gaining his vengeance.

Not long after his banishment into the north, the Dark Oracle began conquering the disparate Yobanjin tribes, bending them to his will. He tested the northern border of the Empire, sending his minions against it, augmented by his sinister power. The Dragon Clan held the line against him, although it required building new fortifications along their northern border. Slowly, the attacks diminished, and the Dragon were lulled into believing that perhaps the Dark Oracle had abandoned his quest.

But they were mistaken.

The Dark Oracle's plan came to fruition through an alliance so dark, so malevolent, that even a minion of the Realm of Evil recognized he had cast his lot with a force more sinister than himself. In this alliance, however, the Dark Oracle discovered all he required to see the Empire burn. His role was not that of a destroyer, it seems, but as the distraction that would permit the gates to be thrown open, and ruination to come to Rokugan.

To Tamori Chosai, the Dark Oracle of Fire, this was acceptable.

Chosai gathered his legions and forged a vast army from the horde of barbarians, an Army of Fire, to break the will of Rokugan. He advanced through the mountains, hoping to take the Empire by surprise. Unfortunately for his initial

plans, scouts in the lands of the Badger Clan discovered the army and sent word back to the Badger Champion, who in turn sent an ambassador to the Winter Court of the Divine Empress to inform her of the threat to her Empire. Although the Scorpion hosts were reluctant to admit the Badger representative, and some among the court discounted the tale, the Empress and her advisors determined the threat was real. They ordered the Shogun to withdraw his forces from the Shinomen Mori to head north.

In the meantime, however, the time required for the Badger to travel the Scorpion lands had been more than enough for the Dark Oracle to begin his offensive. The Northern Towers of Flame, a series of watchtowers constructed by the Dragon, were the first to fall, and many Badger keeps fell as well. By the time the Shogun's forces, joined by forces dispatched by the Emerald Champion and several Great Clans, arrived in the Dragon lands, the Army of Fire had devastated portions of the northern Dragon provinces, a considerable percentage of the Badger lands, and had begun to appear in the northern Phoenix lands and the Ox lands as well.

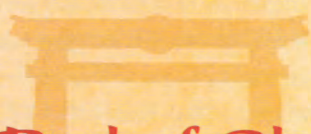
After three months of fighting, the Army of Fire pressed southward, threatening to move beyond the Dragon lands and perhaps even threaten the Imperial City. It seemed a dark time indeed for Rokugan, but all was not lost. The Army of Fire fought without consideration for the continued survival of its members, and in that brutality lay both the secret of its success, and the key to its defeat. In battle, the samurai of the Great Clans proved the equal of ten Yobanjin warriors, even with the power of the Dark Oracle at their back. Driven relentlessly by their leader, the Yobanjin suffered appalling losses, and their numbers could not be replaced.

Ultimately, the Army of Fire was routed, its leaders destroyed and the bulk of its legions slaughtered. The survivors were pushed back, ever back, until they were driven from the Empire in their entirety. The Army of Fire was broken. The War of Dark Fire was won.

The Empress declared a week-long festival in celebration of the victory. Her Champions gathered at the Imperial City to receive her accolades, as well as new weapons bearing the blessings of the Heavens. Throughout the Empire, the people of Rokugan rejoiced at the victory of their Divine Empress, confident now that nothing could threaten her reign. The vast fire that had burned in the north was extinguished forever at her command.

But the fire was a lie.

The war has not yet begun.



The Book of Shadows

A LOTUS EDITION ADVENTURE OUTLINE
FOR THE LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS RPG

Synopsis

In a small, relatively minor court near the mountains, the provincial daimyo had discovered rumors of seventh book written by the prophet Rosoku, one that was lost and omitted from the Empire-wide discussions about his other works, now discovered and possessed by the Keepers of the Elements. The governor, a man of both scholarly and spiritual pursuits despite his shortcomings, quickly becomes obsessed with finding the book, and orders some in attendance at his court to find it and return it to him. The characters, willing or unwilling, are among these individuals, and must travel deep into the most remote recesses of the mountains in search of the book, confronting considerable challenges and a terrifying foe in order to accomplish their assigned duty.

The Setting

This adventure takes place in a small but not unimportant court established near a major mountain range. Although there are some assumptions regarding the family of those involved in the adventure, the names of the NPCs can easily be changed to suit the location of the campaign. Likewise, there is little detail necessary regarding the mountains, and as such this adventure could be located anywhere near the Northern Wall Mountains at the Empire's northern border, the Spine of the World Mountains in its center, or the Twilight Mountains at its southern reaches.

The interactions of the court prior to the onset of the adventure can be as important or as trivial as the Game Master wishes to suit the purposes of his campaign. However, because there is potential to expand the adventure beyond the scope of what is included in this book, some suggestions about members in attendance at the court, and their own private agendas, include the following individuals:

CHUYO, THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR

Rapidly approaching the age at which a samurai traditionally retires, Chuyo looks back on his life and finds it spectacularly unsatisfying on a number of levels. In his youth, the governor was devoted to his duty as a sentry in his family's ancestral estate. He never had the opportunity to shine in that regard, however, as threats never presented themselves. He moved from duty to duty in search of glory, serving as a yojimbo, a scout, and a lineman in his clan's army, but nothing exciting ever happened. Even his appointment to the region he now governs was sheer happenstance; he was born in the area and his name came up after the previous governor died with no heirs and no one wished to replace him. Chuyo believed that the appointment would be his chance to shine, but again he was disappointed. His province has absolutely nothing of any significant value that would allow him to distinguish his reign.

Never having married, and having nothing of any value to pass on to an heir even if he had, Chuyo turned to scholarly pursuits a short time after his appointment. To some extent this was to escape boredom, but part of him hoped that he might find something one day that might let him transcend his mediocrity. The recent rumors surrounding the so-called Book of Shadows might be exactly what he has searched for for years, and the idea has taken root in mind as surely as if he were enchanted. In Chuyo's mind there is no risk too great and no cost too high to deter him from finding the book, if it exists. And if it does exist, he will use it as a springboard to finally gain recognition. Ironically, he does not wish to gain glory and status for their own sakes, he merely wishes to bring honor to his ancestors before he dies.

Chuyo can be of virtually any family, although perhaps the most suited to his personality would be the Shinjo, Yasuki, or Agasha. Whatever family he belongs to, he is a Rank 3 member of its primary School.

Recommended School Ranks

The recommendations listed for the various NPCs in this adventure are simply that: recommendations. You should absolutely scale them upwards or downwards as suits your campaign. For that matter, also please carefully consider the number of foes listed later in the adventure and scale them appropriately for your characters. Lots of unnecessary character death, while thematic and exciting, can also be a major turn-off for players.



DOJI FUJIE, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CRANE

The position of chief delegate for the Crane Clan is never an appointment that is granted without careful consideration, even in as minor and unremarkable a court as that of governor Chuyo. Unfortunately, sometimes such appointments are considered so carefully simply because they are so remote and insignificant, and that is very much the case in this instance. Doji Fujie is a ruthless, malicious, thoroughly unpleasant woman who is only barely able to conceal her horrible nature beneath a thin veneer of traditional Crane etiquette. In fact, she proved so problematic in her previous posting, which was in a Lion court, that she was moved here simply to get her away from events of any importance that could be soured as a result of her presence. On some level she understands the nature of her banishment, but she is in denial in that regard, and has quickly blunted her feelings with glee over becoming the terror of Chuyo's court.

Fujie is a Rank 2 member of the Doji Courtier School.

ISAWA AIYA, PRIEST OF THE PHOENIX CLAN

Isawa Aiya is a simple man, and far more pious than most expect from the Isawa. In fact, he is a stark contrast to virtually every stereotype surrounding his family save one: he is extremely powerful with regard to his ability to com-

mand the kami. Other than that, however, he is pleasant, humble, and quite learned in a number of different areas, including history, philosophy, and theology. Most would be surprised to learn that Aiya is a decorated veteran of the Dragon-Phoenix war from some years earlier; after that conflict, Aiya resigned his commission in the Avalanche Guard and turned his back on violence forever. Although he would never voice his feelings, Aiya finds the behavior of Doji Fujie disgusting, and has a healthy degree of pity for the governor as well.

Aiya is a Rank 3 member of the Isawa Shugenja School, with a focus on Earth.

BAYUSHI RYUU, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SCORPION CLAN

No one is entirely certain why the Scorpion chose to send a representative to this particular court this season; the clan had never bothered to send anyone in years past, clearly considering the court beneath their notice. Governor Chuyo has been very pleased to have Ryuu in attendance, as he regards the Scorpion Clan's interest as a sign that his name is at least familiar to the clan. Unfortu-

nately for him, that is not at all the case, as the Scorpion remain completely unconcerned with his minor and, in their opinion, completely insignificant holdings.

Ryuu is not and has never been a Scorpion, although he wears the face of one. He is a member of the Goju family, an order that serves the Shadow Dragon and, before it, the Lying Darkness. He is aware of the rumors surrounding this Book of Shadows and has been dispatched to the area by his master to monitor any activity relating to it. In the meantime, he enjoys the ruthless malice with which Doji Fujie manipulates other members of the court, and has begun considering bringing her into the Goju against her will, simply because he believes her talents would be an asset to the order.

Ryuu is a Rank 2 member of the Goju Ninja School.

Act One: Court

The court of governor Chuyo is much like most other courts in the Empire, save that there is precious little of local interest to discuss. There are no disputes to speak of, and the province has no borders with other clans, so no potential conflicts arise there. The most interesting thing that has happened in Chuyo's court in the past decade is a blood feud between two yojimbo that resulted in a duel nearly six years past. Since then, court has consisted primarily of discussions that involve current events elsewhere in the Empire. Of particular interest of late has been the appearance of the prophet Rosoku and his challenges, which have captured the attention of the governor as few other things have since his appointment years ago.

The events of this adventure begin with a normal court session, which should involve relatively mundane activities as Chuyo attempting to foster discussion to distract him from his boredom, Fujie ruthlessly skewering anyone who dares appear to capture the spotlight for even a moment, Ryuu observing with a bemused expression, and Aiya appearing distinctly uncomfortable at the ridiculous spectacle unfolding before him. If this is the characters' first exposure to the governor's court, it should come as quite a surprise how unorthodox and bizarre things are. Any courtiers in the party will become a target for Fujie immediately, perhaps even if they are fellow Crane, whereas Chuyo will be eager to hear any tales of valor a bushi might offer, and Aiya is desperate for civilized discussion with a fellow priest of the kami.

Regardless of character interactions within the court,

the true excitement begins with a simple scribe who enters the chamber quietly and discreetly approaches his lord Chuyo. This is hardly noteworthy and rather unlikely to gain any attention at all, but Chuyo's reaction, however, is far more noticeable. The governor fairly roars in surprise at whatever the scribe tells him, and promptly demands that the wizened little man bring him the papers at once, so that he can see them for himself. The scribe disappears at once to gather the papers, leaving a stunned court to gaze in wonder at the electrified Chuyo, who suddenly seems years younger and bristling with energy. In short order, the scribe returns with a pair of scrolls. Anyone familiar with calligraphy can instantly tell that one of them is extremely old and rather worn, although the other appears relatively new in comparison.

Chuyo wastes no time in spreading the two scrolls out on a table in the center of the room, seemingly oblivious to his guests and vassals. He compares the notes and then laughs in delight, clapping his hands like a child. "We have found it!" he exclaims. "Don't you see? It is nearby!" In his excitement, Chuyo begins chattering animatedly to his staff and guests, and will happily allow anyone to look at the two scrolls in question.

The first is a relatively new scroll, no more than ten years old at most as near as anyone familiar with historical documents or the art of calligraphy can tell. It is rather short, and from its phrasing, it is similar to the announcements that were sent out some months before about the challenges placed before the Empire by the prophet Rosoku, descendant of Shinsei. Specifically, it refers to a seventh book in addition to the five elemental tomes and the Book of Five Elements that have already been discovered by the Keepers of the Elements. It refers to a secretive tome known as the Book of Shadows, which can only be discovered by one who "overcomes the venom within the serpent's fangs."

The second scroll is vastly older than the first, easily more than a century old and improperly preserved. In fact, it seems as though it might fall apart at any moment, and the ink in places has faded to the point of illegibility. It appears to be a cartography report, however, and details several sections of the innermost mountain ranges, areas that are conventionally considered inaccessible throughout most of the year due to weather conditions, including snow and mudslides among other such hazards. At first there is no indication of why the document is relevant, but

upon closer inspection, there is a section of the report that details an inner plateau among the mountains, a plateau marked by two great, natural spires that reach toward the Heavens "like the fangs of a serpent."

It is obvious from Chuyo's excitement that he considers the two scrolls to be referring to the same geographical location. Furthermore, he is certain that this inner region of the mountains is the location of the Book of Shadows, a tome that he desperately wishes to retrieve and study. Sadly, CHuyo is clearly too old to go himself, and though his vassals are loyal, few seem the sort to possess the necessary level of skill for such a difficult outing. So Chuyo will look for others to perform this service for him in exchange for his unending gratitude (which, to be honest, is worth relatively little, but he is a provincial governor in the service of a Great Clan).

This, of course, is where the characters come in.

Act Two: Quest

Delving into the mountains is not something that should be done lightly by any character. While it may seem fairly innocuous at first, keep in mind that the governor has ordered them into the most remote region of the mountain range, and they have nothing more complicated to assist them than rope and perhaps a grappling hook of some sort. To make matters worse, there is no way to properly treat any sort of serious injury unless there is a shugenja among the party, and no way to call for help if disaster strikes.

The trek inward to reach the landmark known as the Serpent's Fangs should require a significant amount of time, no less than five days travel one way. Along the way, you may wish to introduce any number of hazards or combats in order to spice up the trek. Possible hazards might include:

- An ancient rope bridge that requires spectacular Athletics Skill Rolls to cross intact. And of course any failed roll could result in its collapse, which would in turn result not only in a thrilling rescue sequence, but leave any characters yet to cross the divide in the difficult position of finding another means to cross (to say nothing of the return trip!).
- Any portion of the trip could have a region where the "path", such as it is, is blocked by an avalanche or mudslide. Traversing the patch now runs the risk of further disturbing the unsteady

ground and causing another collapse that could bury the characters in an unmarked grave.

- A sudden storm could easily result in flash flooding along any flat surface of the mountains, including any paths or trails that the characters might be making use of.
- If you are looking for something completely unconventional and surprising for the characters, they could encounter a group of mountain goats. These particular goats, however, have never encountered humans and thus have no fear of them. This could result in humor turned into tragedy if the characters are not cautious around the rams, which could easily injure even an armored samurai, or perhaps even knock one off the mountain to plunge to his death.

If you prefer something a bit more combative, opportunities include:

- A group of bandits (perhaps half a dozen) hiding high in the mountains to escape magistrates pursuing them in the wake of a very successful attack on a merchant caravan. The spoils of the attack are what the bandits are living off of for now, but they are quite eager to return to the Empire and spend their ill-gotten gains once the heat dies down. Some combat with intruders might lighten their spirits, and possibly add to their profits as well.
- A pack of predators that makes its home high in the mountains is on the prowl for something to eat, and just hungry enough to consider attacking a party of humans. Wolves or mountain lions make an excellent choice here (see the Legend of the Five Rings RPG for creature statistics).
- The characters might encounter a small group of mountain goblins, creatures that, despite their name and resemblance to the more sinister creatures living in the Shadowlands, are generally quite harmless unless provoked. This encounter could prove very interesting for the characters, particularly if they are not familiar with the distinction between the species (and most non-Crab characters would almost certainly not recognize the difference).

Whatever obstacles they face, eventually the characters will reach a peak, on the other side of which is a descent into a flat plain that extends for at least a mile or so. Amid this plain are two relatively small spires that extend upward in the very image of a serpent's fangs.

And perhaps more interestingly, there is an ancient ruin visible in the distance, positioned exactly between the fangs.

Act Three: Confrontation

Although the effort of reaching the Serpent's Fangs might seem to be the most difficult aspect of the quest to find the Book of Shadows, the truth of the matter is that it is only the beginning. As the characters approach the base of the Fangs, the ruins they spotted from afar develop into something slightly more ominous: a dilapidated monastery. The characters might wonder, rightfully so, what a monastery would be doing in such a remote location, and why one would be allowed to fall into such disrepair after the considerable difficulty in building it here in the first place. For characters familiar with the Brotherhood and its eccentricities, finding a monastery *anywhere* is no surprise, and one being abandoned is not of particular concern most of the time. Sadly, this is not "most of the time."

The monastery in question was created decades ago by a particularly separatist sect of monks who believed that their geographical location within the Empire created an inescapable knowledge of geopolitical events, and that this knowledge in turn was a barrier to finding true spiritual harmony. The monks labored for years to construct a monastery in the most remote location they could find, that they could pursue the secrets of the universe without interference from any outside influences. Unfortunately, that only meant that there was no one to turn to for help when the Shadow Dragon set its sights upon the monastery.

The monks who dwell within the monastery were soon lost to the shadows, and they remain within the monastery, a hidden resource that the dragon has not yet felt the need to draw upon. As a sign of his favor, however, the dragon has sent one of his stolen minions, a Shio no Oni, to serve as an abbot of sorts to the monks there. When the time comes that the dragon has need of the monks, the demon will ensure that they are prepared to fulfill whatever duty their master requires.

The monastery itself sits on a plateau between the twin peaks known, among other things, as the Serpent's Fangs. It exists within the shadows of the surrounding

mountains at all times, save for the mid-day hour when the sun is at its zenith. The building is dilapidated to the point that the chambers within have lost all distinguishing features, and it seems just one long series of ruined worship chambers, abandoned quarters, and partially collapsed corridors. There are nearly four dozen brother monks that call the place home, but many are frequently lost in what passes for meditation, and it is unlikely that anything but the loudest battle will summon more than a dozen at most. The Shio no Oni is acutely aware of its surroundings, however, and will respond to any incursion into its territory.

The Book of Shadows is concealed in the monastery's innermost chamber, and requires an Investigation (Search) Skill Roll (TN 35) to locate.

Shio no Oni: See *Creatures of Rokugan*, page 166

BROTHERS OF SHADOW

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 1
Agility 4				
Honor: 0.3		Status: None		Glory: 0.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Goju Ninja 2 / Thousand Fortunes Monk 1

ADVANTAGES: Strength of the Earth (1)

DISADVANTAGES: Forsaken

SKILLS: Athletics (Climbing) 5, Heavy Weapons 3, Hunting 4, Jiu-jitsu 5, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: History 3, Meditation 4, Ninja Ranged Weapons 2, Poison 3, Stealth (Sneaking) 6, Theology 3

KIHO: Embrace the Stone, Falling Star Strike, Flame Fist, Heart of Stone

Act Four: Return to Court

Overcoming the Brothers of Shadow and possibly the Shio no Oni is the most difficult aspect of locating the Book of Shadows, although some might wonder that the task seems easier than perhaps it should. Depending upon the nature and origin of the book in your campaign (see below), that may well be the case. Regardless, once the battle is concluded and the book located, the characters will likely wish to return to court.

The physical journey through the mountains can be a perfect recreation, in reverse order, of the trip to locate the monastery if that is your preference. Of course, challenges that are overcome once can quickly become tiresome and annoying to some players, so you may wish to gloss over

those aspects of the trip. However, consider the possibility that the surviving Brothers of Shadow may be pursuing the characters, and they may have to navigate those same hazards a second time, only on the return trip they are attempting to escape from and/or doing battle with Shadow-corrupted monks. Now that's entertainment!

The return to court should prove triumphant, as the governor spares no expense to celebrate the return of his vassals with the Book of Shadows in tow (although, given his means, the celebration is still relatively meager). Chuyo will go to great lengths to ensure that the book is his, however, and any suggestion by any party that one of the characters would be considered the Keeper of Shadow because they discovered it book will be met with icy, thinly-veiled hatred. On the other hand, characters who readily hand the book over to the governor will be showered with praise and favors, in as much as Chuyo is able to do so.

With regard to the other attendees in court, Fujie will resent the attention heaped upon the characters and begin attempting to discredit or humiliate them in whatever means possible. Aiya will be fascinated that the book actually exists and will ask the characters all manner of questions relating to their discovery of it, what trials they faced along the way, and other such things. If he suspects any of them actually read from the book, he will approach them privately and attempt to learn more about its contents, but he will not press the issue.

Bayushi Ryuu, however, will attempt to acquire the book by whatever means necessary. If the characters somehow manage to retain possession of it, he will attempt to kill one or more of them in the night and take it. If they surrender it to the governor, which is more likely, he will attempt to assassinate the governor and take it. It is likely that he will succeed, which could send the campaign in a completely different direction, depending upon how the GM wishes to handle the situation.

Regardless, recovering the Book of Shadows should, at the very least, complicate the characters' lives for quite some time.

Epilogue: What is the Book of Shadows?

So what exactly is this Book of Shadows that the characters have recovered? Clearly it is quite old, or at least appears to be, and many people are very, very interested in it. What could possibly warrant such attention? The

answer depends upon the nature and direction of your campaign, of course, and there are several options you may wish to explore as part of the ongoing game.

THE TRUTH

It is entirely possible that the Book of Shadows is exactly what it is purported to be: a companion work to the other elemental tomes discovered by the Keepers throughout the Empire. It may be penned by Rosoku, or perhaps his father or another ancestor. It may even be that the story of the Book of Shadows, secreted somewhere in the Empire and awaiting discovery by a worthy samurai, could be what inspired Rosoku to begin his gambit in the first place. Regardless, if this option is selected, then the Book of Shadows is a philosophical treatise delving into the darker nature of mankind, why it exists, and how it might be understood and overcome. Study of the book over a long period of time could lead to the reader mastering his inner demons and taking the first steps along the path of enlightenment, much as the other Keepers have done after discovering their own tomes.

A character who is in possession of the Book of Shadows and who studies it carefully on a daily basis for at least six weeks can begin buying off any non-physical Disadvantages for a number of Experience Points equal to half their original cost. Additionally, when making any manner of roll to resist a mind-affecting mechanical effect, whether a spell, Technique, or Contested Skill Roll, the character adds an additional +5k0 to his roll if he so chooses.

THE LIE

The Book of Shadows could easily be just one more in a series of layered deceptions crafted by the sinister entity known as the Shadow Dragon. By establishing the lost monastery, concealing the book there without the knowledge of its minions, and leaving rumors about its location in other places, the dragon can effectively wait until someone finds that which it has left behind in order to spread its insidious influence in new and unexpected ways. In many ways this would be the dragon's equivalent to the journal of Kitsuki Kaagi, a tome produced by its predecessor, the Lying Darkness, that infected those who read it with the power of Nothing and consumed them, adding them to the Darkness. Granted, the dragon has little use for mindless automatons that serve it, preferring more independent servants, and so the mechanics of the book could likely be radically different, but equally threatening.

The influence of the Shadow Dragon upon any character who studies the Book of Shadows is subtle but inexorable. Any character who studies the book for at least an hour a day for a month may begin to find their own Techniques replaced with the Techniques of the Goju Ninja School (see *The Four Winds* sourcebook) at an appropriate rate as determined by the Game Master.

THE ENIGMA

The book may be something altogether different, containing little more than nonsense or perhaps written in a language no human has ever seen. It could be a lost tome of the Naga or Nezumi races, or one of the other non-human races that rose and fell before the likes of man walked the world. A particularly appropriate option might be for the book to be a lost tome of the Ashalan race, who dwell in darkness by choice. Its discovery could lead to conflicts with that race of immortals, many of whom possess abilities that would make them deadly foes for any group of player characters.

Ultimately the mechanics of the Book of Shadows in this case would depend upon the origin of the book as determined by the GM, but should be roughly on par with the abilities described above or, if the GM prefers, the other elemental books as described in *The Four Winds* sourcebook.

Crisis of Conscience

A SAMURAI EDITION ADVENTURE OUTLINE FOR THE LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS RPG

Synopsis

This adventure works best if your characters are magistrates in service to someone. A position as Imperial magistrates is often best for a group of characters from multiple clans, but any high ranking samurai can justify having magistrates of various clans in his service if he is wealthy or influential enough.

Regardless of who they serve, the characters are sent to Shutai, a completely unpleasant city in the Scorpion lands that would be a very close contender for the most loathsome and corrupt location in the whole of Rokugan. The characters are sent to retrieve sensitive information

from the city's head magistrate, but find him absent, and his lieutenant is less than helpful. While waiting for the magistrate's return, the characters may well become embroiled in events that are unfolding in the city as a direct result of the machinations of many powerful and dangerous individuals, including both the insidious Spider Clan and the Emerald Champion himself.

Set-up

The characters' lord, whomever that might be, is an old associate of the chief magistrate of Shutai, an individual known as Bayushi Kobashi. Kobashi has an extremely checkered past and is rumored to have been involved in any number of horrific activities throughout his career, but he has served as an Emerald Magistrate for more than ten years without anything more than vague allegations, so most discount the rumors. Most of them, however, are true.

The reason for the characters' lord sending them to speak with Kobashi is that Kobashi is supposed to have completed a report concerning the possible activity of the Spider Clan in the city of Shutai. The reason that the lord in question desires this report is up to individual GMs, but the time for Kobashi to have completed and submitted it is long since passed, and no word has come. Hence, the characters must travel to Shutai.

Unfortunately, Kobashi is dead. His explorations into the Spider Clan's activities led him to what he considered an opportunity: namely, looking the other way while they went about their business. This was a dangerous gambit, although Kobashi believed he had things well in hand. Seeing a more suitable ally in his second-in-command Junichi, the Spider made a more lucrative deal with him instead, and his rite of passage was to murder his superior officer. It was a task Junichi was more than willing to perform, having long since come to loathe his superior, but he never had the opportunity.

Long before he allied himself with the Spider, Kobashi was an agent of the Emerald Champion, Shosuro Jimen. In fact, he was a trusted agent of Jimen even before the latter's appointment to Emerald Champion, and his victory at the tournament only cemented their relationship. Unfortunately for Kobashi, Jimen is a man with many enemies, and the deadliest of them, Kakita Noritoshi, became aware of their relationship. Believing that he could gain information about Jimen's activities from Kobashi, Noritoshi journeyed to Shutai to interrogate the corrupt



magistrate. When he discovered the depth of Kobashi's corruption, however, the honorable sensei became incensed and killed him, an act that has thrown the city at large into turmoil. It is into this turmoil that the characters first arrive in the city of Shutai.

Important individuals that have impact on this adventure include:

SHOSURO JIMEN

There are very few people in the Empire more treacherous and cunning than the current Emerald Champion. Although he does not appear in the adventure itself, his influence is pervasive throughout. Shosuro Jimen's stats, should they be required for whatever reason, can be found on page 100 of the *Masters of Court* sourcebook.

KAKITA NORITOSHI

The opposite of Jimen in every conceivable way, Noritoshi is honorable and highly skilled, but currently commands very little influence due to his having undertaken a warrior pilgrimage in order to uncover proof of Jimen's criminal activities. Noritoshi is far from a criminal, although many of Jimen's agents have painted him in a less than favorable light; not even the Emerald Champion dares slander his name overmuch, however. To do so would potentially invite the wrath of the Crane, and that is not a battle that the Champion yet feels is appropriate. Although Noritoshi is an honorable man, he did kill the magistrate Kobashi. It was an act he feels was appropriate, however, given the man's incredibly corrupt nature and collusion with the Spider Clan. In retrospect, it may have been partially due to his lingering rage over the murder of his wife, an act committed by another of Jimen's agents, and privately he regrets the act somewhat. He will be extremely reluctant or completely unwilling (depending upon the circumstances) to fight anyone who is not a direct and willing accomplice of Jimen's.

Noritoshi is a master of the Kakita Bushi School and the Kenshinzen Advanced School. He possesses an almost supernatural awareness of everything going on around him at any given time, making it virtually impossible to surprise or ambush him. Attacking him is tantamount to suicide for all but the most powerful player characters.

JUNICHI, MAGISTRATE

A simple ronin who was once affiliated with the gangs that run rampant through Shutai, Junichi was recruited by Kobashi years ago in order to gain information and muscle to use against the other gangs. It was a gambit that proved quite successful, although sense that time Junichi has only been good for muscle. The Spider seem to think

otherwise, however, and when Kobashi pushed for too much money, they approached his unhappy subordinate, who has gleefully agreed to kill him in exchange for more power and money. That Kobashi has disappeared vexes him, but after the Scorpion was missing for more than a week, Junichi told the Spider that he had killed him. Now he simply hopes that Kobashi doesn't show back up. The presence of the characters in the city will make Junichi exceptionally nervous, and he will begin looking for ways to get rid of them almost the instant they appear.

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes 3			Strength 4	
Honor: 0.5	Glory: 1.3	Status: 1.8		

SCHOOL/RANK: Ronin Warrior 3

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Spider), Heartless, Wary

DISADVANTAGES: Dark Secret (Spider affiliation)

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 2, Horsemanship 1, Hunting 3, Investigation (Interrogation, Search) 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Knives 3, Kyujutsu 2, Spears 1, Stealth 3, Underworld 4

BAYUSHI KOBASHI, MAGISTRATE

Kobashi's statistics are largely unimportant because he is currently dead.

Act One: Arrival in Shutai

Upon arrival in the city of Shutai, the characters should immediately be struck with how mundane everything seems. If they look a little bit closer, however, they may be able to note the aura of wariness and malice that surrounds everyone on the streets, perhaps indicating that the city's reputation is well earned. If any additional proof is required, it is soon provided, as a clamor from one street over attracts the characters' attention. A skirmish has broken out between members of two rival gangs, who are now fighting in the street without regard to property damage or danger to passers by. The combatants are clearly not samurai, but their use of knives and peasant weapons makes them dangerous just the same. If the characters intervene, they will fight to defend themselves and flee in the face of samurai intervention. Four rounds after the characters enter the fight, magistrates arrive to intercede. They would likely not have bothered save for the characters intervention.

For the gang members, use the typical bushi statistics in the *L5R RPG, Third Edition: Revised*.

Act Two: Meeting with the Magistrate

Once things have calmed down, the acting chief magistrate brings the characters back to the magistrate's station to discuss their involvement in the events surrounding their arrival, and to determine the nature of their business in the city. They will probably assume that Kobashi will be present, unless they were paying close attention during the fighting in the streets earlier. After bringing them to the station, he will make them wait a short time simply to assert his dominance and collect his thoughts. Once he feels prepared, they will be admitted to speak with him.

The first thing any character would notice about the magistrate's station is that it is in a terrible state of disarray. Partially eaten food lies forgotten on the desk, shelves, and various other places, and all manner of paper rubbish can be seen casually discarded on virtually any surface. It is clear that the office has not been cleaned in at least a week, and that the magistrate is neither tidy nor concerned about the mess, a point driven home when he negligently rakes papers off into the floor so that he can sit comfortably at his desk and address the characters. The other disturbing thing that the characters might notice is that the other yoriki, whom they will only see in passing as they move through the station while the characters wait on Junichi, appear to be little more than thuggish ruffians, primarily ronin. While it certainly isn't unusual for magistrates to employ ronin as yoriki, having an entire staff of them certainly seems peculiar.

Junichi will be polite but very curt with the characters when they finally have an opportunity to speak. He does this both to maintain an air of authority, which as a ronin he understands is extremely important, particularly when interacting with clan samurai, and to keep from making any slips regarding information the characters should not have. Accurate information that Junichi will give the characters includes:

- Bayushi Kobashi left the city two weeks ago and has never returned. The purpose of his departure was to meet a colleague, and he rode west out of the city.
- Junichi is unaware of any Spider-related report that Kobashi was working on.
- Several of the gangs in the city would gladly have killed Kobashi if they thought they could get away with it.

- However, Junichi will also try to lead the characters astray by telling them the following lies:
- As far as he knows there are no Spider-affiliated holdings in the city.
- He claims to have sent numerous letters and men out searching for any sign of Kobashi.
- He claims to have reported Kobashi's absence within a few days of realizing he was not coming back (he has not only not reported it, but deliberately concealed his absence from the Scorpion, whom he fears will remove him immediately).

Act Three: The Hunt for Bayushi Kobashi

Searching for Kobashi to determine his fate is one of the chief ways in which the characters can hope to actually fulfill their duty, although it may seem a fruitless endeavor. Any attempt to search his private estate will be opposed by Junichi, which seems an honorable stance but really he is hoping to conceal the fact that he has already searched the man's home himself for anything that might incriminate him personally. The gangs in the city know nothing of what is going on, although some might be able to confirm that Kobashi did in fact leave the city heading west approximately when Junichi reports that he did. No sign of any report concerning the Spider can be found, nor does anyone have any knowledge of it (save for Junichi and his Spider patrons).

Kobashi departed the city heading west to take a lesser known route in order to reach a Unicorn magistrate station and leave a message for a minor Unicorn official whom he had discovered was affiliated with the Spider. It was Kobashi's intent to blackmail the man for further profit, possibly resulting in additional merchant interests being moved to Shutai in the process. Unfortunately for him, he was intercepted by Noritoshi first, who inquired after his involvement with Jimen. Noritoshi has considerable presence, and even the veteran magistrate was shaken. So shaken, in fact, that before the conversation had concluded, he inadvertently revealed his blackmailing of the Spider to allow them to continue. Incensed at the incredible level of dishonor and corruption, Noritoshi killed Kobashi in a fit of rage. Kobashi's body, which of course Noritoshi would not touch, currently can be found

one hundred meters from a small path leading west from the Scorpion lands into the plains and from there on to the Unicorn lands.

If you wish, you may have Noritoshi remaining in the area to see what becomes of Jimen's missing agent. If and when the characters discover their body, he will approach them in his guise as a traveling ronin and ask them questions, trying to determine if they are part of Jimen's organization. If he believes that they are not, he will share whatever information he has about them, including the fact that Kobashi is carrying with him a scroll marked as intended for their lord, which contains his (false) observations about Spider activity within the city. It does, however, contain mention of his suspicions regarding Junichi's impending betrayal, something that should pique the characters' interest.

Act Four: Confronting the Magistrate

With the truth revealed, or at least as much of it as the characters are able to piece together, they should know that Kobashi was corrupt, but that Junichi is far more so. Further, the Spider influence that their lord was so concerned about appears to be far more widespread in the area than anyone previously guessed. It is reasonable that they will wish to confront Junichi regarding his activities; even if they do not, then Junichi will come looking for them with several of his men in tow, all prepared to wrap up one serious loose end with a little old-fashioned violence.

Once Junichi is dealt with, how the characters proceed can determine the course of the next adventure encounter, or the course of the campaign itself.

The Battle of Toshi Ranbo



WHEN THE THRONE SITS EMPTY, MAN'S AMBITION ABOUNDS

The events of the Lotus and Samurai story arcs of Legend of the Five Rings shook the Empire of Rokugan to its core. Toturi III's brave but ultimately futile quest for Enlightenment took him to the depths of the Shadowlands and led to his death in battle at the Tomb of the Seven Thunders. He left no clear heir, and his passing brought the short but dramatic life of the Toturi Dynasty to an end. The resulting power vacuum created a vortex, as the Great Clans maneuvered against each other in the absence of Imperial authority. Moto Chagatai, the Khan of the Unicorn Clan, took matters into his own hands and marched on Toshi Ranbo with the intent of claiming the throne, and only an alliance of other Great Clans stopped him and his powerful army in a battle that raged throughout the streets of the Imperial City.

The Vacant Throne chronicles the events of these turbulent years and describes the people, places and things associated with them for use in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* Third Edition. It includes:

- Summaries and timelines of events covered by *Legend of the Five Rings* CCG sets from Path of Hope through Glory of the Empire.
- New mechanics and NPC stat blocks relevant to those events.
- Adventure hooks and other suggestions for roleplaying in the Lotus and Samurai arcs.

The Vacant Throne is a rules supplement and its use requires the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* Third Edition core rulebook.

