Emerald Empire

Legend of the Five Rings

Emerald Empire

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Dedication:

For all the fans who have asked us again and again over the years when we were going to print another run of this book, this revised and improved version is just for you. We hope you enjoy it!

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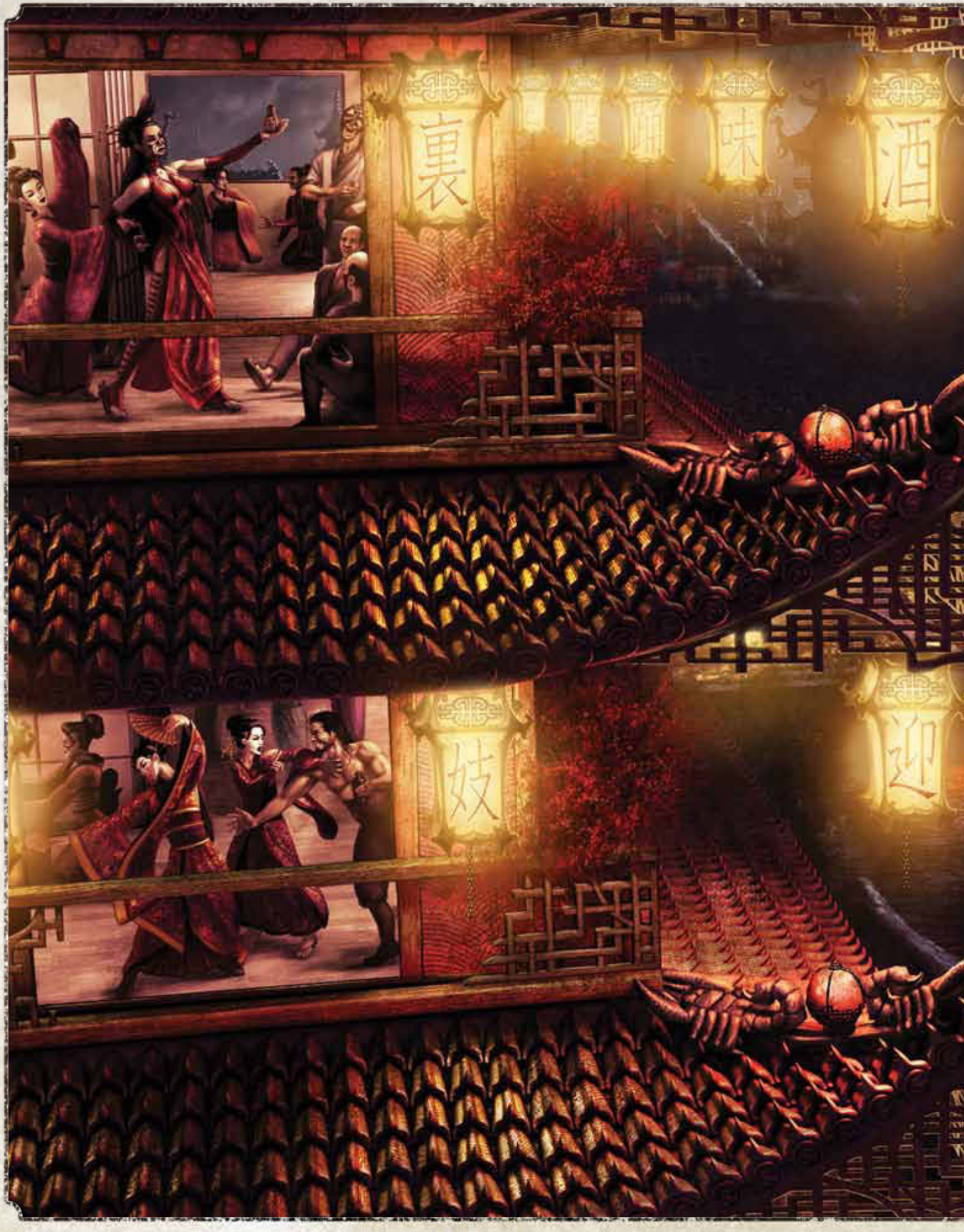
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INTRODUCTION

The sun had long since climbed high into the afternoon sky and begun its descent toward the horizon, and all the while the young student sat in the room alone. Occasionally he glanced up at the elaborate rendering of a Scorpion mon that dominated the room's northernmost wall, or occasionally he would sigh lightly and fidget somewhat as young men his age, scarcely more than boys, were prone to do. But for the most part, he simply sat and waited. For what, he did not know, but ultimately that did not matter. He simply waited.

"If I am not mistaken," a voice interrupted his silent reverie, "you have missed your midday meal."

The student glanced over his shoulder and quickly bowed his head respectfully. "Yes, lord," he said quietly.

The man in the doorway regarded the young boy curiously. "Does this not distress you? I am well aware of the high regard in which young men hold their meals."

"It is unfortunate," the student admitted. "I have gone without food before, however, master."

"Ah yes," the man said, slowly walking around the circumference of the room. "You were raised in a very rural province, were you not? Your father was a magistrate in a minor branch of the Bayushi family, as I recall."

If the student was alarmed by the man's knowledge, he did not show it. "Yes, my lord, that is correct."

"Your father was a man who embraced his duty despite that it was somewhat lackluster and far from glorious." He looked at the student carefully. "He understood his place within the clan and never questioned it. A good and dutiful vassal, by all accounts."

"Thank you, my lord."

The man stood before the student, hands folded. "Do you know who I am?"

"You are the dojo's master sensei," the student answered. "My sensei is a subordinate of yours."

"Indeed he is," the sensei agreed. "And how did you come to be in this room, pupil?"

The boy frowned ever so slightly behind his cloth mask. "Master Joto instructed me to join several other students in this room. He told me this at first light this morning."

"I see," the sensei said. "And yet, nothing has happened. You are the only one here. Do you find that unusual?"

"I suppose," the student admitted, clearly uncomfortable.

"Did it occur to you that you had come to the incorrect location?"

"No."

The sensei raised his eyebrows. "There is no chance that you misunderstood your sensei?"

"No, my lord," the student said at once.

"You seem quite certain."

"I remember very clearly what my instructions were, sensei," he replied. "I have made mistakes since arriving at the dojo, to be sure, but I do not hear things incorrectly."

"I see," the sensei said. "How do you explain this situation?"

"I assume it was some sort of test by sensei Joto, my lord."

The sensei chuckled. "There was another option that occurred to you, of course."

The boy looked down and said nothing.

"Speak," the sensei commanded.

"It is possible sensei Joto made the mistake," the boy said quietly. "I do not wish to impugn the honor of my sensei."

"Of course not, but the possibility is there, is it not?" The sensei nodded. "You are as canny as I have been told."

The student squirmed slightly but could not contain his curiosity. "Who has spoken of me to you, master? If I may ask."

"Who has not?" the sensei said. "Most of your sensei have mentioned your name. You are very young, and have only just begun your training, and yet your innate talents and the speed and accuracy with which you master tasks have made an impression. Even more so because your rural upbringing and lack of exposure to even common traditions and customs within the Empire should have caused you to begin your training at a disadvantage."

The boy looked down again. "I am undeserving of such praise, master."

"I do not consider statement of fact praise," the sensei said. "And we shall have to work to purge this modesty from you, I think. A truly useful vassal accepts both his strengths and weaknesses and can face them without embarrassment." He looked at the boy closely. "You do wish to be a useful vassal, I trust?"

"Yes, master," the student said eagerly.

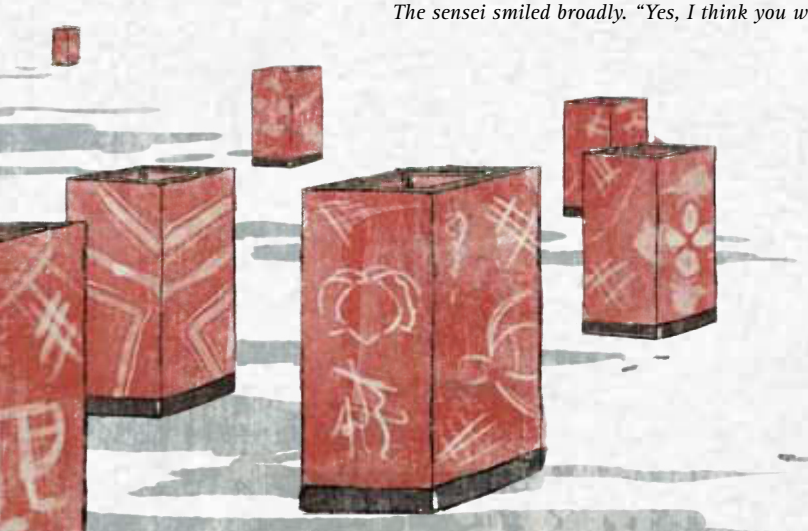
"Very well then," the sensei said. "From this moment on you will be my personal student. You will no longer report to sensei Joto and the others, but will report to this room, my private training chamber, at dawn each morning. You will continue to reside within the dormitory, however." He paused. "Your status as my student will likely earn you the ire of your fellows. You understand this?"

"It will not be a concern," the student said.

"Very good," the sensei said. "You are dismissed to take your mid-day meal, however, late." He paused. "Do you have anything you wish to say?"

The boy rose shakily, somewhat unsteady because of the length of time spent sitting on the hard wooden floor. He bowed very deeply. "I am not worthy of this great honor, master." He rose and looked the sensei in the eyes. "But I will be."

The sensei smiled broadly. "Yes, I think you will."



Behold the Emerald Empire!

Welcome to the second volume of *Emerald Empire*! In addition to being the second sourcebook for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game, 4th Edition, this is the second edition of the *Emerald Empire* sourcebook, the definitive guide to the setting of Rokugan. The first Emerald Empire, originally printed for our Third Edition, remains one of our most popular books of all time as well as one of the most difficult to find. We have had more requests for another printing of the book than of all our other out-of-print sourcebooks combined! So when the time came to evaluate our early release schedule for 4th Edition, the choice to update the text and reprint the book seemed an obvious one. For those of you new to the line, the question you may have is, what is the purpose of this book? And of course, those of you who are long-time fans are doubtless wondering what is new about the book. Let's address both of those questions.

First of all, Emerald Empire is the definitive guide to the samurai culture as it exists in the Empire of Rokugan. If you look at the Book of Air from our 4th Edition core rulebook as an introduction, then this is the full blown college course. It is an exhaustive examination of all the different aspects of society that a player or GM would need to understand in order to enrich their games with that extra bit of detail and (dare we say it?) realism. The purpose of the book is to provide more than just surface impressions, but allow an individual to truly understand and portray both the world and the characters within it in a consistent, individualized manner that preserves the theme and flavor of all its denizens. And of course, we want to give you some new mechanics to enjoy in your campaign as well, but we'll talk more about that just a little bit later.

For those of you familiar with our previous edition, you're no doubt wondering what is different about this version of Emerald Empire. Rest assured that this is no simple reprint! The material contained herein has undergone a completely new editing cycle, ensuring the high quality that you have come to expect based on our core rulebook, and removing all time-sensitive material to ensure that the book has the most value possible for GMs of all eras. More importantly, we also took the opportunity to introduce new material into each chapter (and even added a new chapter!) to ensure that the treatment of the setting is as comprehensive as possible. This book contains at least 25% completely new content in addition to the revision of existing material, and the mechanics have been both extensively playtested and based on the requests of the fans. In this book you will find the following:

Chapter 1: Geography is an expansion upon the description of the lands that appears in 4th Edition's Book of Air. It discusses the location and particulars of major geographical features such as mountain ranges, coastal regions, vast stretches of plains, and discusses the benefits and drawbacks of the unaligned lands that exist between the borders of the Great Clans. It also discusses some of the forgotten places that dot the recesses and corners of the Emerald Empire, which

some GMs may find of interest to use as settings for their own adventures. And what better mechanical spotlight for geographical discussions than the **Shinjo Bushi**, the most elite scouts and some of the finest cavalry in all of Rokugan.

Chapter 2: Customs examines the traditions and rituals that fill the lives of every living soul in the Empire. The most common levels of the Empire's caste system are examined, as are major milestones such as birth, death, the gempukku ceremony, and the offering of gifts among the different clans. Each Great Clan has a section detailing its unique rituals and customs, as well as those of the Minor Clans and the Imperial families. The mechanics for this chapter include the **Minor Clan Defender Advanced School**, which is an excellent way of highlighting the unique customs and practices of the Minor Clans as compared to their Great Clan counterparts.

Chapter 3: Social Structure takes a look at the rigid social structure that the Empire knows as the Celestial Order. Not simply a social caste system but an integral part of the nation's religious beliefs, the social structure of Rokugan begins with the Emperor and extends downward to include not only the samurai of the Great and Minor Clans, but members of the clergy, trained peasant warriors, and the lowliest eta. To highlight the rigid nature of society, the **Imperial Scion Advanced School** is the mechanical highlight of this chapter.

Chapter 4: Politics examines the cutthroat court environment that dominates the social environment in Rokugan. It examines the different levels of court and their relative importance, from the Imperial Court of the Emperor all the way down to the simple provincial courts maintained by countless governors throughout the Empire. A more in-depth examination of the power and prestige commanded by the Emperor's Chosen and the Jeweled Champions is included as well. To highlight the sinister side of Rokugan's politics, the **Ikoma Lion's Shadow** are included, a popular group from previous editions once known as the Ikoma Spymasters.

Chapter 5: The Arts is entirely new content, and details the pursuit of the arts in samurai society, something that many members of the caste frequently overlook in favor of the way of the warrior or the scrolls of a priest. The chapter discusses how the arts influence politics and diplomacy in the Empire, as well as how each individual clan approaches the arts differently. The **Shiba Artisans**, one of the most traditional artisan institutions in Rokugan, highlight the content from a mechanical perspective.

Chapter 6: Commerce & Economics examines the strange and sometimes paradoxical economy of the Emerald Empire. The chapter discusses the role money plays in the lives of the different castes within the Empire. It also addresses the issues of availability of merchandise, major trade routes throughout the Empire and in its coastal waters, and the imports and exports of the various clans. The mechanical highlight for this chapter is the **Kobune Captain Advanced School**, one of the key elements of the clan's economy.

Chapter 7: Crime & Punishment is an important chapter because of the important role the Empire's law enforcement systems take in many campaigns. This chapter details not only the charter of the Emerald Magistrates, but that of the Jade Magistrates and many prominent magistrate traditions within the ranks of the Great Clans. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the different acts considered criminal by the Empire's justice system, and what stern punishments can be levied against those who commit them. Because of the importance of the chapter, it includes not one but two mechanical features: the **Doji Magistrates** and their counterparts, the **Soshi Magistrates**.

Chapter 8: Religion takes a look at the religious systems of Rokugan. Religion is an integral facet of the life of every honorable samurai, and this chapter discusses all aspects of it, including not only study of the Tao of Shinsei, but reverence for the Fortunes of Tengoku and the worship of ancestors that is so prevalent among samurai families. While it is rather obvious how religion relates to the life of the priest caste, the shugenja, this chapter also looks at how it can impact the daily activities of both bushi and courtiers, not to mention the strange monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The diversity of religion within the Emerald Empire can be seen in the ramifications of the **Dark Paragon Advanced School**, a mechanical option available only to the most devout of the Spider Clan's warriors.

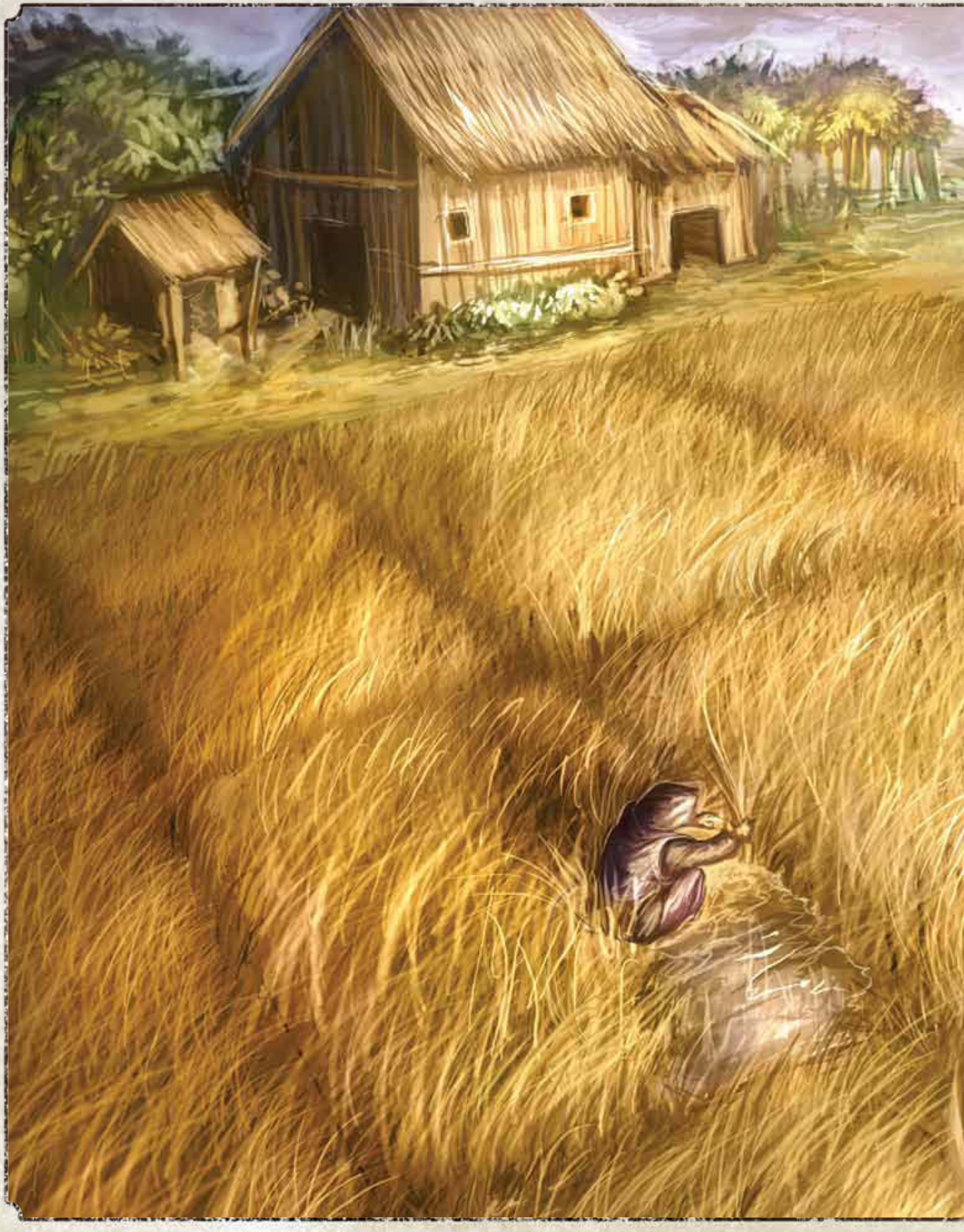
Chapter 9: Education displays the vital importance of education in a culture dominated by learned warriors. From the dojo of the bushi to the temple of the shugenja and on to the academies where the courtiers of every generation are trained, as well as the myriad of different gempukku ceremonies that are conducted throughout the Empire. Some of the stranger educational methods are examined, including the enigmatic **Taoist Swordsmen** of the Dragon Clan.

Chapter 10: War is perhaps the most relevant to the aspirations of the average samurai, for no greater fate can lie in store for an honorable warrior than to kill and die on the field of battle in the name of his lord. This chapter takes a look at the traditional military roles filled by many samurai as well as the unique military traditions and organizations within the individual clans and other units such as the Imperial Legions. As an example of the sort of unique martial philosophies that exist within the different clans, the **Hida Pragmatists** are the mechanical feature for this chapter.

Chapter 11: The World Beyond is a brief look at what little information is known about the lands that can be found beyond the borders of Rokugan. This information is intentionally sparse, intended to spark the imaginations of individual GMs who desire to set their campaigns as part of a larger world.

Appendix 1: Way of the Daimyo is an update of the systems originally included in the Second Edition sourcebook of the same name. These optional mechanics are intended to allow individual GMs to include their player in the happenings of the Empire on a much larger scale, allowing them to take the positions of daimyo, sensei, temple masters, and other positions of significance.

Appendix 2: Glossary is a simple examination of many important terms that many new players may not be familiar with. The section includes all major family names in the Empire as well as traditional military ranks and political positions, including the powerful military position of rikugunshokan and the essential political position of hatamoto.



Geography

The young student looked at the series of tables before him, each one containing a detailed map of a single province. He frowned at the enormity of it all and sighed lightly.

"Something troubles you, young one?"

The student jumped and turned to the doorway, bowing deeply. "Forgive me, sensei! I meant no disrespect!"

"Do you object to your assignment?" The sensei walked among the tables, trailing a finger along one of the large parchments on which the maps were inscribed.

"I would never object, master," the student replied at once.

The sensei chuckled. "Of course you would not. You are a fine student. Please, however... voice your concerns."

The student frowned beneath his simple cloth mask and fidgeted. "It is just... if it were not for my faith in your teaching, master... I would wonder if there was perhaps a better use for my time."

Now the sensei laughed openly, the sound ringing through the chamber. "An excellent answer! Perhaps you should train as a courtier instead!" Seeing the boy pale visibly, he waved the comment away. "A joke, young one, do not be alarmed." He paused for a moment. "Are you familiar with the story of Daidoji Yuri?"

The boy thought for a moment, his brow furrowed. "I do not recall that name, master."

"Daidoji Yuri was a scout for the Crane Clan, and one who had a terrible grudge against the Lion Clan for the death of his brother." The sensei waved a finger. "You must never allow emotion to cloud duty. This is what Yuri did, however, and it caused him to take great risks. Once, he ventured far too far into the Lion provinces, and was detected. The Lion patrol numbered at least ten, and chased him back into the Crane provinces. What do you imagine happened?"

"Outnumbered ten to one? Unless he reached reinforcements, there is very little chance of survival."

"Generally correct," the sensei said. "Yuri survived, however. His pursuers did not."

The student gaped. "How, master?"

"Superior knowledge of the terrain," the sensei answered, gesturing toward the maps. "The Daidoji family is known for their exacting attention to detail in their homeland. They are frequently at odds with the Lion, a clan with vastly greater numbers, and exploiting the features of the terrain, using pitfalls, marshes, even occasional deliberate traps, are one way that the Daidoji manage to hold the line for the Crane Clan."

The student looked back at the maps with renewed interest. "That is amazing, master. Are all Daidoji so skilled?"

"Many are," the sensei said. "Be ever careful when dealing with them. But even they are frequently outmatched in their level of skill by members of the Shinjo family of the Unicorn Clan. There are none who know better how to exploit the features of the land in order to utilize them in tactical maneuvers against the enemy." He paused. "Well, perhaps the Akodo, but even then not in matters of cavalry, and the Akodo are far too hidebound by honor to allow even slightly questionable tactics of such a nature."

"The Shinjo," the student mused.

"Very much so, yes," the sensei said. "Have you heard the tale of Shinjo Tsuro?" He smiled. "You will enjoy this one."

Environment and Terrain

As was already briefly described in the Legend of the Five Rings RPG 4th Edition, the lands of the Emerald Empire exhibit a wide variety of terrain. Majestic mountains cut it off from the scorching deserts of the west and the mysterious steppes of the northwest. Another great mountain range, the Spine of the World Mountains, passes through the middle of the Empire, separating the land in two distinct parts. Great rolling hills lie at the feet of these mountains, and moors and other hillocks can be found throughout the Empire. Thick coniferous forests are plentiful in the north, while in the south and on the Mantis islands jungles filled with exotic trees are common. The strangest and largest forest of all, however, is the legendary Shinomen Mori. Vast and largely unexplored, this great forest is still a mystery to most people who inhabit the Emerald Empire.

Rokugan also boasts several vast plains. From the golden fields of the northwestern Unicorn lands to the great agricultural lands of the Lion and Crane Clans, a good portion of Rokugan is a wide plateau of flat and fertile grassland.

The long Rokugani coastline varies in aspect. In the north, the beaches are narrow and filled with smooth stones. In several places the cold currents of the northern ocean pound waves against high rocky cliffs. In central Rokugan, where the Spine of the World Mountains reach the coastline, the shore is a impressively high cliff wall offering few places for ships to dock. The Crane settlements along this coast are the only safe harbors in this part of the Empire. The southern coast is shallower, with many beaches and coastal marshes.

Mountains

The Rokugani revere mountains as places where ancient spirits dwell. In pre-Imperial times, few people dared to venture into the mountains for fear of encountering a malevolent spirit. Only the most holy and spiritually enlightened men and women were willing to venture into the mountain regions, building shrines and monasteries in remote locations where they could pay tribute to their gods in peace, far away from prying eyes. As the Empire emerged and grew, however, population pressure and a growing need for resources such as metal and stone have encouraged settlement in the foothills near the great peaks. In modern times many fortified castles and keeps also stand within the towering mountains, guarding strategically located passes and protecting the people working in the nearby mines. That said, even in the twelfth century most of the great mountain ranges remain unexplored, uncharted, and untamed.

Mountains retain a special place in the hearts of the Rokugani people. Not only are they beautiful and majestically grand, perfect examples of the glory of nature which Rokugani art reveres, but they also hold unfathomable mysteries and unusual dangers, including strange beasts seldom found elsewhere.

The Empire's three major mountain chains form great natural barriers that cannot easily be crossed. The Seikitsu Range, or Spine of the World Mountains, splits the Empire in two, cutting across Rokugan in a jagged pattern descending from the isolated northwestern lands of the Unicorn Clan to the southeastern coastal holdings of the Crane. The Yugure Yama, or Twilight Mountains, cut through the Crab lands and help guard the southwestern border of the Empire against the Shadowlands, reinforced by the lower sub-chain known as the Wall Above the Ocean. The third great mountain range, the Kyodai ano Kabe sano Kita, or Great Wall of the North, isolates the Empire from the open steppes and trackless deserts of the Burning Sands, and helps prevent invasion by the gaijin tribesmen to the north. Together these three mountain ranges have played a major role in the history of Rokugan, and undoubtedly helped forge the culture, character, and value system of its inhabitants.

The Spine of the World Mountains

Aside from a handful of passes, there is no easy way of crossing the Spine of the World Mountains. In fact, journeying through these mountains is so difficult that the rare passes that cut across them are of the utmost strategic importance. Few travelers risk crossing these mountains away from the passes, and few explorers have journeyed through the vast uncharted territories at the heart of this impressive mountain chain.

The Spine of the World Mountains run in a jagged path across the Empire from the northwestern Unicorn territories to the southeastern coast. The high, rugged peaks of the Spine of the World are covered with ice and snow all year round, and show little vegetation save for the occasional lichens and mosses that somehow cling to the bare rock. Below the snow line, stout and surprisingly resilient coniferous shrubs grow wherever rare patches of earth are available. At somewhat lower elevations clusters of trees begin to appear, huddling together as though for protection against wind and rain, with strong roots that dig deep into the soil. In these places the ground is a mixture of jagged rock and black earth, rich enough to allow different kinds of vegetation to thrive, but hazardous enough to discourage any traveler from climbing through. At the foot of the Spine of the World Mountains are hills that separate the rocky peaks from the surrounding plains and valleys, sometimes gradually and sometimes abruptly. Like the mountains themselves, these hills vary in their flora and fauna from one region of Rokugan to the next, but they generally offer a much richer mixture of life than the bleak higher peaks.

Due to the tremendous distance which the Spine of the World covers, the mountain range presents several different aspects to the people of Rokugan. In the northwest, the hills that form the foot of the range are as bare as the tall, jagged, ice- capped spires which disappear in the clouds. In this part of the Emerald Empire, on the outer edge of Unicorn Lands, the Spine of the World Mountains are extremely hazardous and only the very brave—or extremely foolhardy—dare journey through them. However, it is also in this region that

one of the few major passes crosses the range. Iuchi Pass, deep in Unicorn Lands, is one of the few routes allowing relatively safe travel through the Spine of the World, and the Unicorn benefit greatly from the trade and commerce which runs through this pass.

Near where Unicorn lands meet those of the Lion is the Seikitsu Pass. Up until the twelfth century, this is a fairly minor pass, but after the destruction of Beiden Pass during the Spirit Wars it is expanded by the divine mandate of the Sun, and becomes the principle route for trade and travel through the Spine of the World. The pass connects the eastern edge of Unicorn lands to the northern edge of the Scorpion territories, and the question of which clan has the right to tax and control the pass is often a contentious one.

One of the highest points in the entire range is the Mountain of the Seven Thunders, which stands at the edge of Lion territory at the very heart of Rokugan. The Ikoma palace is located near the base of this impressively tall mountain. While the Mountain of the Seven Thunders is extremely high, jagged, and rocky, in this region the Spine of the World Mountains as a whole are gentler than they are in the northwest. Though the highest peaks are still mostly bare rock covered by ice and snow on their summits, at mid-level and lower elevations trees and plants abound, and the flanks of the mountains are always green with life.

South of the Mountain of Seven Thunders is the Beiden Pass, the other major pass through the Spine of the World. For over a thousand years Beiden was the primary route through this mountain range, connecting the lands of the Lion with those of the Scorpion. As such, Beiden was a continual focus of both commerce and military action, with more than a few wars waged over its control. During the twelfth century, the pass was collapsed by Emperor Toturi I's shugenja at the climax of the conflict known as the Spirit Wars. Thereafter, most travel through the Spine of the World shifted to the Seikitsu Pass, although some minor communication was still possible through a network of lesser passes known as the Shadows of Beiden.

As the Spine of the World Mountains veer southward and eastward, they eventually meet the warmer climes of the Crane territories. In this region, the mountains form a massive wall that separates the fields of the mainland from the sea. Although snow still caps the top of these peaks, vegetation grows abundantly on their lower slopes in this part of the world, nourished by frequent rainfall. In the far south, the Spine of the World chain ends abruptly, seemingly melting away into the sea. In this region, deep forests and treacherous marches surround the coastal peaks.

The Twilight Mountains

Smaller than the mighty Spine of the World Mountains, the Yugure range and its off-shoot, the Wall Above the Ocean, cover a sizable portion of the Crab Lands. This mountain chain dominates the area that separates the Empire from the merciless forces of the Shadowlands, forming a natural barrier against the minions of Fu Leng. For hundreds of years the Crab Clan used the Twilight Mountains to anchor its stubborn defense of the Emerald Empire, and even after the construction of the famous Kaiu Wall the mountains continued to play an important role in securing the safety and well-being of Rokugan.

The harsh and rocky Twilight Mountains are not as high as the other two great ranges of Rokugan, but they are extremely dense. The range is made up of innumerable ridged peaks, one leading directly into the next. They are capped

The Imperial Histories: The Bad Death of Hida Amoro

During the era known as the Clan War, the Crab Clan forsook its duty for the first and only time, allying with the forces of the Shadowlands. The lord of the Crab, Hida Kisada, mistakenly believed he could use the Shadowlands forces to seize the throne, then use the forces of a united Empire to turn and crush the Shadowlands forever. He would eventually learn firsthand the magnitude of his error, but in the meantime, Crab forces fought alongside those of Fu Leng.

One of Kisada's deadliest soldiers in that war was a legendary berserker named Hida Amoro, a man whose capacity for rage seemed infinite and whose prowess on the battlefield was devastating to the Crab Clan's enemies. Unfortunately, Amoro was almost as deadly to his fellow Crab as he was to their foes—in the grip of his battle-rage he would strike down all nearby. Kisada was ready to wash his hands of Amoro after a battle in which the berserker killed over a hundred Crab soldiers, but Kuni Yori, the daimyo of the Kuni family, proposed a solution. Yori had engineered the alliance with the Shadowlands and was already beginning to feel the influence of the Taint on his mind. Using a dire maho ritual, he created a legion of undead soldiers to fight alongside Amoro, soldiers who could not be killed by Amoro's raging violence. He also provided Amoro with an amulet that let him control the zombie soldiers.

With his new undead minions at his side, Hida Amoro became even more of a terror to the Crab Clan's enemies, wading into battle with his undead troops at his side. However, this dark bargain would also become his doom. A few months later, Crab forces engaged the Dragon at Beiden Pass. A force of Togashi tattooed men stymied Amoro's zombie legion, and in his frustration he inadvertently crushed Kuni Yori's amulet.

Freed from control, the hundreds of zombies turned on Hida Amoro and tore him to pieces.

with ice and snow during the winter months, and during the summer their summits are bare of vegetation, showing only solid rock. Lower on their slopes, the terrain is no less craggy, and trees and bushes grow only in isolated clusters, usually in valleys and along the banks of the River of the Last Stand. This river cuts across the Twilight Mountains and for much of its length it forms a natural border between the Empire and the Shadowlands.

Journeying through any part of these mountains is a highly dangerous affair. In many areas the terrain is precarious and the risk of landslides is extremely high. Aside from a handful of narrow passes, anyone crossing these mountains has to maneuver through tight fissures or cross deep chasms. A multitude of natural predators have made the Twilight Mountains their home, and in addition the southern portion of the mountain chain is also infested with creatures from the Shadowlands. This region is affected by the Taint, warping and mutating its nature and appearance. The Crab Clan deploys elaborate defenses, including traps and aggressive scout patrols. After the eighth century, however, the true key to all Crab defenses is the strongest structure ever built by humans: the Kaiu Wall, which stands 100 feet high and runs almost the entire length of the border with the Shadowlands. The Carpenter Wall is situated on the northern bank of the River of the Last Stand, and its high walls make the Twilight Mountains looming behind it appear even more magnificent and impenetrable.

As mentioned, there are a number of passes through the Twilight Mountains, and most of these paths are either heavily garrisoned or booby-trapped by the Crab. All who would travel them (for whatever reason) would do well to make themselves known to the Crab authorities. The largest and undoubtedly safest passageway through the Twilight Mountains is the Kaiu Roka, or Carpenter Pass. Situated approximately midway along the Twilight range, the Carpenter Pass is the easiest way to move troops to and from the border with the Shadowlands, and thus has been used extensively by the Crab for hundreds of years.

The safest portion of the Twilight Mountains is the area east and north of the border with the Shadowlands, especially the off-shoot range known as the Wall Above the Ocean. Despite the many hazards found in these mountains, they support a surprisingly large number of tea plantations. Much of Rokugan's tea supply, in fact, comes from this area, the only part of the mighty Twilight Mountains considered to be civilized. In addition, the foothills of these mountains hold rich iron deposits, and the Crab Clan mines are a major source of wealth and resources for the clan.

The Great Wall of the North

Much like the Twilight Mountains form a natural barrier that helps separate the Emerald Empire from the Shadowlands, the Kyodai na Kabe Sano Kita isolates Rokugan from the gaijin lands to the north. The Great Wall of the North is so vast, in fact, that very few in the Empire actually know what lies beyond.

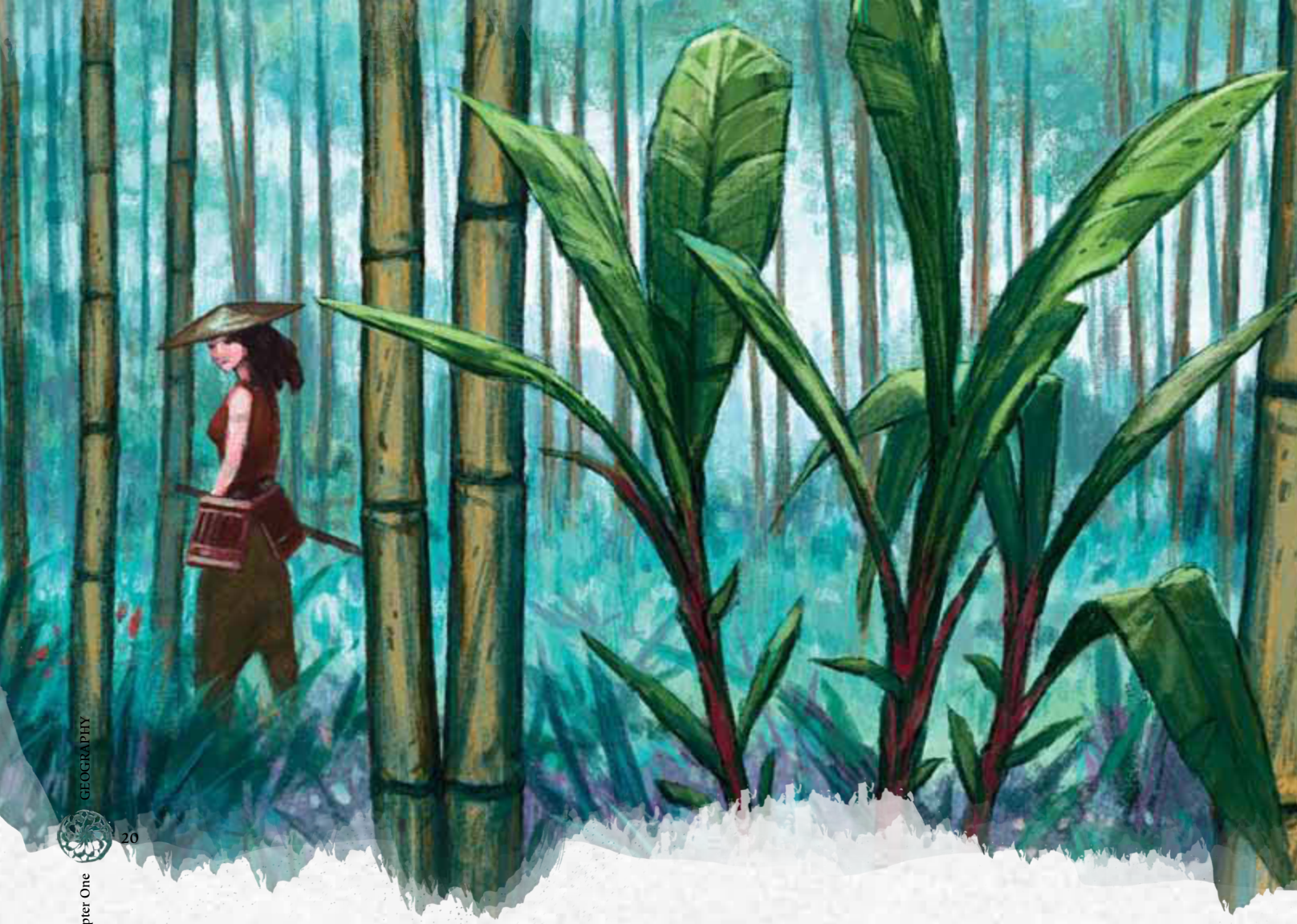
The Great Wall of the North is arguably the most impressive mountain range in all of Rokugan, its tallest peaks exceeding those of the Spine of the World. The peaks of the Great Wall are covered in a thick blanket of ice throughout the year; in fact, many of the mountains are so high that even their foothills are blanketed in snow for eight to nine months out of the year. The Great Wall is not as jagged as the Twilight Mountains or the Spine of the World, and its smoothly rolling peaks seem to blend into one another, forming a unified whole that is both wondrous to behold and hazardous to explore. Between these great northern mountains are many deep and isolated valleys, often with lakes or mountain streams fed by summer run-off from the upper peaks.

The stony summits of the Great Wall of the North are bare of life, unsurprising given their icy conditions. At lower altitudes, however, these mountains are vibrantly alive. Forests of pine, spruce, and cypress turn the lower slopes of the Great Wall of the North a dark green shade throughout the year. On the southern side of the range, oaks and maples are also plentiful at lower elevations, although they cannot survive at the chilly higher altitudes. The combination of thick forests and numerous streams and lakes makes the mountains a popular home for many animal species. More than any other mountain range in Rokugan, the Great Wall of the North is home to an incredible variety of animals, including the commonly encountered brown and black bears, cougars, badgers, tigers, and mountain goats.

Few samurai have ever ventured north of this mountain range, but members of the Unicorn and Scorpion Clans say these lands are home to vast deserts and bleak open steppes. In Rokugan this place is described by the catch-all title of the Burning Sands, although not all of it is desert. According to popular tales, mighty barbarians riding great steeds live beyond the mountains in the northwest, slaughtering and pillaging each other and their neighbors without mercy. Both the Dragon Clan and the Phoenix Clan maintain a steady vigil on their mountainous northern borders, watching to ensure no rampaging barbarian horde crosses into Rokugan.

Natural hazards also make the Great Wall of the North extremely hazardous. The heavy snow-pack makes avalanches a continual threat, and the abundant animal life includes numerous deadly predators. Peasants generally admire the Great Wall of the North from afar while giving thanks they need not approach it. The samurai of the Clans generally do not think about these mountains save as the Empire's northern border. Dragon and to a lesser extent Phoenix samurai, however, know the mountains fairly well. It is sometimes even rumored that the Phoenix Clan trades with one tribe of northern barbarians, the so-called Yobanjin. During the late twelfth century, tumultuous events force the Empire as a whole to become more aware of the Great Wall and the peoples who dwell beyond it.

There are few actual places of note in the Great Wall of the North, which is mostly a vast uncharted wilderness. Only a handful of these places are widely known, but the strangest and most notorious is undoubtedly Hinanbasho sano Mittsu Shimai, the Refuge of the Three Sisters. High in the mountains near Dragon territory, this place is one of the rare shrines dedicated to the Moon, a deity which the Rokugani revere but also regard with unease. In order to reach this isolated place, travelers must find a path called the Climb of the Moon, the only road leading to the shrine; simply locating this mystical route can be a trial in itself. The Shrine itself is maintained by the three sisters of its name, and by all accounts the same three women have dwelled there for as long as anyone can remember—suggesting they may be ghosts or other spirits. Supposedly, they can answer any question truthfully, but ruin inevitably befalls those who ask.



Forests

Forests vary greatly from one part of the Empire to another, due both to soil fertility and to the widely varying climate and weather patterns in the different regions of Rokugan. In the north, great coniferous forests dominate, but there are also many smaller woodlands comprised of pine, oak, spruce, birch, and maple. Most of these forests are found in the foothills of the Great Wall of the North, but the most impressive northern forest, the Isawa Mori, is found in the heart of Phoenix territory. Traveling southward, evergreen conifers gradually give way to an amalgam of deciduous trees. The most populous of these are the maple, oak, and apple tree, but birches, willows, pear trees, and plum trees are also quite common.

In central and south-central Rokugan, forests are generally smaller, sparser, and more widely scattered than in the north, as these regions are dominated by agricultural plains. Bamboo trees, relatively scarce in the north, become far more common in these regions, and are extensively cultivated by the Rokugani due to their rapid growth and versatility. There are a few major exceptions to this pattern of limited forestation, most notably and infamously the Shinomen Mori. The largest and most feared forest in all of Rokugan, the Shinomen Mori effectively forms the western border of the Empire, and few samurai dare to venture into its sinister shadows.

On Rokugan's southern coasts and in the Mantis isles, where tropical winds warm the soil and frequent rainfalls nourish it, more exotic forests can be found. Black ebony, red mahogany, strong balsa, as well as teak, ash, hackberry, palms, and various fruit-bearing trees are common. On the Mantis isles these often give way to genuinely tropical jungles with plants like coconuts and pomegranates.

The Isawa Mori

Isawa Mori lies in the heart of Phoenix territory and is one of the most important wildernesses in Rokugan. Second in size only to the vast Shinomen Mori, the Isawa Mori is one of the oldest untamed areas in the Empire. Tall pines and other coniferous trees, such as cedars, cypresses, firs, and spruces, make up the great majority of this forest, but oaks, maples, and birches also grow in thick clusters. Since most of the trees in the Isawa Mori are evergreens, the forest remains cloaked in foliage all year long. During the long winter months, a thick blanket of snow covers the forest's dark green mantles but fails to make it seem any less somber or forbidding. Many of the Isawa Mori's deepest places have yet to be explored by man, and while the forest is far less dangerous than the Shinomen Mori, many areas within it are known to be haunted by malevolent spirits. Nezumi tribes have also dwelt within the forest at various times. It is said even the powerful Elemental Masters of the Phoenix Clan avoid the more dangerous reaches of the Isawa Mori.

Despite or perhaps because of the rumors of strange creatures and unnatural manifestations, many samurai of the Phoenix Clan view the Isawa Mori as a place of profound spiritual and religious significance. The Asako family in particular views the Isawa Mori as a place of spiritual learning and enlightenment, and treats it with much respect. The Shiba revere the forest as the dwelling place of ancient spirits, but generally give it a wide berth. Only the Isawa see the forest as primarily a resource, although they show no lack of respect for the spirits of the woods. The Isawa consider themselves such masters of the spiritual arts that the presence or absence of ghosts or spirits in the Isawa Mori can hardly be a serious concern. Nonetheless, the Isawa always show the proper respect and gratitude to the forest kami when harvesting lumber. The timber of the Isawa Mori is a major resource for the Phoenix Clan, especially since wood from this primeval forest produces exceptionally resilient scrolls. Also, shrines built using lumber from the Isawa Mori almost always seem to attract the Fortunes' favor.

Deep inside the Isawa Mori is what the Asako long ago dubbed the Heart of Nature. Asako sages believe this is a passage that leads to the Spirit Realms, but no one knows exactly where to find it, and it seems to move at random through the forest. It appears to touch on many different Spirit Realms, including Chikushudo, Sakkaku, and Yume-do. It is impossible to predict the Heart of Nature's location or which Spirit Realm the passage will touch at any given time. Even denizens of the Spirit Realms themselves have no way of knowing where the passage leads or how to return. The Heart of Nature and the strange beings it brings to the Isawa Mori are in great part responsible for the dark reputation the forest has earned over the centuries.

Mori Kuroi

Long before there was a Phoenix Clan, the folk who lived in what would one day become the Isawa provinces had another name for the Isawa Mori: Mori Kuroi, the Black Forest. In these ancient times the inhabitants saw the forest as a dreadful and terrifying place, best to be avoided entirely. They believed strange and dangerous creatures dwelt deep within the forest, and dared not venture too far into its somber territory. Any hardship or misfortune was blamed on the malign spirits of the forest.

It was Isawa himself who began to change this attitude by entering the depths of the forest alone, returning safely after seven days and nights. With time, the local fears and superstitions receded, but the common people never truly forgot them... and with good cause.

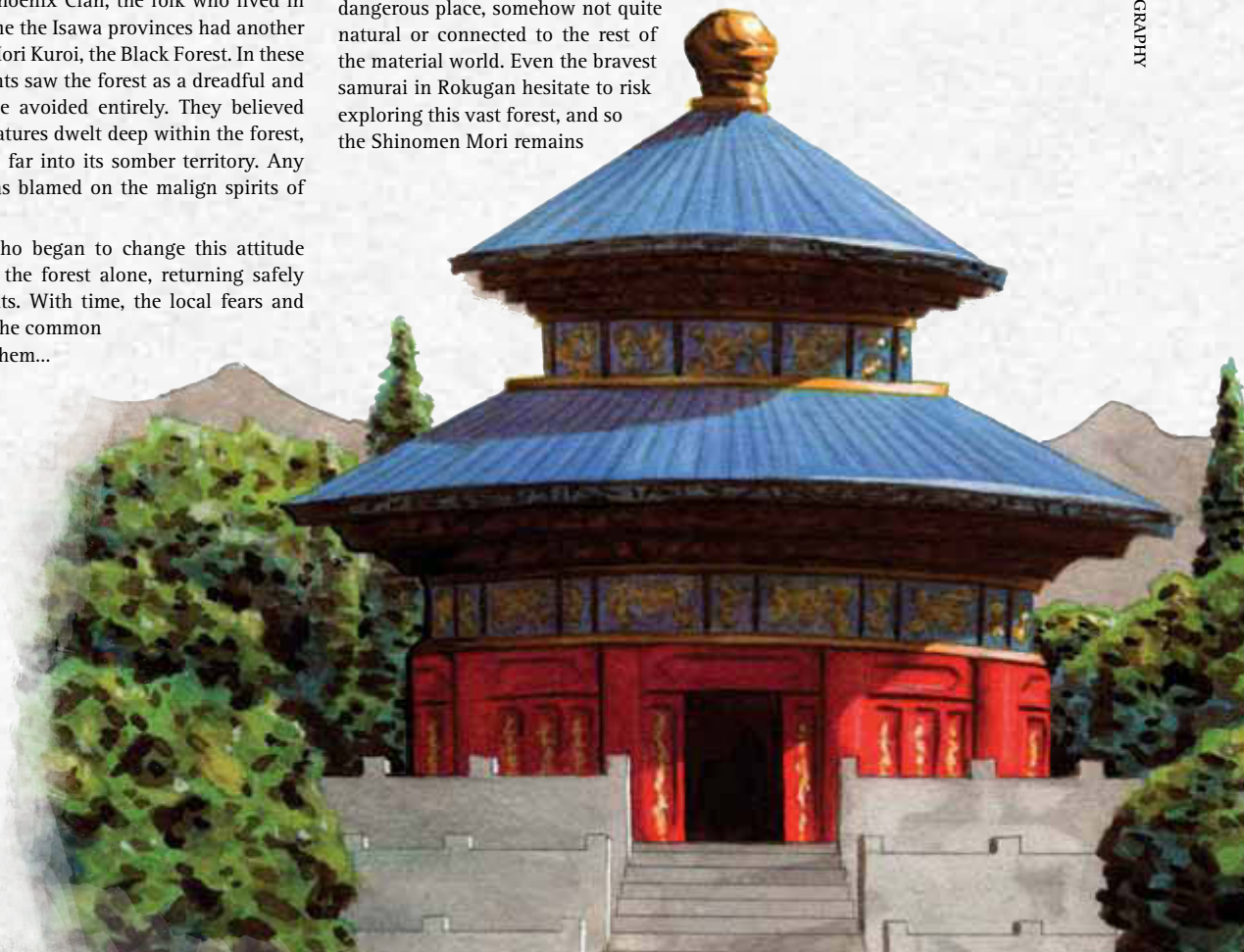
Within the Isawa Mori is a place which locals still call by the name of Mori Kuroi. A dark and sinister portion of the larger forest, the Black Forest is one of the most dreaded places in all of Rokugan. Everyone who lives near the Black Forest is convinced something wholly sinister lurks within the depths of this place. This portion of the Isawa Mori is almost never disturbed, and only in the direst circumstances would anyone dare take timber or other resources from it.

An abandoned manor house that once belonged to the Isawa can be found in the center of the Black Forest. It is said a powerful shugenja once summoned an oni to this manor, hoping to curse the Isawa with a deadly plague. The oni's plague took a terrible toll on the Isawa, not once but twice. In modern times, the Isawa are aware of this place and have raised wards to ensure no one can ever go there again.

The Shinomen Mori

The Shinomen Mori is one of the most mysterious places in the Empire. By far the largest forest in Rokugan, the Shinomen Mori is also one of the least known places within the Empire's borders, and it has never been fully explored. Although the people of Rokugan visit the outer edges of this virgin forest, occasionally harvesting precious wood from it, no man has ever ventured deeply inside and returned to tell about it. In fact, there are hundreds of miles within the forest no mortal man has ever seen. Even the Naga, whose ancient cities almost all lie within the Shinomen Mori, do not claim to know all the secrets of this eerie place.

There are hundreds of rumors and legends concerning the Shinomen, tales which have grown more and more elaborate over the course of centuries, and none can truly prove which tales are true and which are false. All manner of ghosts and fantastic creatures are believed to haunt the forest, and its core is reputed to be enchanted with all manner of spiritual powers. No one knows if these tales are fact or fiction, but all who have visited the Shinomen or even laid eyes on it from a distance are convinced it is a truly dangerous place, somehow not quite natural or connected to the rest of the material world. Even the bravest samurai in Rokugan hesitate to risk exploring this vast forest, and so the Shinomen Mori remains



much as it was hundreds of years ago: a wild and unspoiled land, home of countless wild beasts and much stranger creatures as well. Its flora is rich and extremely diversified, and for the most part remains undisturbed. Birch, willow, maple, and oak seem to be the most common trees found within the forest, or at least within those portions the people of Rokugan have dared to visit. In the northern part of Shinomen Mori, cypress and juniper, as well as some fir and maple, seem to be common. At the southern edge, however, plum and cherry trees are mixed with teaks, balsas, willows, and birches.

Despite all the dreadful rumors attached to the place, at various times the Scorpion, Crab, and Unicorn have explored the rim of this immense forest. They have also harvested lumber from it, albeit while taking great care not to offend the spirits of Shinomen Mori. Despite the Empire's long history, no Clan has ever dared to establish a major holding near the Shinomen Mori, although many small villages can be found in the area directly around it. The heimin who live in these villages never venture into the ancient forest, having learned to fear what might lie within.

At the southeastern edge of the Shinomen Mori is the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow, one of the most important places in Rokugan. In this part of the forest, cherry trees are dominant, lining the edges of the lake and blossoming all summer long before falling to cover the water with white petals, making the lake appear as if it is covered in snow. One of the Empire's most prominent Cherry Blossom Festivals is held there each spring, and those who celebrate near the Shinomen Mori can momentarily forget their fears of the place.

Kitsune Mori

Kitsune Mori, the Forest of the Fox, is a relatively small place compared to the vast Shinomen Forest to the west. It is also a much simpler place, with few mysteries left to be discovered—at least for the shugenja of the Kitsune family. Kitsune Mori is home to the Fox Clan from the dawn of the Empire, becoming part of the Mantis territories when the Fox join the Mantis in the late twelfth century. It is a fairly wide-open forest of mixed trees. The mild climate and the warm winds coming from the southeast are extremely beneficial to the rich and abundant flora, and thus the Forest of the Fox is a verdant and bountiful place. The trees of the Kitsune Mori tend to grow not huddled together but rather spread apart widely, so despite the countless small plants and shrubs covering the ground travel through the forest is relatively easy. All manner of plants and animals can be found in the Kitsune Mori, and it is an ideal place to forage for nuts, berries, and roots. There is a great variety of wild fruits and edible plants in the Forest of the Fox, plentiful enough to feed hundreds of people simply by harvesting the gifts the forest bears. Indeed, it was solely due to this bounty that the Fox Clan survived its early decades within the Kitsune Mori.

The Kitsune Mori also holds so many different herbs, roots, and spices that herbalists throughout the Empire consider it one of the best places to find medicinal ingredients. Birches and willows abound in the Forest of the Fox, but the place boasts a hundred different varieties of trees, including several types of maples as well as many coniferous shrubs. Unsurprisingly, the abundant plant life of the Kitsune Mori attracts countless species of animals, and the forest is one of the best places in the Empire to hunt both small game and larger prey such as deer and boar (although the Kitsune will not permit foxes to be hunted anywhere within their lands). Wolves and brown bears are the most fearsome animals living within the bounds of the forest, but as its name implies it is best known for the several species of foxes, including the furtive red fox, who thrive there.

The Kitsune Mori contains more than a few spirit gateways, primarily to Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. Shapechanging spirits, especially kitsune and tanuki, are frequent visitors to the Kitsune Mori and their interactions with the Fox Clan have contributed to the famously spiritual nature of the Kitsune family. For those outside the Fox Clan, however, the Kitsune Mori can be an unsettling place, and strangers tend to be quite wary when journeying through these woods.

Plains

In between its many tall mountains, rolling hills, and thick mysterious forests, Rokugan boasts several vast plains, fertile lands which are often cultivated by the peasants of the Empire, producing abundant crops. The three most important such areas are in the territories of the Crane, Lion, and Unicorn Clans.

The Fertile Plains of the Crane

Unlike the flat open lands of the Lion and the Unicorn, the small plain in the middle of Crane territory is actually made up of gently rolling hills and valleys. Beginning to the north and east of the towering Spine of the World Mountains, the Doji plains spread across the heart of their northern territories, and form the keystone of Crane agricultural wealth. They are checkered with streams, small rivers, and lakes, rich sources of fish, shrimp, water chestnuts, lotus seed, reeds and other resources. The many streams combined with a mild summer climate and frequent rainfall ensure the Crane lands remain green with vegetation almost all year round. During the spring, countless types of flowers bloom in these fields, turning the otherwise ordinary-looking farmlands bright and colorful.

The Crane consider these fertile plains vitally important, since they provide the clan with most of its food. Although relatively small compared to the vast farmlands of the Lion or the open prairies of the Unicorn, the Crane farmlands nevertheless produce enough rice, wheat, and cotton to not only fulfill the clan's own needs but also to export extensively. Over nine-tenths of the Doji plains are used for intensive cultivation and farming. Rice, cotton, and wheat are the dominant crops, supplemented with millet, rapeseed, silk, sorghum, and maize. Interestingly, the Crane productivity is so great that they do not actually have to use all of their lands for crops, and there are some open pastures and unused fields in their territory. Those open areas attract rodents, foxes, and deer. Wild horses sometimes roam in their plains as well, and

cougars, lynx, and wolves frequently visit the region to hunt for prey.

Far from the fertile central plains of the Crane is a city which also enjoys a rich agricultural zone. Mura Sabishii Toshi, or Lonely Shore City, lies on the coast at the southernmost end of the Spine of the World Mountains. The thriving port opens upon a vast flatland which is also the property of the Crane Clan. This region also produces a considerable crop of millet, rice, and rapeseed for the clan.

The Unbroken Fields of the Lion

The largest of Rokugan's open plains are held by the Lion Clan. Although the soil of the Lion plains is extremely fertile, the weather there is somewhat unpredictable due to the intersection of humid winds blowing from the eastern coast and dry winds coming from the interior. This makes the Lion plains prone to both flood and drought, with rain sometimes pouring for days on end while at other times rain might not come for several weeks. In winter, the temperature is low and the winter freeze lasts quite long, particularly in the north and northwest at the borders of the Dragon and Unicorn Lands. Despite these difficulties, the Lion plains are excellent agricultural land due to the combination of warm summer temperatures and extremely fertile black soil. Soybeans, sorghum, wheat, sugar beets, flax, cotton, sesame seeds, and millet are all grown in this region, but the most important crop in Lion territory is of course rice. In fact, most of the fields in the Lion lands are filled with rice paddies, aside from a few smaller clear areas that serve as training grounds for their armies. The Lion do also have some modest horse herds, and maintain pasturage for them near Kyuden Ikoma. The Lion use every bit of land they can to produce the food, steeds, and supplies they need for their huge military forces. Indeed, they are famed for planning the use of their lands just as meticulously as they wage their wars.

Unlike the Unicorn lands to the northwest, the Lion plains are not divided by large numbers of rivers, nor do they boast the numerous smaller streams of the Crane lands to the south. As a result, travel here is easy and rapid. The warriors of the Lion Clan can move from one region of their holdings to the next quite easily, free of any natural barriers.

Aside from a few small patches of thick forest, the only major interruption to the Lion plans is a single mountain that rises near their center. This singular formation is known as Lookout Mountain to the warriors of the Lion Clan, who use it to spy on the surrounding lands, and their settlement of Shiranai Toshi, or Darkness City, lies in its lee. Perhaps the most important city in the Lion plains, however, is also one of its dullest and most unattractive. The city known simply as Foshi has the distinction of being the most efficient crop center in all the Lion territories, producing enough food each year to feed an entire army.

The Great Golden Plains of the Unicorn

The Unicorn plains begin at the northern and western edges of Rokugan, in the foothills of the Great Wall of the North and the lesser hills on the edge of the Burning Sands. These vast grasslands extend to the south until they reach the Spine of the World Mountains, and to the east until they pass the river called Kawa Mittsu Kishi, the most important channel for Unicorn commerce. In the southeast, the river separates the golden plains of the Unicorn with the fields of the Lion, while in the northeast the plains abruptly stop at the foot of the Dragon mountains.

The Unicorn plains are for the most part quite flat. A multitude of different rivers cut through Unicorn lands, splitting the plains into several separate regions, and these well-watered fields are quite fertile. Thousands of peasants work on farms in this territory, growing wheat, oats, rice, millet, and barley, along with a wide variety of vegetables such as potatoes,

Golden Sun Plain

The Plains of the Golden Sun lie untouched and perfect in the midst of the Empire's fertile south, between the lands of the Crane and those of several Minor Clans, most notably the Sparrow. Travelers are allowed to pass through the Golden Sun Plain, but only for the purpose of viewing their natural beauty. Such visitors are not permitted to linger, and are forbidden by Imperial decree from settling there or even building anything larger than a campfire.

Long ago, the Hantei Emperors proclaimed the Golden Sun Plain to be an eternal offering to Lady Amaterasu, in thanks for the many blessings she bestowed on Rokugan. The lands are some of the finest in all the Empire. Green meadows and rolling fields seem tailor-made for growing grain and rice, while dense woodlands house all manner of animals. Lakes and streams also dot the countryside, teeming with fish and unmarred by rapids or dangerous falls. When the sun sets, it seems to light the entire province with a heavenly glow, and travelers who pass through it speak of being filled with a sense of profound harmony and wonder. Any clan which laid claim to the Golden Sun Plain would become one of the wealthiest and most powerful in the Empire—but no clan will ever dare break the Imperial decree laid down in the earliest days of the Empire.

carrots, and cucumbers. There are also occasional apple orchards, stout trees that blossom with white flowers in the spring. Despite the agricultural potential of the Unicorn plains, however, a large portion of them remain uncultivated and are instead used as grazing land for the clan's famed horses.

The Unicorn plains lie in the northernmost part of the Empire, and the long cold winters bring a thick blanket of snow. During the cold months, icy winds from the northern and western mountains blow across the plains, turning them into a dreary and dangerous region for travelers. In the spring, however, the Unicorn plains teem with life. Hares, foxes, gophers, and a variety of other small animals invade the region, and both deer and wild horses.

Unicorn villages are scattered across the plains, often much more widely than in the settled lands of other clans. Most of them are not large or memorable, but a few have attained some prominence, most notably Kurayami-ha Mura (Dark Edge Village). This village was home to the Emerald Tournament during the early years of the Empire, and while that time is long past it retains a certain fame for its dueling fields and dojo.

Coastline

The long and jagged coast of the Rokugan mainland is divided into four distinct parts. In the northern Phoenix provinces, the shore is mostly a rocky wall of high cliffs, occasionally interrupted by beaches of black and blue pebbles. Further south in the Imperial and Crane lands, cold northern currents give way to slightly warmer waters, and the beaches are wider, deeper, and composed of a mixture of fine rocks and clean white sands. Where the mighty Spine of the World Mountains reach the coast, a wall of cliffs line the water, the currents are treacherous, and sailing close to shore is a hazardous enterprise even at the best of times. Finally, in the southeastern Crane and Crab lands, the waters become warmer and clearer, with smooth beaches and intermittent marshes. The tropical waters which caress the shores of the distant Mantis Isles are even warmer, and the smooth sandy beaches of the Mantis lands are famed throughout the Empire.

The Bay of the Crab

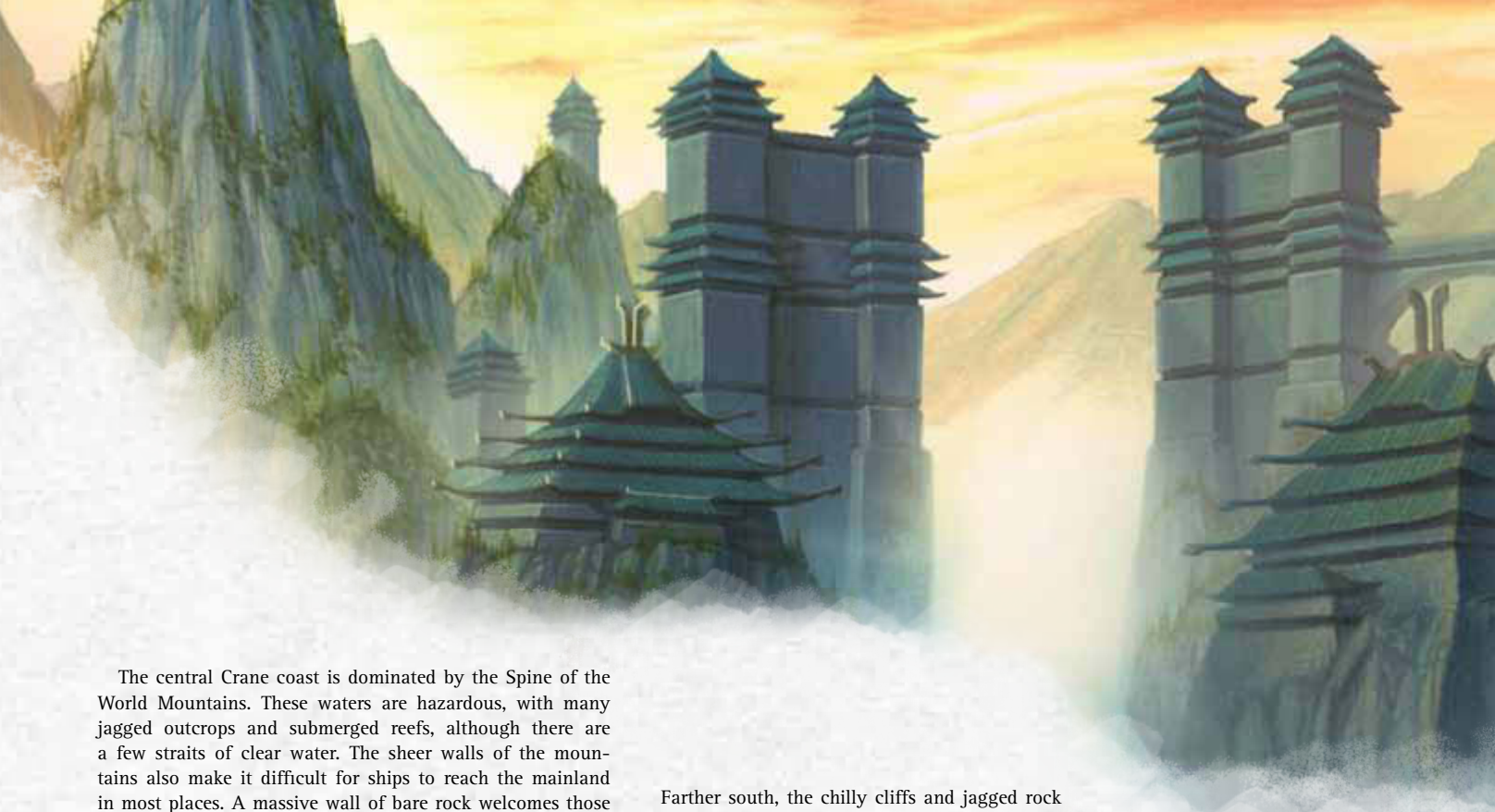
The southern coastline of the Crab provinces is famed for a large shallow bay, widely known as Earthquake Fish Bay. Many long narrow inlets form natural harbors along the coast of this bay, and its warm waters teem with life, making it an ideal place for fishing. The mouth of the bay is known as the Tidal Landbridge, since at low tide the ground rises above the water and allows travelers to cross from one side to the other—if they are swift. On the western side of the Tidal Landbridge is the southernmost end of the Kaiu Wall. The coast there is jagged and rocky, bearing little vegetation save for occasional tufts of moss, lichen, and patches of scrub brush. Most of the bay's interior coast is low plateau, with many fishing villages and wide beaches. The sand here is thicker and more gravelly than on the wide beaches of the Empire's exterior coast. At the northern end of the bay, the coast rises into the jagged slopes of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains, while the southeastern side has low marshy plains.

The warm waters of Earthquake Fish Bay are known to turn an azure shade due to the coral beds that lie within its shallow depths. Many species of fish can be found within these waters, including angelfish, blue dolphins, harlequins, red top zebras, firemouth, purple cichlids, and deep-ocean varieties of fish also come to the bay to breed. Crustaceans of all types also abound in Earthquake Fish Bay, and Crab fishermen build traps especially designed to snare them. The bay's warm waters allows fishermen to work all year round, giving them an advantage over Crane and Mantis fishermen who are subject to the seasonal variations of the ocean.

Crane Lands: Sand Beaches and Mountainous Shores

The Crane lands generally hug the coast of Rokugan. From the Yasuki lands on the east side of Earthquake Fish Bay to the Spine of the World Mountains running alongside the ocean, most of the Empire's coastline belongs to the Crane. No other clan has anything close to so much shoreline at its disposal—not even the island-bound Mantis can boast of as many miles of oceanfront land as the Crane.

The southern Crane shoreline is composed mainly of vast white sand beaches that sometimes stretch several miles inland, although in the far south inland marshes are also common. Rainfall is abundant, since seasonal winds carry a great deal of moisture to this part of the Emerald Empire, and the flora along the Crane coast is rich and verdant. The spring rainy season lasts about a month, and the summer that follows is hot and humid. This is beneficial to the cultivation of rice, one of the Crane Clan's most important food resources. Fishing is also a major source of food in this region, since ocean currents from the south warm the coast during much of the year and the harvests collected from the sea are plentiful.



The central Crane coast is dominated by the Spine of the World Mountains. These waters are hazardous, with many jagged outcrops and submerged reefs, although there are a few straits of clear water. The sheer walls of the mountains also make it difficult for ships to reach the mainland in most places. A massive wall of bare rock welcomes those foolhardy enough to bring their vessels too close to land. Despite these inhospitable aspects, these waters also boast plentiful resources that attract brave sailors. The warm waters of the south and cooler currents of the north collide here, and several unique species of fish thrive here that cannot be found anywhere else in the Empire.

North of the Spine of the World Mountains, the Crane coast acquires a wholly different character from the rocky shores near the mountains or the sandy beaches of the south. The climate on the northern Crane shore is temperate, with harsher winters, and the vegetation is heavier on evergreens and other cold-weather trees. The coastline is mostly short patches of dark-stoned pebbly beaches (purple, gray, and black stones predominate) intermixed with hills and low rocky cliffs. Fishermen live in small villages along this coast, but most heimin here are laborers and farmers, living off the fertile agricultural plains of the Crane rather than relying on the gifts of the seas.

The Rugged Coast of the Phoenix

The coasts of the Phoenix territories are a mixture of flat beaches, rocky cliffs, and sheer impenetrable mountain walls. The Phoenix shore has only a few natural harbors where sailors can shelter from the cold northern seas. Freezing winds blow over the sea, dumping heavy snow on the northeastern coast every winter. There is a striking contrast between the cold and inhospitable Phoenix shore and the temperate coasts of the Crane to the south. On the northern coast, winters are cold, long, and dry, and where the Great Wall of the North reaches the coast a thick blanket of snow covers the peaks all year round.

It is virtually impossible to approach the northern part of the Phoenix coast, since jagged rocks extend down to the sea and even into the water, making seafaring quite dangerous. The northern ocean itself is also unpredictable and seems to be cursed with extreme weather conditions—storms, hail, and blizzards are all frequent in this region. There are few settlements along this hostile shore, the principle exception being Shiro Shiba, the ancestral home of the Shiba family.

Farther south, the chilly cliffs and jagged rock formations give way to flatter and more open lands with long but narrow beaches. These beaches are a mix of rocky land and carpets of dark blue and gray pebbles, worn smooth by the constant pounding of the sea. Algae and fish often wash up on these beaches as though rejected by the furious sea. A few fishing villages do line the shores in this region, along with one major trade port, Toshi no Omoidoso (the City of Remembrance).

The small range known as the Yama no Kuyami (Mountains of Regret) mark the southern border of Phoenix lands, segregating them from the rest of the Empire. The shore there is an amalgam of jagged cliffs where few plants grow. Some of these cliffs are high, as though competing with the taller peaks to the north, but most are low and craggy. These cliffs are known to turn to an unsettling blood-red shade when the light of the sun shines on them.

The Tropical Isles of the Mantis

The Mantis are convinced they possess the most beautiful beaches and the most bountiful shores in all the world. The irregular coastlines of the Islands of Spice and Silk form numerous bays and peninsulas which the sailors of the Mantis Clan cunningly use to defend their holdings.

The Mantis Isles tend to be extremely mountainous but also quite verdant, with high peaks rising out of dark green tropical rain forests. Long, sandy beaches of the purest white sand line the shores, surrounding each island completely. Beyond these perfect beaches, narrow plains can sometimes be found along the coastline—these areas are rare enough that Mantis peasants use every square inch of them to grow vegetables, cotton, and rice, as well as raising groves of silkworms. Inland basins also sometimes cut through the great sand beaches, forming extensive marshy wetlands. The local climate is uniformly hot and humid, with no meaningful winter. Consequently, many plant and animal species can only be found in the Mantis Isles, such as coconuts and pineapples.

Wildlife

The wildlife of Rokugan is surprisingly rich and diversified, so much so that an Asako sage once said a man who travels the length of the Emerald Empire awakens in a different world each day. Indeed, anyone who has traveled through the many regions of Rokugan knows its natural diversity is matched only by the depth of its cultural traditions.

Flora

The wide range of local climates in Rokugan ensure diversity in its plant life. The plants on the distant eastern isles of the Mantis are very different from those that thrive in the rocky foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains, and the flowers that sprout out of the fertile soil of the central Rokugani plains have little in common with those blooming on the branches of trees in the Dragon mountains.

Rokugan's landscapes vary even more than its climate, often quite dramatically. At the height of the tall mountain peaks, small plants, lichens, and rare flowers cling to the rocky terrain, while on the lower slopes tall trees abound, forming dense forests where plants and animals thrive together. In the plains, both cultivated and wild shrubs are abundant, and the heavy trees of the mountains give way to softer woods and to bamboo. The sandy soil of the southeastern coasts and the tropical isles of the Mantis harbor plants found nowhere else in Rokugan. The flora of the Emerald Empire has many faces, and each generation of scholars discovers new species their ancestors seem to have missed. There are, however, a number of species more numerous or more important to the people of Rokugan, and these are known to most inhabitants of the Empire—if not by name, then at least by sight.

Pine trees are common throughout Rokugan, and can be found even on the southern coast and the Mantis Isles, though in those lands they are far less abundant than in the north. These evergreens are especially plentiful in the far north, as well as in the mountains where temperatures are colder. The Isawa Mori in the heart of Phoenix territory is the largest source of pine in the Empire. In coastal areas, pines often serve as windbreaks to protect villages and cities, as well as lining the Imperial roads to shade and protect those traveling the Empire. For many Rokugani the pine symbolizes youth and longevity, and pine trees are used throughout the Empire as bonsai and garden trees, as well as supplying materials to build houses and furniture.

Cedar, cypress, fir, and spruce trees are also common in the Empire but, unlike pines, few grow in the south and none can be found on the tropical isles to the east. These evergreens are also used as bonsai and garden trees, but their preferred usage is for constructing houses and furnishings. The interior of chests and closets, for example, are frequently covered with planks of cedar, whose scent helps keep clothing fresh and pleasantly aromatic.

Juniper, another evergreen coniferous tree, is also important to the people of Rokugan. The aromatic cones of this tree, which resemble black or dark-blue berries, are used to flavor alcohol as well as for their medicinal properties.

Smaller evergreen shrubs are also common in Rokugan, mainly in the north and throughout the various mountain ranges of the Empire. These smaller evergreens are often used for bonsai trees, for a talented artisan can coax a wonderful creation out of the most ordinary shrub.

For many samurai, the most spectacular and admired tree in Rokugan is the maple. There are many types of maples throughout the Empire, all of them turning bright shades of orange, yellow, and red in the autumn before falling to cover and eventually nourish the ground. In the spring, maples blossom and grow rich foliage, and while the leaves of all maples are green, each kind has its own peculiarities. The more common type of maple has leaves of a darker shade of green, paler underneath, with traces of silvery and gray hues within the folds. Another common variety, the red maple, has veins of an almost blood red shade that cut through the surface of its leaves like rivers cutting across the land of Rokugan. Due to its diversity and splendid autumn colors, the maple is widely used as a decorative tree in Rokugani gardens.

There are several other trees used to build houses, furniture, sea vessels, and more mundane items such as bowls, utensils, and the like. Oaks, for example, provide a hard and durable wood. The stout, broad-leafed oak tree can be found throughout the Rokugani mainland and its wood is often used for tools and weapons. Teak trees also yield a hard and durable wood, a yellowish-brown resinous material mostly used for shipbuilding—thus, it is extremely valuable to the Mantis Clan. The warm-weather trees known as the balsa, ebony, and mahogany are found mostly in the south and on the islands of the Mantis. Balsa produces a light wood typically used to build rafts and children's toys, while the other two are hard woods of extremely high quality and durability. Black ebony is especially prized and used for art and decoration, while the reddish-brown mahogany is mostly used for furniture. Many rich samurai proudly display mahogany furniture for their guests to admire.

Ash trees, which bloom in small clusters of purple flowers in the spring, can be found throughout Rokugan, as can hackberries, which bear a cherry-like fruit. Other fruit trees in the Empire include the apple, orange, peach, and pear. These trees are appreciated for their aesthetic qualities in addition to the fruit they bear, and are often displayed in gardens.

No fruit-bearing tree, however, is more highly prized than the cherry tree. Indeed, the blossom of the cherry is one of the most important flowers in Rokugan, and an entire spring festival is dedicated to viewing these delicate pink-white blossoms. There are dozens of different cherry tree varieties throughout the Empire, most of which bloom for just a few days in the spring. The famed Cherry Blossom Festival is celebrated at that time, with samurai holding parties under the blooming cherry trees. Commoners and samurai alike view

the cherry blossom as a precious gift handed down by the ancients.

Plum trees, which bloom several weeks ahead of the cherry blossom, are the earliest sign that spring is on its way. Plum blossoms are among the first to open during the year, typically flowering while a blanket of snow still covers most of the landscape. Like cherry trees, plum trees come in many varieties, most of which have been cultivated for longer than the Empire has existed. Their blossoms range from white to dark pink, and have a much stronger fragrance than cherry blossom.

Of all the wildlife in Rokugan, few plants are used in as many ways as bamboo. This fast growing tree can be found all around the Empire, although it is more common and prolific in the Empire's central and southern provinces. Bamboo is used in construction as well as in countless arts and crafts, and the interior of many homes is decorated with it. Bamboo is waterproof, making it especially useful for making canteens, water-clocks, and similar items. Bamboo shoots are also a popular spring delicacy.

Wicker is also well-liked and quite common in Rokugan. Slender and pliant, this twig can be plaited or woven to create baskets, chairs, hats, and other useful items. Many Rokugani homes, especially humble abodes, are filled with items made of wicker. The twigs and branches of the willow tree, also tough and pliable, are used for such work as well. Willows are also appreciated for their flowers and are thus often grown in gardens, unlike wicker.

Many other types of small plants and roots are plentiful throughout the Empire. Shrubs, for example, include prickly brambles of various types; honeysuckles cultivated for their fragrant white, yellow, or red tubular flowers; azaleas that bear beautiful multicolored flowers; and glossy evergreen camellia with pink or red rose-like blossoms. Climbing shrubs such as ivy and wisteria, which cling to walls and sheer mountainsides, are common as well. Although some of these shrubs are cultivated in gardens, most of them grow in the wild alongside lichens, mosses, and poisonous plants such as the hemlock.

In Rokugan a great many plants, such as bellflowers, poppy, and purple saffron, are cultivated because of the ornamental flowers they produce. The most popular examples include hollyhocks with their long clusters of variously colored buds, irisies with their sword-shaped leaves, the bell-shaped lily, the oleander with its evergreen leaves and clusters of pink, red, or white flowers, and the funnel-shaped morning glories that wondrously open up with the coming of each new day's sun. Snapdragons, cultivated for their spikes of flowers that resemble the mouths of dragons, are also extremely popular throughout the Empire.

No flower, however, is as prized as the orchid. There are countless varieties of orchids in Rokugan, and experts who know how to tend to them are highly sought after. Many samurai families have cultivated orchids for generations in their gardens, and experts have developed several new varieties that can be found nowhere else in the world.

Along the Rokugani coasts, a number of aquatic plants can be found, but the most common of these are the lotus, the water lily, and a great variety of algae. Some of these—such as the arame, hijiki, kombu, and nori, to name a only a few—are edible and provide an important supplement to the Rokugani diet.

Of course, the Empire cultivates a great many edible plants, so many that an exhaustive list is impossible. The more common types include arrowroot, barley, cumin, cucumber, mulberry, oats, onions, millet, soybeans, wheat, rice, persimmons, and sorghum.

Fauna

The animals of Rokugan are, without any doubt, as varied as its plant life. From the great brown bears living in the coniferous forests of the north to the deadly tropical snakes of the Mantis isles and the savage lions of the central plains, Rokugan is home to countless animal species. Although some kinds of animals call all of Rokugan their home, migrating through the length of the Empire or populating almost all of its wilderness, other species can only be found in specific areas. Thus while panthers and parrots thrive in the tropical islands and jungles of the Mantis Clan, deer and gophers prefer to settle in the open plains, and goats and cougars make their homes in the remote and rocky terrain of the high mountains.

Forests and mountains have particularly dense animal life, while the cultivated plains tend to be home to fewer species. The long coasts of Rokugan attract birds as well as other small animals, particularly in areas unsullied by human hands. Perhaps the densest animal population, however, is in the sea. The Mantis Clan in particular long ago learned to respect the rich and wondrous aquatic life of Rokugan.

The warm seas in the south and around the Mantis Isles are filled with brightly colored tropical coral fish. There are so many species of these that no one has yet identified—much less named—all of them. Mantis fishermen catch and export many of these exotic fish as pets, and keeping tropical fish is a popular pastime among the rich nobles of the Empire. The warmer waters are also home to graceful dolphins, blood-thirsty sharks, and black finless porpoises, together with a hundred different kinds of shellfish and jellyfish, and a few rarer beasts such as triangular-tailed dugongs.

The oceans are also home to many species of sea turtles, manta rays, and whales, the latter ranging from the merely large to the truly gigantic in size. In the northern waters the impressive beaked whales or narwhals can be found, while furtive sea lions and fur seals are numerous and prized for their coats. Walruses and horseshoe crabs can also be found in the north, while the spider crab, the largest and most impressive natural crustacean known to Rokugan, can be found almost anywhere along the coasts of the Empire.

On land, common and widespread Rokugani animals include badgers, bats, bears, boars, cats, chickens, dogs, donkeys, foxes, frogs, gophers, horses, lions, lizards, monkeys, mice, mules, ox, pigs, ponies, rabbits, rats, sheep, snakes, squirrels, stags, tigers, tortoises, turtles, wolves, and yaks. Furry-tailed dormice, copper-toned pheasants, colorful woodpeckers, crest-headed ducks, and insectivorous moles and shrews are also found almost everywhere. In the southern forests, monkeys and bats can be found, and the jungles of the Mantis Isles boast larger apes, chameleons, panthers, parrots, land salamanders, and many kinds of snakes. Somewhat rarer inhabitants of the Mantis lands include crested serpent eagles, numerous kinds of lizards, and macaques, characterized by their red faces and cheek pouches.

The mixed forests of Rokugan's temperate regions are home to small deer, whose beautiful fur coats change with the seasons, as well as brown and red bears, wolves and wild dogs, reddish-brown foxes, noble-looking stags, black crows, and savage boar. Lizards, snakes, and small game such as hare are also quite common. In the coniferous forests of the north, one can encounter brown bears, hazel grouses, stags, and the occasional steppe tiger from across the Great Wall of the North. Rodents of all kinds roam the length of the Empire and are as numerous in the forests as they are on the plains.

In rocky hills and high mountains, aggressive black bears and wild cougars can sometimes be a danger to unwary travelers. Other species of animal, such as badgers, mountain goats, and small rodents also abound. In heavily wooded mountains, red bears, deer, stags, small game, and boar also occur in large numbers.

Fewer animals live in the plains of Rokugan, mainly because most of these areas were settled and cultivated by mankind long ago. Nevertheless, deer, raccoons, tanuki, wild horses, and gophers inhabit the plains of the Empire. These areas are not without predators either, such as cougars, lynx, and wolves. In the central plains of the Empire, prides of lions roam the plains as well.

Along the shores of rivers and lakes can be found fresh water giant salamanders, the largest amphibian animal known to exist. Mink, otters, and several species of ducks (notably mandarin ducks) are also numerous. Fresh water fish, such as the salmon and rainbow trout, are plentiful in most lakes and rivers of the Empire, and form an important part of the Rokugani diet.

In addition to all the mammals and reptiles native to Rokugan, there are over 600 different species of birds that consider these lands home. The most common of these are the sparrow, the house swallow, and the thrush. Crows are also quite common, as are robins, woodpeckers, kestrels, cuckoos, pheasants, pigeons, and chickens—though of course most of the latter are farm animals.

About a quarter of Rokugan's bird population lives on or near water. The crane, heron, swan, duck, and stork are certainly the most common, and each of these species include several sub-types, such as the grey heron, the black-crowned night heron, the green-backed heron, and the pond heron, to name only a few. Other species of birds, such as the diving grebe, the long-necked cormorant, and the snipe also live in lakes, ponds, and marshes.

The Unaligned Lands

Rokugan is surrounded by territories that do not belong to any of its Major or Minor Clans. The most important of these regions is of course the Shadowlands to the southwest, but the Empire's other borders also give onto important unaligned lands. The largest of these is the vast desert to the northwest of the Empire. This place, called the Burning Sands, is a sun-scorched wasteland, and only the Unicorn and the Scorpion have ever visited it. To journey into the Burning Sands is a deadly prospect indeed.

To the north of the Emerald Empire is another vast and largely unknown territory, a great steppe home to the wild Yobanjin tribes. To the east lies the ocean, and aside from a few remote islands none can say what lies beyond—the gaijin known as the Merenae once sailed from out of those strange seas, and many Rokugani still fear their possible return.

It should be noted that unaligned lands are found not only outside the borders of the Empire but also within them. Indeed, some areas of Rokugan have remained unexplored for centuries, or were abandoned so long ago that no one truly knows what mysteries and wonders lie within.

Hazards of the Unprotected Lands

Travel through the Empire is relatively safe as long as one remains on the Emperor's roads. The wilderness regions of Rokugan, however, are much more hazardous. In forests, hills, and mountains, the terrain makes travel difficult and the untamed animals and strange creatures in these places can prove to be quite deadly. More intelligent threats, ranging from bandits to Shadowlands beasts to oni summoned from Jigoku, often hide in remote and untended areas to avoid detection. While the Great Clans offer protection to any peaceful traveler journeying within the Empire's territories, they cannot provide the same benefit to those who explore its wildernesses.

The unexplored wastelands of the Burning Sands offer not only the natural hazards found in any desert—such as the blazing sun, the difficulty of finding water sources, deadly sandstorms, and temperatures that drop below the freezing point each night—but also a surprising number of strange and deadly creatures. Scorpions, poisonous snakes unknown in the Emerald Empire, mysterious fire-belching reptiles, and even giant sandworms capable of swallowing a man whole—the Burning Sands abound with strange and untamed wildlife. As if that were not enough, the whole desert lies under some manner of curse, and Rokugani magic does not seem to work properly there.

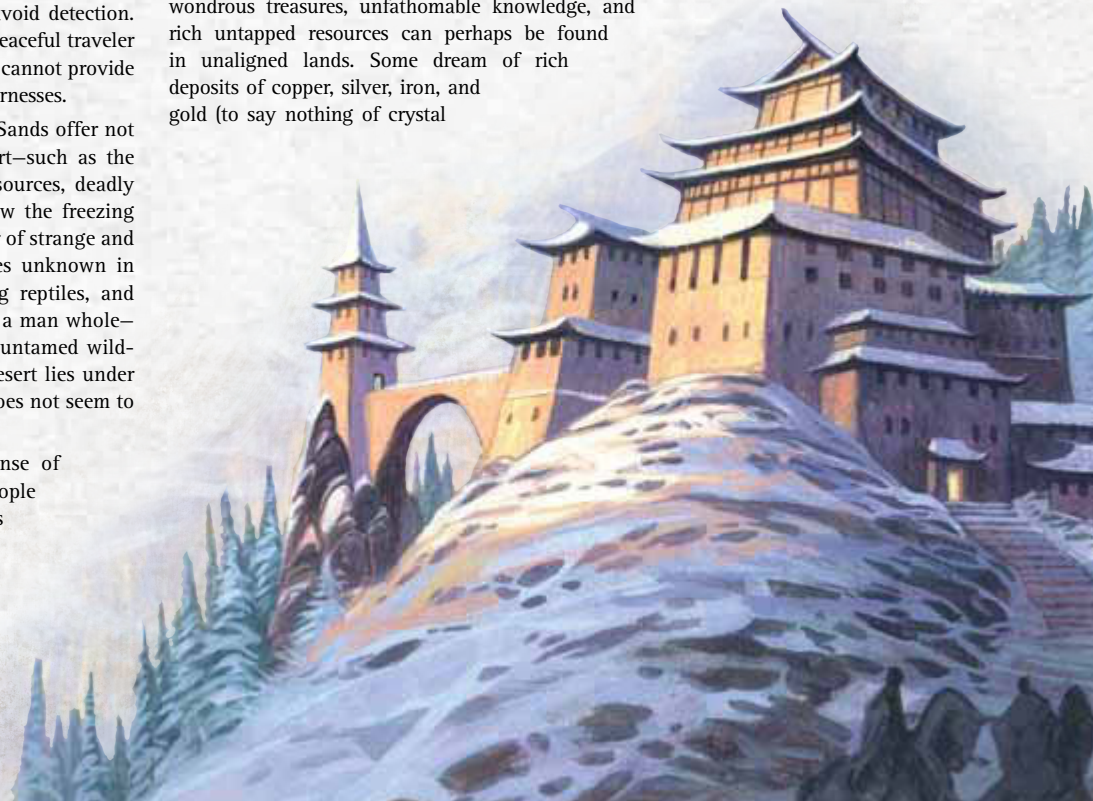
To the north and northeast, a vast expanse of unexplored steppe remains a mystery to the people of the Emerald Empire. Many roaming tribes live in this great wilderness, but the people of Rokugan have met only a handful of these groups, most notably the Yobanjin nomads who sometimes trade with the Phoenix—and sometimes raid the northern Empire.

Many years ago while the Unicorn were gone from the Empire, the samurai of the Lion Clan were forced to fight against another barbarian tribe, this one hailing from the northwest. These barbarians frequently ventured inside the borders of the Lion provinces, stealing food and domesticated animals, and slaughtering men, women, and children without mercy. After years of these bloody forays, the Lion Clan finally organized a great raid against these people. In only a few years, the warriors of the Lion all but eradicated this menace, killing most of the barbarians outright. The raids against Rokugan abruptly stopped and never resumed. Of course, none know today whether any of these savage northmen remain, or whether they hold grudges against those who all but exterminated their tribe.

Beyond the Burning Sands in the distant west, dozens of foreign civilizations exist. The ways of these gaijin nations are unknown to the people of Rokugan, and only a few sages even know they exist. At different times both the Unicorn and (in the early twelfth century) the Scorpion Clans have had contact with foreigners from these distant lands, and they agree that most of these barbarous so-called civilizations are extremely dishonorable and possess bloodthirsty warriors, devious tricks, and strange and treacherous magical arts. These people have nothing in common with those living in the Emerald Empire. Further, while some of these civilizations appear to be well organized, others are little more than nomads or bandits, roaming the wilderness. No Rokugani can fathom what fate these foreign peoples and places reserve for the unwary traveler, but all are convinced nothing good can come from these lands. The Burning Sands, the mysterious west, and the countless strange civilizations that lie beyond—these are no places for a samurai.

Risks and Rewards

Despite all the dangers in the unexplored territories inside and outside the Empire, many samurai believe that wondrous treasures, unfathomable knowledge, and rich untapped resources can perhaps be found in unaligned lands. Some dream of rich deposits of copper, silver, iron, and gold (to say nothing of crystal



and jade) that may yet be discovered in the Emerald Empire's remote territories. They think of the valuable lumber and exotic animals to be found in the great forests of the Shinomen and the unexplored islands on the ocean. Others dream of discovering fertile lands suitable for rice, wheat, and other grains, if only one could claim ownership over them. But finding and claiming such treasures is not an easy task when one considers the countless natural hazards, deadly creatures, roaming bandits and barbarians, and strange civilizations that already dwell in these lands. Moreover, contact with the gaijin has been officially forbidden by Imperial law since the Battle of White Stag in the fifth century.

That being said, the lure of foreign arts and achievements can lead many samurai into exploring these foreign places. Gold jewelry, polished gems, fine dyed silks, and similar commodities are a powerful lure, and wealthy samurai nobles are often willing to pay for such goods regardless of their provenance. The Mantis Clan has maintained covert contacts with the foreign realm known as the Ivory Kingdoms for centuries, smuggling exotic goods and artwork into the Empire for this very purpose. Likewise, sages and scholars overcome with curiosity may pay well to learn about strange languages, or to see scrolls and books detailing the histories, gods, official edicts, and belief systems of foreign cultures. Pragmatic samurai may also feel the lure of acquiring new combat techniques, learning new ways of crafting weapons, or uncovering the secrets of war engines yet to be invented in Rokugan.

Even within Rokugan, the possibilities for discovering lost knowledge or ancient civilizations can be compelling. Countless explorers have visited the ruins of the ancient Naga civilization, and during the twelfth century the Unicorn discovered the ruins of a vast city of purple crystal beneath the Seikitsu Pass. Other secrets of ancient glories may have left traces inside the borders of the Empire, still awaiting human discovery.

Ruins and Forgotten Places

There are many forgotten places in and around Rokugan, ruins abandoned or destroyed long ago. A complete list of such ancient secrets would be a book in itself, but here we present three as examples.

The Ruins of Shiro Chuda

In the early centuries of the Empire, Shiro Chuda lay at the center of the Snake Clan's modest holdings near the provinces of the Phoenix Clan. Founded by a former Isawa, the Snake Clan was corrupted by an evil spirit called a Shuten Doji, a terrible entity that could not be banished or destroyed. In the year 402, in what history remembers as the Five Nights of Shame, the Phoenix invaded Snake territory and killed every man, woman, and child they could find. Not even the animals were spared, lest the Shuten Doji escape in a possessed body.

For hundreds of years afterward, the ruins of Shiro Chuda and the surrounding Snake lands were left well alone. No sane man dared enter this territory, haunted as it surely was by the restless ghosts of all of those slain by the Phoenix... not to mention the possibility that the Shuten Doji itself might yet lurk there. What treasures might still lie within the ancient castle of the Snake, none can tell, but anyone who dared venture into this part of the world would surely have to brave great dangers—not least, remnants of the Taint left behind by the Chuda.

The Ruins of Shiro Heichi

Centuries ago, the Boar Clan was wiped away by a supernatural tragedy, resulting in the creation of the terrible artifact known as the Anvil of Despair. The Heichi family was lost forever, but its name still echoes in both legend and history... and in the ruins of the Boar Clan's once-great stronghold. Shiro Heichi is situated to the north of Crab territory, at the farthest edge of the Twilight Mountains. Just as almost no one knows what befell the Boar Clan, few in Rokugan can imagine what mysteries lie within the walls of this ruined keep. Everyone who has ever heard about the place, however, does know one thing: a restless and terrible spirit called the Shakoki Dogu haunts the foothills in which the ancient Boar Clan stronghold may be found. It is said this powerful malevolent spirit feeds on madness, and provokes it in those who fall into its grasp.

The Ruins of Hiruma Castle

In the eighth century, the Shadowlands legions of the Oni Lord known only as the Maw overran much of the Crab lands. Although the Maw's forces were eventually defeated at the Battle of the Cresting Wave, most of the Hiruma family's lands, including their ancestral castle, remained within the newly-swollen Shadowlands.

For the next three centuries, countless Hiruma would perish in a long series of campaigns to retake the castle. Suffused with Taint, Hiruma Castle became a deathtrap, luring the Hiruma into hopeless battles and sieges that bled the family white. In addition to the major campaigns, many lesser expeditions were mounted to the abandoned castle by samurai searching for lost artifacts and records of the Hiruma family.

Hiruma Castle was finally reclaimed and purged of the Taint in the early twelfth century. For games set before that date, however, it can be a powerful lure for those seeking lost knowledge—or revenge against the forces of Fu Leng.

New Mechanics

The following sections offers a new Basic School for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition rules. The Shinjo are known as wanderers, and few samurai in Rokugan can claim to have as deep a knowledge of its landscapes and animals than the Shinjo.

The Shinjo are an ancient and honorable family that sustained considerable damage to their reputation due to the subversion by their leadership by the sinister Kolat organization. Information on this shameful episode may be found in the Kolat chapter of the L5R 4th Edition expansion book *Enemies of the Empire*. Prior to the exposure of this shame, the Shinjo were the ruling family of the Unicorn Clan, maintaining a line of Clan Champions descended from the clan's founding Kami herself. After the purge of the Kolat, the Shinjo were removed from power and replaced by their distant kinsmen, the Moto. Despite this change, the family persevered in its duties to the Unicorn Clan, and remained one of the pillars of the Unicorn Clan and its military endeavors.

New Basic School: Shinjo Bushi

The Shinjo excel at mounted tactics, a trait common to all Unicorn bushi traditions. The family's fighting techniques incorporate a number of gaijin fighting methods encountered during the clan's centuries of travel outside the Empire, and as a result they employ a unique defensive style that depends on concepts such as the active parry, riposte, and other such oddities that most Rokugani are unfamiliar with.

Shinjo Bushi School [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Bow, Knife, Traveling Pack, Horse, 10 Koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Way of the Ki-Rin

The Shinjo family's natural affinity for horsemanship is immediately obvious and pervades their every action. When spending a Void Point to add +1k1 to any School Skill Roll, you may also add your rank in Horsemanship to the total. This bonus cannot be used while in the Center Stance.

Rank Two: Dance of the Blade

The ancient gaijin swordsmanship techniques practiced by the Shinjo have given them a defensive edge against many styles practiced within the Empire. When you are in the Full Defense Stance and an opponent succeeds with an attack roll that targets you, you may immediately take a Free Action to make a Contested Agility Roll against that opponent. If successful, the attack misses instead. This may be done a number of times per Round equal to your School Rank.

Rank Three: The Four Winds Strike

The swift and relentless assault of a Shinjo is a dreadful sight to behold for his enemies. You may make attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action when wielding weapons that possess the Samurai keyword. If you are fighting while mounted, you may also attack as a Simple Action when wielding a bow.

Rank Four: Spirit of the Blade Unleashed

Those who mistake the defensive style of the Shinjo as weak can find themselves brutally surprised in the last moments of their lives. When you are in the Defense or Full Defense Stances and an opponent makes a melee attack targeting you, after the attack resolves you may immediately take a Free Action to make one melee attack against that opponent. This causes you to immediately assume the Attack Stance. This Technique may be used a number of times per skirmish equal to your School Rank, but may only be used once per Round.

Rank Five: Dancing with the Fortunes

A Shinjo atop a horse is a sight that gives even the most seasoned among his enemies pause, and for good reason. During a skirmish, when mounted, when you wish to spend a Void Point you may make a Void Ring Roll (TN 20) as a Free Action. If the Ring Roll is successful, you gain the mechanical benefit of having spent the Void Point without actually spending it. (This does not actually create a bonus Void Point, it simply generates the mechanical effects of spending one.) If the roll fails, you spend the Void Point as normal. You may only use this Technique a number of times per skirmish equal to the number of Void Points you had at the start of the skirmish.

You may utilize this Technique when on foot as well, but the TN of the Void Ring Roll increases to 30.

The student turned the small box over in his hands several times, examining it carefully. "Master," he asked his sensei, "why is it considered rude not to decline a gift twice before accepting? I understand that it is customary, and I would never be rude enough not to observe it, but how did such a custom begin in the first place?"

The sensei smiled. "It is a valid question, and one that shows your intelligence. How many are introduced to things as children and simply never question them? That you question what is presented to you sets you apart from the pack."

The boy frowned. "Is it not disrespectful to question tradition?" he asked. "That is what my mother always told me."

"Something said merely to prevent embarrassment," the sensei said. "And justly so, for it is always good to avoid being noticed, even as a child. Your mother did you a service by keeping you from raising questions among others, but now is the time to cast that aside and question."

"Yes, master," the boy said, bowing.

"As to the point at hand," the sensei said, "the truth is that no one can know for certain. As with most social customs we currently practice, it can be assumed that the tradition was started with Lady Doji, who in turn developed the social graces of Rokugan based upon the styling of her divine family, the Kami, in the Heavens."

The boy nodded. "I see."

The sensei raised a cautionary finger. "I said that it could be assumed," he cautioned. "Assumptions are for the other clans, not for us. Never assume something that can be questioned."

"Yes, master," the boy said. "My apologies."

"My personal suspicion," the sensei said, "is that the Imperial families are responsible in some way for the tradition. They benefit from it, as it gives them the impression of largesse and benevolence, as well as generosity when it suits them. That the same benefits are extended to the clans is of course lost upon them."

"You hold the Imperial families in low regard, master?"

The sensei nodded. "The Emperor and his family are of course excluded, for to suggest otherwise would be blasphemy," he clarified. "Those who serve him are self-important buffoons, however. The Otomo are obnoxious beyond all comprehension, the Seppun self-assured, and the Miya hopelessly naïve." He raised a finger again. "That said, we must remember to pay them all due respect at all times. They command significant political power and would make terribly annoying and expensive enemies."

"Is questioning the Imperial families not tantamount to questioning the Emperor? The families serve the Emperor directly, after all."

"All samurai serve the Emperor." The sensei waved dismissively at the conversation. "By that logic questioning any samurai is questioning the Emperor, but of course the Imperials have instituted such a belief purely for their own benefit despite how self-contradictory it is." He folded his arms into his sleeves. "The important aspect of the matter is to understand how popularly held customs can be turned into weapons to use against one's enemies. Interpretation and execution are powerful tools, and you will need to understand them all."

"I will try, master," the student said.

"I should hope so," the sensei replied. "Now, let us discuss the tradition of bowing, and how it can be used to manipulate those whom you encounter."

Ritual and Routine

"First we are enveloped by the womb; then we are enveloped by custom; finally we are enveloped by death."

– The Tao of Shinsei

The Samurai

A samurai of the Empire goes through his days moving from ritual to ritual, most of them so basic and deeply ingrained that they are performed without thinking. As discussed more briefly in the *Book of Air* in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook, most of these rituals deal with how one properly interacts with an Other. This "Other" might be another samurai, a heimin farmer, the spirit of an ancestor, or even a fire kami—if it has a place in the Celestial Order, there is a protocol for dealing with it.

Human interactions are governed by the patterns of etiquette. An ordinary samurai kneels before a lord because the lord occupies a higher place in the Celestial Order. Someone who is a social equal is greeted with a bow, but by making the bow lower or holding it longer, one can show varying degrees of respect—or subtle disrespect. Indeed, etiquette supplies not only the rules for correct behavior but also the rules for how to insult someone correctly—important knowledge in an armed martial society where insults are dealt with through duels. In a world where everyone carries a three-foot razor blade (or has the protection of someone else who does), courtesy can be a matter of life and death.

There are standards for written communication as well. A casual note to a close friend can be quickly brushed on the back of a piece of used paper. A letter to one's lord, on the other hand, calls for thick new paper, the finest ink and the best possible calligraphy. A love letter should be done on fine paper and scented with a symbolically appropriate fragrance. Often the exchange of letters becomes a courtly entertainment or rises to the point of being a major political weapon; see "The Game of Letters" later in this chapter for further details.

Interactions with the various kinds of spirits also have their own rituals. Shugenja are specialists in these rituals, but there are basics known to all samurai. Before entering a temple, for example, a samurai must wash his hands and mouth to purify himself. Household shrines must receive daily offerings of incense, food, and prayer. All prayers begin with clapping loudly, showing reverence for the spirits being addressed.

A Letter

To Lady Doji Domotai, Lady of the House of Doji and Champion of the Crane, Tsume Kyoichi, humble servant of the Crane and Magistrate of the Village of Weeping Pines sends greetings.

My Lady,

I hope that this letter finds you in health, and that your glorious ancestors continue to watch over you. It is my duty to inform you that bandits have settled into the woodlands to the east of this village. My doshin who have scouted the area estimate that there are at least twenty of them, enough to threaten the village itself and merchants traveling along the Road of Seven Bridges. I therefore humbly request reinforcements so that your estates may be cleared of this filth.

Tsume Kyoichi

From The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

I was invited to the sumai tournament Lady Kazuko sponsored to celebrate the end of summer's heat. While I was there I accompanied some of the other women to view the early chrysanthemums in the Lady's garden. We hadn't been there even long enough to compose a haiku when Kakita Tamami walked around the willow tree. Fortunes, why do these things happen to me? Everyone knew what I had said about her last play. "Ah, Doji-san," she said, and bobbed her head at me as if I were a child. "How does the Sun find you today?" "I am fine, Kakita-san," I replied, and bowed to her almost as deeply as I had to Lady Kazuko. I held the bow for the length of a breath before rising and smiling at her. Oh, she glared!

Doji Barahime was trained as a courtier, but her acid tongue and waspish disposition kept her from becoming more than a minor political force. Instead, she is remembered as one of the leading literary and artistic critics of her day. Widowed at a young age (shortly after their marriage her husband developed a fondness for fugu sushi which eventually killed him), she devoted her considerable free time to the arts. Barahime's critiques were noted for their brilliant insights, their elegance of style, and sometimes for their savagery. Shoddy workmanship infuriated her, and she made sure her readers knew exactly what she thought of artists who didn't measure up to her standards.

Most of her critiques were collected in her pillow books, along with stories and observations of her life and a handful of poems. Some of these were circulated during her life, but the majority were published after her death by her niece, Doji Yuuki.

Barahime maintained a long-running feud with the playwright Kakita Koshiro over the validity of kabuki as an art form. Shortly after his death by illness in the year 956 she retired to a monastery. The last entry of her pillow book is a poem, dated the day she learned of Koshiro's death:

Even flaming coals
can be snatched up, smothered,
carried in a pot.
Why then can't I
see my love again?

Doji Barahime is given ancestral honors on the last day of the month of the Boar by the descendants of Doji Yuuki, by aspiring dramatists, and by exceptionally brave artists.

Monks

Monks occupy a unique place in Rokugani society, and the customs relating to them naturally reflect this. They are not actually members of the samurai caste (though some monks are retired samurai), but their place in the religious life of the Empire gives them a social status that farmers and merchants lack. Most samurai will show monks the same courtesy they would show a low-ranking samurai, and a monk with a reputation for learning or wisdom could be given the respect normally reserved for Daimyo. There are no legal repercussions to being rude to a monk, but the social consequences for showing such lack of piety and respect can be severe. Monks have dedicated themselves to the teachings of Shinsei, who was honored by the First Emperor and the founding Kami of the Great Clans, so disrespecting a monk can, by implication, be taken as disrespect for the Celestial Order.

Among the heimin monks are shown great respect. Shugenja are rare and frequently occupied by the business of their lord, but monks are far more common and occupied only by the Tao. When a peasant woman needs prayers for the safe delivery of her child, or a farmer needs a blessing on a new house, or a village needs someone to officiate at a harvest ceremony, it's usually a member of the Brotherhood of Shinsei who is there to help.

In their own lives monks observe many customs and rituals intended to aid them in their path to enlightenment. They say special prayers to clear and focus the mind first thing in the morning, before every meal, and before reading the *Tao*.

The Bonge

The bonge—the common people of the Empire—have a great many rituals and customs of their own, which they cling to with a dedication that rivals the staunchest Lion traditionalist. The reason for this is simple: they live in constant peril. Commoners face all manner of threats, including disease, earthquake, drought, deluge, fire, cold, bandits, ronin, their lord's samurai, some other lord's samurai, ghosts, nezumi infestations, and creatures from the Shadowlands. Their ancestors did things a certain way and survived to bear descendants, so they do things in exactly the same way, hoping to survive to have descendants themselves. There is some variation in this—urban commoners tend to be somewhat more open to new ideas than country-dwellers—but as a general rule all heimin are suspicious of new ideas and anyone espousing them.

Sample Prayers

Morning Prayer to the Ancestors:

"Honored ancestors, you watch over your children day and night. Honored ones, accept then this offering of gratitude."

A Daily Prayer for Purification:

"All the evil karma created by me, by my fear, desire, and regret, created by my body and thought, I confess openly and fully."

A Prayer Before Meals:

"Rice gruel is effective in five ways to aid the traveler on the Way. There is no limit to its good results, resulting in peace forever."

A Prayer Used as a Blessing of Persons and Places:

"Whatever spirits have come together here, either belonging to the earth or living in the air, let all spirits be happy, and then listen attentively to what is said.

"Therefore, O spirits, attend to me, show kindness to the human race who both day and night bring their offerings; therefore protect them with your strength.

"Whatever wealth there be here or in the other world, or whatever excellent jewel in the heavens, it is certainly not equal to the Way. The most excellent jewel is found in the Tao of Shinsei, by this truth may there be enlightenment.

"The destruction of fear, the freedom from passion, the cutting off from regret; the excellent peace which Shinsei attained, there is nothing equal to that Way. This excellent jewel is found in the Tao, by this truth may there be enlightenment.

"The purity which the best of teachers praised, the meditation which they call uninterrupted, there is no meditation like this. This excellent jewel is found in the Tao, by this truth may there be enlightenment."

Members of the bonge worship their ancestors, but their motivations are different from samurai. They do not believe their ancestors can aid them; rather, they simply venerate them as family elders. For supernatural aid they look instead to the Fortunes, especially the great Seven Fortunes. Every village will have at least a small shrine to the Fortunes, and daily life is filled with rituals intended to coax goodwill from the spirits.

The bonge lie in the middle level of Rokugani society, and their relations with samurai are more complex than those of eta or other bottom-caste persons. When a samurai enters a village, he will typically walk to the center of it calling loudly for the headman. The headman or someone from his family will arrive as quickly as possible, inviting the samurai to his house. Every headman's family maintains a 'quality room' just for visiting samurai, and any guests will be invited there and offered food and drink. The headman will politely ask what the samurai wants. If the samurai is a representative of the village's lord, the headman will agree to any and all requests, regardless of whether the village can actually fulfill them. If the samurai is a ronin, the headman will attempt to talk him out of the request, or agree to the barest minimum required to avoid the wave-man's wrath. If the samurai serves a lord other than the village's, the headman will agree to all reasonable requests—and then make note of them in the village's tax ledger. When magistrates come in the autumn to collect taxes, this amount will be charged off against the village's tax liability.

A wandering monk who enters a village will generally go first to the local shrine. There he will offer prayers and see that it is well-cared for. Usually, a villager will soon greet him and offer him food and a place to sleep. Monks generate far less fear in a village than samurai do, and villagers will generally agree to any reasonable requests a monk might make. In return, the villagers expect the monk to perform any blessings or rituals they might need. Of course, not all monks are honorable and pious, and villagers like to tell tales of drunken or womanizing monks who meet their comeuppance at the hands of honest peasants.

Household Rituals

The Women's Rite for Needles

On the twenty-seventh day of the Month of the Dog, all the women of a household will kneel before the shelf that holds the family shrine. The woman in charge of the household places a block of tofu on the shelf and one by one sticks in all the needles that have been bent or broken by use during the past year. That task complete, she offers a prayer of thanksgiving to all the needles who sacrificed themselves in service to the household.

New Year's Luck Ritual

On the last day of the year a handful of soybeans are thrown about in each room of the house, then swept up and tossed out of a window. This is believed to sweep up all the lingering bad luck from the old year, preparing the house for good luck in the new year.

Way Stations of a Life

A samurai is, in theory at least, always willing to die on behalf of his lord. But this does not mean his life is of little consequence or passes by without marking its special moments. Birth, death, and other important occasions all have customs associated with them. The basic forms of these customs were discussed the L5R Core Rulebook's *Book of Air*. Here we examine them in greater depth.

Birth and Death

"To be born at all is to have died before."

— Lion proverb

The birth of a child is always an important event for a family. All families will take steps to ensure that mother and child are undisturbed by evil spirits, though opinions vary throughout the Empire whether this is best done before, after, or during the birth. In any case, the necessary rituals will be conducted by the household shugenja (for wealthy and powerful samurai) or by a shugenja or monk from a nearby temple. A month after a child's birth, the parents will take the infant to the nearest shrine to be blessed and have its name recorded. Birth ceremonies tend to be small, family-focused events; if someone invites you to celebrate the birth of their child, you know they consider you a trusted friend.

Funeral ceremonies, on the other hand, can vary widely in size. The funeral of a young child will probably only be attended by family and a few neighbors, but the funeral of a famous warrior or courtier will draw mourners from all over.

The exact details of a funeral ceremony will vary slightly depending on the circumstances of the death—a Mantis who is swept overboard in a storm doesn't leave behind anything to cremate, and in the Crab Lands if there is the slightest suspicion the deceased might be Tainted they will cremate first and hold the fancy ceremony later. Still, there is an established

Adventure Hook: A Shameful Funeral

Challenge

An important samurai with a link to one or more of the PCs has died due to illness. This could be a relative or even the provincial daimyo of one or more of the PCs. They are invited to funeral ceremonies along with a number of other prominent samurai.

Focus

Before the cremation can take place, the unthinkable happens: the body gets up and runs amok. The PCs must help put the animated body down before someone gets hurt. In the meantime, rumors quickly begin spreading that the late samurai was Tainted or possibly even a maho-tsukai.

Strike

The real culprit is a political rival attending the funeral. He used a maho scroll to animate the body, hoping the ensuing scandal would disgrace the family and allow him to take control of their lands. The PCs must find out the truth before the host family's reputation is shattered—otherwise this story could end with the entire family committing seppuku.

From The Pillow Book Of Doji Barahime

Yesterday I attended the funeral of General—as Father's representative. The day was horribly hot and humid; I could feel my under-kimono melt onto my body with each step and I might as well have left my parasol at home for all the help it gave me. Father decreed I had to take Yuu-chan with me, so she could practice her manners in public, and—Jizo be praised!—she actually behaved herself. I suppose she was simply overwhelmed by the crowd.

The Governor was there, along with his karo and hatamoto. Our lord wasn't able to attend, but he had sent his senior advisor. The grounds were thick with Doji courtiers of every rank, and I don't think I could have swung my parasol without hitting a Kenshinzen. Not that I advise swinging parasols around Kenshinzen; they are a twitchy lot. Anyway, Yuu-chan kept mostly quiet as she stared at the crowd with those huge eyes of hers. At one point she turned to me and said, "Auntie! There must be two hundred people here to mourn the General!" I think I kept the smirk off of my face. A hundred were there to mourn the General, and a hundred were there hoping to impress the mourners.

pattern for funerals throughout the Empire, and every family will try to follow that pattern as much as possible.

Immediately after death an eta will moisten the lips of the deceased with a mixture of salt and water. This is the 'last food and drink,' and it is intended to fortify the spirit of the dead for its journey into the next life. Next the eta will take the body to be washed and dressed in funeral clothes. The cleansed body is brought back to the bedroom to lie in state until the cremation ceremony, which is normally held four days after death.

Near the bed holding the body a small table will be set up. The table is covered with a white cloth and red ribbons, and displays a blank funeral tablet along with various talismans. All of these items are purified by a shugenja or monk. White paper lanterns and flower wreathes are hung throughout the house, and the doors of the family shrine will be shut and covered with white paper to protect it from being rendered impure by the presence of the corpse.

An honor guard of bushi will be appointed to keep watch over the body. This is a custom that originated in Crab lands, due to Tainted bodies' unpleasant habit of reanimating, but over time it was adopted by the rest of the Empire. A chief mourner, usually a close family member, will also be appointed and it is his duty to make sure there is always someone in the room mourning the deceased. It is believed the spirit of the dead person lingers in the house for a few days after the death, and if it thinks it wasn't sufficiently mourned it may stay and turn into a malevolent ghost.

On the day of the cremation the eta load the body onto an unpainted palanquin with white curtains and carry it to the pyre. After the family and the other mourners have gathered, a monk or shugenja will say the necessary prayers and the pyre will be lit. When the pyre has burned out and the ashes are cool the family will gather for a private ritual in which they pick the bones out of the ashes and place them in a funeral urn.

Special chopsticks are employed for this ritual. The family member closest to the deceased will pick the bones out of the ashes, transferring them to the next closest member, who passes them on down the line until the last family member present puts the bones in the urn. In addition, the bones are placed into the urn in a special sequence: legs, arms, hips, backbones, teeth, and finally skull.

The funerary urn is returned to the house and placed on the family altar for 35 days of additional mourning. During this time dishes of specially blessed salt are kept at the gate and doorways of the house so visitors may purify their hands and face before entering. When the period of mourning ends the urn is taken away for final burial. Depending on the wealth and status of the family, this may be a special burial plot, a family shrine, or a temple of Shinsei. In the Lion Clan, sufficiently well-regarded samurai have the honor of being buried in the great Hall of the Ancestors, where their name will be honored by generations of Lion samurai to come.

Rice and Ashes

The custom of using chopsticks to pick bone from funeral ashes has influenced meal etiquette. It is incredibly rude to pass food from one person to the next via chopsticks because it too closely mimics this part of the funeral rite. The proper way to do it is for the first person to place the food on a plate, and the second person to then pick it up.

The Gempukku Ceremony

"Do not choose a famous name. Choose your name, and then make it famous."

— Toritaka Tatsune

The funeral ceremony and the gempukku ceremony have this in common: They both mark the end of one life and the start of a new one. A gempukku, however, is a joyous ceremony which marks a new generation added to the strength of a clan. The exact details of a gempukku vary, both between clans and based on whether the child in question was trained as a bushi, courtier, or shugenja. In almost all cases there will be some kind of testing. This is the last chance for the youth's teachers to evaluate their student, and the first chance for the young samurai to impress the world with his skills.

What the tests look for says a lot about the outlook of the samurai's family and clan. The Matsu, for example, set tests that push the martial skills of young Lion to their limit. The Shiba, however, take martial skills as a given and instead ask the new samurai to give a speech on how he will use those skills to defend the Phoenix.

After the testing, various blessings are pronounced on the new samurai, after which he officially announces his new name. By tradition the choice of name is left solely to the new adult, and it is usually kept a secret until the ceremony. The moment it is announced is always of great interest to the family; the name chosen, and the reasons behind it, says volumes about the character and ambitions of the new samurai. Many samurai, for this very reason, choose names of ancient heroes or ancestors who were highly regarded. For instance, in the twelfth century Doji Domotai set off shock waves when she chose the name of a Matsu hero for her own, but no one could doubt her regard for her Matsu sensei or her intent to live up to the ideals he had instilled in her.

Weddings

"Shipwreck renders a man poor for a year; a bad marriage makes him poor for life."

— Mantis proverb

As discussed in the L5R Core Rulebook, marriage in Rokugan is usually arranged and has little to do with love. Rokugani betrothals are negotiated contracts between two families, with the bride- and groom-to-be having only moderate input. Most families who can afford the fee will hire a professional *nakado* (matchmaker) to find a good spouse for their child and to conduct the negotiations with the other family. A matchmaker will consider a number of factors in arranging a marriage, but whether the two people have genuine feelings for each other is not one of them.

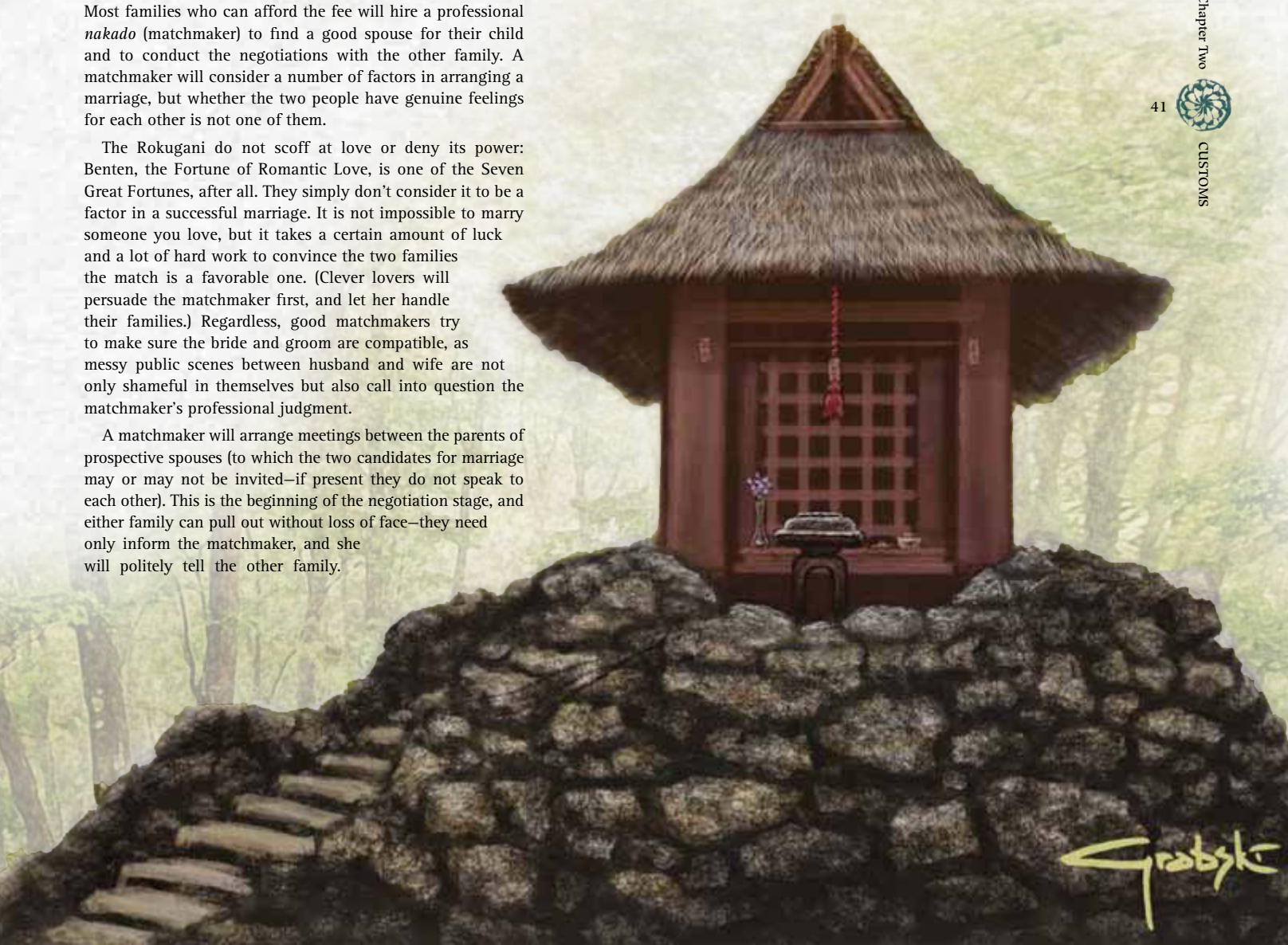
The Rokugani do not scoff at love or deny its power: Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love, is one of the Seven Great Fortunes, after all. They simply don't consider it to be a factor in a successful marriage. It is not impossible to marry someone you love, but it takes a certain amount of luck and a lot of hard work to convince the two families the match is a favorable one. (Clever lovers will persuade the matchmaker first, and let her handle their families.) Regardless, good matchmakers try to make sure the bride and groom are compatible, as messy public scenes between husband and wife are not only shameful in themselves but also call into question the matchmaker's professional judgment.

A matchmaker will arrange meetings between the parents of prospective spouses (to which the two candidates for marriage may or may not be invited—if present they do not speak to each other). This is the beginning of the negotiation stage, and either family can pull out without loss of face—they need only inform the matchmaker, and she will politely tell the other family. Once the marriage contract has been written out and signed by all parties, however, the engagement is official and breaking it embarrasses both families and the matchmaker.

The most important part of the contract will spell out if the bride will join the groom's family or vice-versa. Usually, whoever has the lower social station (e.g. Status) will join the family of the higher-Status partner, so many families seek women of slightly lower station to marry their sons. This rule is not absolute, however. The Utaku family absolutely forbids daughters to marry men of higher status, and the Matsu and Moshi families discourage it. In the Crane Clan, a man marrying a Doji woman will sometimes join her family out of respect for the clan's founder. Outside of family or clan traditions, sometimes it is simply advantageous to have a connection to a wealthy and powerful family, and such concerns have a way of trumping custom.

The family who gains a new member will traditionally pay a dowry to the family who loses a member, and ironing out the details of dowries is another task for the matchmaker. Between wealthy and powerful families, dowry negotiations can become quite elaborate in and of themselves.

The wedding ceremony itself is fairly simple. It usually takes place at a shrine, either a family shrine or in a nearby temple, and is attended only by the families involved. A shugenja purifies and blesses the couple, after which



the two of them read their vows and take three sips each from three different cups of sake. Incense and prayer are offered to the Fortunes and the ancestors, and the ceremony is done. In some cases, the completion of the ceremony will be signified by tying the bride and groom's hands together with a red thread, symbolizing the new connection between them.

The reception that follows is more lavish. Depending on the wealth of the families it may involve up to several hundred people. If the couple are members of the samurai caste they can expect a representative of their lord to attend, and if they are of high enough rank the lord himself may make an appearance. It is considered good taste to present the couple with a wedding gift. In the upper classes, the gift is usually purely symbolic, representing wishes for long life and many children. In the lower castes, gifts of money to help defray the wedding expenses are considered appropriate.

Everyday Manners and Mores

Gift-Giving

As discussed in the L5R Core Rulebook, the Rokugani consider gift-giving to be an arena where it is truly the thought that counts. A lord already provides his samurai retainers with food, shelter, clothing, armor, and any other reasonable need, so giving a samurai something useful implies his lord is unable to take care of him, a potentially deadly insult. While ronin and members of the bonge don't have that kind of security, the idea that a useful gift is an insult has percolated all through Rokugani society. That is not to say a ronin or a peasant farmer will object to being given money, but it does mean the giver and the receiver will pretend koku really aren't all that useful.

Gifts are given for a variety of reasons. A Rokugani may send a gift to a friend as a memento of past times, or to congratulate him on a happy occasion, or merely because the object reminded him of that friend. When meeting a superior or one's host for the first time it is also proper to present a gift, and a gift may be given to someone of lower station as a recognition of merit. Special occasions such as marriages and gempukku ceremonies also are proper venues for gift-giving.

The things that are given as gifts fall into certain broad categories. Something may be given as a gift because it had personal meaning to the giver. An example of this would be giving someone the first fan you ever painted, or a sword guard that belonged to an ancestor. Or the gift could have significance to the recipient, such as an unusual or especially amusing netsuke given to someone known to collect them.

The Imperial Histories: The Wedding of Hida O-Ushi

A few years after the Second Day of Thunder, the leadership of the Crab Clan faced a dilemma. Hida Yakamo, the Clan Champion, was fully occupied in the military leadership of the clan and had no time to marry, but the continuity of the family line had to be maintained. Unfortunately, the only other choice was his younger sister, Hida O-Ushi. O-Ushi had grown up without a mother, and her father Kisada had raised her in the same way as his sons—resulting in a young woman who was crude, violent, and not particularly chaste. Most of the Empire regarded her as an embarrassment. Yakamo himself cared deeply for his sister, but was often frustrated by her rebellious nature. When he decreed she should marry, the two siblings nearly came to blows, a furious O-Ushi declaring she would never be some samurai's "good little wife."

Yakamo delegated the task of arranging O-Ushi's marriage to his friend Daidoji Uji, lord of the Daidoji family. Unknown to him, Uji admired O-Ushi and longed to marry her himself. The lord of the Iron Cranes arranged a simple free-form combat tournament for those who might wish to marry Yakamo's sister. The tournament was open to all comers, and Uji's intention was to win it himself and claim O-Ushi for himself.

Much to everyone's surprise, O-Ushi decided to compete in the tournament herself, fighting for the right to marry no one. After a brutal battle, she and Uji were among the last combatants still standing. Uji seemed to have the upper hand, but the stubborn young woman headbutted him with her last strength, knocking them both senseless—and leaving a single man standing. Shinjo Yasamura, the unremarkable third son of the Shinjo daimyo, had survived the entire battle chiefly because no one paid him much attention.

Yakamo quickly ordered the wedding ceremony completed before his sister could wake. And when O-Ushi finally came round, she found her hand tied by a red thread to a slim young man who anxiously asked if she was all right.

Much to everyone's surprise, the marriage proved a harmonious one, perhaps in part because the mild-natured Yasamura never tried to question O-Ushi's superiority. Indeed, legend claims that when Yakamo first asked his sister what she thought of her new husband, she yanked on the red thread and watched Yasamura stumble awkwardly. She smirked and said, "He'll make a good little wife."

From The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

Yuu-chan came bounding into my study today, letter in hand. Will that girl never learn a dignified walk? "Auntie," she cried out, "I've been invited to Lord Hiroshi's for the Harvest Festival!"

"That is wonderful," I said, and I meant it. Hiroshi is too self-absorbed to know a good poem from a bad, so he will praise her to all of his guests regardless of what she does—the perfect patron for a young poet.

Yuu-chan, meanwhile, was going into a frenzy over her packing list. "Auntie, I will need some fresh writing brushes. And paper. And a kimono, I have no new kimono for this season—I'll look like a frump! And what can I bring to give Lord Hiroshi?"

"That's easy," I said. "Give him a mirror."

Gifts with religious or philosophical significance are also popular: collections of Shinseist parables, blessed amulets from important shrines, and similar items are popular choices.

Gifts can also be given to insult the recipient. This needs to be done with great delicacy, or the giver will be the one who ends up looking foolish. Richly extravagant gifts are insulting because the recipient has no way of returning the sentiment. An insulting gift could also subtly imply that the recipient is lacking in something; giving an annotated copy of Kakita's *Sword* to a Dragon samurai who follows Mirumoto's *Niten* is a good example of this.

How a gift is presented also determines whether a gift is perceived as a compliment or an insult. "Akodo-san, there is no greater treasure for a samurai than the wisdom and honor of his ancestors, and so I would like to present you with this copy of Akodo's *Leadership* as a token of my esteem," is a compliment. "Akodo-san, I would like to present you with a copy of this book, *Leadership*. I am sure it will help guide you through your life," is an insult.

Guests and Hosting

In a land of swords and paper walls, hospitality customs are extremely important, for they tell both guest and host exactly what to expect from each other and prevent unfortunate (and potentially deadly) disagreements.

When a samurai wishes to visit another samurai at home, the visitor will first announce themselves to the gateman (usually a servant, but powerful samurai will have bushi guarding their residences) by presenting a copy of his personal chop (or his personal mon, if he has one). He will also make a short speech explaining who he is and what his visit is for, after which he will wait while the information is conveyed to the host or hostess.

If the host isn't at home, or doesn't wish to see the visitor, the visitor is offered a cup of tea and told that the host is away and will be back tomorrow. It does not matter how long the host will really be away, or even if he is away at all, the gateman will always say, "tomorrow," and it is quite rude for a visitor to press the matter.

If the host will receive the visitor, he is shown into the house. A visitor who is a friend of the host will leave his daisho on a rack near the entrance of the house. If the visitor is an acquaintance, stranger, or enemy, he will usually keep his swords with him.

What he does with his swords when greeted by his host will set the tone of the meeting.

If the visitor places his sword to his right, making it hard to draw, he is expressing trust in his host. If he places the sword to his left he is indicating he doesn't trust his host, or perhaps that his host should not trust him. In any case, if the sword is laid with the hilt towards the host the visitor is hinting he doesn't think much of his host's skill with a sword.

It is worth pointing out here that actually drawing your sword in someone else's house is considered the height of rudeness: The presence of the family shrine makes a home

The Shoji Screen

Rokugan is a society where every residence is crowded and privacy is rare and difficult to attain. If that were not enough, most internal walls (and even some external ones) are made of paper. The Rokugani have devised a variety of social conventions to get around this problem, of which the most basic is simply to refuse to notice anything that does not concern them personally. Thus a Rokugani guest will sit quietly in his room, pretending not to hear a bitter argument between his host's family members in the adjoining room.

One of the more specialized variants on this social rule involves the use of shoji screens—folding screens of paper or silk, mounted in thin wooden frames. These can be moved anywhere within a residence, and by social compact they are considered the same as walls—so a pair of samurai may arrange "privacy" simply by stepping behind a convenient shoji, without ever leaving the room. Of course, whatever they say will be clearly audible, but the Empire's social rules mean that anyone who refers to their "private" conversation will be confessing to eavesdropping, instantly placing themselves in the wrong.

Of course, social convention does not prevent a samurai from acting on information he gained by overhearing a "private" conversation behind a shoji screen—he just has to avoid ever admitting where he got that information. Among skilled courtiers, the use and manipulation of information through conversations behind shoji can become a high art.

sacred space, and to draw steel dishonors a samurai and shames his ancestors. In Rokugan it can be far easier to justify a murder than a social gaffe.

If a visitor is to be staying in the house as a guest the host will do everything in his power to make the stay gracious and pleasant. Wealthy samurai have elegant guest rooms for their visitors, while samurai of more modest means will often offer their own bedroom to their guests. Even heimin, whose houses frequently only have one room, will offer their guest the most comfortable spot in the house. The visitor, meanwhile, stays studiously ignorant of all of the family's private business going on around him.

Food in Rokugan

When a wild duck flies straight through your kitchen door you shouldn't expect to find leeks on its back as well.

— Rokugani Proverb

Custom is as important in food and dining as it in all other areas of Rokugani life. Climate and geography are the determining factors for what food crops are available, but culture will influence how they are prepared and—perhaps more importantly—which foods are eaten by the elite and by the lower orders.

As an example of this, consider wheat. Wheat is an adaptable grain that can be grown in much of the Empire, but unlike rice it is almost never eaten as the grain itself.

Instead it gets milled into flour and made into noodles and occasionally breads. Noodles come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, and custom enters in to arbitrate who eats what. The Imperial Families eat very thin noodles made entirely by hand from the finest white flour. The higher ranks of the Crane Clan will eat noodles almost as thin as the Imperials do, whereas Crab of all levels favor thick, hearty noodles called *udon*. In the Dragon provinces samurai and heimin alike eat noodles made of a blend of wheat and buckwheat flours, buckwheat being even more tolerant of poor growing conditions than normal wheat.

Here are the raw materials available to the cooks of the Empire:

Cereals: Samurai throughout the Empire eat rice as the main part of their diet. Peasants in farming villages are frequently required to turn over all of the rice they grow to their lords, and grow millet or barley for their own use. In the towns matters are more complex. The poor of a town will eat millet or cheap noodles, but wealthy merchants eat rice almost as often as samurai do. Townsmen falling in between those two extremes will eat mixtures of millet and rice; the higher the proportion of rice, the wealthier the family (or the wealthier it wants to appear).

Wheat is also widely grown, and what doesn't get turned into noodles is made into bread. Breads fall into three basic types: steamed buns, pancake-like breads made from batters, and flatbreads formed from stiff doughs that are rolled out and cooked on a hot, flat griddle.

Proteins: Seafood is heavily consumed in all coastal areas, and in inland areas river and lake fish are eaten whenever possible. Poultry is also widely used, both as meat and eggs. Soybeans are another hugely popular source of protein, especially since they can be grown in most parts of the Empire. Most of the soybean crop is turned into tofu, a heavy bean curd that keeps well, but a significant fraction of each year's soybean crop is used to make salty, fragrant condiment called *shoyu* (soy sauce) and the thick paste called *miso*, which is used for flavoring and to make soups and sauces. Mung beans and the small, red adzuki bean are also eaten; the adzuki is the main ingredient in the sweet red bean paste used in many confections.

Vegetables and Fruits: A number of the Empire's important vegetables come from the sea: *nori* (dried seaweed) and *wakame* (fresh seaweed) are harvested in large quantities from coastal areas, and nori is sold all over Rokugan. The important land-grown vegetables are squash, cucumber, cabbage, kale, yam, burdock, carrot, radish, and onion. The most important fruits are the plum and the apricot, though pears, cherries and apples are also grown.

Dining Customs By Clan

"If it's got four legs and isn't a table, if it swims in the water and isn't a boat, if it flies and it isn't a kite—the Unicorn will eat it."

– Scorpion proverb

The Crab

Crab cuisine revolves around two concepts: simple and plenty. The bushi manning the Kaiu Wall want food that will fill them up and keep them going, and they want it in a hurry. Not everyone in the Crab lands serves on the Wall, but no one wants to be seen as belittling those who do, and so Wall cuisine has become the norm.

The one area where Crab cooks shine is in the preparation of fried things—the oil the foods absorb in the process adds extra calories, making it a very popular cooking method. Gourmets around the Empire agree that no one makes better *age* (deep fried tofu) than the cooks along the Wall. Noodle dishes are another specialty, due to the relatively low cost of wheat.

The one food advantage the Crab have over the other clans is that their southern location allows them to have fresh vegetables almost all year round: radishes and the hardier members of the cabbage family (kale, mustard, broccoli, broccoli rabe) can be grown later into the fall and started earlier in the spring than anywhere else in the Empire.

The Crane

The Crane eat fish and rice because they have a long coastline and abundant lands suited for rice growing. Everyone else eats fish and rice because that's what the Crane eat, and

the Crane have been setting the standards for the rest of the Empire since the reign of the First Emperor.

Ordinary Crane look for freshness and balance of flavor in their foods; the Crane elite are fanatical about it.

The Dragon

The samurai caste follows the standard set by the Crane, though it takes effort. The Dragon provinces are almost completely unsuitable for rice growing: they are cool, rocky, mountainous, and dry. Dragon peasants grow millet and wheat in the lowlands and barley and buckwheat in the upper reaches; the rice the samurai eat is gotten in trade. They also import a lot of dried fish, but these are used mainly for seasonings and for stocks and soups than as a protein source.

The main source of protein in Dragon cuisine is soybeans, especially the soybean curd known as tofu. However, some Dragon also rely on a more controversial food source: goat meat. Goats are robust creatures well-suited to the mountains, and they make use of pastures too rocky to be of any other use. Of course, eating red meat is considered scandalous in much of the Empire, so Dragon samurai tend to refer to goat as "mountain tuna."

Due to their long winters, the cooks of the Dragon have developed many methods of pickling vegetables for later use, most of which have spread to the rest of the Empire. Pickled vegetables are popular both for meals and as snacks.

The Lion

The Lion deviate little from typical Rokugani dietary practice, though they eat far more poultry and tofu than they do fish. Their farmlands are extensive, though their western provinces tend to be too dry and rocky for good rice production.

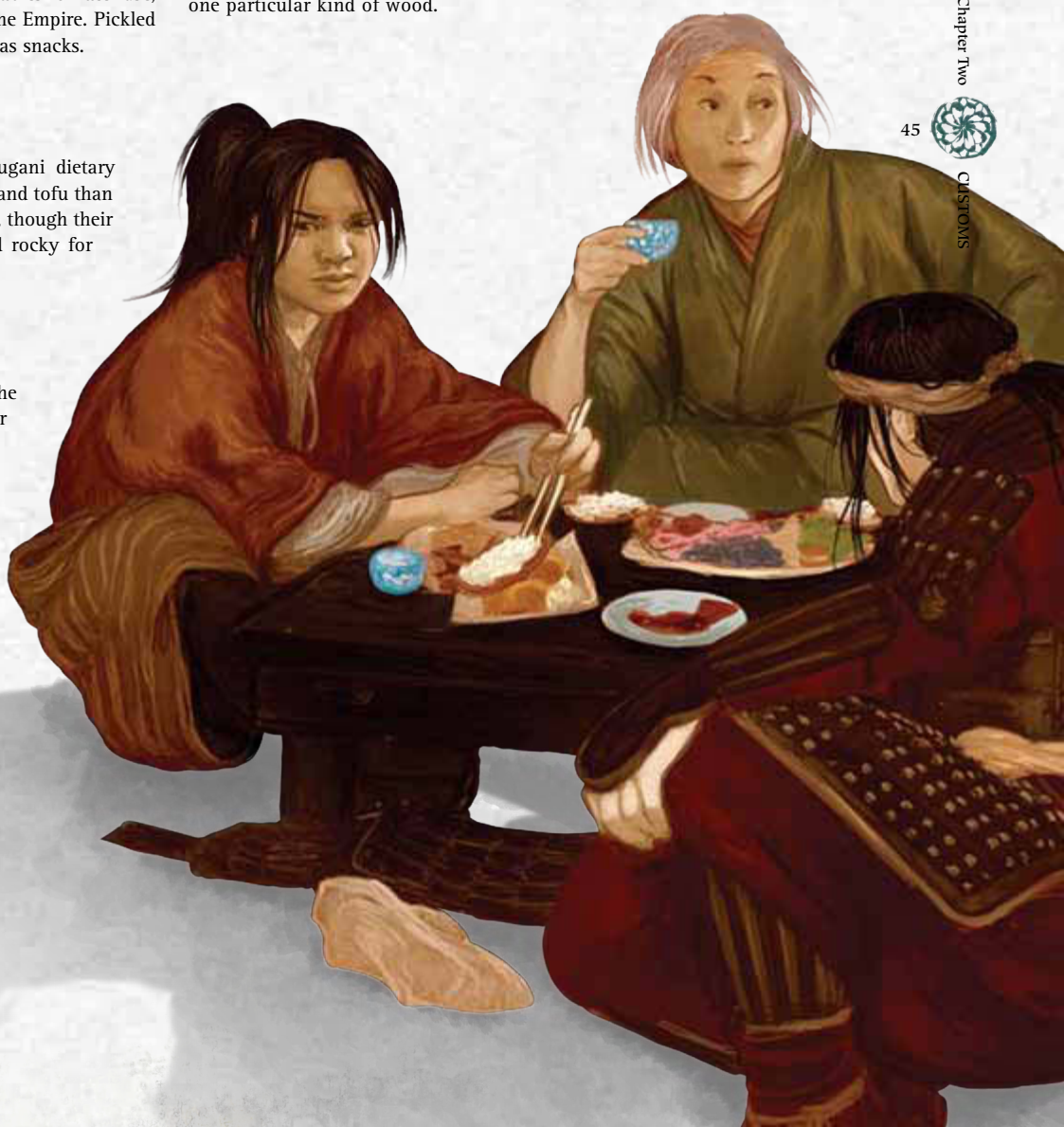
The Mantis

The Yoritomo family of the Mantis have the distinction of being even pickier about their fish than the Crane. Indeed, they are so adamant about freshness that their chefs have devised several dishes in which the fish is set before the diner while still twitching in its death throes. Few of these dishes have become popular on the mainland, although the concept of sushi (serving raw or lightly cooked fish over vinegar-infused rice) is a favorite everywhere. The Mantis' most famous contribution to the cuisine of the mainland is a special type of sushi known as fugu sushi, which became an immediate hit with the Crane Clan. A dish which requires the chef to have three years of intense training before preparing it, with the slightest mistake spelling certain death for the eaters, is a perfect match for the clan that considers iaijutsu an art form.

The Islands of Spice and Silk have a wet, tropical climate that allows them to grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, and their illicit trade with the Ivory Kingdoms has exposed them to a number of spices not normally used in Rokugan. The Tsuruchi and Moshi favor more typical mainland cuisine, though in the later twelfth century the use of Ivory Kingdom spices starts to spread through those families as well.

The Phoenix

The Phoenix have similar dietary patterns to the Crane, for pretty much the same reasons: abundant coastline and good farmlands, combined with a traditionalist approach. However, their large forests have given rise to a number of dishes in which the food is wrapped in the leaves of a tree (oak and large-leaved magnolia are both popular) before cooking, or roasted over a fire made from one particular kind of wood.



The Scorpion

For most of their history, Scorpion cuisine was similar to Lion cuisine. During the twelfth century, however, the Scorpion spent several years in exile in the Burning Sands. After their return, their diet began to show some influences from this experience. Scorpion samurai still ate plain rice, but they added dishes in which the rice was cooked with vegetables and spices to season it. They also became fond of small chunks of poultry or fish threaded on a skewer, sprinkled with cumin or cinnamon, and roasted over a fire.

The Unicorn

The Unicorn returned to the Empire with a cooking style developed over 800 years of wandering, a style focused on foods that could be prepared quickly with a minimum of fuel and equipment. Small bits of meat threaded on skewers, flatbreads, and vegetables roasted in ashes are all specialties of this nomadic cuisine.

The Unicorn didn't give this cuisine up when they returned to a more settled life; they just added the elements of standard Rokugani cuisine they liked, combining the two into a unique style. Like the Dragon, they raise livestock for food, but unlike them the Unicorn aren't afraid to call a cow a cow. The rest of the Empire regards Unicorn cooking as disgusting, but the descendants of Shinjo do not care about such sneering—they are upholding the traditions of their own ancestors, after all.

An example of Unicorn fusion cooking is gyuniku no misozuke, a dish where thin strips of beef are marinated several days in sweet white miso and then broiled. Another popular Unicorn custom is to grill meat and vegetables on a round sheet of iron set above a fire, with individual samurai scooping their food off the grill and into bowls for eating. Hot and tangy spices are common in Unicorn food, usually in fiery sauces that are drizzled over every sort of dish.

The

Most Rokugani don't give a lot of thought to what Lost or oni might eat, but the fact of the matter is that unless they are undead, corrupt beings have to eat too. Most Shadowlands creatures eat anything they can catch (until they too are caught and eaten), but those Lost who manage to live in a more organized fashion (especially those organized by the Dark Lord Daigotsu in the twelfth century) sometimes display more sophisticated sensibilities. Lost have been known to raise crops (tended by zombies or enslaved goblins), creating a cuisine that is a dark and eerie reflection of Rokugan's. The largest difference, aside from the ever-present Taint, is the amount and kinds of meat eaten. The Lost eat far more meat than most Rokugani, and they will eat any creature that isn't poisonous—even human flesh. Indeed, many of the Lost consider un-Tainted human flesh to be a delicacy for special celebrations, and take a perverse glee in serving this "dish" to any Rokugani prisoners they hold.

Chopsticks

Everyone, from the Emperor down to the lowliest eta, eats with chopsticks. Even Moto warriors fresh from the Burning Sands are given crash courses by their Rokugani kin on how use them, because nothing signals you are an outsider faster than not being able to eat properly. Everything but soup is eaten with them, and even then it is considered acceptable to pluck out the solid parts of the soup with chopsticks before drinking the liquid.

Almost any kind of wood can be made into chopsticks, but what actually gets used varies by social strata and by clan. Eta and heimin will use whatever wood is common and cheap, which usually means bamboo—it grows quickly and the wood is tough and durable.

Crab chopsticks are also usually made of bamboo. Most non-Crab assume this is because the Crab don't care what they are made of, but the truth is that bamboo is a common symbol of perseverance, a virtue the Crab readily admire. The fact that the wood is also tough enough to be sharpened into an emergency weapon is just a bonus.

The Crane favor very simple chopsticks made of beautiful woods, and it isn't uncommon for a Crane household to have several different sets of chopsticks to coordinate with the passing seasons: plum for winter, cherry for spring, kaya (a hard, golden-tinged wood) for summer, and maple for fall. Kaya is used for summer both because of its sunshiny color and because it is the favored wood for go boards—a subtle reminder that summer is the season of war. The Imperial Families somewhat unsurprisingly follow the Crane's lead in chopsticks.

The monks of the Dragon use whatever the local peasantry uses. Dragon samurai usually don't have much of a preference, though a set of plum wood chopsticks is considered a thoughtful and gracious gift.

Lion samurai earn their reputation for being uninterested in frivolities, but neither do they object to having necessary objects that are also beautiful. Kaya, white oak, and plum wood are favorites.

The families of the Mantis diverge sharply in their inclinations. The Moshi prefer chopsticks made from light, warm-colored woods, especially maples. The pragmatic Tsuruchi tend not to care, while the Yoritomo like chopsticks made from rare woods like ebony and mahogany, sometimes ornamented with inlays of pearl, mother-of-pearl, or coral. Most Rokugani tend to be horrified by the gross ostentation of Yoritomo chopsticks, though they will admit they show excellent workmanship.

The Phoenix also favor ornamented chopsticks, but their taste runs to fine wood and woodwork. Chopsticks with inlays of a contrasting color wood are quite common.

Scorpion think light-colored chopsticks clash with their dark clan colors, so they prefer chopsticks in lacquered black or red, or ones made of naturally dark woods.

Unicorn have no set preferences, though exotic woods from the Burning Sands are popular. Some Unicorn like chopsticks made of purple-tinged woods, though others consider this to be disrespectful of the clan's colors.

The Lost, if they use chopsticks at all, prefer ones carved out of bone. Of course, this may include an element of practicality along with sadism: in the Shadowlands, the trees can sometimes be more dangerous than the animals.

Unique Customs of the Great Clans

The Crab

"Lady Shiriko claimed today that the Crab are no different than the ogres they fight. I must disagree—no one has ever heard of an ogre using chopsticks."

—from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

New children are cherished in the Crab as a sign that the clan's strength is being replenished, and Crab birth customs are oriented toward protecting the child. When a pregnancy is about to come to term, whether samurai or peasant, a local shugenja makes sure to renew all blessings on the home. During childbirth a guardian always stands vigilant over the house holding a specially blessed wand (called a *gohei*) to keep away goblins, spirits, and other demons that might want to harm or corrupt the child. In the case of an important samurai family, this guardian is always a shugenja. With lower-status samurai families the shugenja gives the wand to a lesser priest or monk, while in peasant families the father-to-be (or, if he is dead, another male relative appointed to act as "father") is given the wand. Even an eta family will get a blessing at this time, as corrupt eta are every bit as dangerous as corrupt samurai.

As the child grows, most Crab mothers will sew a wish doll, a practice started by the Kuni. Wish dolls are stitched with one eye and the spirit of the doll is asked to watch over the child. As the child grows the doll sits watchfully in an honored place in the house (usually in the child's room), and at gempukku the second eye is stitched on as a sign of thanks for the doll-spirit's aid.

Crab gempukku ceremonies vary widely from family to family. The most well-known custom is the Hida practice of sending the student into the Shadowlands (admittedly, only after the student has demonstrated his skills with an assortment of martial demonstrations). The student must return with the head of a Shadowlands creature to be made samurai. Crab sensei take careful note of what the student brought back and how he went about it. Students who bring back the head of an oni or other dangerous creature are given important responsibilities on the Wall, and those wise enough to seek out their peers and enter the Shadowlands in a group are groomed as officers. Students who return with the head of a nezumi, however, are labeled as fools and cast out of the clan.

The Hiruma also have stringent tests, though theirs emphasize cunning and speed over brute strength—the ability to return from the Shadowlands with information is valued more highly than the ability to return with an oni's head. During the two centuries when Shiro Hiruma lay in the hands of the Shadowlands Horde, a common test was for the student to bring back an item from the fallen castle. During other eras, different tests were applied, such as bringing back a weapon or piece of armor from one of the many battlefields where Crab heroes fell against the forces of Fu Leng.

The Kuni have no formal dojo, and so their gempukku tests vary from sensei to sensei. These tests are never easy, and in fact many of the senior Kuni have a secret rivalry over who can devise the most difficult but passable gempukku test.

The Kaiu and Yasuki play supporting roles in the clan's fight against the Shadowlands, and so they rarely ask their students to go into that dark realm as part of their gempukku. Instead, both families favor rigorous written and oral tests on the student's knowledge of family techniques and practices.

While the Crab believe marriage is very important (the next generation of Crab samurai has to come from somewhere, after all) they don't put a lot of emphasis on the process. Any Crab who reaches the age of 22 without marrying is granted an arranged marriage. The arrangements are typically handled by parents, and frequently a local magistrate will fill the role of matchmaker, the whole affair carried out in an atmosphere of efficient practicality. The receptions following a marriage ceremony, on the other hand, are times of wild and boisterous celebration. The Crab can turn even a party into a feat of endurance, and this combined with the clan's notorious fondness for strong drink results in many marriages remembered mostly for the drinking contests that happened afterward.

Crab samurai rarely retire to the life of a monk; the idea of someone still capable of serving the clan going off to a life of meditation and contemplation strikes them as almost mad. The few Crab monasteries usually hold monks who suffer from devastating injuries or some form of insanity, and these establishments often double as hospitals. More frequently, older Crab samurai become sensei at one of the many Crab dojo, where they can contribute to the war effort by passing on their skills and knowledge to the next generation.

Funerals are a solitary exception to the Crab Clan's usual disdain for ceremony. Death on the Wall is common, and each death is accepted with quiet respect. Funerals are elaborate affairs, usually commemorating the death and life of many samurai at once. In the case of large battles, such an act is not only practical but allows the Crab samurai to be remembered as they lived—as fellow soldiers and comrades. While Crab insult their living comrades with jovial familiarity, to speak ill of the dead is a grave offense. The only fault ever spoken of after death is cowardice; all else is forgiven once a soul has passed from the mortal realm. Visitors who accidentally insult a dead Crab find every Crab in the room suddenly turning their backs, quietly pretending they no longer exist. If the visitor is truly unfortunate, the dead man's comrades or relatives will immediately demand a duel. The Crab Champion almost never refuses permission for such duels, for no Crab will endure an insult to his duty. Even if no duel is forthcoming, the insulting visitor may find himself trapped in an alley later that night by a swarm of masked crab with jo staffs.

Part of the Crab's formal attitude toward funerals is the custom of "voice after death," in which a person is allowed to speak of the deceased as if he were still alive. Prior to death many Crab warriors will chose someone to act as their voice. This person is given a message the Crab wishes to be said at his funeral. To ask another person to be one's voice is the ultimate gesture of trust and respect between two Crab, and it is a bond some take more seriously than marriage.

The Crane

"Everyone knows that the Crane are the most elegant Clan in the Empire. Everyone knows it because we tell them over and over again."

— from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

The birth of a child is as welcome and joyous an occasion among the Crane as anywhere else in Rokugan, but the Crane feel that to show too much pride over a new child attracts the attention of vindictive spirits. Spirits of dead children are quite tragic, but they are extremely dangerous to a young child. The Crane believe these spirits are attracted when a parent displays too much pride, so they express their joy at childbirth in more subtle fashion. Neighbors, friends, and relatives are invited over in small groups over several days following the birth, with the closest friends and relatives invited first. These individuals offer gifts and lavish compliments to the newborn. The parents are expected to humbly turn the gifts down and brush the compliments aside as a show of humility. The gifts are put aside in storage until the child's fifth birthday, when they are offered to the child again. Since the number four represents death, to pass that age—and therefore overcome that number—suggests the child is now somewhat safe from evil spirits and can safely accept the gifts.

The Crane do not merely practice the traditional gempukku ceremony—they *define* the traditional gempukku ceremony. The parents of the young samurai-to-be will use the occasion as an opportunity to display their wealth and political connections. This allows the guests of the ceremony to properly evaluate where the new samurai will place in the great game of court—which of course is itself part of playing the political game. The greatest example of this is the special gempukku ceremony hosted by the Kakita Dueling Academy, the so-called Topaz Championship. The Championship features young men and women from every Great Clan and a few of the Minor Clans in a competition designed to showcase the talents of Rokugan's youth. Invitations to participate or attend the festival are some of the most hotly traded favors in Rokugan. Of course, it is no coincidence that this prestigious competition ends in an iaijutsu tournament, the dueling art-form that the Crane define and dominate.

Though the Crane avoid open warfare and prefer the peaceful court life, they respect the way of the warrior as much as any other samurai. Many Crane bleach their hair white shortly after their gempukku to honor Daidoji Hayaku, the legendary hero who entered the Shadowlands to find the missing Thunders and came back with the Ancestral Sword of the Crane.

Courtship and marriage rituals are of utmost importance, since many Crane political alliances are cemented through well-placed betrothals. It is considered every Crane samurai's duty to marry well. Generally, such decisions are resolved entirely by professional marriage arrangers, experts in creating unions that will be long lasting and fruitful for both the clan and the parties being wed. The Crane city of Musumi Mura is home to some of the most skillful *nakado* (matchmakers) in the Empire, and their services are much in demand.

Crane marriage celebrations are always lavish affairs. It is considered to be poor taste for a lord to pass up an invitation to a vassal's wedding, and so the celebration is seen as honoring the lord's presence as well as the new couple's union.

The Imperial Histories: The First Hantei's Bride

It is said that during the dawn of the Empire, Hantei sought a bride to accompany him in life and bear his heir. He traveled through all of Rokugan, seeking the perfect woman, but could not find a suitable match anywhere. He turned to his sister Doji for help, and her followers searched far and wide to find a suitable woman, but still in vain.

In the village of Ichito, just south of Kyuden Doji, one fisherman had a daughter of true magnificence. Doji Mioko had a voice so pure and beautiful that the fish in the ocean would rise to the surface to listen to her—which made fishing very easy for her father. When Doji's samurai came looking, the fisherman feared for his livelihood, so he took his daughter to an island off the coast to hide.

Hantei remained dissatisfied with the many beautiful women brought to court by Kakita and Doji. There was nothing lacking in their honor, beauty, or skills. But none inspired him, none made his heart beat as his sister had admitted Kakita did for her. The Emperor decided to abandon the search for a time, and went hunting with his falcons to raise his spirits. While chasing a stray bird, he found himself on the coast, listening to the sea breeze—and with it, a beautiful and hauntingly sad tune. When he told Kakita of this, the husband of Doji took him to the village, seeking a ferry to the island which seemed to be the source of the mysterious song.

The only fisherman not out to sea was Mioko's father, and it was he who took Hantei and Kakita to the island. When he realized the purpose of their trip, the clever fisherman regaled them with tales of the wind blowing through rocks and coral. He claimed it could often sound like a maiden singing for her lover. Disappointed, Hantei returned to the mainland to meet the next group of Crane maidens.

After the samurai had left, the fisherman returned to the island to speak to his daughter and bring her food. She had seen him at sea and asked who the man with him had been, but he replied it was merely a beggar. Then he praised her for her obedience and returned to the mainland. The fisherman did not realize that Mioko had in fact fallen instantly deeply in love with the radiant young Emperor. She wrote a haiku about the man she had seen on a ribbon, and tied it to the leg of a bird she had befriended. With a prayer to Amaterasu, she released the dove to carry her feelings away from the island. The dove flew true and came to Hantei's rooms in the Imperial palace.

No sooner had Hantei read the poem than he summoned Kakita. He proclaimed the author of the poem the only woman he would marry, and commanded his champion to find her. Crane samurai once again set out to scour their lands for the soul who wrote the haiku, but no one could tell them who had written the poem on the ribbon.

When the fisherman told his daughter of the Emperor's search, Mioko burst into tears. The Emperor had stolen her words and taken them as his own. Now she would never have her handsome beggar. The quick-thinking fisherman asked for the words to the poem, telling his daughter he would teach them to another village girl. Once the Emperor had left, he promised, he would help her to find her "beggar."

The fisherman brought a village girl to the Emperor's palace, bearing his daughter's words. The Crane rejoiced at having finally provided a bride for the Emperor, but Hantei's divine nature let him sense something was amiss. He asked the girl for more of her poetry, but found it lacking. The girl soon broke down and confessed the truth.

Hantei was angry, but he chose a cunning strategy rather than direct confrontation. The next day he visited the fisherman and asked to hear the music from the island coral once more. The fisherman grudgingly rowed the young Kami out to the island. When Mioko saw her father return with her "beggar," she rushed out to meet him... and when Hantei saw Mioko, he dropped to his knees and declared his love for her. It is said that when Mioko accepted his love and returned it, Hantei wept tears that turned to pure jade as they fell upon the sand. He collected the tears and gave them to Kakita in exchange for the Crane maiden's hand in marriage.

As for the greedy fisherman, he was condemned to live on the island for the rest of his life, with only the wind in the coral for companionship.

Among the Crane retirement is seen as a just reward for a life well led. A samurai who gives his life in glorious combat for his lord is a hero, but a samurai who serves his lord, survives, and goes on to provide his wisdom to the next generation is equally well regarded. Even the most revered sensei show respect and deference to retired Crane monks, and it is not unusual for a Crane daimyo to have a few such *inkyo* in his household for counsel and guidance.

For a Clan that celebrates life as much as the Crane, death can be difficult to accept. Funerals are somber, stately occasions in which friends and family pay their respects to the deceased. There is little variation from the Rokugani norm in Crane funeral ceremonies—hardly surprising, since here as in so much else the Crane set the standard for the rest of the Empire. A deceased samurai's lord need not attend the funeral ceremony if he is otherwise occupied or simply does not wish to attend, but it is considered an insult not to at least send a representative. This representative usually carries a short message written by the lord himself (or by one of his artisans and approved by the lord), conveying his respect to the family and sorrow for their loss.

The Dragon

"Dragon wisdom is vastly over-rated. Making sense to yourself is easy; it's making sense to others that is hard."

— from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

The Dragon are a smaller clan than many of the other Great Clans, and their birthrates tend to be low, so every child born to the samurai caste is seen as a fortuitous event. When a pregnant woman is about to come to term, it is the husband's duty to make certain the house is protected from evil spirits. Blessed strips of coiled paper called spirit catchers are hung all around the inside and outside of the home. Local shugenja or monks are asked to visit the home and grant their blessings, and it is not uncommon for total strangers to stop at a house decorated with spirit catchers and offer their blessings and good wishes for the child.

Though the Dragon treat their peasants relatively well, many of their heimin are quite poor compared to those of other Great Clans. It is not unusual for Dragon peasants to

be unable to support their children with their harvest. Fortunately, the Togashi are always willing to adopt unwanted children and raise them a members of the tattooed order. Destitute peasants wishing a better life for their children deposit the babies outside of Dragon monasteries. The practice is so common that many monasteries serve dual purposes as both holy sites and orphanages.

The families of the Dragon Clan vary widely in philosophy and purpose, and this affects the ceremonies each family uses for the gempukku. The Mirumoto show considerable variety even within their own ranks. Some branches of the family allow the student to complete his gempukku simply by presenting a poem his sensei deems acceptable. Other Mirumoto are more traditional, requiring their students to undergo a lengthy, solemn ceremony in which the samurai-to-be recites his lineage and the great deeds of his ancestors. He is then handed a pair of swords with which to demonstrate a mastery of the Niten stances before the assembled onlookers.

The Kitsuki also have a traditional gempukku, though they are less interested in martial prowess. Kitsuki gempukku ceremonies always involve some test of wits. Visual puzzles, riddles, and tests of memory are all common, but the specific test is rarely the same twice. Sometimes the samurai-to-be is not even informed he is taking a test until it is completed successfully—for example, perhaps he is told his new swords are missing and he must help find them.

The gempukku ceremonies of the Tamori, and of the Agasha before them, are solemn and to the point. After several days of fasting and seclusion, the young student is brought before his master. The master offers a satchel of blessed scrolls and asks one question: "Why do you wish to bear our name?" If the master is impressed with the sincerity of the student's answer the ceremony is complete. Some claim it does not truly matter what the student says, as long as he is concise and passionate in his beliefs.

The Togashi order is secretive about its initiation techniques, but it is known that they pursue study of the Tao, meditation, and of course ritual tattooing with magical ink. The senior monks of the order monitor the tattooing process carefully, for the tattoos reveal much about the wearer's soul and destiny.

In a Clan as reclusive and enigmatic as the Dragon it is somewhat surprising that their customs regarding courtship are fairly straightforward. It is rare for members of other clans to seek a political alliance with the Dragon, and the families get along with each other relatively well, so marriages for political reasons are much rarer than in other clans. By contrast, marriages for love are actually somewhat common, though in all cases a samurai must ask permission from his daimyo before he can be married.

In the Togashi order, marriages are unusual to say the least. Though not all the *ise zumi* take vows forbidding marriage, most do, believing that such worldly and bodily pursuits distract them from the pursuit of enlightenment. When a Togashi does take a spouse, he or she usually expects to leave the order, though there are exceptions. If the prospective spouse intends to join the Dragon Clan and pass the order's initiation ceremony, or if the Dragon Champion deems that a tattooed monk can continue serving the clan's interests even when married and far from home, the Togashi is allowed to retain a monastic affiliation. Those tattooed men who do marry and live with another clan frequently take the name of their spouse in recognition of the inherent contradictions between married life and affiliation with a monastic order.

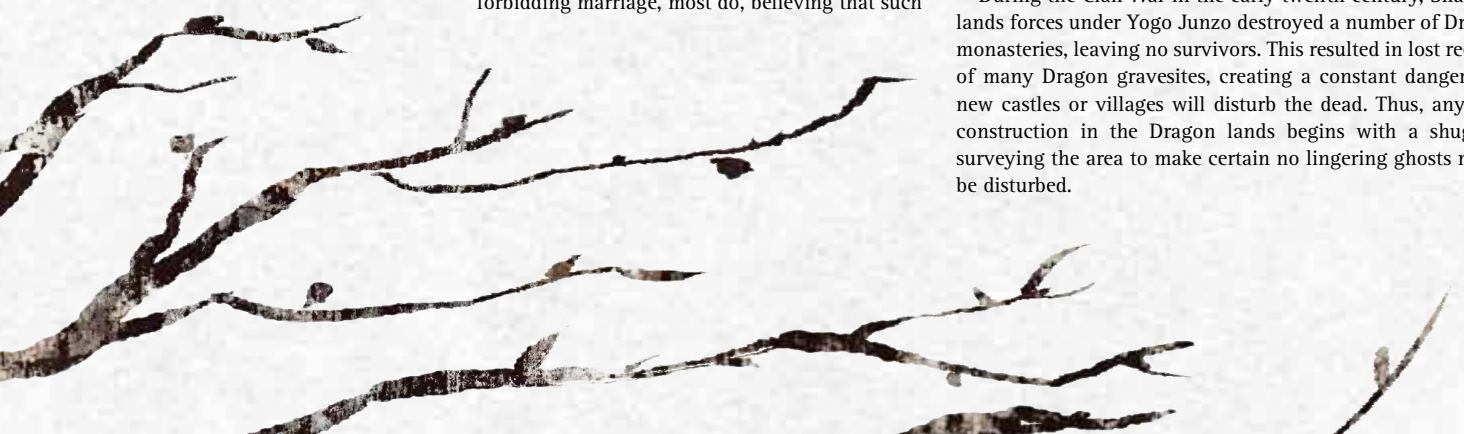
Marriage ceremonies in the Dragon Lands are humble affairs, though they rarely occur in humble locations. The Dragon believe it is best for marriages to take place in natural surroundings rather than shrines. Waterfalls, forests, and mountain peaks are popular choices for marriage ceremonies. The most powerful and wealthy Dragon samurai can afford to arrange their ceremonies in exotic locations such as in sight of active volcanoes.

It can be safely said that no other Clan views retirement in quite the same way as the Dragon. While the Crab avoid retirement and the Crane see it as a just reward for a life well-led, the Dragon do not actually view it as a fundamental change in a samurai's life. Quite the opposite, in fact: some Dragon decide to follow the path of Shinsei and take a monk's vows while still serving as a samurai. In other clans such a thing is seen as entirely contradictory—the path of Shinsei requires too much dedication for a samurai to also serve his lord as he is expected. The Way of the Dragon, however, essentially reconciles the two. The clan's conception of duty already emphasizes personal growth and enlightenment, so taking a monk's vows is seen as a perfectly legitimate path. Still, the Mirumoto and Kitsuki do tend to have traditional views of Bushido, and thus most still view retirement as the end to a samurai's career. Retired Mirumoto and Kitsuki do not continue to serve their family, though some of them join the Togashi and take that name.

Dragon funerals are very informal. Most Dragon have little fear of death, viewing it as one more change in an existence fraught with it. When a Dragon dies, he is ritually cremated as normal. Elaborate gravesites are uncommon; scattering the ashes of the dead in areas of serene natural beauty is the norm. Friends and family will gather to say their goodbyes. Some choose to leave gifts such as rice, sandals, or warm blankets by the grave, all intended to make the deceased spirit's continuing journeys more comfortable.

Dragon gravesites are typically unmarked, but they are invariably placed near a shrine or monastery. The monks keep careful records of which areas are resting places for the dead, and whose ashes lie there, for it is their duty to make sure unmarked burial sites are not defiled.

During the Clan War in the early twelfth century, Shadowlands forces under Yogo Junzo destroyed a number of Dragon monasteries, leaving no survivors. This resulted in lost records of many Dragon gravesites, creating a constant danger that new castles or villages will disturb the dead. Thus, any new construction in the Dragon lands begins with a shugenja surveying the area to make certain no lingering ghosts might be disturbed.



The Lion

"Lion samurai are brought up to be staid, dependable, hardworking, loyal, and obedient. I had a pony like that once."

— from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

The birth of a Lion is a glorious event, usually attended by the child's close relatives and a representative of the local Daimyo or provincial governor. A Kitsu shugenja is often on hand to discern any omens at the birth. At the birth of any high-ranking samurai, one of the Kitsu ancestor shugenja known as *sodan-senzo* importunes the ancestors to divine whether any have taken a particular interest in the child. Everything is recorded dutifully, and from that day forward the young Lion is guided towards the destiny the Kitsu have foretold.

Most Lion parents are too occupied with their duties to raise a child themselves. In most cases the newborn is raised solely by a chosen protector (usually a trusted ashigaru or ji-samurai) with occasional visits from the parents. This protector is no nanny, however; it is his duty to insure the young Lion is prepared to meet his destined course in life. If a Lion should become dishonored later in life, his childhood protector often takes his own life out of shame.

Despite the Lion Clan's reputation for inflexibility, they are neither stupid nor wasteful in their dedication to Bushido. Failure is a dishonor, but one that can be corrected and learned from. The Akodo study their battlefield defeats, not their victories.

Wild tales of Matsu children slitting their bellies in mass numbers and Akodo students killing each other to weed out the unfit are popular in the rest of the Empire, but they are wild tales, nothing more. In truth, the Lion would rather bring a less-promising child up to an acceptable level of skill than waste the time and resources spent on him in his younger years by killing him outright.

A Lion finds himself once again at the center of his family's attention during his gempukku ceremony. This is the only time a true Lion fears scrutiny, because his audience is the people he values most. While no Lion will ever consider an opponent to be a worthy judge of his skill, he will spend his entire life bowing before his superiors within the clan. Those who fail their gempukku cannot truly escape or erase the stain they place on their names. However, those who fail despite their best efforts are often given another chance to learn and prove themselves. Only those who fail their gempukku due to cowardice, selfishness, or other irretrievable moral flaws are required to commit seppuku.

Relationships between Lion are generally dispassionate. Arranged marriages are the overwhelming rule, with notable and powerful bushi commonly uniting to raise a stronger and more perfect generation of Lion, or to cement necessary political alliances with the leaders of other clans. Notions of romantic love are uncommon among the Lion, to say the least; only the Ikoma find any sort of interest in the notion of romantic affairs, as they are raised to embrace emotional displays. However, as the most polit-

The Matsu and Marriage

The Matsu have an unusual tradition: any time they marry a member of another Lion family, they demand the other samurai take the Matsu name. This convention dates back to the dawn of the Empire, when Lady Matsu repeatedly refused Akodo's request to marry. Finally, she married another Lion samurai, a man whose name is lost to history. When Akodo demanded to know why she had spurned him for someone of lesser rank, she replied: "If I married you, I would merely be the wife of Akodo. Now, this man is the husband of Matsu."

ical of the Lion families they too usually marry for political reasons.

Children of influential figures are generally betrothed by the age of ten. Others might have their marriages arranged at any time of their lives, as circumstance and glory demand. Occasionally a betrothal is delayed for years while a samurai's parents seek an appropriate partner. Members of the Ikoma family act as matchmakers and chaperones between engaged Lion samurai, and make the perfect emissaries should a Lion marry outside the clan.

Once the arrangement is made, a Lion will always fulfill it, lest he shame both his own family and that of his spouse. Often, Lion enter tournaments of skill and dedicate their victories to their spouse, donating winnings to the spouse's family.

Every Lion dojo contains a pristine copy of the *Tao* of Shinsei. Pristine and untouched, never opened. This tradition dates all the way back to the great teacher's lifetime at the dawn of the Empire. After the conversations between Shinsei and Hantei were recorded as the *Tao*, Akodo refused to accept the New Way. "Your Way is not my Way," he said sternly. Hantei was shocked by his brother's behavior and asked why he would treat the Enlightened One so poorly. Akodo simply growled again, "It is not my way. This is my way," and he shook his katana in its saya.

Hantei commanded Akodo to apologize to Shinsei and display a copy of the *Tao* in his clan holdings. Akodo agreed, for he would not disobey his brother and Emperor, and thus the *Tao* is displayed to this day—and never read. Few Lion samurai openly disdain its teachings—it is, after all, the official religion of the Emperor—but the focus of every Lion's life is warfare and combat. It is only when a samurai can no longer wield a weapon that the life of a monk is acceptable.

For the Lion, giving up the way of the warrior is not always easy. Instead of retiring, may older Lion become advisors or teachers for the next generation. Those who seek the favor of a Lion daimyo would be wise to please his elder advisors. This will win the favor of the daimyo twofold—not only do these advisors hold a great deal of influence, but by respecting them one also shows respect for the daimyo's judgment. Even those Lion who retire to the life of a monk are unlike the monks of other clans, for they seldom remain cloistered. Many become traveling holy men, or work with the Kitsu or Ikoma to maintain their records, or guide the more spiritual aspects of the Lion Clan.

Death is life's inevitable conclusion, and a necessary step within the kharmic cycle. A Lion does not long for death, but he meets it without fear or complaint. A Lion who falls in glorious combat will die at peace, for even if his army is defeated the Heavens will remember he died as a samurai.

How a Lion is honored after death depends on how he lived his life. Deceased samurai have been cremated since the Battle of Stolen Graves hundreds of years ago, and often communal funeral pyres are made on the battlefield where Lion soldiers fell. Large numbers of rank-and-file soldiers are committed to the Void in this manner, while a Kitsu or Ikoma records the name and deeds of each of those who have passed on. Many Lion bushi receive promotions after death to acknowledge their bravery and skill in battle. Sometimes these promotions bring with them positions and land that pass to the soldier's descendants.

Important deceased figures usually have long, somber rituals to celebrate their lives. A Kitsu sodan-senzo or Ikoma omoidasu (bard) is typically on hand to recount the glorious deeds of the deceased to the assembled family and friends. The omoidasu will also weep and otherwise express the emotions of the stoic mourners. If the dead Lion had any special wishes that were to be enacted after his death, a family retainer makes these wishes known at the funeral. Such requests often involve disposition of property and titles among heirs.

The most glorious funerals are reserved for true heroes of the clan and family, or for family daimyo and the Clan Champion. Those who are noticed by the leadership of the Lion may be interred in the Hall of Ancestors, with a commemorative statue raised in their memory. Such fortunate Lion are considered the guiding ancestors of the clan, shining examples for all who come after. The name and deeds of such a Lion will never be forgotten as long as any member of the clan draws breath. Those who visit the Hall of Ancestors claim to hear the deep, awe-inspiring chant of these ancestors the moment they step across its gates.

The Mantis

"The Mantis are proud descendants of a Hida who couldn't keep his hands to himself and a Matsu without a single shred of propriety."

— from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

Since the day Emperor Toturi I proclaimed them a Great Clan, the daimyo of the Mantis have been intent on building up their population to match their Great Clan status. Mantis samurai are encouraged to marry and have as many children as they can, and those who have three or more can expect to be swiftly promoted to reward this service to the clan. This emphasis on breeding means the rituals for protecting a newborn child are zealously observed. The Moshi, for example, will carry children out into sunlight at the earliest opportunity to bless them, while among the Yoritomo a blessing from a monk of the Order of Kaimetsu-uo is a must. The Tsuruchi will loudly twang bowstrings around the child,

believing the sound will help drive away malevolent spirits. In the later twelfth century, efforts to maintain solidarity between the clan's divergent families lead a growing number of Mantis samurai to observe all three sets of customs. One can't be too careful, after all.

As might be expected from such an eccentric clan, there is no unified Mantis gempukku ceremony. Each of the Mantis families has had centuries to develop its own unique practices, and each conducts its rituals with no interference or judgment from the other families.

The gempukku of the Yoritomo requires the student to demonstrate knowledge of the myriad of skills a Mantis samurai must master to serve the clan. Martial skills are of utmost importance, of course, including the peasant weapons their fighting style demands. Yoritomo samurai are also expected to be able to conduct basic commerce, as many of their number are involved in the mercantile interests of the clan. Sailing skills are necessary, of course, and the ceremony sometimes tests stealth and similar disreputable activities.

The Moshi, by contrast, practice one of the most traditional gempukku ceremonies in the Empire, one dating back to their founding as an off-shoot of the Phoenix Clan. Prospective shugenja spend a great deal of time in meditation with the kami. This prayer vigil can be interrupted at any time by their sensei, who requests they cast spells at a moment's notice. Calligraphy and knowledge of the Tao must also be demonstrated, as well as a command of basic theological and astrological precepts.

The gempukku ceremonies of the Tsuruchi are even more unconventional than the Yoritomo, for the Tsuruchi originated as men who rejected normal samurai ways almost completely. Indeed, when Tsuruchi himself first began accepting followers in the eleventh century, he demanded they break their own swords as the price of joining his Minor Clan. Although that tradition faded after the Tsuruchi joined the Mantis Clan, their ceremonies still pay short shrift to the expectations of conventional samurai. Gempukku begins with tests of athleticism and kyujutsu. Perceptive abilities are tested as well; Tsuruchi are expected to be able to hunt by sound alone if necessary. The ceremony culminates with an exercise in tracking and investigation, for those skills are the livelihood of the family's prominent bounty hunters.

While Mantis lords arrange political marriages for themselves and their children, ordinary Yoritomo samurai sometimes have a great deal more latitude in their choice. The Yoritomo's general philosophy that destiny is forged by one's own efforts and not by one's connections tends to devalue the idea of political marriages. Mantis who reach the age of 22 without marrying must generally consult a matchmaker, however, and find a suitable mate. This provides incentive enough for most young adults to choose their own spouses. More than a few Yoritomo marriages have formed out of fear of the matchmaker.

The Yoritomo rarely retire. The Brotherhood of Shinsei has few temples on the Isles of Spice and Silk, and the influence of its monasteries is quite small. Those who do retire tend to enter the Order of Kaimetsu-uo, which often satisfies the new monk's taste for action and excitement. The Tsuruchi and Moshi have more traditional views of retirement, but few Tsuruchi live long enough for the privilege.

Most Yoritomo samurai are buried as they live—at sea. The body is placed on a boat, which is set ablaze and pushed out to sea. The higher the rank of the deceased, the larger the ship that carries him to Yomi. Peasant burials are far simpler: the deceased's ashes are simply strewn across the water. After the funeral the living are expected to move on with their lives. The dead have already reached their reward, so those who wish to honor them may do so without the need for further ritual.

The Moshi strictly follow traditional funerary procedures, with the added tenet that the dead must be honored under the light of the sun. Tsuruchi funerals are drawn-out, ritualized affairs in which the deeds of the dead are recounted at length—a legacy of the family's origin, when it numbered only a few dozen members. The deceased's bow is burned on the pyre with him, or passed on to a fellow Tsuruchi if that was his wish. Special humming bulb arrows are fired into the sky, creating a mournful sound that can be heard for miles around. Tsuruchi funerals conclude with lengthy drinking, dancing, and carousing, as the friends and family of the dead mourn the passing of their fellow Tsuruchi and celebrate the life they still have.

The Phoenix

"The Phoenix ambassador goes on and on about peace in the Empire. It is noble, I guess, to want for the Empire what you can't get at home from your kin."

— from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

A Phoenix birth is a joyously heralded step in the kharmic cycle. A shugenja always joins the child's parents when a samurai-caste child is born. As with many other events, the kami's blessings are a traditional part of childbirth; the Fortunes are asked to bless the infant and the family's ancestors are called to guide the child's hands. The soul being reborn is petitioned as well, to rise from the ashes of death and bring honor to theclan.

The shugenja's presence serves another purpose. While the other clans may wait to test children until they show evidence of affinity to the kami, Phoenix children are tested for magical ability only hours after their birth. Occasionally even the element they will focus on later in life can be divined at this time. Children who lack a strong connection to the kami are guided onto paths better suited to their abilities. Other life decisions and responsibilities may be left to the child's parents or mentors, but on the question of magical talent the clan's needs must come first.

Peasant births are also frequently attended by shugenja, or at least by monks. Though the heimin represent a lower level of the Celestial Order, the birth of a child is no less joyous and thus Phoenix shugenja see it as their duty to celebrate the event.

The Phoenix believe gempukku should test the soul as well as the mind. The ceremonies surrounding the graduation of a new samurai are steeped in ritual, and involve difficult trials to ascertain the candidates' strength of will and test their knowledge. Each Phoenix family has a unique approach to this, and the rivalries and tensions between the families tend to accentuate these differences over time.

Isawa youths perform complex rituals that tax the body and mind to their limits. Prospective graduates from the Isawa school must memorize the contents of one spell while casting another, even as another group of shugenja (usually those who passed their gempukku the previous year) attempt to distract them with their magic—albeit not with any truly harmful spells. The display of magic and friendly competition always adds an air of excitement, and Isawa gempukku ceremonies attract crowds of interested onlookers.

Shiba gempukku are reserved, even by the standards of most samurai families. There is no display of martial prowess—the Shiba are presumed to have learned that in the dojo. Instead, the students are asked to describe how they intend to protect the Phoenix Clan. These speeches are as carefully thought out as a samurai's death poem. Shiba samurai often quote the gempukku speeches of famous Shiba of the past as reminders of the value of duty and honor. If the Shiba is intended to be yojimbo to a specific shugenja, that shugenja attends the ceremony and may comment on the speech.

The Asako's secretive gempukku ceremonies are typically attended only by other Asako, and they make a point of never inviting the Isawa. While the gempukku of Asako shugenja resemble those of their Isawa brethren, the family's secretive order of *henshin* mystics hold ceremonies that are a strange mix of philosophical debate and unarmed combat. At least one senior *henshin* master attends, monitoring those present to determine which, if any, show particular promise for the Path of Man.

The Agasha left the Dragon behind to join the Phoenix during the War Against the Darkness, but in the years afterward they still retain many Dragon traditions. Their gempukku involves extended silent mediation ceremonies, followed by ritual tattooing.

Though the tattoos of an Agasha are not magical like those of a Togashi, they still have deep personal meaning and no two Agasha bear exactly the same tattoos.

Courtship traditions are steeped in history, so the traditionalist Phoenix are strict about all of their aspects. Phoenix weddings are solemn and ritualized, though they are still usually enjoyable social events. They always take place in a shrine to the Fortunes. A shugenja advises the family on all marriages, and arranges every aspect of the union. When the marriage is celebrated this same shugenja generally performs the prayers as well. It was the Phoenix who originated the custom of wearing red and white clothing during the wedding ceremony, white symbolizing the bride's "death" to her old family and red showing her rebirth into her new family.

Potential matches are arranged for most Phoenix children by the age of eight, but if the betrothal has not been confirmed by the time of their gempukku they are allowed greater flexibility in choosing their own spouse. If an arranged Phoenix marriage falls through for any reason, the abandoned party receives appropriate compensation from the other partner's family. The Isawa have an extraordinarily complex system for determining the value of marriages, factoring in both parties' ages, social station, and position in the clan. This ensures there is no ill will between the families involved and gives the honorable party, whether Phoenix or not, something for the trouble they will have to go through in arranging another marriage.

Heimin marriages are usually simple affairs, but in Phoenix lands a particularly valued heimin servant can expect a ceremony almost as grand as a samurai wedding. For the samurai lord, a fine wedding demonstrates his gratitude to those who serve him and celebrates the future birth of those who will continue to serve.

While samurai are never supposed to fear death, many view it as an ending to that life's story. The Phoenix have a unique view of death. All change breeds growth, and death is the ultimate change. Like the celestial firebird they take as their symbol, the Phoenix believe death is a necessary part of life, leading to inevitable rebirth. As the clan with the largest number of shugenja, the Phoenix are familiar with death rites and their place in them, and their shugenja often officiate at funerals for samurai of other clans. Whether the ceremony they direct involves a communal grave or just one soul, Phoenix shugenja perform a quiet ritual to honor the accomplishments of those who have gained respite from mortal life. Unlike many shugenja, the Phoenix recognize even those who have died dishonorably, commending them to the afterlife in the hope that they will find better fortune in the next life. For this reason, the families of dishonored samurai sometimes travel to the Phoenix lands in search of a shugenja to grant peace to their unfortunate kinsman's soul.

Property and title among the Phoenix are handed down to the next of kin, or allocated by the Elemental Council's retainers if the deceased had no living family. Any land or possessions the Elemental Council claims are eventually redistributed to other clan members.

The Scorpion

"They wear masks as a sign they can't be trusted and then become offended when you don't trust them. Can't these people make up their minds?"

— from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

Childbirth is a welcome event in Scorpion Lands, one to be remembered, with the lucky parents celebrating for several days. The lords of the Scorpion often excuse the father of an infant from his duties so he may commemorate the birth properly. This custom helps strengthen the bonds of loyalty within the family. Scorpion peasants are generally not treated as well as peasants from other clans, but the custom of excusing new fathers extends to the heimin, mitigating their resentment toward the samurai caste. In large villages someone, somewhere, is always having a child, so there are constant festivities.

A newborn Scorpion is welcomed from the first moment of his life. Relatives and friends pay their respects and offer their protection. If there is one thing the Scorpion take very seri-

ously, it is a celebration—though most serve as mere excuses to invite guests into the household (and perhaps loosen their tongues with sake and entertainment). Childbirth is an exception, however—only family members and close friends may visit a Scorpion household following a birth. An outsider is admitted only if trusted utterly, someone who is considered a Scorpion in the eyes of the clan. Needless to say, this does not happen often.

Twins are considered lucky, representing Scorpion friends or lovers from a past life so loyal to each other that they died in the same instant, thus reentering life together. Also, since Bayushi himself was Shiba's twin, the birth of twins evokes the clan's founder. Triplets are not seen with the same joy, however. The number three is extremely unlucky to the Scorpion, so the birth of three children at once is a dire portent. Some families have been known to conceal the third child or even abandon it altogether rather than risk the resultant bad fortune.

Though some clans are secretive about their gempukku ceremonies, the Scorpion are not. Everyone is invited, including visitors from other clans and strangers who happen to be in the area. A placard is posted outside of the household for a week before the ceremony begins, giving the samurai-to-be's name, parents, sensei, and dojo, and inviting all to attend. The candidate is introduced to everyone in attendance and personally presents a gift to every guest. Ideally the candidate will have created these gifts, though some wealthy Scorpion families "lend" their children koku to purchase expensive gifts. A large number of generic gifts are also set aside for additional guests—these are known as "face gifts," since guests need only show their faces to receive one. Face gifts are invariably of much lower value than those intended for invited guests, and need not have been created personally by the samurai-to-be. This is no insult to the unexpected guests, but rather a sign of respect to the invited ones.

Following the young samurai's rather traditional initiation ceremony, sake flows freely and all present take off their masks to enjoy themselves. The highest-ranking samurai never removes his mask, however, symbolizing that the Scorpion Clan must always retain some secrets. Later that evening, after the guests depart, the true ceremony begins. The young samurai is not informed of this phase in advance, so this often comes as a surprise. The samurai is taken to a private room by his sensei, and is asked the guests' names and what he learned by how each one reacted to his gift. If the young samurai's answers are satisfactory, he is given his first mask and welcomed as a Scorpion. Those who fail are given only a scrap of cloth to cover their face, symbolic of the rough scrap Bayushi wore until he could find a true mask. This scrap is immediately recognizable by any adult Scorpion, but meaningless to everyone else. Some samurai choose to continue wearing this simple cloth mask even after they have proven themselves to their sensei's satisfaction, as a symbol of the progress they have made. Scorpion are forbidden to speak of this secret ceremony, and vehemently deny its existence. To talk about it would ruin its power to properly test future samurai of the clan. A Scorpion must always be prepared.

In a clan that takes as much pride in family and politics as the Scorpion, courtship is taken very seriously. Marriages are arranged well in advance, always to benefit the family and clan. Marriages for the sake of love are all but unheard-of in the Scorpion Clan; love is a threat to duty and loyalty, after all. Besides, a Scorpion can marry only once, and if that marriage does not benefit the clan he has betrayed the Scorpion through his selfishness.

Samurai weddings in Scorpion lands are always presided over by a Soshi shugenja. A presiding Yogo is considered unlucky, given the strong association of that family with the legendary Yogo curse. Even Yogo themselves avoid such a thing.

Like most Scorpion ceremonies, their weddings are great celebrations open to all. Though the initial ceremonies are as stately and reserved as any Rokugani wedding, the subsequent festivities are notorious for their riotous vigor. Even a normally controlled Scorpion samurai relaxes his façade to display true emotion, crying openly or dancing in joy at the union. Some who know the Scorpion well wonder if this is yet another ploy, intended to draw their guests into lowering their guard. But although the Scorpion seldom refuse such an advantage when it presents itself, they seem to take a sincere joy in weddings. Scorpion see their loyalty to their family as part of their larger loyalty to clan and Empire, and the opportunity to share that loyalty by inviting another into their family fills the heart of a Scorpion with a happiness that outsiders can never understand.

Scorpion see arranged marriages as extremely important contracts. Backing out effectively declares war on the other party's family. Any samurai who reneges on a Scorpion marriage can expect immediate retribution. Only a moderator of higher social status than either of the engaged samurai can break off a Scorpion marriage without creating bad blood between both parties.

A samurai who abandons or mistreats a Scorpion spouse earns the ire of the spouse's entire family, even if the spouse has married outside of the clan and is no longer technically considered a Scorpion.

Peasant marriages in the Scorpion provinces are also matters of great revelry. They are usually presided over by monks rather than shugenja; samurai rarely attend. The bride and groom wear masks during the ceremony (a practice normally not indulged by Scorpion peasants) to remind them who they serve.

Scorpion samurai generally look forward to retirement, the great reward for a life of service to the Empire. While the Crab and the Lion often look upon a retired samurai with disdain, as someone who lost the opportunity to die in service to the Emperor, the Scorpion do not see things this way. Dying for the Empire is good and noble, but living for the Empire is better. Retired Scorpion are often viewed with silent awe, and young samurai show their elders the greatest respect. A samurai seeking guidance is well advised to visit the remote monasteries in the Bayushi provinces to listen to their retired samurai. Walking the Way of the Scorpion is dangerous indeed, and any samurai clever enough to become an old Scorpion and retire in peace is a hero by his very existence.

Scorpion funerals are strange events, celebrated with as much joy and enthusiasm as a marriage, gempukku, or childbirth. The Scorpion believe a samurai who served the clan loyally will be rewarded in death, his soul invited into Bayushi's hidden cavern to share secrets with the First Scorpion. When a samurai dies, the Scorpion tell tales of his loyalty and devotion, hoping Bayushi will overhear the

tales and wish to know more. Much like Scorpion marriages and gempukku, all who wish to attend a Scorpion funeral are welcome. In fact, the Scorpion make a special point of inviting their enemies to clan funerals, especially any enemy responsible for the death. To invite enemies from outside the clan requires the Scorpion Champion's permission, however, for under Scorpion tradition such an invitation is an open challenge. Enemies who answer the invitation must be supremely confident... or totally unaware of this tradition.

Of course, these conventions apply only to Scorpion who died in loyal service to the clan. Scorpion who died disloyal are seldom given a proper burial. Often their corpses are beheaded and then left in a field, to be devoured by wild animals. Those who betray the Scorpion and are captured alive face an even worse fate: they are brought to the depths of Traitor's Grove, a special forest right outside Kyuden Bayushi, where Scorpion shugenja use a secret process to permanently trap their souls in a tree, binding them into eternal torment. The Scorpion believe that as the tree grows, its bark cuts through the traitor's soul, causing great pain. On quiet nights one can hear the traitors' moans in the grove, begging forgiveness. The traitors' personal possessions are left hanging from the tree limbs, and thieves know to stay well away. The bitter and agonized ghosts of Traitor's Grove enact a terrible curse upon any who steal from it, imposing a painful, lingering death.

The Unicorn

"It's clearly untrue that Unicorn samurai learn their manners from their horses. No horse has ever tried to shake hands with someone."

— from The Pillow Book of Doji Barahime

The Unicorn are not like any other Great Clan, for their culture is a strange blend of Rokugani traditions and the gaijin customs they picked up during their centuries of travel. It is, however, a common misconception that the Unicorn maintain their barbaric ways out of some inability to adapt or understand Rokugani culture. The Unicorn understand the culture of their homeland quite well; they simply choose to maintain their unique customs. Their barbarian ways are a part of their history, the same customs that allowed them to survive in a hostile world. The Unicorn practice their ways not because they disdain tradition, but because their different experiences have given them different traditions.

One of the notable differences between the Unicorn and other clans is that the Unicorn do not share the Rokugani aversion for touching flesh. Close friends will greet one another with a friendly handshake, married couples embrace publicly, and the Unicorn enjoy eating red meat, especially beef, mutton, and venison. The Unicorn also feel little difficulty in using leather garments and items. However, this

does not extend to direct contact with dead humans. Unicorn samurai and peasants avoid toughing corpses with the same vehemence as any other Rokugani. A Unicorn who touches a corpse or is stained by an enemy's blood will visit a priest for proper purification as soon as practical.

The Unicorn value family bonds, so any addition to the family is greeted with joy and a celebration. As soon as the birth is complete and the health of both mother and child are certain, it is the father's duty to spread word of his child's birth. Most samurai do so by leaping on to their fastest horse and riding around the city or camp where they dwell, shouting the newborn child's name with great excitement. Any children old enough to ride will accompany the father in his task. Thus, any addition to a large family seldom goes unnoticed. Though in other Clans such outward display of emotion is frowned upon, among the Unicorn this is an honored tradition. Unicorn ambassadors in the lands of other clans usually restrain themselves more, however, in order to avoid offending their hosts.

Unlike many Unicorn customs, their gempukku is highly traditional, unchanged since the days when they were still the Ki-Rin Clan. Each summer, on the plains surrounding Shiro Shinjo, all youths who have come of age that year gather for a mass gempukku ceremony. Before the assembled clan, they receive their swords and swear oaths of loyalty to the Unicorn Clan. The vows still refer to the Unicorn as "the children of the Ki-Rin, servants of Shinjo." All Unicorn are welcome to attend, but outsiders are only rarely invited.

The Unicorn are unique among the Great Clans in that they will allow gaijin to swear fealty. Via a special oath overseen by the Unicorn Champion, the gaijin swears his loyalty, cuts his palm with Unicorn steel, and presses the wound against the slashed palm of a true Unicorn. Once this is done the gaijin is a Rokugani forevermore in the clan's eyes. The Unicorn are always careful to bar any magic during the course of this ceremony, fearing the use of blood during magical rituals might draw the attention of evil spirits.

During their time as wanderers, Shinjo forbade the Unicorn to marry within their own bloodline. This custom ensured that the Unicorn would continue to grow and adapt, learning the ways of foreign cultures by taking wives from the lands through which they traveled. The Unicorn continue to cling to this tradition since their return, so arranging Unicorn marriages is often a complicated issue. Unicorn samurai keep careful note of their linage, and will frown upon any arranged marriage that defies this tradition no matter how politically convenient it may be. For instance, a Shinjo samurai will turn down an arranged marriage with a Moto maiden if his ancestors five generations past married a member of her line. Most samurai do not enforce this custom past seven generations, but an especially strict Unicorn may not be so forgiving. An uncompromising Shinjo, for example, may refuse to marry an Asahina because his grandfather married an Isawa (the family from which the Asahina came from long ago). To this day, some Unicorn prefer to venture out into the desert or the wild Yobanjin lands to seek a spouse rather than risk polluting their bloodline. Frustrated Unicorn diplomats have frequently attempted to put an end to what they see as an archaic and outmoded tradition, since more than a few politically beneficial betrothals have been ruined by it.

Retirement is a fate most Unicorn look upon with mixed emotions. On one hand, to settle down in one's old age is a sure sign of victory—the reward for a life well lived. On the other hand, for a clan that draws such exhilaration from exploration and wandering, old age can be a difficult thing to accept. If there is one thing a Unicorn hates, it is to be bound in one place too long. The idea of entering a monastery and dwelling there indefinitely is distasteful to many of them. How could anyone be expected to find enlightenment in a single place when there is such a wide, beautiful world waiting to be discovered? Consequently, there are few true monasteries in the Unicorn lands. There are many orders of monks, but like the Unicorn themselves, these holy men are usually nomads. Unicorn monks can be found anywhere in Rokugan, for many of them seize on a monk's lack of need for travel papers to venture into forbidden lands and see the wonders they have always been denied by politics.

Like other Rokugani, the Unicorn cremate their dead and hold traditional funeral ceremonies. The major departure from normal custom is that the ashes of high-ranking Moto, Shinjo, Utaku, and Ide Family members are not interred in their graves. Close friends or family members instead scatter the ashes in a secret location, while a "public" grave is erected so others can come and show their respects. This way, even if enemies defile the public grave, the departed soul is safe from dishonor.

The graves of past Clan Champions (sometimes known as Khans) are a jealously guarded secret. No two Khans are ever interred in the same place, and only the Khan's son or chosen heir knows where the previous Khan's ashes truly lie.

Shadowlands & the Spider

The Lost have no uniform customs for recognizing or celebrating birth, and until the rise of Daigotsu they do not even have a gempukku ceremony. Most Lost (and later, most members of the Spider Clan) come to their position as adults, and the Lost generally have a low birth rate when they bother to have children at all. As a result, they generally display variations of the customs in use among the Great Clans, usually with dark and perverse changes driven by their malignant nature.

The Spider Clan, once it forms, does sometimes arrange marriages for its members and their children, usually along strictly utilitarian lines. Romance is discouraged, since love can have unfortunate consequences for the impulsive and frequently violent samurai who join the Spider. (Whether the true Lost can actually experience love at all is a matter of some mystery, of course.)

The Lost do not really have any concept resembling "retirement," but the Spider Clan's efforts to imitate samurai ways sometimes extends to allowing its members to join the Order of the Spider, or more commonly to go into semi-retirement as advisors or sensei.

While the Lost and the Spider may lack uniformity in handling rites of passage, in areas of day-to-day life the situation is somewhat clearer. On the surface, their societal practices have a passing resemblance to those found elsewhere, which is part of the justification the Spider use in the twelfth century when they attempt to claim Great Clan status. For example, the tradition of denying a gift twice before accepting it is used by Spider samurai—although both offers and denials tend to have a somewhat more menacing tone than elsewhere in the Empire. Any custom found in widespread use in most courts is also present in the Spider courts, but with an edge that would seem hostile even to the most belligerent Crab or Lion.

Among the Lost, personal differences of any sort are typically resolved through open violence. The Spider Clan attempts to moderate this somewhat, favoring some sort of contest of power. Duels are far more common than among Rokugan's true clans, although duels to the death are almost as rare as they are elsewhere—the Spider find it inefficient to kill one another when doing so only limits their resources. Instead, they prefer to focus on humiliating their opponent in defeat, ensuring everyone in attendance knows without question who is the victor—and usually resulting in bitter long-term grudges. Prior to the rise of the Spider Clan, of course, the Lost seldom show any concern for preserving their numbers, and lethal battles for dominance are commonplace.

Although it would surprise many to hear it, art has a place among the Lost and their Spider derivatives. The dark urges instilled in them by the power of Jigoku require outlets, and while violence is preferable, it is not always available (or acceptable, among the Spider). In its place, some choose to pursue a somewhat less visceral but no less vigorous outlet for their sinister inclinations. Sculpture is a favorite, and twisted and disturbing pieces often decorate the lairs of Lost and the holdings of Spider samurai. Others prefer a more practical pursuit, turning their attention to the creation of weapons and armor—although few Lost or Spider have the skill to truly master such work. The greatest of such artisans is of course the dread and terrible Asahina Yajinden, whose history is recounted in the Bloodspeakers chapter of the L5R 4th Edition expansion *Enemies of the Empire*.

Political pursuits are unknown among the Lost through most of their history, but after the emergence of the Spider Clan they embrace them much more readily. The campaign to win Great Clan status gave rise to a generation of courtiers and infiltrators trained in debate, deflection, interrogation, and investigation, as well as secondary pursuits like poetry and literature needed to operate within the Empire's courts.

Pastimes and Entertainments

The bulk of a samurai's time is taken up with his duties to lord and family, but even the most dutiful samurai will occasionally take time to relax and unwind. Many samurai visit geisha houses for this purpose, enjoying evenings of music, dance, and free conversation. As an added benefit, since geisha are technically hinin, or "non-people," a samurai can freely express his emotions to them without losing face. Many samurai find that after pouring out their frustrations to a sympathetic geisha they are refreshed and ready to serve their lords with renewed determination. Geisha often take professional pride in their ability to be sympathetic toward their clients.

Another popular activity is attending performances of the dramatic arts. Storytelling is extremely popular in Rokugan, and there are two basic kinds of performers, storytellers and chanters. Chanters differ from storytellers by their highly distinctive and stylized manner of recitation, accompanied by music. The biwa is the traditional instrument of a chanter, though chanters associated with puppet theater (see below) usually use a samisen instead.

Theater is also quite popular, and the main types in Rokugan are noh, kabuki, and puppet theater (or *bunraku*). Noh is the oldest and most respected form of theater: it is essentially a long poem presented by a handful of actors accompanied by music, a theater of symbolism with heavy emphasis on the actors' ability to evoke mystery and depth by the use of stylized motions. The plots are minimal and usually deal with supernatural themes or events long in the past. They also tend to be tragic to the point of depressing, and short comedic plays known as *kyogen* are often performed in between noh plays for the audience's emotional relief.

The Draw-Lot Plays of the Crab

The only thing a Crab commander on the Kaiu Wall fears more than an oni attack is boredom. Boredom saps the will, takes the edge off reaction times, and lulls the mind into a false sense of security. Unfortunately, bringing in artisans to provide entertainment can create even more problems than it solves. During the reign of Hantei XXXIV, a Crab officer named Hida Monzaemon had an idea—his unit could entertain itself with an amateur kabuki production. Since he was fairly certain that he would never get volunteers for this, he wrote the names of characters from a popular play on small scraps of paper and put them in his *kabuto* (helmet). Then he added enough blank slips of paper to make the total number of slips equal to the number of men in his unit, lined his men up, and ordered them each to draw a slip out of the kabuto. The ones who drew character names were informed that those were their roles and they had a week to rehearse.

None of the "actors" were happy about this (especially the ones who drew female roles), but they quickly got into the spirit of the thing when they saw how much their comrades were looking forward to the play. The week after the performance Monzaemon was besieged by bushi who wanted to know when the next one was going to be. The tradition of the draw-lot play was born, and the idea quickly spread up and down the Wall. There are three rules for a draw-lot play:

1. All roles must be drawn by lot out of a kabuto.
2. The play must have at least one scripted fight scene.
3. The play must have no Shadowlands characters.

Beyond that, anything goes. The average draw-lot play features minimal props, wild improvisation, and ludicrous amounts of audience participation. A Kakita playwright who once witnessed a draw-lot play described it as, "crude, lewd, loud, poorly paced, over-acted, and yet somehow... perfect."

Kabuki is a younger art form and considered by some to be lowbrow, having evolved out of the *kyogen* plays. It is still supported by the nobility, however, and many respected writers have created kabuki plays. Kabuki features gorgeous, elaborate costuming, dramatic action, and a mixture of traditional stories and up-to-date plots based on current events. Kabuki plays are far less scripted than noh plays, leaving wide room for actors to improvise and interpret their roles.

Puppet theater evolved from the chanter storytelling tradition, and the actual text of the play is declaimed by a chanter while the puppets carry out the action. The flexibility and small size of puppets allow them to act out acrobatics impossible for a human actor, and scripts for them frequently take advantage of that fact. Dramatic battles and supernatural beings are the stock in trade of puppet theater. The chanting style here is the same as that of the chanter storyteller, and talented chanters frequently shift between independent storytelling and performing as part of a theater troupe.

Noh theater troupes are always made up of samurai actors and are supported by daimyo, as are many kabuki troupes. There are also a certain number of independent kabuki troupes made up of actors drawn from the lower classes of Rokugan; they make a precarious living by migrating around the smaller towns and villages of the Empire. These troupes are more likely to perform what are called townsman plays—plays about the lives of ordinary merchants, artisans and farmers—rather than the grand historical tragedies favored by the samurai caste.

The performers in puppet theater are entirely drawn from the lower classes and usually are migrants, traveling from place to place in search of audiences, though large cities will usually have a few permanent troupes. Despite its lowly origin, puppet theater is very popular with samurai, and lords will sometimes arrange for a troupe to perform at a festival or celebration they are sponsoring.

Samurai wanting more active artistic pastimes can take up ikebana, origami, poetry, painting, or calligraphy. For the athletic there is hunting, especially falconry, as well as sumai wrestling and kemari.

Kemari is a courtly sport where the participants try to keep a cloth ball moving through the air with only their feet—touching it with their hands is against the rules. It is considered a court game and is traditionally played in full courtly dress, complete with the tall peaked hats male courtiers wear on formal occasions. Many consider the challenge of maintaining one's dignity in a kemari game more difficult than the game itself.

Another popular entertainment in court is the game of one-upmanship known as *sadane*. A favorite among younger courtiers, sadane is the art of impromptu criticism. The participants in the game will choose a single agreed topic—a work of art is a very popular choice—and then compete to see who can deliver the most scathing and devastating criticisms of its quality. Sadane is normally directed against inanimate objects (paintings, sculpture, ikebana, etc) or artistic presentations (plays, poems, pillow books, and so forth). However, truly daring courtiers may play a game of sadane with a person as the object of criticism—a hazardous move indeed, since if word gets back to the target of the game, offense and a duel will likely result.

Games of Strategy

For those who like intellectual challenges, the Rokugani play two great strategy games, go and shogi. Go is a game with rules so simple that even peasants can and do play it, but with such depth of strategy that even brilliant samurai who devote their lives to it cannot truly master its intricacies. The game is played on a wooden board with a 19 by 19 line grid, creating 361 intersections. The game is played with small white and black stones; players take turns placing their stones on the line intersections, with the goal of capturing territory by surrounding it with the stones. The rules allow for deep and wide-ranging strategies, and moves made a hundred turns back can suddenly emerge as game-winners. Players of go are often ranked according to their win-loss record, with the lowest-ranking players starting at 1-Dan and ascending to Grand Masters with a ranking of 10-Dan.

A full go set consists of a board, 180 white stones, 181 black stones, and two lidded bowls to hold the stones. During play the lids are turned up and are used to hold captured stones. Tradition decrees that the finest go sets have boards made of from a thick slab of kaya wood, white stones carved from clam shells, and black stones carved from slate. Every serious student of go aspires to have such a set, but in practical reality go sets vary widely in their materials. Heimin usually play on boards of thin wood with ceramic stones, or simply light and dark colored pebbles stored in woven baskets. In the palaces of the Yoritomo, semi-precious stones are laid down on boards made of exotic wood imported from the Ivory Kingdoms. Most sets fall in between these two extremes.

Shogi is a type of chess. It was brought to Rokugan by the Unicorn and quickly became popular in the samurai caste. There were originally several different versions of it, but in the late ninth century Akodo Soko codified the variant that became the standard for the rest of Rokugan. Some of the other variants are still popular for casual play by Unicorn samurai, especially with the Shinjo and Moto, but serious shogi is always played with Soko's rule set. In honor of Soko's

achievement the Lion Clan grants the Empire's Grand Master of Shogi the title of *soko-meijin* and, if they are not already a member of the Lion Clan, honorary fealty with the Lion.

Shogi is played on a board with a 9 by 9 grid and two sets of nineteen playing pieces. The pieces are flat five-sided wooden tiles, each with an inked kanji denoting the name of the piece. The tiles themselves are also of varying sizes, with the more important pieces being larger than the lesser. Shogi allows for all pieces except the king and the gold general to be promoted, so the back of each such piece has its promoted name written on it.

The names, numbers and moves of each piece are as follows:

King (1): Moves one square in any direction.

Rook (1): Moves forward or sideways as far as the player wishes.

Bishop (1): Moves diagonally as are as the player wishes.

Gold General (2): Moves one square in any direction, except diagonally backwards.

Silver General (2): Moves one square forward or diagonally.

Knight (2): Moves two spaces forward or backward, then one space to the side. This is the only piece that can move over other pieces.

Lancer (2): Moves any square forward.

Pawn (9): Moves forward one square at a time.

The moves of the promoted pieces are:

Promoted Rook: Retains its original movement and gains the king's ability to move one space in any direction.

Promoted Bishop: Retains its original movement and gains the king's ability to move one space in any direction.

Promoted Silver General: Loses its original movement and gains the movement of the

gold general.

Promoted Knight: Loses its original movement and gains the movement of the gold general.

Promoted Lancer: Loses its original movement and gains the movement of the gold general.

Promoted Pawn: Loses its original movement and gains the movement of the gold general.

Captured pieces are said to be "in hand" and are resources the players can reintroduce into the game when they see fit. An opponent with pieces in hand can launch an attack or shore up a defense by dropping a piece back into play on his move.

Unlike go, there is no tradition dictating the best materials for a shogi set. Because the names of the pieces are inked on them, a light-colored wood is always used for the tiles, but any wood can be used for the board.

The Game of Letters

Within the courts, critics and blackmailers alike employ letters as their weapon of choice, and lovers use them as their most subtle but most direct gift. This continual flow of correspondence within a court is known as the "Game of Letters," and is designed chiefly to display skill and manipulate others rather than to convey information. The Game of Letters is quite ancient, and tales claim it was first perfected by Hantei Genji, the Shining Prince, second Emperor of the Hantei Dynasty. In the modern Empire all courtiers are familiar with the Game of Letters, and dealing effectively with the Game is taken extremely seriously, especially at major courts such as the Imperial Winter Court. Each letter must receive a reply, since otherwise the recipient is admitting the author's superior wit. A single game will often continue for an entire season, and a skilled courtier can easily have a dozen correspondences continuing at once.

A letter for the Game is never written casually, in the manner of a letter to a friend, or brusquely, as a commander might dictate orders for his troops. Instead, it is a creation born of precise art and careful calculation, following a strict set of rules but exploiting those rules to amuse, confound, lure, entice, or provoke the recipient. Symbolism is employed not only in the text itself but also in every physical detail, such as the choice of paper or the manner of delivery. The color of the paper establishes mood, conveying a particular emotion to the reader. The texture and thickness of the paper also matters—a thick, heavy paper suggests a serious topic, while a thin tissue conveys a light-hearted tone. The size of the paper relative to the writing is also significant—using a large piece of paper to convey a short message suggests generosity or extravagance, while a small piece of paper crowded with writing conveys a subtle insult, suggesting the recipient is not worthy of more paper.

The content of a composition for the Game of Letters follows a strict structure, a thirty-one syllable poem, usually based on an image from nature, and conveying the author's intent indirectly. Since letters sent in court are almost never sealed, any samurai can stop a servant in the halls and read what he is carrying. In fact, most courtiers take it for granted that their letters will be read by others—that is part of the game.

Skilled authors consider many other aspects of their letters. Brushwork may convey an emotion that reinforces the text or undercuts it. Messy or uneven brush-work might suggest an insult or a lack of emotional control, for example. Most courtiers compose their letters several times to make sure they get the exact effect they want from their calligraphy.

Rokugan has several traditional styles of letter-folding, often quite elaborate, and some clans have developed their own signature styles to show off their skills and discourage forgeries. Scorpion Clan courtiers are especially skilled at folding letters in ways that are fiendishly difficult to open without tearing. Again, different styles of folding convey different messages, with a casually folded letter suggesting lack of care while elaborate folding implies great significance in the contents. A completed letter will also be scented and usually attacked to a small object, such as a flower, a sprig from a tree, or a stick of incense, all of this again conveying subtle messages. Even the choice of which servant will deliver the letter has meaning.

The combinations of paper, scent, style of poem, and accompanying item used in the Game of Letters are almost infinite. An expression of love might be written on soft paper the color of spring clouds, with a poem comparing the recipient's beauty to a hunting heron, accompanied by a sprig of bamboo implying the author's love is strong. Not surprisingly, a skilled courtier can often guess the intent of a message without even opening it.

Reading

Setting aside the challenges of the Game of Letters, reading poetry, history, and literature is considered a respectable and often enjoyable way to pass the time. Popular reading includes the great works of the Empire's past, such as the *Tao* of Shinsei, Akodo's *Leadership*, and Kakita's *The Sword*, as well as learned commentaries on these same works. Histories, folk tales, and poetry collections are also quite popular, and the works of famous poets are considered especially worthy of being kept and read many times.

Pillow books—named for the small, loosely-bound notebooks they are usually written on—are also widely read. Some of these are actual novels or short-story collections, but the majority are personal journals; journal-writing is a common practice among the upper classes, and even people who don't normally keep a journal may start the practice when going on a journey or attending an important Winter Court. Afterwards the pillow book can be circulated among the writer's social circle, and if it is popular enough it could be copied for wider distribution. A pillow-book that deals with popular or scandalous materials can become quite the sensation in the courts, especially since most journals use pseudonyms—allowing readers to speculate on who the author really is talking about.

The Bonge

The lower classes of Rokugan do not have a lot of leisure time to fill, but even so there are moments when they can put aside their daily labor and relax, even if only for a few minutes. Time spent spinning, weaving, or mending clothing or tools is time when the hands are busy but the mind is free, and villagers will gather in groups to share conversation and stories while working.

Festivals in honor of the Fortunes or the kami are also times of fun. Village festivals usually feature music and dancing, and wandering kabuki or puppetry troupes will stage productions for the crowds. Two other forms of theatrical entertainment found at festivals are *saragaku* and *dengaku*. Saragaku features acrobatics and mimicry, while dengaku is based on singing and dancing. Both are preformed by wandering troupes of hinin actors.

New Mechanics

This section of the chapter presents new mechanics for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition RPG. Here we present a new Advanced School for the Minor Clans, those lesser clans who must struggle to find their place in the larger society around them. Although Rokugani customs and social rules present many obstacles for samurai of the Minor Clans, a handful of them can rise above their position to become true paragons of bushido, men like Toku or Yoritomo. These men and women are the Minor Clan Defenders.

New Advanced School: Minor Clan Defender [Bushi]

The samurai of the Minor Clans begin their career in service to the Emperor at a significant disadvantage compared to their counterparts from the Great Clans. They have fewer resources, fewer allies, and vastly less prestige. Many simply accept this is their lot as servants of a lesser clan and never challenge it. There are a few, however, who refuse to accept such a fate, and commit themselves fully to championing the cause of their clans to the Empire at large. These men and women do not have any particular unifying qualities other than their passion and drive to better the lot of the Minor Clans. Such individuals occasionally come into contact with one another during the course of their activities, and over the years can form strong alliances in order better serve their cause. Although no formal dojo exist in which students can follow the lessons of such heroes, there are secrets passed down through family lines and via apprenticeship for those who choose to follow such a path. In a show of the devotion these individuals have to a greater cause, these secrets are shared among all those who share the same passion for their cause, regardless of what Minor Clan affiliations they possess.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Agility 5, Strength 4

Skills: Any one Weapon Skill at Rank 5

Other: Only members of Minor Clans can take ranks in this Advanced School; must possess one Paragon Advantage

Techniques

Rank One: Know No Boundaries

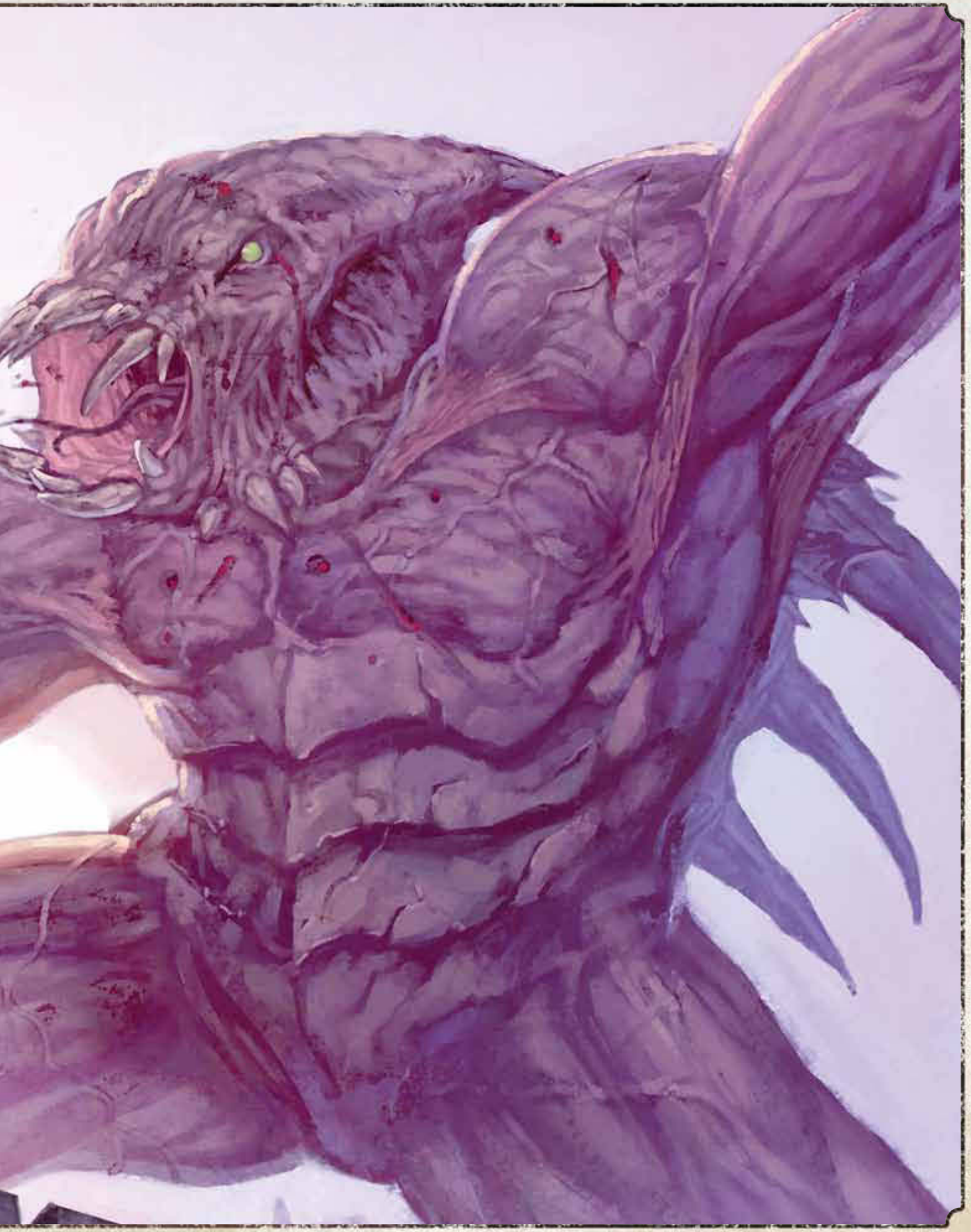
Conviction and determination can elevate even the lowest samurai to greatness if he but follows his own sense of honor in moments of crisis. You may spend a Void Point to temporarily gain two ranks of Status, forcing others to recognize your talents and abilities. This effect lasts for a period of one hour.

Rank Two: The Speed of Certainty

A true master of destiny is versatile and fleet of action. Once per Round you may spend a Void Point to make one melee attack as a Free Action. You may make no other attacks during this Round.

Rank Three: The Strength of Humility

A defender of the Minor Clans is a paragon of strength and certainty, skilled in the samurai arts and capable of virtually any deadly action. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action when using weapons with the Samurai keyword. If you already possess the ability to make attacks as a Simple Action when wielding such weapons, you may choose any one other type of melee weapon (knives, heavy weapons, spears, etc.). You gain the ability to attack with these weapons as a Simple Action instead.



Social Structure

A servant entered the room and placed four scrolls on the long, low table that today dominated the majority of the sensei's instruction chamber. He carefully unrolled each, placing small stones to hold the rolls open. The servant bowed very deeply and then retreated from the chamber without ever speaking a word. The sensei regarded the open scrolls with a curious expression. "Are you familiar with these symbols?" he asked.

The student looked at them carefully, each in turn. At the third, he peered a bit more closely. "I have seen this one before," he said. "A herald visited my father's village once when I was a child. He bore this symbol." He looked at the sensei. "Is this the symbol of the Emperor's heralds?"

"It is remarkable that you should remember it so well," the teacher mused. "You are partially correct. That is the family mon of the Miya family, who serve the Emperor directly without oaths of fealty to any clan. They serve as the Emperor's heralds."

The student nodded, then pointed to the others. "Are these also family symbols?"

"That is correct," the sensei answered. "The first is the family mon of the Otomo family. They are the worst caricature of spoiled nobility that can be imagined, but they serve their purpose well enough. The second is the symbol of the Seppun, whose duty is to protect the person, the family, and the estate of the Emperor. The fourth, of course, is the symbol of the Hantei Dynasty, the family of the Emperor himself."

The student looked carefully at the mon that represented the Emperor, lifting a hand as if to touch it and then thinking better of it. "In more... cultured areas... I suppose these have tremendous weight."

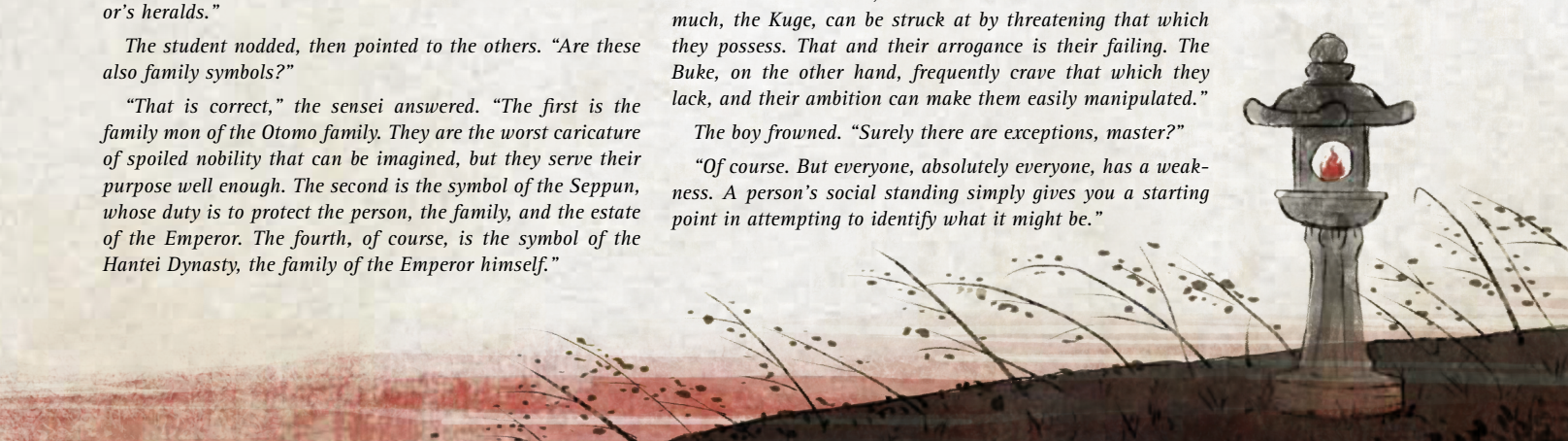
"Correct," the sensei said. "There are levels to all things, however. The Imperials sit atop the highest levels of society, more powerful than all save the Emperor and, perhaps, his chosen subjects. The Clan Champions, for instance. The important matter to consider is that all who fall beneath the Imperials, all within the Empire, form levels. The kuge are those who are directly descended from the Kami, and as such have a certain element of nobility. Most other samurai are among the buke, who have sworn oaths of fealty and whom serve the Kami's descendants directly."

"Is there an important distinction between the two other than social standing, master?"

"In their weaknesses," the sensei nodded. "Those who have much, the Kuge, can be struck at by threatening that which they possess. That and their arrogance is their failing. The Buke, on the other hand, frequently crave that which they lack, and their ambition can make them easily manipulated."

The boy frowned. "Surely there are exceptions, master?"

"Of course. But everyone, absolutely everyone, has a weakness. A person's social standing simply gives you a starting point in attempting to identify what it might be."



The Celestial Order

"If you have offended against Heaven, your prayers will not hide you."

— Rokugani proverb

All things in the Empire of Rokugan spring from, and are subject to, the Celestial Order. The Celestial Order is a natural stratification of existence that came to the mortal realm with the Kami who fell from the Heavens. All souls have a place in that natural order, and it is through obedience to the Celestial Order that Rokugan's society has remained so stable over the course of a thousand years and more. Those who eschew the order, who forsake their place in favor of a lower position, or even worse presume to reach higher than their station, are looked upon as blasphemers and heretics.

There are, of course, those who fall outside the Celestial Order. Gaijin are the most notable such individuals: folk from distant lands who do not obey the Emperor, do not follow proper civilized traditions, and worship false gods. As such, they are not truly considered people in the strictest sense—in that regard they fall even lower than eta in the divine scheme. Eta, at least, can fulfill their purpose in this world in hope of purifying their kharma and achieving something greater in their next life. Gaijin have no hope of such a thing unless they turn their backs on their blasphemous cultures and embrace the worship of the Celestial Heavens. Based on the information available from the Empire's limited interaction with various gaijin cultures, that seems highly unlikely.

The Mandate of Heaven

"My father understood that it is not enough to say the Mandate of Heaven is absolute. Men must understand it and treat it as absolute. For if they do not, they become little more than beasts, and if his subjects became as beasts, then all he built would fall apart."

— Hantei II Genji

The origins of mankind's understanding of the Celestial Order lie with the founding Kami. The sons and daughters of Amaterasu and Onnotangu fell to the moral realm after Hantei's epic battle with his father, during which eight of his nine siblings were freed from Lord Moon's gullet. Falling to the mortal realm cost the Kami their immortality, but not their

divinity; they remained as gods among men, and it was only natural they would rise to control the region now known as the Empire of Rokugan.

In doing so, the Kami attempted to construct a society that reflected the order that existed in Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens.

The Emperor

Since the time of the first Hantei, the Emperor has been known as the Son of Heaven. This is not a euphemism, but rather an indication that the Emperor has in fact been directly blessed by the Heavens, which endorse his rule over Rokugan. This was obviously true of the Hantei Dynasty, founded by Hantei, son of the Sun and Moon, and blessed by his mother upon his ascension to the throne. The later Toturi Dynasty also received the blessing of Lady Sun after Toturi defeated the returned Fu Leng and prevented all of Rokugan from falling under his domain. And the Iweko Dynasty that took power after the fall of the Toturi was not only blessed but divinely selected by the representatives of the Sun and Moon to restore harmony to the Empire.

Thus, all of the dynasties that have ruled over the Empire for twelve centuries and more have been endorsed by the Heavens, and the Emperor has been elevated above all other men. In recognition of this power, and to signify the sacrifices necessary to bear such an incredible burden, each Emperor gives up his personal name upon taking the throne, becoming merely the Hantei, or the Toturi, or the Iweko.

Because of the position's endorsement by the Heavens, the Emperor holds dominion over all land and all men that dwell within the realm of mortals. The Emperor grants portions of the land he owns to those who have sworn fealty to him, most notably the Clan Champions, who in turn divide it among their family and followers. In exchange for his allowing others to dwell upon and live off of his land, the Emperor expects a certain amount of taxes in return, and it falls to his followers to oversee, harvest, collect, and return those taxes to the Imperial City, where they may be distributed as the Emperor sees fit.

Because of the manner in which the Empire's economy functions, taxes usually take the form of a percentage of the harvest from each region, varying somewhat depending on the needs of the people in that area. By serving as a clearinghouse and distribution center for such an enormous quantify of food, the Emperor's bureaucracy literally determines who lives and who dies in any given season. While in theory each link of the chain along which the food travels to reach the Emperor keeps sufficient to feed the local population, in practice there have been more than a few eras when particularly ruthless Emperors have made sure that does not occur.

In addition to serving as the ultimate owner and administrator of all land and resources in the Empire, the Emperor is also the head of Rokugan's religion. The two aspects of the state religion, Shintao and Fortunism, were formally merged by the second Emperor, Hantei Genji, and have remained so ever since. In fact the Brotherhood of Shinsei, the principle religious organization in Rokugan, is theoretically headed by the Emperor. Each of the different sects within the Brotherhood has its own leader, but they are all accountable to the

The Imperial Histories: Reign of the Steel Chrysanthemum

In the year 589, Hantei XVI ascended the throne after persuading his father to retire early. The new Emperor was a brilliant and capable man, but he also quickly proved to be a brutal tyrant and a paranoid, sadistically cruel man. His rule became a reign of terror as he brutally tortured and killed anyone he suspected of disloyalty, regardless of age or position. Military resistance and peasant uprisings were ruthlessly crushed by the Imperial Legions, commanded by the Emperor's personal general, the so-called "Stone Crab," Hida Tsuneo.

The only political figures willing to resist the Hantei's increasingly crazed rule were his mother, the dowager Empress Otomo Kaoichihime, and his younger brother, Otomo Tanaka. Kaoichihime and Tanaka sought to undermine the Hantei's authority and curb his power. Unfortunately, despite his madness Hantei XVI was a cunning and brilliant political manipulator, and every attempt to constrain his power met with defeat... followed by hideous reprisals. Eventually, Tanaka and the dowager Empress concluded their only choice was to try to remove the Emperor by force. However, they knew many samurai, Lion especially, would remain loyal to the Emperor to the bitter end, and such a civil war might tear the Empire asunder. Unable to face such a prospect, the two instead worked to persuade the Imperial Guard that Hantei XVI had become a threat to the future of Rokugan.

They were still pursuing this goal when the Hantei discovered his mother's disloyalty. Furious, he ordered Hida Tsuneo to murder her in open court. This final outrage was too much, and the Imperial Guard joined Otomo Tanaka in slaughtering both Hantei XVI and Hida Tsuneo. A swift and merciless purge disposed of the Steel Chrysanthemum's other loyalists, and the true nature of his death was carefully concealed from the Empire at large. Otomo Tanaka, having participated in the coup, felt himself unworthy to hold the throne, and the post of Emperor passed to the Steel Chrysanthemum's young son—who, fortunately, proved to be a far better ruler than his father. The tyrannical Emperor's crimes were expunged from all official histories.

Hantei XVI returned to the Empire as an embodied spirit centuries later and tried to overthrow the rightful emperor, Toturi I. Despite his madness the returned Hantei was able to rally enough followers to become a genuine threat to the Toturi Dynasty, primarily for the simple reason than that he was a Hantei and thus many believed him to be infallible. His defeat—and subsequent murder several years later—finally confirmed that the Hantei were in fact mortal and capable of mistakes.

Emperor, though he (or more rarely she) seldom if ever calls upon them. The only other religious officials in Rokugan are shugenja, who are all members of the samurai caste and therefore by definition serve the Emperor as all samurai do.

Although the Emperor is sometimes treated as a semi-divine being, there are few within the Empire naïve enough to believe he is infallible. Bearing the blessings of the Heavens does not automatically bestow perfection upon the Emperor... although that may have been the case with the first Hantei, his son Hantei Genji, and the first Empress Iweko. While in practice all samurai follow the Emperor's commands without question, the assumption that he cannot make mistakes has been eroded over time, particularly due to the actions of the infamous Hantei XVI (also called the Steel Chrysanthemum) and the ignominious end of the Hantei Dynasty in the twelfth century. The short-lived Toturi Dynasty, for its part, was all too human in both its strengths and its weaknesses.

Despite the gradual erosion of the Emperor's infallible image, this has not radically altered the way most samurai view the man or woman who sits upon the throne. The allegiance of the samurai caste to the Emperor has remained largely unshaken throughout Rokugan's history, and on those occasions when disloyalty has arisen, the consequences for the Empire have generally been dire.

The Kuge, Servants of the Emperor

The Kuge are the true nobility among the samurai caste. Many of them can trace direct descent from the Kami, or are privileged to serve the Emperor either directly or through an extremely limited degree of separation. The Emperor himself is technically a member of the kuge, although obviously his position is elevated far above the other members because of his divine blessing.

Most kuge achieve their social status through heredity, but there are a handful who enter it through promotion. Key appointed positions in the Imperial hierarchy, such as the Emerald Champion or the Chancellor, automatically confer membership in the kuge. This is not hereditary membership, however, extending only to the office-holder and his immediate family so long as he is alive and holds his position. The most prominent of these offices over the Empire's history is probably the Emerald Champion, who must claim his office by defeating all other applicants in the extremely challenging Test of the Emerald Champion. The theoretical position of Shogun is also of exalted rank, though it did not become a recognized office until the very end of the Toturi Dynasty. The Shogun is supposed to be the commander of the Emperor's armies and the supreme military authority within the Empire. The Emerald Champion's duties actually parallel the Shogun's in many ways, and for much of the Empire's history it was the Champion who commanded the Imperial Legions in addition to enforcing the Emperor's laws by overseeing the Emerald Magistrates.

Other positions that bestow status as kuge include the Jade Champion, the Voice of the Emperor, the Imperial Advisor, and the Imperial Chancellor. These positions are all duties bestowed directly by the Emperor himself, and are

discussed in more detail in Chapter Four: Politics. Briefly, the Jade Champion is responsible for overseeing the protection of the Empire from magical crimes and the forces of corruption; the Voice of the Emperor sees that the Emperor's decrees and laws are spread across the Empire for all to hear; the Imperial Advisor keeps track of all matters of court and makes sure the Emperor is advised of political events; and the Imperial Chancellor moderates the Imperial Court. There are other such positions, but none with the same prestige as these.

The daimyo of the three Imperial Families also hold membership within the kuge, as do all those who bear the dynasty's family name (the Emperor's spouse and children). Some are of the opinion that all members of the Miya, Otomo, and Seppun Families should be considered kuge, since they are all direct servants of the Emperor with no clan loyalties to dilute their devotion. Others restrict the distinction to the family daimyo and their immediate families. Ultimately, this is essentially a philosophical debate—in practice, almost all members of the Imperial families hold influence and power within the kuge.

Beneath these Imperial servants and families are perhaps the Emperor's greatest servants throughout the Empire's history: the Clan Champions. These men and women are, at least in theory, the direct descendants of their clans' founding Kami, or of those who swore fealty directly to those Kami. Unlike other members of this class, the Champions' status extends to both their immediate and extended families—siblings, cousins, and children. Generally speaking, the position of Clan Champion is a hereditary one, passed down from each Champion to the oldest eligible child upon death or retirement. Some clans consider these positions patriarchal or matriarchal, and will not grant to title to children of a certain gender. For the most part, however, gender is not considered a major consideration in choosing the heir. In times when direct heredity is not an option for the selection of a successor, more distant family relations will suffice. However, some clans (such as the Lion) will not extend their search for a legitimate heir beyond a certain degree of separation, and once that degree is reached, the position is appointed based on merit rather than heredity. The Lion are somewhat notorious for the rapid progression of their Clan Champions during and after the Clan War, when the position went from Akodo Toturi to Matsu Tsuko, then to Ikoma Tsanuri, and then to Kitsu Motso before finally stabilizing with the Matsu Family for several generations.

The final ranks of the kuge are filled by the daimyo of the Great Clans' non-ruling families and by the ruling daimyo of the Minor Clans (sometimes called Minor Clan Champions). These individuals are likewise devoted servants of the Emperor and his chief nobility, and their status is in part recognition for their service. Kuge status only extends to their immediate family, and in the case of Minor Clan daimyo, is largely a gesture of respect rather than an acknowledgment of equality with individuals such as the Emerald Champion or the Great Clan Champions. Much as with the Clan Champions, family and Minor Clan daimyo inherit their positions through blood ties whenever possible, the closer the better. For example, after the Clan War the Centipede Clan daimyo Moshi Juiko retired. Because she had no children of her own, her niece Moshi Wakiza was selected to succeed her.

Vassal Families

The system of fealty that exists in Rokugan has created a series of complex social organizations of samurai that are commonly referred to as families. However, the term "family" is something of a misnomer, since very few individuals bearing the name of a samurai family are actually related to the person who founded that line. Many are not even related to one another through blood or marriage; instead, a number of prominent bloodlines are surrounded by numerous smaller but distinct lineages, together making up an entire family.

Most samurai are buke. Either they or their direct ancestors swore an oath to loyally serve a direct descendant of the family's founder, and for their service they were honored with the right to bear the founder's name and pass it on to their children.

These individuals are all called vassals, but on occasion one distinguishes himself through heroic or noble service, and in recognition of that his lord will grant him a vassal name, setting him apart from other buke. Ironically, this distinction rarely lasts longer than a few generations, after which the vassal families gradually fade into the ranks of the buke. But the vassal family bears its name proudly all the same.

Vassal families are obviously something of a peculiarity within the ranks of the buke. If all buke have sworn fealty to the kuge, shouldn't vassal families be more prestigious than other buke since they have their own family name? Shouldn't Kouken Tokaru of the Mirumoto have more status than his cousin, Mirumoto Tokei?

The short answer is no.

The longer answer is, not really. An individual samurai given the right to create a vassal family does in fact have a little more clout than the average member of a greater family. Akodo Seizuka, founder and daimyo of the Seizuka Family, commands more respect than the average Akodo. Those who swear fealty to Seizuka and take his name, however, still serve the Akodo daimyo; they have just added one additional degree of separation to their service. In essence, the founder of the clan and those who inherit his position do possess more social status than others of their patron family. (In game terms, this can be represented with the Social Position Advantage when creating a character.) Other members of a vassal family beyond the daimyo are not any more or less prestigious than other members of their patron family, and in fact tend to be somewhat more obscure since almost no one outside of their patron family has ever heard of them or their exploits.

Local Daimyo

The most prominent and prestigious position which most buke can aspire to is a posting as a provincial or city governor. Such individuals are the only buke-class samurai who are permitted to use the term "daimyo" in reference to themselves, and they can choose and appoint their own ji-samurai assistants and vassals. In many ways they are quite powerful within their own domain, but their power is also extremely limited outside of the territory they rule.

The position of a local daimyo is a difficult and precarious one. They have attained the highest rank possible for one of the buke, but they can never rise higher—and in order to retain their current position and pass it on to their children, they must serve their clan and their family daimyo without fail. Such men and women often live in a state of constant stress and tension, driven to extremes of anxiety by even minor setbacks within their domain.

The Buke, Servants of the Kuge

The vast majority of Rokugan's samurai belong to the buke class. Buke are not directly descended from the founders of whatever family they serve, but instead have sworn fealty to the family personally or, more likely, are descended from those who swore fealty to a direct member of the ruling line. This is by no means an indication of short-term service, since many family branches within the Great Clan families can trace their ancestry back to the men and women who swore fealty to the Kami and their subordinates during the dawn of the Empire.

There are many striations of power and influence within the buke. First among equals are the daimyo of families that are not kuge—that is, the various vassal families (see sidebar) and the subordinate families of those Minor Clans with more than one family name. At differing times the Minor Clans of the Hare and the Monkey have both managed to attain a second family name, for example. Of course, such ranks often mean very little in terms of actual power. Indeed, many relatives of Great Clan family daimyo, though too distant in relation to be considered kuge, are far more influential than even the most prominent personages within a vassal family or Minor Clan.

Setting aside these cases, the highest ranking members of the buke class are those who have been appointed to some position of status among their peers, usually through merit or political maneuver. Such individuals include provincial and city governors, military officers, hatamoto (personal vassals of major daimyo and Clan Champions), karo (advisors to daimyo), and magistrates (whether they be clan or Imperial in their authority).

The higher ranks of the buke also sometimes include the younger children of kuge families. In certain circumstances, kuge families may be too poor to confer an inheritance on all of their children worthy of their social status. When this happens, the younger and less fortunate children are essentially cast down to the buke level, although they can climb back up if they prove themselves industrious and earn an appointed office. For example, a samurai in this position who wins a posting as an Emerald Magistrate might well be accepted back into the rank of kuge by those who pay attention to such things.

Beneath those who have received appointments based on merit or influence are the rest of the buke, the rank and file of every clan and family in the Empire. This is by far the vast

majority of the samurai caste. Most of them belong to minor branches of the great families that have sworn fealty to the family daimyo or Clan Champion and in return are granted the right to bear their lord's name. A subset of these are the so-called vassal families, individual family groups who have been given the right to bear a unique name of their own. These vassal family names are not generally known outside of their patron family, although some within the clan as a whole will be familiar with the vassals of other families.

Generally, all samurai of this rank are referred to as *ji-samurai* or "half-samurai." This term is not widely used in polite conversation, however—it is usually only brought up when someone of greater rank wishes to shame or embarrass a member of the lower buke.

Ronin

"You ask me why so many ronin flocked to Toturi-sama's banner. Well, no doubt, there were those who did so for the usual reason—that employment was both more profitable and more exciting than idleness, and that if we fought well and lived, there was the prospect of rewards beyond a mercenary's pay. Others could tell right away that he was a truly great general, and wanted to back the winning side.

"But I think all of us would say that above all, we fought for Toturi-sama because he did not spit on us and send us out to die. For once, we were treated like true samurai. For that we would have followed him anywhere in this world, and across the Spirit Realms if it came to that."

— Takuan,
Imperial Chancellor to Emperor Toturi I

Ronin are a unique subset of the ji-samurai. They are samurai by their birth, and that cannot be ignored even by their greatest detractors. To deny a ronin the dignity of samurai status is to call into question the right of any child born of samurai parents to call itself by that name. Nevertheless, the circumstances of a ronin's life deny him the opportunity to swear fealty to the lord of his family or clan—for a ronin has neither of those things. A samurai's role in the Celestial Order is to serve, and without a lord a samurai has no place in society. For that reason, many consider ronin to be an anomalous element of Rokugan's society, the result of weakness and sin on the part of flawed samurai throughout history.

The irony is that because the Celestial Order teaches samurai cannot stoop to menial labor, ronin are often forced into a position where their only options are banditry or mercenary service, both considered dishonorable. However, despite their reputation for criminality, there are some ronin who find a virtuous path and ignore the slander and prejudice of their fellow samurai. Benevolent *otokodate* (ronin bands) can even acquire a positive reputation if they are persistent and their acts are of such honor and courage that they win the hearts of the common folk. For example, the ronin shugenja sect known as the Kanosei Furudera Order are much beloved by the heimin of Rokugan for their constant labor on behalf of simple farmers and craftsmen. Over the

The Imperial Histories: The Hidden Sword

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a ronin band known as the Hidden Sword patrolled the lands around the Shinomen Mori. The Hidden Sword protected small villages in the unaligned lands around the forest, with a special focus on fighting the deadly bandit gang known as the Forest Killers. The Hidden Sword were adored by the common people of that region, and even won allies and friends among the militant monks of the Order of Thunder.

Sadly, their history ended when their Forest Killer enemies ambushed them. The Hidden Sword was wiped out save for three survivors. However, one of those survivors was a man named Kaneka, later to become the Empire's first Shogun.

years their charitable attitudes have also gained them the favor of the Brotherhood of Shinsei and of more than one shugenja family.

Honest ronin face a tremendous problem overcoming the stereotype of the ronin as a bandit, a rogue who takes what he wants and kills without reason or hesitation. There have been far too many such individuals throughout Rokugan's history, some of them of considerable power and notoriety. The infamous Forest Killers, for example, were one of the largest and best organized ronin gangs in history, and persisted for decades before their destruction by Emerald Champion Yasuki Hachi. Outlaws such as these are the reason so many samurai believe all ronin to be honorless dogs who deserve nothing better than a quick death. Adding to this problem is the perception of ronin as samurai who failed their lord and were cast out of their clans as a result. While there are ronin who certainly fit this description, the popular mind seldom draws any distinction between genuine renegades and those ronin who were simply born into their station.

Ronin sometimes settle in their own communities, although it is more frequent for them to disperse themselves throughout the Empire. The largest known ronin settlement in the Empire's history is the village of Nanashi Mura (literally, "no-name village"). This settlement on the outskirts of Dragon Clan territory was founded by a ronin named Fuyari, an exile from the Unicorn Clan who raised a ronin army to wage war against his former clan. After a confrontation with a mysterious hooded ronin, however, Fuyari abandoned his war and instead sought a home for the men and women who followed him. After much wandering, the Dragon agreed to let him build and maintain a village under their protection so long as they maintained law and order and paid their taxes in a timely manner. Thus Nanashi Mura was born, and continued to thrive throughout the twelfth century.

Budoka and Ashigaru

Budoka and ashigaru are members of the bonge class, but because of their service to the samurai caste, they are elevated above others of their rank and allowed special privileges not generally available to commoners. This does not change their true position in the Celestial Order, but it does afford them a societal promotion of sorts, a reward for services performed.

Budoka are warriors taken from the ranks of the peasants and selected for individualized training by their samurai lords. Generally speaking, a budoka is chosen and trained by one particular samurai, although his services may be offered to others over time and a budoka can conceivably change masters during his lifetime. The practice of selecting and training budoka was most common in the early centuries of the Empire, when the social system was less strictly regimented, but it does continue to see use, particularly among the Crab and Mantis Clans. The Crab are willing to train almost any able-bodied warrior if he can assist in fighting the Shadowlands, and the Mantis with their low samurai population are more than happy to add to their military ranks by training budoka. Magistrates in all clans also train budoka to assist in upholding law in remote villages where the magistrate can seldom visit—these peasants are sometimes referred to as *doshin*.

Ashigaru are the rank and file soldiers that fill the bulk of any army. A typical Great Clan field army is no more than half samurai, and for some clans the percentage may be much smaller. Ashigaru are peasant conscripts, and have usually only received the most basic weapons training and formation drill. Typically they are trained in the use of yari (spears) although some of them may be armed with bows. Ashigaru units are typically led by a budoka or by one of their own selected as having a talent for leadership. These men are called ashigarugashira.

Because of their training and the nature of the service they provide for their lords (and ultimately the Emperor), budoka and ashigaru are considered to be at least nominally members of the buke. They are most assuredly not samurai, however, and while their buke status gives them dominion over other peasants, they are still considered property of their lord and can be discarded or even killed without reservation. That being said, their military training makes a budoka and ashigaru valuable clan resources. Any samurai who casually

The Imperial Histories: The Age of Enlightenment

During the reign of Emperor Toturi III, the whole Empire went through a period of obsession with the concept of enlightenment, prompted in part by the return of Shinsei's descendant, the prophet Rosoku, to Rokugan. Although Rosoku was killed by an assassin of the Bloodspeaker Cult, before his death he presented the Empire with a series of six challenges designed to bring forth enlightened souls to guide the Empire into the future. These challenges immediately became a focus of intense fascination throughout Rokugan.

"The smith who can craft a helmet strong enough to shatter one thousand blades shall keep the Book of Earth." This challenge is solved by Kaiu Sugimoto, an aged and infirm Kaiu engineer, who averts a war between the Badger Clan and the gaijin tribes of the Yabanjin when he slams his helmet down on the table where war is being planned, shocking the gathered officers into rethinking their plans.

"The scholar who can contain one thousand years of learning on a single parchment shall keep the Book of Air." This challenge is met by Mirumoto Masae, the sister of the Mirumoto family daimyo, who averted a war between Dragon and Phoenix by scolding the leaders for their arrogance and brandishing the ancient treaty that promised peace between their clans. Shamed by their own actions, both sides bow to her wisdom, and soon after she becomes the Keeper of Air.

"The warrior who can defeat a thousand enemies in a single stroke shall keep the Book of Fire." This is achieved by a brash young warrior named Kakita Tsuken, who intervenes in a war between the Mantis and the Phoenix. Placing himself between a Mantis legion and a helpless Phoenix village, he demands the Mantis commander face him in a duel before threatening the town. Tsuken is gravely wounded in the duel, but the Mantis commander dies, and his legion withdraws.

"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." This challenge is met by Doji Jun'ai, a Crane officer who marches her troops to the support of the Phoenix—despite orders from her superiors—rather than see the Crane violate their oaths to their Phoenix allies.

"The sage who can perform a task greater than these four things combined shall keep the Book of the Void." This is completed by the blind shugenja Asahina Hira, who discovers the hidden truth of the Badger lands—they are home to the grave of Ryoshun, the lost Tenth Kami.

"And to the soul who can master all five of these, an even greater gift—a collection of these five scrolls along with ancient writings of Shinsei himself, combining to form the Book of Five Rings." This is attained by Asahina Sekawa, the Jade Champion, who finds the hidden and near-legendary Shrine of Shinsei. There, he kills the assassin of Rosoku and recovers the Book of Five Rings, becoming its Keeper.

Within a couple of years of his achievement, Sekawa leaves the Empire to protect the infant heir of Shinsei's bloodline. The other five samurai, known as the Keepers of the Elements, remain in Rokugan and work closely with the Brotherhood of Shinsei to promote study and understanding of the Tao among all the people of the Empire.

takes the life of such a commoner should have an excellent reason, or be prepared to face severe punishment from the lord whose vassal he killed.

The Clergy

The clergy is a vital component of Rokugani society. It is comprised primarily of monks, most of them members of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The Brotherhood is actually a union of many different monastic orders, and all but a handful of tiny and particularly esoteric orders belong to the Brotherhood. As its name implies, the Brotherhood is devoted first and foremost to the study of the Tao of Shinsei, but reverence for the Fortunes and ancestors is accepted and indeed expected of its members as well. Indeed, some sects within the Brotherhood place the worship of the Fortunes first in their devotions, with the Tao serving as a supplement to their devotions.

Monks are generally not considered members of the samurai caste and in fact are strangely absent from the Celestial Order in most of its common representations. However, they are afforded tremendous respect by both peasants and samurai, making them a unique bridge between the upper and lower levels of Rokugani society. The respect and even admiration most peasants show for monks is easy to understand. Monasteries dot the countryside, and it is rare to find a village of any size that does not have a monastery within a day's travel. Unlike samurai, monks believe they are a part of

Adventure Seed: A Sinful Brother

Challenge

The PCs come to a town which seems to be laboring under a dire curse. Crops are failing, wild animals attack at night, and sickness is widespread. The local lord is at a loss, and begs for help in lifting the bad fortune afflicting his lands.

Focus

All normal blessings and prayers seem to have no effect, but carefully questioning the local peasants can eventually unearth a story of a thieving monk who passed through the town a few months ago. When the peasants caught him taking food and drove him out of the village, he threatened to curse them.

Strike

The PCs can eventually track down the monk at a monastery in an adjacent province. He is in fact a thief and a drunkard, but the other monks show compassion for his flaws and are unwilling to believe he could curse an innocent village. The PCs will have to convince the monastery of the truth before they will turn on their misbehaving brother.

the world and all that is in it, and do not consider themselves superior to anyone for any reason. They interact with the peasant castes without reservation or bias. Moreover, monks frequently take it upon themselves to purify their body and spirit with difficult physical labor, so it is not uncommon to find monks working alongside the lower castes in villages, fields, or wherever heavy labor is needed. The bonge and hinin consider sharing in their burdens the greatest act of kindness imaginable, and many are brought up from childhood with tales of benevolent monks from the local temple working alongside them and their parents. Consequently, they usually treat monks with the utmost respect.

Of course, not every monk is hard-working, pious, or kind-hearted. Peasants also tell humorous and ribald tales of monks who engage in lechery or drunkenness. Such stories are usually mere tales, but there are enough "bad eggs" in the Brotherhood's ranks to keep such stories in circulation.

As another component of their search for true understanding and enlightenment, monks frequently make stringent vows to deny worldly temptations. Chastity, poverty, and fasting are the most common forms of self-denial, but other forms of ritual purification exist as well. Most monastic sects advocate spending many hours of each day in meditation, sometimes under demanding physical circumstances, in order to properly prepare their spirit and body for spiritual advancement.

The clergy is not limited solely to monks. Shugenja are clergy, but they are also samurai, and their status as samurai takes precedence over their status as clergy. Shugenja are priests of the kami, and as such they perform a wide variety of rituals and blessings the peasants consider essential to their ongoing survival. They bless crops, marriages, births, and deaths, as well as countless other events both mundane and significant. Because of their samurai status, however, most shugenja remain aloof from peasants and conduct their rituals purely as part of their duty to their lord and to the kami. Social interaction between peasants and the shugenja who meet their spiritual needs is rare. Ronin shugenja may sometimes have a closer relationship to the common folk, especially since they have often grown up among them.

The Bonge

The bonge class is also known as the heimin or "half-people." It comprises the vast majority of Rokugan's non-samurai population—indeed the vast majority of its population of all kinds. The bonge include farmers, merchants, and craftsmen, as well as various other commoners such as servants, fishermen, and urban laborers. The life of a heimin is generally a difficult one, made up largely of labor in service to a samurai lord who is usually uncaring about his plight.

Heimin have the right to file charges against one another if they feel they have been wronged; generally these are handled by the doshin or yoriki of a magistrate rather than the magistrate himself. Heimin who are wronged by samurai have no rights whatsoever, since they are entirely inferior in social rank. Conversely, a samurai wronged by a heimin can execute him instantly, although he may have to answer to the heimin's lord if he does so without prior permission. Killing a heimin without permission is generally considered rude and somewhat distasteful, but in the case of severe impropriety even the most merciful samurai may find it difficult to stay his blade. Peasants are in much more danger from reckless ronin who know they will be moving on in short order, giving them little reason to fear a vengeful samurai lord.

Foremost among the bonge are the farmers. Farmers are not afforded any particular courtesy by samurai, but they are considered the most important and worthy of heimin because it is their work that feeds the entire Empire. Farmers are valuable vassals, and a samurai who kills another man's farmer is likely to face a duel as a result—he has in essence taken food from the mouths of other samurai by his actions.

After farmers, artisans and craftsmen are most valued. Art is considered a noble endeavor, and there are numerous samurai who take up the artisan path as well, tempering their natural contempt for the bonge. Heimin artisans of particular skill are often funded by a samurai patron, sometimes generously enough to allow them to live unusually well for their station. Some artisans among the bonge can actually travel in affluent and rarefied samurai circles.

Practical craftsmen such as carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, and potters do not have the same options for success as skilled artisans, but they are still afforded a certain respect for their skills, many of which are vital to the proper functioning of Rokugani society.

Below these heimin are the merchants, a necessary evil at best. To sully one's hands with matters of commerce is considered distasteful by samurai, perhaps even dishonorable among those of especially refined sensibilities. These attitudes filter down into the common ranks, so merchants are regarded with hostility even by their fellow heimin—despite their often considerable wealth. In point of fact, successful merchants can easily become far more wealthy than most samurai, rich enough to rival a provincial governor or even a family daimyo. However, they must be cautious about displaying their wealth lest their arouse the ire of the samurai class. One popular maneuver among wealthy commoners is to wear kimono with extremely elaborate and expensive dyes and embroidery—all of it on the inside, where samurai cannot see it and take offense.

The Hinin

The hinin, or "non-people," are without question the lowest of all people in Rokugan. Unlike the heimin or the bonge, hinin are seen as little more than objects—not people at all. Most of them belong to the group known as eta, who work as morticians, leatherworkers, and garbage collectors. These tasks are considered so unclean they hopelessly contaminate the kharma of those who perform them. The work of the eta is not generally considered important by samurai, and thus most eta can be killed without hesitation for the slightest cause. Slaying eta in the service of one's own lord is considered poor form, however, and can be considered a crime under certain circumstances—albeit one more like vandalism than murder. It should go without saying that eta live in mortal fear of all samurai. However, most eta are virtually invisible to samurai, who are raised to ignore their unclean presence. Unless an eta draws attention to himself, a samurai will not notice him at all—which suits both parties fine, given the realities of their respective places in the Celestial Order. Eta are not even permitted to speak to samurai unless the samurai expressly command them to do so.

In point of fact, eta are treated just as badly by the heimin as by the samurai class. They can only find any real degree of kindness with each other or, sometimes, among the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

Social Mobility in Rokugan

Although Rokugan has a strict caste system, it is not a completely unchanging one. Samurai born into the buke can aspire to higher ranks if they prove themselves worthy or develop political contacts and networks of alliances. A tiny number of them may even be able to vault into the ranks of the bonge by winning a position such as Emerald Champion.

But what of the commoners? Isn't their only opportunity for promotion to live according to the Celestial Order and be reborn to a higher station in their next life? Most of the time, that is true... but during war the situation changes. An ashigaru or budoka who achieves great deeds on the battlefield can, on rare occasions, win an opportunity to join the ranks of the samurai. For example, an ashigaru might manage to personally slay an enemy daimyo, presenting the severed head to his samurai lord. Such exceptional peasant warriors are usually allowed to swear fealty to a vassal family or a lesser branch of a major family.

Peasants can take advantage of war in another and less honorable way. Samurai battlefields are often strewn with fallen weapons and other gear, and an unscrupulous peasant can equip himself with a daisho and then claim to be a ronin. Since most ronin have only their swords and their own word to prove their membership in the samurai caste, this gambit can work so long as the peasant avoids anyone who might recognize him from his old life. It is impossible to say how often this gambit has been used through the Empire's long history, but on at least one occasion it gave rise to a Minor Clan. The Clan War hero known as Toku began his life as an innocent and naïve peasant boy who picked up a pair of swords and thought this made him a samurai. He eventually realized the crime he had committed and confessed to his lord and friend, Emperor Toturi I. Toturi, however, chose to forgive Toku's crime, declaring he had lived more honorably than any true-born samurai. Instead of being executed, Toku was permitted to found the Monkey Clan.

Entertainers are generally considered hinin as well, but this distinction is not always clearly defined. Many peasant entertainers are considered more like artisans, and are shown more respect than other eta. Geisha are the most obvious example, of course, but peasant actors and musicians also fall into this nebulous category. The best among them may be treated by samurai almost as equals, although in the strictest interpretation of the Celestial Order they are indeed hinin.

Criminals from any non-samurai caste are also considered hinin once convicted, and those who are not executed outright are marked as hinin for the remainder of their lives. Such men and women often wind up as lifelong criminals, joining urban gangs, bandit packs, or smuggling rings.

A unique subset of the hinin class that has come to work closely with samurai over the centuries are the torturers. Torture is considered a legitimate interrogation practice in Rokugan (the Empire's legal system is discussed in more detail later in this book), but samurai magistrates would never stoop to touching the flesh of criminals themselves. Instead, they have skilled hinin torturers on hand to assist them with such things. Although these individuals are generally despised by other commoners and hinin for their work, samurai often treat them with a modicum of respect because of the skill with which they perform their necessary duties.

In a similar fashion, some magistrates have been known to maintain an eta assistant to help them investigate the scenes of murders or other violent crimes. This is particularly common among the Kitsuki family, who prize the knowledge that can be gleaned from close examination of a dead body. The sinister shugenja of the Kuni family also have such assistants, some of whom have a considerable knowledge of anatomy in order to assist their masters with dissections of Shadowlands creatures and other such unsavory tasks. (Of course, rumor elsewhere in Rokugan suggests the Kuni themselves do not hesitate to dirty their hands with dissections.)

Hinin cannot hope for much in the way of comfort or happiness in their current existence. Most of them believe their best hope is to lead a virtuous and dutiful life, executing their assigned tasks well and without fail, and hoping for a better life in their next incarnation. Through great effort they may be reborn as heimin rather than hinin, eventually fulfilling their destiny in this life to earn peace in the next. Some secretly hope to one day be reincarnated as samurai, but such desires are never spoken aloud for fear a samurai might hear such heresy and punish them terribly for their presumption. And of course there are a few hinin who succumb to the anger and bitterness of their lives and join dangerous movements such as the Bloodspeaker Cult.

The Gaijin

"The mind of Tengoku gives no thought to foreign barbarians."

— Rokugani saying

Gaijin have no place in the Celestial Order. They are foreigners and barbarians, and have no understanding of how all life sprang from the Lady Sun and Lord Moon at the dawn of time. Though gaijin look like men, many Rokugani believe they are not even created of divine blood, but instead sprang forth from some other (perhaps blasphemous) source. At best, they are descended from rebels who refused to acknowledge the Kami who founded the Empire.

The gaijin's complete absence from and ignorance of the Celestial Order renders them less than human, less even than the lowly hinin who perform the most despicable services for samurai in hopes of a better life. That said, however, it is not impossible for gaijin to find their place in the Celestial Order, and in doing so earn the rights and privileges samurai enjoy. Over the centuries a handful of gaijin have embraced the religion of Rokugan, and in doing so they have opened their souls to the truth of the universe. Though these gaijin can never be truly accepted without some manner of divine endorsement, they can hope to be reborn within the Order upon their death and subsequent reincarnation. Otherwise, the best a gaijin can hope for upon death is oblivion.

Though the official Imperial histories make no mention of it, there are rumors that the Tortoise Clan, founded in the aftermath of the Battle of White Stag in the fifth century, may have included many stranded gaijin in its early ranks. More recently, during the War Against the Darkness in the twelfth century the Moto nomads of the Burning Sands came to Rokugan and joined their established cousins in the Unicorn Clan. Because the Moto arrived in the company of Lady Shinjo herself, the founding Kami of the clan, their rightful place within the Unicorn Clan could not be denied. Soon after, Shinjo specifically appointed the Moto the rightful rulers of the Unicorn until such time as she returned. Since not even an Emperor can overrule the word of a Kami, the Empire had no choice but to accommodate to the Moto's presence.

The Shadowlands

While the hinin are beneath the Celestial Order and the gaijin outside of it, the denizens and adherents of the Shadowlands are directly opposed to it. Just as Jigoku is the antithesis of Tengoku, the oni and those who ally with them are the nemeses of Rokugan. It is the duty and obligation of every Rokugani, regardless of position in the Celestial Order, to oppose the forces of the Shadowlands at every possible opportunity. Death at the hands of the Shadowlands is not considered a disgrace, for to die in such a manner means that one stood against the darkness. Collusion with the Shadowlands, however, is the most severe and unforgivable form of blasphemy imaginable. The souls of those who commit such crimes are usually severely punished, and if they have succumbed to the Taint their fate is inevitably condemnation to eternal torment within the confines of Jigoku.

New Mechanics

This section contains new mechanics for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition RPG. Here we present a new Advanced School for the Imperial Families, the men and women who live at the pinnacle of Rokugani society. The Imperial Scion does not merely manipulate the court society of Rokugan, he defines and controls it, and those who displease him can find themselves cast down into the buke or even made ronin.

Advanced School: Imperial Scion [Courtier]

The Imperial families are not generally given a great deal of consideration by the average citizen of Rokugan. Even most members of the samurai caste go their entire lives while glimpsing only one or two true Imperials, and many of the more remote family branches never encounter one for generations at a time. The Imperial families are simply smaller than most of those who serve the clans, and their spheres of influence are relatively limited in comparison to their clan counterparts. Even the well-traveled Imperial heralds of the Miya family tend to stick to clearly defined travel routes, avoiding the Empire's more remote districts for decades or even centuries at a time. In some cases this can lead to a misperception of the Imperials as dangerous or hostile individuals who desire only the obedience and submission of other samurai. While this is untrue in the main, there are a few individuals who prove it correct.

Scions of the Imperial families are utterly ruthless individuals who have mastered the manipulation of their own social standing to decimate their enemies. Standing against a scion in court is tantamount to ruination for all but the most skilled or highest-ranking samurai. These scions most often come from the Otomo family, which teaches their secret techniques in its most prestigious and elite dojo. Much more rarely, members of the Miya or Seppun families are permitted to train there as well. The scions are rarely liked, frequently sought as allies, and almost always feared for the power they can and will bring to bear on any who arouse their ire.

Requirements

- **Rings/Traits:** Awareness 5, Perception 4
- **Skills:** Courtier 6, Etiquette 4
- **Other:** Only members of the Imperial families may take ranks in this Advanced School; Status 4 or higher

Techniques

Rank One: The Awe of the Throne

A true scion of the Imperial families knows how to use his social position to his advantage in nearly any situation. Any time you are called upon to make a Skill Roll, or to use your Glory or Honor rank, you may spend a Void Point to instead substitute your Status Rank.

Rank Two: The Strength of the Throne

As a champion of the Imperial line, you can ensure that those who oppose you suffer mightily for their temerity. After conversing with an opponent of lower Status Rank for a few minutes, you may force that opponent to make an opposed Courtier / Etiquette roll against you. If you defeat your opponent at the roll, you may reduce his Status by a number of points up to a maximum of twice your Insight Rank.

Rank Three: The Terror of the Throne

There is virtually no one who is immune to the power of an Imperial scion. While conversing with an opponent of equal or lower Status Rank, you may force a Contested Void Roll. If you are successful, you can permanently give the opponent any one Social Disadvantage. Alternatively, you can force the opponent to become ronin, but the technique can only be used in this manner once every six months. Forcing a samurai to become ronin in this way costs you 5 points each of Glory, Honor, and Status.

Politics

The scrolls on the table that depicted the Imperial family mons had been sitting in the chamber for three days now, and had been joined by other scrolls sitting on a variety of other tables, all of which had apparently been added to the room for the purpose of displaying them. The student had laboriously learned the mons of all the major families of the Great Clans the first day, but the number of smaller vassal families among them had taken longer, given that in most cases he had never even heard of them. He frowned at the last one. "The Tsume family, vassals of the Doji?" he said.

"Are you guessing, or certain?" the sensei asked.

"Certain," the student said.

"You are correct," the sensei answered. "Well done." He strolled around the room looking at the different mons. "Why do you suppose I have required you to learn all of these, young one?"

"Heraldry is a noble and scholarly pursuit," the student replied. He waited for a moment, then added, "and identifying an opponent's heritage can give strong indicators as to his capabilities and weaknesses."

"The former is true, although largely irrelevant," the sensei said. "The latter is much more important. A samurai of skill and cunning, such as you will be, can often find himself in a court setting, and the sword will not help you there. You must be ever cautious, ever vigilant, and ever aware, even of your allies."

The student struggled to stifle a chuckle. "I think my rural upbringing would prevent me from ever being appointed to a court, master. As you have said, I lack exposure to certain essential aspects of society."

"Your upbringing is unfortunate in some respects but ideal in others," the sensei said. "You are a blank canvas on which a masterpiece can be painted. That you are so bright and skilled is a tremendous advantage." He raised an eyebrow. "Do not allow such lofty praise to make you arrogant, pupil."

The student bowed. "I will try, master."

The sensei smirked. "Regardless, the point of the matter is that you are very skilled, skilled enough that one day you will doubtless find yourself in court in some capacity or other. Always keep in mind, however, that no matter how skilled a samurai may be, court is deadly and a single misstep or misunderstanding can result in your death. Or worse, your disgrace."

"Is it more dangerous than a duel, master? I thought that was the most dire situation in which a warrior might find himself."

The sensei shook his head slowly. "In a duel, you know who your enemy is, and you know your skill might be sufficient to save you. In court, your enemy can often be unknown, and too frequently, nothing a warrior has at his disposal can prevent his fate." He paused, and a smile spread on his features beneath his mask. "But then, we have never said you will simply be a warrior, have we?"

The Goings-On in Court

"A warrior's failure dooms only himself; a courtier's failure dooms the entire Clan."

— Doji Norie,
Doji Courtier Academy Grand Master

The way of the samurai is often considered synonymous with the way of the warrior. Rokugan has a rich and vibrant history of conflict, and countless lives have been lost on the field of battle. But samurai do not serve their clans solely on the battlefield. Politics has been a vital element of the Empire's history since its founding, and the negotiations and maneuvers of courtiers have changed history as often as war, if not more so. Indeed, Imperial decree technically forbids aggression against Minor Clans by Great Clans, and significantly restricts the means by which the Great Clans can war against one another. During the reign of weak Emperors, these decrees can be winked at or ignored, but for most the Empire's history the Imperial Throne is essentially unassailable and the Great Clans are forced to confine their military conflicts to what might be called spirited border skirmishes. Perhaps this is why the reign of the Hantei Dynasty is often referred to as "the thousand years of peace" despite the many conflicts during that time.

But while wars may come and go, the courts remain a vicious battleground for the Great Clans throughout Imperial history. Indeed, many military clashes great and small are little more than gambits intended to provoke or respond to overtures made in court. Skillful courtiers can change the outcomes of wars even after the battles are fought. Thus even the normally undiplomatic Lion and Crab maintain a presence in the courts, dispatching their Ikoma and Yasuki representatives to parry political attacks from the Crane and Scorpion.

Those who follow the courtier's path must do so with the same courage and zeal as a bushi in combat, for their failures can be as catastrophic as a lost war, and their victories can bring glory and success to their clan without the need to fight a war at all. Nor is politics free from risk. In a land where honor is defended with steel and insults are answered with lethal challenges, the skilled courtier must find ways to obstruct, undermine, and destroy his opponents without falling prey to the same fate themselves. Seasoned warriors who get re-assigned to court often find it a taxing and even demoralizing experience.

Winter is the greatest season of activity for courtiers; since the cold weather and heavy snowfall prevents most military maneuvers, politics and intrigue take center stage. But one should not imagine that winter is the only time court is convened; far from it. Courts are held throughout the year, albeit with frequent recesses that can last months at a time. The longest of these recesses tends to fall immediately before and after the Imperial Winter Court is convened, ensuring all representatives have ample time to visit their families, report to their lords, and make whatever preparations are necessary for the intense political battles of the winter months.

The courts of the Clan Champions tend to be a little less regular in their scheduling than the Imperial Court, owing to the intense schedules such individuals maintain, but these

The Imperial Histories: The Fox Clan

When Shinjo led her followers out of Rokugan to explore the lands beyond, not all of her vassals were willing to accompany her. Those who remained behind called themselves the Fox Clan, and for seven hundred years they were the voice of Shinjo in the Imperial Court.

However, the Fox Clan's history proved not to be an easy one. The Ki-Rin lands on which they dwelled were fertile and their peasants brought forth great harvests. This soon drew the attention and jealousy of the Lion Clan, who resented that such a small Minor Clan should possess so much land. They persuaded the Emperor to issue a proclamation calling on the Fox to "share" their lands... and then marched an army to take possession. The Fox fought bravely, but were hopelessly outnumbered and soon defeated.

The Emperor felt some responsibility for what had occurred, and assigned the Fox new lands far to the south, where they dwell today. He also issued a decree forbidding Great Clans from making war on Minor Clans. Although ambitious or aggressive clans would sometimes find ways around this restriction, in general it worked to ensure the Minor Clans would not be bullied too severely by their stronger neighbors.

The Fox themselves faced dire straits when they arrived at their new home. They had few supplies and the province they had been given was heavily forested, lacking much arable farmland. They were forced to resort to hunting to feed themselves and their children, violating Rokugan's taboo against eating red meat. However, soon after their arrival in these new lands, the Fox formed a mystical connection with the animals of the forest. According to legend, during one of his reluctant hunting trips, the Fox Clan daimyo accidentally killed a kitsune spirit in one of his traps, leaving two orphaned kits. The daimyo accepted the kits to raise as his own, in penance for his breaking the taboo against eating meat. The kits took human form and became Osusuki and Akomachi, the ancestors of the modern Fox Clan's ruling line. The tale claims that Osusuki married a man from the clan and birthed the next daimyo, while Akomachi became a kitsune and married back into the line of fox spirits. Whatever is the truth, with the merging of the kitsune into the clan's ruling family, the forest became an ally of the Fox Clan and they thrived from that day forward, until their absorption into the Mantis Clan.

courts also meet in their absence—the Champions place their confidence in trusted subordinates to oversee and manage things while they are otherwise engaged. In general, the less important a court is in the grand scheme of things, the more erratic its schedule becomes—thus, the courts of provincial daimyo and city governors meet only occasionally when the local lord feels it useful.

The Imperial Court

There is no higher court in the Empire than the Imperial Court. It began as the personal court of the Emperor when he chose to hold it, but over the centuries it has evolved into an independent assemblage that meets on a regular basis throughout the year, often without the Emperor in attendance. The modern Imperial Court is an arena where the foremost political minds of each clan meet to resolve matters between one another, without the cumbersome process of using subordinates who need to gain approval from their superiors before acting. Clan ambassadors to the Imperial Court answer to no one except their Clan Champion, and even then they generally have considerable latitude.

During most of the year, the Imperial Court is located in Rokugan's capital where the Emperor resides. During the winter, however, the Emperor traditionally leaves the capital to spend the season with a chosen clan, which becomes the host of the Imperial Winter Court for that year. This is a great privilege and clans compete fiercely for the right to serve as the Emperor's host for the season. Through most of the Empire's history the Crane have tended to dominate this competition, so much so that Kyuden Doji contains permanent guest quarters for the Son of Heaven.

Who Attends the Court?

The Imperial Court is attended by the highest ranking and most capable courtiers in the Empire. Every Clan Champion recognizes the importance of having his agenda advanced in court, as well as the need to defend against the intrigues of other clans—which in some cases is by far the more important task.

While the court is in the Imperial capital, the representatives of the Imperial families are usually the largest contingent in attendance, though during the Winter Court they are usually outnumbered by the host clan. The Otomo always maintain a healthy presence at any Imperial Court, usually a delegation of somewhere between one and two dozen representatives. This frequently, but not always, includes the Otomo family daimyo or one of the daimyo's principal advisors. About 50 Seppun guardsmen are usually present, serving as bodyguards to the Imperial contingent and cooperating with the host clan's forces in providing general security. And of course the Miya are present as well, with perhaps half a dozen heralds in attendance.

The Emperor and his personal retinue attend the court, of course, and this group can include such notables as the Imperial Herald, the Imperial Advisor, Imperial Treasurer, Voice of the Emporer, the Emerald Champion, the Chancellor, and when they are active, the Jade Champion and the Shogun.

Beyond the Imperial contingent, there is no precise formula for Great Clan or Minor Clan attendance at the Imperial Winter Court. Each clan is sent a notification of when the Winter Court will begin, and each is entitled to bring roughly a dozen delegates along with the appropriate yojimbo, attendants, and the like. These numbers are never explicitly stated, and clan delegations can vary in size, but any less than half a dozen (or more than twenty) is generally considered poor form and can even be construed as an insult against the hosts. The hosts, of course, are entitled to many more delegates, but rarely take full advantage of this implied right so as not to seem overbearing.

The Minor Clans traditionally have substantially less representation at the Imperial Court, regardless of season. One of the few Minor Clans to consistently have a presence is the Fox, who have been permitted in court since their creation due to the Hantei Emperors' desire to preserve

their dynastic link with the children of Shinjo. In the reign of the Toturi Dynasty the Monkey Clan were afforded a similar privilege due to their position as favored vassals of the Toturi.

During the twelfth century, the Tortoise led an effort to form a long-term alliance of the Minor Clans, and this enabled the Minor Clans to establish a more consistent presence at the Imperial Winter Court.

The Hierarchy

The hierarchy of the Imperial Court is clearly defined in theory, but somewhat flexible in fact. Samurai are accustomed to a life of service, but the Imperial Court is attended by the most powerful and influential individuals in the entire Empire, few of whom are truly accustomed to quietly accepting the dominance of another. Thus, regardless of who is overseeing a particular session or event, tact and diplomacy are vital to avoid severe difficulties or dangerous personality clashes.

Naturally, the Emperor is the ultimate authority in the Imperial Court, and when he is in attendance all court sessions are held in his presence. They begin at his whim, although they are typically announced in advance so everyone will be present and suitably prepared for the Imperial presence. They end when the Emperor grows weary of the day's proceedings. The Emperor's presence can create somewhat of a chaotic environment depending upon his personality, since he can arbitrarily end any debate or conflict by simply announcing the outcome, leaving those in attendance with no choice but to accept his decision. Eccentric (or in the case of Hantei XVI, insane) Emperors have been known to turn their court into a nightmarish tightrope-act for all in attendance.

When the Emperor is not in attendance, authority in the court falls to other individuals: the Imperial Chancellor and, during Winter Court, the host. When court is held in the Imperial Palace, the Chancellor is the unquestioned authority in the Emperor's absence. However, during Winter Court when a clan or one of the Imperial families is playing host, considerable authority and responsibility falls on the hosting Champion or daimyo. This can lead to power clashes between the Chancellor and the host, although in theory there is a division of responsibility. Anything that directly affects actual court sessions should fall under the Chancellor's authority, while everything else should be the host's responsibility. Depending on the personalities involved, however, this is not always the case—especially during the reign of weak or ineffectual Emperors, when much of the Imperial power devolves to people like the Chancellor and the Imperial family daimyo.

Beneath the Chancellor and host, the other Imperial family members, especially the Otomo, often claim some authority. This is not necessarily a measure of status, since it is entirely possible that guests may outrank even highly-placed Imperial family members, but a certain amount of deference is expected because of the Otomo's status as the Emperor's direct vassals. Only the local commander of the Seppun guard contingent can pull rank on an Otomo, since in the event of emergency, authority immediately passes to the officer in charge and remains such until the crisis has passed.

Below that level there is little authority over the court as a whole. Rather, control defaults to the individual delegations, where rank is determined by status inside the clan. The Imperial Court tends to attract a particularly high caliber of individual, so it is not at all uncommon for a Clan Champion or several family daimyo to be in attendance at any given time. As a result, there is typically a very clear chain of command within the individual delegations.

Different Great Clans may have more or less influence at a specific Winter Court depending on where the court is being held—hence the intense political maneuvering every year to win the Emperor's favor on this matter. As already mentioned, the Crane are the most frequent victors in this particular political battle, although the Scorpion, the Phoenix, and the Imperial families are also frequent hosts. Conversely, the Crab, the Unicorn, and the Mantis are the rarest hosts. No Minor Clan has ever hosted an Imperial Winter Court.

What is Discussed at Court?

Only matters of greatest import are worthy to be brought before the Emperor at the Imperial Court. Declarations of war and announcements of major treaties are common subjects, and a great many wars have begun and ended within the confines of the Emperor's audience chamber. The Imperial Court also tends to magnify the importance of lesser matters discussed there, and seemingly trivial disputes—things as innocuous as a minor border skirmish, the extradition of a criminal, or even a jilted lover—have sometimes resulted in war solely because they were broached at the Imperial Court. In the presence of the Son of Heaven no clan will willingly back down and lose face in front of its allies and enemies, regardless of how trivial the matter at hand may seem.

Adventure Seed: A Death at Court

Challenge

The Imperial Winter Court is badly disrupted when an elderly samurai is found dead, apparently stabbed to death in his sleep. The Emperor commands the crime be solved forthwith to restore harmony to his court.

Focus

Soon an alarming truth comes to light: the dead samurai is actually a former Clan Champion, retired and living under an assumed name. When rumors of this reach the court, angry accusations against his old rivals become the order of the day, and soon everyone is talking of war.

Strike

The murderer is actually a simple yojimbo with a personal grudge against the old samurai, and had no idea he was killing a former Clan Champion. In order to prevent war, the PCs must not only discover the killer's identity but also present convincing evidence of his guilt to a court full of angry, paranoid nobles.

If wars and treaties are the lifeblood of the clans, then rice is the lifeblood of the people, and it has its place at the Imperial Court as surely as warfare. Court is where the imbalances of each year's harvest are resolved. Those who have bountiful harvests (most typically the Crane) have considerable leverage over clans experiencing shortages. Jockeying for position and offering favors or exchanging services for rice is a large part of what makes the Imperial Court so important to the Great Clans and Minor Clans alike.

In addition to affairs that must be discussed before the court as a whole, the Imperial Court is host to a myriad of minor pursuits that draw the interest of lesser courtiers and ambassadors. Chief among these pursuits, as within almost all courts, is the arrangement of marriages between clans. Marriage is both a means of exchanging favors and services as well as a way to secure alliances between families. Another pursuit is the fostering of students between schools of different clans, again as part of treaties or for the purpose of cementing future relations.

The Courts of the Clan Champions

The Champions of the Great Clans are among the most powerful and influential individuals in the Empire, outranked only by the Emperor and his direct servants. When the Champions convene their own courts, they are attended by not only their most powerful vassals but also many important samurai from other clans.

Who Attends the Court?

Clan courts are primarily attended by prominent personages of that clan—the Champion is usually in attendance, though he may delegate the task of managing the court to a trusted subordinate. Because of the importance of the event, delegations from other clans, both allies and enemies, make a point of attending, and frequently an Imperial guest or two will show up as well.

Those in attendance from the host Champion's clan tend to be an assortment of samurai from radically different walks of life. Senior military officers, such as shireikan or rikugunshokan, are generally expected to attend if their duties permit. Representatives from the major schools within the clan are present, usually in the form of mid- to high-ranking sensei. Prominent temples, major strongholds, and smaller elite military units are all represented as well, although their purpose for attending may not extend beyond a demonstration that such groups or locations are prominent enough within the clan to warrant their own representative.

The Hierarchy

Without question, the highest ranking member of a clan court is the Clan Champion himself. Because these events are convened in his name and at his command, the Champion is frequently in attendance when matters of any significance are discussed, but it is also common for him to take his leave after a few days or sometimes even only a few hours, attending to other responsibilities. When this happens, the Champion invariably designates a representative to oversee the court in his absence. This samurai speaks with the Champion's authority, and is typically a trusted advisor such as a karo or hatamoto, or even a former sensei. It is also not uncommon for a Champion to leave his or her spouse to oversee the court.

Beneath the Champion or his representative, the most powerful samurai in attendance are family daimyo. Although such individuals frequently maintain their own lesser courts, sometimes even at the same time, it is rare to find the court of a Clan Champion that does not have at least one of the clan's chief daimyo in attendance. This helps maintain close relations between the families, grants the Champion insight into what his vassals are doing in their provinces, and allows the Champion to make use of his most powerful and influential vassals during a court session. After all, it is likely that the clan's enemies have sent substantial delegations of their own, and there is need to guard against their intrigues.

Once the ranks of the kuge have been exhausted in the chain of authority, the next step varies depending on the clan in question. Among the Phoenix, for example, the highest ranking shugenja, whether a sensei or some other position, is typically assumed to hold the next highest rank. Among the Crane, experienced courtiers are looked to for guidance. Among more military clans, such as the Crab, Lion, and Unicorn, senior military officers tend to be granted authority in the absence of a clear chain of command.

What is Discussed at Court?

As might be expected, discussion in the courts of Clan Champions revolves almost exclusively around issues that concern the host clan. Inter-clan conflicts are usually the predominant point of conversation, whether those conflicts be military, political, or economic. Of course, these matters must often be discussed in front of guests whose ranks may include both allies and enemies. For this reason, it is not uncommon for Clan Champions to offer unique distractions for their guests, such as hunting trips, elaborate games, or theatrical performances. Naturally, the guests must politely accept and attend in order to avoid giving offense, and this allows the Champion's vassals the opportunity to meet privately.

Even in times of peace, war is a point of discussion. The composition and disposition of a clan's armies is often debated during the Champion's courts, as many daimyo at every level often want to control or at least influence things like the number of troops stationed within their provinces, the appointment of officers, the allocation of food and other supplies to the troops (and where these supplies come from), and so forth and so on.

Matters of commerce, although distasteful to samurai, appear in their own way. Clan leaders pay extraordinarily close attention to the yield of each year's harvest, as well as to how the crops are distributed and what must be done to compensate for any shortfalls. Shortages can be potentially crippling, leading to famine during the following year, and any clan that suffers from such a malady will find itself beset by representatives of other clans that have rice to spare. Of course, any help will come with a price—political favors or other resources from the beleaguered clan. Similarly, those clans with agricultural surpluses will find themselves approached for help, giving them ample opportunity to seek out the most lucrative offers in exchange for their surplus.

Family Courts

The courts of family daimyo might seem less important than those of Minor Clan Champions, but the opposite is actually true. While the family daimyo of Great Clans theoretically command equal social status to Minor Clan Champions, in truth the leaders of the Minor Clans are afforded this equality purely as a matter of form. Most Minor Clans are substantially smaller than even a small Great Clan family, and they command significantly fewer resources as well.

Who Attends the Court?

The courts of family daimyo are attended primarily by representatives of the different branches of that family. There are almost always representatives from the clan's other families as well, and often ambassadors from other clans will attend, especially if they have business with that specific family. That being said, courts at this level vary so widely that it is nearly impossible to make any broad generalizations about them. Examples might best serve as a guide on the type of attendance a given family might attract.

The Isawa are unquestionably the most powerful family in the Phoenix Clan. As such, their family court is led by at least one of the Elemental Masters and is attended by a larger number of representatives from other clans. There are also a large number of Shiba in attendance to ensure the court's security, and a smaller number of Agasha and Asako to represent their families' interests with their Isawa lords. The Phoenix's neighbors and most frequent allies, the Crane and Dragon Clans, both send their own representatives to the Isawa court, while the Mantis, who have often been the Phoenix's enemies, send a representative as well. Depending on the era, other clans may be present in small numbers as well, such as the Unicorn, the Lion, or the tiny Ox Clan from the nearby Dragon Heart Plain.

In contrast to the Isawa, the Horiuchi of the Unicorn are almost certainly the smallest family serving any of the Great Clans. Because of their limited numbers and relatively remote location, the Horiuchi court does not even have representation from all the Unicorn families. The Ide are present, as the Unicorn courts are their business, and so are the Horiuchi's patrons, the Iuchi. The Moto may be present as well, depending on circumstances. The Shinjo and Utaku families, however, reside in the clan's northern provinces, distant from the Horiuchi, and the families do not regularly interact with one another. Due solely to proximity, the Horiuchi occasionally host ambassadors from the neighboring Lion and Scorpion Clans, as well as a visitor from the relatively close castle of the Miya family. Other than that, however, there are very few who attend the Horiuchi's small court unless directly invited for some specific reason.

The Imperial Histories: The Three Man Alliance

Although the Minor Clans eventually formed an extensive alliance in the mid-to-late twelfth century, this exercise in strength through unity had an earlier example in the form of the so-called Three Man Alliance, which formed near the end of the eleventh century.

The Alliance was born out of a notable instance of Great Clan aggression against the Minor Clans. The Scorpion general Bayushi Tomaru invaded the Suzume Hills, hoping to seize a route through to the rich Daidoji ports of the coast. He seems to have expected the poor Sparrow to knuckle under and allow his army to cross their lands unmolested, but to his surprise the Sparrow assembled their modest army and prepared to fight to the death. Tomaru, a man of notable arrogance, was perfectly willing to oblige them, but before the battle had lasted more than a few minutes, the earth heaved beneath the feet of the Scorpion army and the air filled with deadly flights of arrows. Reinforcements had arrived from the Fox and Wasp Clans, to the surprise of not only the Scorpion but also the rescued Sparrow. A Wasp magistrate had brought word of Tomaru's aggression and the two Minor Clans had agreed their Sparrow neighbors could not be left alone to face it.

Tomaru was swiftly defeated and, in the wake of his retreat, the leaders of the three Minor Clans agreed to an alliance to repel any further invasion. The three Minor Clans began sending their young men and women to train in each others' schools, and all three clans placed high-ranking ambassadors in each others' courts. The Three Man Alliance would last for a generation, bringing peace and stability to a region that was previously little more than a field for conflict between Great Clans.

The Hierarchy

The family daimyo is always the supreme authority in these courts. However, such daimyo are frequently called upon to attend their Champion's court or even the Imperial Court, so they too rely on trusted advisors and representatives to maintain court while they are absent. Because of the relatively minor nature of matters discussed in these courts, it is not out of the question for the daimyo to be absent for months at a time, particularly during Winter Court, and it is quite possible the family will not even convene court if there is not a specific reason to do so. When court is in session and the daimyo or his representative are unavailable, authority defaults to the highest ranking member of that family, or if necessary to a particularly high ranking member of an allied family.

What is Discussed at Court?

Family courts are relatively limited in scope. For the most part, the topics mirror those found at a Clan Champion's court, but tend to be more focused on the relation of those events to the specific family in question. This is also normally the venue through which disagreements between families within the same clan are resolved, although if that proves impossible the matter is usually taken to the Champion's court for final arbitration.

Commerce between families, the security of shared borders, the training and housing of troops scheduled to campaign together, the disposition of major institutions affecting multiple families, and the cross-training of personnel are all discussed and dealt with on a regular basis.

The Courts of the Minor Clans

As mentioned above, the courts of Minor Clan Champions fall below the courts of family daimyo from the Great Clans in importance, and are generally not considered particularly significant or prestigious assignments. In fact, they are frequently regarded as a place to send ambitious or troublesome individuals in order to get them out of the clan's affairs, or a place where influential samurai can send potential rivals to prevent them from causing further problems.

There are some, however, who consider such appointments a genuine opportunity. Given that so few concern themselves with the goings-on in Minor Clan courts, any beneficial outcomes from them are likely to gain favorable notice for whoever made the arrangements. More than one promising courtier has found a place in his clan's Imperial Court delegation after a rousing and utterly unexpected victory in a Minor Clan court.

Who Attends the Court?

Given their limited resources, Minor Clans can ill afford conflict, and as such they tend to be more agreeable to peaceable solutions to their problems. Conflicts between the Minor Clans are not unknown, but they are rare; anything larger than a simple border skirmish could theoretically result in the devastation of one or both sides. Because of this, the Minor Clans as a whole tend to maintain amenable relationships with one another, and send embassies to each other whenever possible. Geographical distance sometimes prevents this, again due to limited resources; for example, the Ox Clan can ill afford to send representatives halfway across the Empire to the Hare lands, even though the two clans have no enmity toward one another.

The Minor Clans operate on an entirely different level from the Great Clans. More than three-quarters of any Minor Clan court is comprised of members of that clan, and the proportion can often be even higher than that. Some of the other Minor Clans will have representatives present, usually between two and six such clans. If there is a Great Clan with whom the hosts are particularly close, they will have a representative present as well, although such individuals are rarely of high rank. For example, the Crane usually maintain a representative in the court of the Sparrow, a Minor Clan descended from them.

The Hierarchy

Minor Clan courts are ruled by Minor Clan Champions or, in their absence, by their designated representatives. Although it is possible for the Champions to be summoned away for important business or even to attend the Imperial Court, this is far less common than with the Great Clans, and it is virtually unheard of for the Champion's representatives to be called away—after all, the Minor Clans typically have little else of note taking place. Individuals outside of the clan are not ceded authority under any circumstances.

What is Discussed at Court?

Again, Minor Clan courts mirror the courts described previously in terms of what is discussed, but the scope of their discussions tends to be far more limited. The advancement of each clan's social, economic, political, and possibly military goals is the usual topic among Minor Clans. These small clans feel the weight of their disadvantages in relation to the Great Clans, and often cooperate simply because they understand so well how the odds are stacked against them.

Provincial Courts

The lowest courts in the land are the provincial courts, the domain of provincial daimyo and the governors of large cities. These are the lowest ranking samurai permitted to call themselves daimyo, and their modest courts are typically held in private estates or minor strongholds scattered around the clan lands. Depending on the province or city in question, there may not be any court associated with it at all. The Hayai province in the Kitsu family's lands, for instance, has no court of its own because the Castle of the Swift Sword is located within the province, and the Akodo family daimyo holds his court there.

This sort of situation is not unusual—each family's ancestral estate is naturally located within one of their provinces or major cities, and the governor of that particular region is usually relegated to less important tasks while the family daimyo holds court.

Who Attends the Court?

Provincial courts have wildly unpredictable attendance, varying considerably from one province to the next based on political climate, geography, and countless other factors.

Oftentimes, guests are invited personally by the governor, and these invitations may be driven by anything from complex politics to a simple desire to see old friends again. Depending on the size and influence of the province or city, other clans may send representatives to look after their interests; the great Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari, for example, has representatives from nearly every clan because it is home to a number of valuable holdings, including the hugely profitable entertainment district known as Teardrop Island and the fields which produce the Empire's supply of medicinal opium, a drug vitally useful when treating badly injured samurai.

The Hierarchy

Generally speaking, lower courts are overseen by the governor or daimyo in attendance. If a member of the same family or clan is attending who is of superior rank, they can choose to oversee the proceedings in place of their underling. Regardless, the governor acts in every way as the host, supervising events and discussions and offering entertainment and diversion just as any other host might. Of course, the matters being discussed are exclusively of local importance.

Beneath the provincial governor is his chief assistant, known as a *karo*. This individual, while not technically of high status himself, speaks with the authority of his lord in matters of court, and thus can theoretically hold dominion over those with higher status than him. Such things are always a balancing act, of course, and such samurai must

tread carefully in order to avoid offering offense that could reflect poorly on the governor, his family, and his lord.

Other than the governor's karo, other prominent figures in the court's hierarchy who are affiliated with the family or the clan may be in a position to assume control if an unexpected situation develops. Individuals of this caliber could include the highest-ranking military officer in the province; the captain of the watch at the castle or estate where the court is held; or the governor's spouse or eldest child. It is not uncommon for a family daimyo to have a representative present at each court in his provinces, although these individuals rarely command any significant power of their own.

What is Discussed at Court?

As mentioned above, there is little of any real significance that is discussed at the provincial court level. However, in those courts set in major cities, or in provinces that have significant trade routes passing through, matters of commerce and trading can take up considerable time and effort. Regional courts in trade cities such as Nikesake, Ryoko Owari, or Samui Kaze Toshi often become the focus of attention for merchant patrons from numerous clans and families.

Positions of Power

In the Empire of Rokugan, all political power is supposed to rest exclusively with the Emperor. There are no exceptions to this rule; it is literally the mandate of the Celestial Heavens, made manifest in the mortal world. However, it is the right (and frequently the desire) of the Emperor to parcel his authority out to his chosen vassals in a manner that alleviates the burden of power without lessening his authority. This is how some of the most powerful and influential individuals in the Empire receive their mandates.

The Emperor's Chosen

The Emperor's Chosen are quite possibly the most powerful group of individuals in the Empire, outside the Emperor himself and perhaps the Great Clan Champions. As the name suggests, these are individuals personally selected by the Emperor to fulfill very specific roles in his immediate administration. These positions are accompanied by an incredible amount of social clout and political power, although for the most part they lack any significant military power save for the Shogun of the Empire (when one exists). These individuals are able to stand on equal ground with the Great Clan Champions, though most generally choose to continue observing their oaths of loyalty to their own Champion.

The Imperial Advisor

The Imperial Advisor holds influence that even the other members of the Emperor's Chosen can only envy. The Advisor is also typically the first member of the Chosen to be selected when a new Emperor takes the throne, although more conservative Emperors often choose to keep a previous Advisor instead. The purpose of the position is to offer personal political advice to the Emperor regarding the goings-on in the Imperial Court and the various other courts, especially those of the individual Clan Champions. The Advisor must remain fully informed and up to date on all major events transpiring throughout the Empire's political environment. To accomplish this, every Advisor quickly and efficiently establishes a network of allies throughout the various clan holdings, and compiles regular reports on everything of interest. This part of the duty is easier than one might think, though, because there are an almost limitless number of samurai who greatly desire to call the Imperial Advisor an ally.

Despite its higher profile and greater political influence, the office of Imperial Advisor generally has less resources at its immediate disposal than others of the Emperor's Chosen (although the Advisor does enjoy an extravagant personal estate and fortune). There are no military forces or law enforcement agencies answerable to the Advisor. In truth, though, these things are unnecessary; the Advisor makes his own resources from the assets of his allies, both inside the court and beyond.

The Imperial Chancellor

The position of Imperial Chancellor is similar in some respects to the Imperial Advisor. Both are deeply involved with the Imperial Court on a daily basis, and while their duties are different, they are just similar enough that the two frequently become rivals. This is perhaps by design, as the Imperial families generally prefer to ensure those promoted to such lofty positions are not able to interfere with their "pure" service to the Emperor. Conversely, when the Chancellor and Advisor do manage to work together, there are very few forces in the political arena of the Empire that can pose even a challenge to them, much less a threat.

The duty of the Imperial Chancellor is to arrange and oversee the events of the Emperor's Imperial Court. This is in theory a relatively simple duty, as the Chancellor merely establishes the agenda for the day when the Emperor is in attendance or, when the Emperor is absent, oversees the court's events in his place. However, given the sheer number of attendees at the average Imperial Court session, and their influence throughout the Empire, it can be extremely taxing to try and schedule things in a manner that ensures all parties are relatively pleased with the outcome.

When the Imperial Court is conducted in the Emperor's absence, the power of the Chancellor increases significantly, since there is in essence no accountability. On those rare occasions when there is no Emperor and the throne stands vacant, the power of the Chancellor within the Imperial Court is essentially without limit. The only individuals who can pose a legitimate threat to his power in such a situation are those who hold other high positions within the Imperial power structure, such as the Otomo family daimyo or the Amethyst Champion.

Due to the nature of the position and its duties, the Chancellor is one of the few people in the whole Empire with essentially unrestricted access to the Emperor's person. The Chancellor has so many duties that require the personal attention of the throne that close contact is required. There are

limits, of course, and the Chancellor is always subject to the whim of the Emperor himself. Only the Advisor and the Voice have closer degrees of contact, and depending on the nature of the relationships between the Chosen, even that may not be the case.

The Imperial Herald

The position of Imperial Herald is said to have existed longer than any other among the Emperor's Chosen, longer even than the Emerald Champion, eldest of the Jeweled Champions. The name refers both to a specific individual, the Imperial Herald, and to the agents that individual oversees, the Imperial heralds. The purpose of both is to spread the word of the Emperor to his people, carrying news, proclamations, laws, and edicts throughout the Empire with all due haste and urgency. The position was created in the earliest days of the Empire's history, when Hantei needed to spread the word of Rokugan's victory over Fu Leng. The war with the Dark Brother had cost the land and its people dearly, and there was destruction everywhere. The first Herald, Miya, made it a habit to spend a few days working in each village he visited, helping with repairs and reconstruction, before issuing his Imperial news. This greatly lifted the spirits of the people and made the word of their Emperor most welcome. As time went on, others joined the Herald, forming the beginnings of the Miya family. Their repair efforts became known as the "Emperor's Blessing," later called "Miya's Blessing" in honor of its creators.

Miya's Blessing

The activities of the first Miya gave rise to a tradition which is still upheld by the modern Miya family, and which is called "Miya's Blessing" after them (although some traditionalists continue to refer to it by its original title as "the Emperor's Blessing").

All Miya samurai are expected to set aside a portion of their wealth (at least fifteen percent) toward the Blessing. Each year, the daimyo of the Miya meets with his senior advisors for a period of three days, reviewing the state of the Empire and discussing which areas have been ravaged by war or disaster, which roads and landmarks have fallen into ruin, and which towns and cities are in need of development. They use the wealth of the Blessing to hire the finest craftsmen and procure vast quantities of food and supplies, then dispatch this aid to the three regions they judge to be most urgently in need of help.

Although the Miya's Blessing is well-known throughout the Empire, the family itself never discusses it outside of those three days each year. They do not want praise or attention for their actions, which they see solely as a matter of duty and honor.

Unique among the Chosen, the Imperial Herald is an inherited position. The office is typically held by the daimyo of the Miya family itself. It is within the right of the Emperor to appoint someone different to the position, of course, but this has very rarely been the case in the Empire's history; most of the time, the Emperor is content to allow the Miya daimyo to fulfill the position. In addition to the traditional duties of a daimyo, the Imperial Herald serves as the personal herald of the Emperor and is responsible for overseeing the many lesser heralds who serve him—traditionally all drawn from the ranks of the Miya family. He also oversees the adjudication of Miya's Blessing (see sidebar). As a daimyo of an Imperial family, the Imperial Herald is theoretically one of the wealthiest men in the Empire, although the Miya are a small family and tend to be vastly less ostentatious with their wealth. Mostly they prefer to funnel it back into the Miya's Blessing rather than live in luxury.

The Imperial Herald's personal stables are full of the finest horses in the Empire, rivaling those found in the most lavish stables of the Utaku and Shinjo Families. In addition, the Imperial Herald possesses a unique back-banner that has been the chief symbol of the office for several centuries. It is not the original, since the wear on these items is significant, but even so, it is perhaps only the third such banner to have been created, and has lasted far longer than those that came before. The banner is made in the sashimono style, indicating the Herald's rank and status, and bears the Emperor's personal crest as well. The sashimono is also accompanied by an intricate horo, or wicker cloak, constructed expressly for the Imperial Herald.

The Imperial Treasurer

The position of Imperial Treasurer is the newest among the Emperor's Chosen, finally being created at the beginning of the Iweko Dynasty in the twelfth century. Previously, its areas of responsibility—tax assessment and collection—were the domain of the Emerald Champion. The creation of the new position was deemed necessary due the Empire's often-erratic taxation policies, enforcements, and records over the course of previous centuries. Money is not something a samurai likes to concern himself with, after all, and thus most Emerald Champions had done a poor job in that regard. This was not a matter ever openly discussed and certainly not condemned, for no one would expect a man of honor and warriors' training to be learned in the ways of commerce. The Iweko Dynasty chose to finally separate those duties of the Emerald Champion and create the office of Imperial Treasurer to handle them instead.

As might be expected, it is the duty of the Imperial Treasurer to oversee the collection of taxes each year throughout the Empire. This is an incredibly complex task, since the demands of the Emperor are complicated by the demands of individual Clan Champions and governors, ensuring almost every province throughout Rokugan has a different means of calculating how much tax should be collected from individuals and settlements. Once the Imperial taxes are returned to the capital, the Treasurer is responsible for storing them, inventorying them, and then distributing them to other Imperial agencies and to the clans as necessary. The task is truly monumental, significantly more complex than the duties of any other Chosen, as any Treasurer will gladly attest—to

the great annoyance of the other Chosen. The other Chosen usually remain cordial with the Treasurer, however, since he is more or less responsible for the funding of their agencies.

Because of the enormity of his duties, the Treasurer is permitted to recruit agents to oversee his operations. These are not technically magistrates or soldiers, but are frequently accompanied by such individuals in order to ensure their safety and security. Given the demanding nature of the Treasurer's duties, it would seem to make sense to have a large number of such agents, but because so few among the samurai caste are well suited to economic matters the Treasurer instead tends to have a smaller number of operatives, carefully selected for their expertise in commerce and calculation. This unfortunately tends to make these individuals somewhat arrogant, and they are usually unwelcome among the vassals of the other Chosen.

Due to the close association of the Treasurer with the distasteful concept of commerce, the position is held in slightly lower esteem than the other members of the Chosen, at least by outsiders. However, the Treasurer has such complete control over the issuance of Imperial edicts concerning taxation that no one dares to openly look down upon him or question his authority overmuch.

The Shogun of the Empire

The position of Shogun was first theorized in the legendary writings of the ronin tactician known as Sun Tao (see *Chapter 10: War*, for details about this remarkable individual). Sun Tao posited there would be times when the Emperor would be unable to defend his Empire, and when such times arose, a separate military leader would be required to deal with such duties. Sun Tao named this individual the Shogun, although the origin of the words remains unknown. Many found this supposition blasphemous, for the mere implication that the Emperor would be unable to defend the Empire was seen as tantamount to treason. It was not until many centuries later that the first Shogun was created by a canny Emperor of the Toturi Dynasty, for reasons unknown. Some believed the purpose was to prevent the title of Shogun from being assumed by an independent rival to the throne, perhaps the Emperor's brother. Others believe the position was endorsed as a means of limiting the power of the Emerald Champion, one of only a few men in the Empire who could rival the Emperor's power. Still others believe it was an altogether altruistic decision to ensure the Empire would be protected no matter what. Regardless of the purpose for the decision, the Shogun of the Empire finally came into existence as one of

the Emperor's Chosen, and thereafter functioned as the principle military power endorsed by the throne.

The Shogun is unique among the Emperor's Chosen in that the position has virtually no ties to the Imperial Court whatsoever. In fact, due to the nature of his abilities and duties, the Shogun rarely if ever makes an appearance at court; most Shoguns find this perfectly acceptable, since the men selected for such a duty very rarely have any interest in politics. Instead, the Shogun is most frequently deployed around the Empire or to the territories just beyond its borders, ensuring the safety and security of the Emperor's lands. The execution of his duties can occasionally bring him into conflict with the Clan Champions or, more frequently, with the Emerald Champion.

The principle power of the Shogun's authority takes the form of an autonomous military organization called the Shogunate. The Shogun has complete discretion in the composition and organization of this force, and can hand-select officers from any other clan or force, including from the Imperial Legions. This extends to the ability to actually draft forces from the Great Clans, although Clan Champions may contest this when it takes place. The Shogun cannot request specific individuals or units by name, ensuring the clans are not obligated to surrender their most elite forces. The Shogunate can vary enormously in size, as some Shoguns prefer small, elite, exceptionally well-trained forces while others prefer larger, more traditionally constructed military organizations.

In addition to the Shogunate, the Shogun has significant influence over the Imperial Legions. This is actually a check on the power of the Emerald Champion and vice versa; the two positions both hold a position of authority over the Legions, and the Legion commanders have a great deal of leeway in determining which authority figure they more strongly identify as their commander.

The Philosopher and the Emperor

Sun Tao himself does not write of it, but in the commentaries to his eponymous book, later scholars tell that shortly before he left Rokugan, the ronin philosopher gained an audience with Emperor Hantei Genji to discuss the proper government of the Empire. For the most part, the Emperor listened respectfully, but when Sun Tao propounded his theory of the Shogunate, the Hantei replied hotly that he could not agree.

"My father led his warriors himself, and saw to their arming, provisioning and training through his immediate staff. It is our right and our duty to lead in war."

They debated back and forth, and finally, Sun Tao looked the Emperor in the eye and said, "Tell me: When your heralds disperse across the Empire to deliver the Emperor's Blessing, do you tell each one where to go and how much he is authorized to spend?"

The courtiers in the audience chamber gasped at this ronin's presumptuousness; the right hands of the Seppun guardsmen twitched and moved toward the handles of their blades.

But the Emperor simply replied that no, that was the Imperial Herald's task. And Sun Tao pressed on: "And whenever a petty thief is brought before a judge, and the judge has a question about implementing your law, shall he consult with you personally?"

To which the Emperor replied that of course he had no time for such things.

"Very well, then," Sun Tao concluded. "Is it not your right to comfort your subjects in need, and your duty to enforce your laws as you see fit? And yet you have no time to manage these things yourself."

To the astonishment of all present, the Hantei bowed and admitted the wisdom of what Sun Tao had said.

The Voice of the Emperor

Similar in some respects to the Imperial Herald, the Voice of the Emperor is a position among the Chosen that elevates a single individual to the privilege of personally speaking for the Emperor in matters of grave importance to the Empire. The difference is that the Imperial Herald merely reports edicts specifically written for the ears of the masses, while the Voice of the Emperor delivers personal, specific information. Perhaps the Emperor does not wish to attend court one day, and sends the Voice to speak on his behalf (rather than the Chancellor, which can often lead to tension between the two positions).

The position of Voice is not maintained consistently across the Empire's long history, for many Emperors have seen no need to have anyone else speak for them. Conversely, there have been Emperors or even entire Dynasties that refused to speak directly to any of their subjects, embracing the notion that the voice of the divinely-mandated Emperor is too pure to be heard by mortals. When this rather eccentric but theologically supported stance is taken, it is the Voice of the Emperor who speaks to all who have business with the Emperor himself. This makes the Voice an incredibly powerful person, but also effectively robs him of all but the most minute vestige of a personal life. Most consider this a small price to pay to be the Emperor's most intimate confidant.

As might be expected, the Voice of the Emperor essentially transcends the need for wealth. The Voice is most frequently found in the company of the Emperor's person, and thus has absolutely no need for money or other wealth in any form. His every want and need is accounted for, from lavish personal quarters in the Imperial Palace to the most obscure items available merely for the asking. Although the position does not maintain a large staff in the manner of some of the other Chosen and the Jeweled Champions, there are several dozen attendants, from personal valets to yojimbo to scribes, available at the Voice's beck and call for any service he might require. He also is given a personal stable with the finest horses, all descended from Utaku stock.

The Jeweled Champions

The Jeweled Champions are the greatest example of social mobility and meritocracy in Rokugan's otherwise rigid social structure. The vast majority of the populace never has the opportunity to rise above the conditions of their birth, whether they are born to the lowliest family of eta or to the most dutiful family among the buke caste. But occasionally there are opportunities for some degree of upward mobility among the samurai; the Jeweled Championships are a series of tournaments that provide such opportunities for all who earn the right to compete. Most contestants in the various Jeweled Championships are from higher-ranking members of the kuge, but every clan holds internal competitions to determine who may participate in the tournaments, and it is the dream of ever member of the buke to win a place in such a contest.

Of the Jeweled Champions, only the Emerald and Jade Champions are truly on the same level as the Emperor's Chosen. The others, while commanding significant if specific influence, are still somewhat limited in the scope of their power. This is, of course, by design.

The Emerald Champion

There are many who believe the Emerald Champion is the most prestigious and powerful individual in the Empire outside of the Emperor himself, and there is certainly historical precedent to support such a claim. The position is by far the oldest of the Jeweled Champions, originating in the first days of the Empire. Kakita was the first to hold the position, although it was not known by that name during those early days.

The Emerald Champion is the personal champion of the Emperor, responsible for defending his honor should the unthinkable occur and a samurai offer a slight to the throne. Depending on the disposition of a particular Emperor, this may be a position that never takes such action, or it might be one wherein the holder is expected to cut down anyone who draws

the Emperor's ire one way or another. Some centuries after the position was created, the duties associated with it were formally codified, both as the Emperor's yojimbo and, as has come to be the primary focus of the position, as the enforcer of Imperial law. For much of the Empire's history this included the assessment and collection of Imperial taxes as well.

The resources at the command of the Emerald Champion are significant. In addition to the enormous political and societal power at his command, there is a personal estate that is one of the wealthiest in the entire Empire. The Champion also commands an extensive organization of magistrates, referred to as Emerald Magistrates or sometimes as Imperial Magistrates. They are authorized to act in enforcement of Imperial law regardless of clan boundaries, and for much of Rokugan's history they were also tax assessors and collectors. Because of their unrestricted travel and their ability to override the jurisdiction of clan magistrates, the Emerald Magistrates are the most definitive and versatile resource available to the Emerald Champion, and depending on an individual Champion's inclinations, they can be a powerful force for good, a vast information-gathering network, or a dangerous subversive organization.

The Emerald Champion's military power varies by era and individual. Prior to the Toturi Dynasty, the Imperial Legions generally answered only to the Emerald Champion, giving him considerable military clout. Over the centuries the Imperial Legions have varied greatly in both number and size; during the reign of Emperor Toturi I they were finally standardized, formed into ten large autonomous armies. However, the subsequent emergence of the Shogun confused the situation once more, since individual legion commanders could choose to take their orders from either the Emerald Champion or the Shogun. This rather effectively prevents either position from completely overshadowing the other in terms of military power, which may have been the intention of the Imperial families in the first place.

On a more personal level, the Emerald Champion has access to powerful ancestral items that serve as a badge of office. Many of these were forged for the first Champion, Kakita, or his immediate successors, and as such were all created within the first century of Rokugan's history. After so many years of service in the hands of honorable, law-abiding champions of the Emperor's word, the spirits of these items have been awakened, and they now confer powerful abilities to any Emerald Champion wielding them.

Although it possesses no mystical properties, the Emerald Seal is a powerful badge of office. It signifies that the bearer is the lawful Emerald Champion, and as such entitled to proper deference from just about everyone else except the Emperor. None but the Emperor and the Emerald Champion may carry the badge, save in the rare instances when it must be transported and given to its new owner. Carrying the Seal, or even touching it without permission, is a crime that carries a penalty of execution.

The Emerald Champion is supposed to be a warrior, and weapons and armor come with the office. Among the oldest

The Imperial Histories: Expansion of the Jeweled Championships

In the year 1171, the second year of the new Iweko Dynasty, the Empress ruled the Jeweled Championships would henceforth be held every year in order to give more samurai an opportunity to compete. However, each individual contest would not necessarily replace the current position holder. Instead, the standing champion would add the winner to his organization—for example, the Emerald Champion would add each year's winner to the ranks of the Emerald Magistrates. If one of the Champions' offices did become vacant, however, the scheduled annual tournament would take on its traditional role of choosing the new Champion.

and most venerable katana in the Empire, the Blade of the Emerald Champion is far from a ceremonial weapon, but is indeed a powerful *nemuranai* (awakened magical artifact) that is said to punish those without honor.

Crafted at the same time as the Champion's blade, the Emerald Armor has seen literally hundreds of battles throughout its existence and emerged intact each time. Repairs have had to be made over time, but only rarely. The armor is said to draw upon its wearer's honor to protect him, just as the blade does to punish the guilty.

The Jade Champion

In theory a magical counterpart to the martially-based Emerald Champion, the Jade Champion is in practice a position with a complex and conflicted history. The creation of the Jade Champion's office took place relatively early in the Empire's history, probably a short time after the creation of the Emerald Championship, although records are imprecise. However, it is alleged that the Phoenix Council of Elemental Masters took offense to the existence of the position, considering it an affront to their superiority in all mystical matters, and worked tirelessly to leverage political influence against the office. This appears to have been successful, and the position of Jade Champion was forgotten for several centuries; finally, records referring to it were rediscovered in the Imperial City and the position was reinstated.

The Jade Championship is filled by one of the most powerful and knowledgeable shugenja in the Empire, at least in theory. The Champion is selected by an extensive tournament that measures each contestant's abilities in any number of scholarly and societal skills, all of which culminates in the contestants waging a competition of taryu-jiai, the shugenja equivalent of iaijutsu. The victor assumes the mantle of the Jade Champion, which like its Emerald counterpart is a lifelong appointment. The Jade Champion is in some respects a more specialized version of the Emerald Championship, one specifically tasked with enforcing all Imperial laws pertaining to the use of magic in any form. There is obvious overlap between the two positions—no self-respecting Emerald Magistrate will overlook an offense as blasphemous as the practice of blood sorcery, for example. When possible, however, the members of the Emerald organization defer to Jade for such things unless there is significant rivalry between the two Champions—a situation, unfortunately, that has arisen on more than one occasion throughout history.

The resources available to the Jade Champion are broadly comparable to those of the Emerald Champion, but the many years of dormancy experienced by the position prevented it from accumulating political power to the same extent. Personal estates and monetary resources are significant, enough so that the Champion does not have to worry about such things ever again. In terms of a network of agents, the Jade Champion has the authority to deputize Jade Magistrates, and has a single military force, the Jade Legion, that is exclusively at his command.

The most significant items of office that accompany the position are the Jade Seal and the Mantle of the Jade Champion. The Jade Seal is a unique badge that the champion uses to mark all official documents, including those that grant the bearer status as a Jade Magistrate or a Jade Legionnaire. The seal is rarely removed from the champion's personal estate, and is often used in his absence by a trusted subordinate responsible for overseeing the usual bureaucratic responsibilities that come with the position.

The Mantle of the Jade Champion is an artifact commissioned by the Emperor when the office was reactivated. It was crafted by the Phoenix Clan's best artificers, perhaps as penance for their clan's role in the disgracing of the position years ago. The Mantle serves as the Champion's badge of office when he travels, so that the Jade Seal can be left behind and kept safe. It is meant to be worn over an existing kimono, and is said to considerably amplify a shugenja's natural ability to speak with the kami. Prayers offered when wearing the mantle generally have greater effect and may be called upon more frequently than normal.

The Amethyst Champion

The Amethyst Championship has the most varied and unique, and certainly the strangest, history of any of the Jeweled Championships. The history of the position is somewhat indistinct and the records maintained by the Imperial families were lost at some point, probably during one of the assaults levied against the Empire's two Imperial capitals. What is known is that the position was created as a means of safeguarding a gaijin artifact, an object of mysterious origin called the Crown of the Amethyst Champion. The unique mystical properties of the crown brought vast wealth to those who possessed it, but only so long as the crown was kept safe. An entirely different aspect of the strange gaijin magic that infused the artifact was that it was virtually impossible to keep safe, ensuring that each Champion would enjoy a lengthy period of unbridled prosperity followed by inevitable ruination. The crown was stored away by the Imperial families long ago rather than continue to tax the Empire's best and brightest samurai with its terrible curse. Many years later the crown's blessing (and curse) caused it to come to the fore again, and the Imperial families restored the position of the Amethyst Champion rather than continue threatening their own prosperity. Fortunately for the Empire, an especially powerful and wise Phoenix named Isawa Sawao

The Imperial Histories: Hatsuo and Saibankan

The evolution of the Emerald Championship into a law-enforcement position can truly be said to derive from the story of two men: Doji Hatsuo and Soshi Saibankan.

Doji Hatsuo was the Crane Clan Champion of his generation, as well as the Emperor's personal champion. At that time, the position was not yet known as the Emerald Champion, but was merely considered the Hantei's primary personal defender. Hatsuo was immensely dissatisfied with the inconsistency with which the Emperor's laws were enforced. In some provinces, the authorities had set themselves up as little more than petty dictators who interpreted the law according to their whim. In others, crime was rampant as those in charge feared acting on their own initiative lest they disrespect the Emperor's will. Hatsuo found this situation completely unacceptable, and chief among his objections were the authoritarian figures called judges.

Judges were established in major cities and provincial capitals to pass judgment on those caught in flagrant violation of the law. Many were corrupt, and many more merely incompetent. In his desire to find a better way, Hatsuo discovered a kindred spirit holding the position of judge in the Scorpion city known as Ryoko Owari Toshi: Soshi Saibankan.

Soshi Saibankan was among the most well-known judges in the Empire. He was fair and just, respected by every honorable samurai who encountered him. More unusually, however, Saibankan was beloved by the common people of his city. During his judgments, the canny Scorpion frequently spun colorful tales about his beloved uncle Sochoku. These tales invariably involved some moral tale his uncle had supposedly instilled in Saibankan as a youth, or on occasion difficulties Sochoku had encountered when he failed to adhere to a particular virtue. These tales were completely fabricated, of course, but they succeeded famously in driving Saibankan's points home to all who heard them.

Saibankan's just rulings and emphasis on virtue, not to mention his incorruptibility, earned Hatsuo's respect. Together, Hatsuo and Saibankan created the magistrate system that has prevailed in Rokugan ever since. Certain families, clans, and provinces had established similar policies before, but it was not until Hatsuo and Saibankan's collaboration that it became widespread and standardized. They created a series of overlapping fields of jurisdiction to ensure there would never be only a single representation of the Emperor's authority in any location. Provincial and clan magistrates would oversee local regions, while a new cadre of Imperial magistrates enforced the laws Empire-wide, overseen directly by the Emerald Champion, the name assigned to Hatsuo's position. These Emerald Magistrates would be the ultimate enforcers of the Emperor's laws, responsible for ensuring that egregious breaches of law and etiquette were not tolerated.

More information on Saibankan and Hatsuo's creation may be found in the chapter on Law.

finally discovered a means to end the curse forever and destroy the crown, after which he relinquished the position.

Since the crown's destruction, the position of Amethyst Champion has become associated with the duty of a courtier, the third major aspect of a samurai's duty to clan and Empire (besides those of the bushi and shugenja). The position is selected by ranking members of the Imperial families based on a number of criteria. Generally speaking, the Imperials look for the same qualities they valued during the Championship's previous incarnation, which included both knowledge of the blade and the gift of speaking, particularly oratory and poetry, as well as a generally honorable nature.

Once an Amethyst Champion is appointed, his duty is to represent the interests of the Emperor and the Imperial Court in all locations, including those far, far removed from the court itself. By nature of the position, the Champion is considered to be welcome in every court in the entire Empire, regardless of location, and part of the duties associated with the position require the Champion to make several trips each year in order to spread the Emperor's attention to distant courts. Like the other offices, the Amethyst Champion maintains a staff of attendants, many of whom attend particularly remote or unimportant courts so the Champion need not do so personally. These individuals are extended the same prestige as Emerald Magistrates, and are generally considered guests of honor at Minor Clan courts or courts held in unaligned lands.

The Turquoise Champion

Created centuries after the other Jeweled Champions were already in place, the Turquoise Champion is an individual intended to embody the most sophisticated and cultured aspects of the samurai caste. In short, the Turquoise Champion is the most elevated and gifted artisan among the samurai of Rokugan. Ostensibly the situation was created in order to serve as a reminder to the Great Clans that there is more to life than war, and to spark the fires of creativity in the souls of all samurai. The Champion is selected by means of an extensive competition between artisans of all types, the ultimate winner of which is determined by a panel of judges from the Imperial families. The winner gains the position of Turquoise Champion and, in most cases, determines by default the particular discipline of artistry that will be in vogue for the coming year. A victory by a calligrapher will see calligraphy become the rage in the Empire, while a poet would have a similar result for poetry.

The Turquoise Champion has relatively little power accompanying the position when compared to other Champions such as the Emerald, Jade, or Amethyst. The position does award residence in a private estate within the Imperial City. The estate is luxuriously appointed and has facilities for the pursuit of virtually any creative endeavor that can be imagined. Likewise patronage is not an issue, as the Imperial families ensure the Champion lacks for nothing when it comes to the production of his art. The Champion does not have any magistrates or similar resources, but a suitable staff is made available. Attendants, assistants, and lesser artisans are all provided, as are yojimbo and individuals necessary to make all travel arrangements throughout the Empire.

The Ruby Champion

The Ruby Champion is an office that exalts the honorable and prestigious position of the sensei. Every samurai has a sensei they revere, so an appointment to a position such as this is considered a tremendous honor even if it lacks the political and social clout normally associated with the Emerald and Jade Champions. Similar to the Amethyst Championship, the Ruby Championship does not have a fixed means of determining a victor. On numerous occasions throughout history the position has simply been appointed by the Emerald Champion. The reason for this is that the Ruby Champion is the master sensei of both the Emerald Magistrates and the Imperial Legions, organizations over which the Emerald Champion (and to a lesser extent the Shogun of the Empire) holds dominion. The relationship between the two positions is an exceedingly close one, and the Ruby Champion theoretically answers only to the Emerald Champion, with no one else involved in the execution of their duties.

Despite its somewhat lower profile and greater separation from the daily goings on of the Empire, the position of Ruby Champion has tremendous importance. The Champion is responsible for personally selecting the training regime and the teachers who will train thousands of bushi serving the Empire in direct and very essential ways. The Champion has as part of his estate roughly a dozen extremely well-appointed dojo throughout the Imperial holdings, the largest of which adjoins the Emerald Champion's personal estate near Otosan Uchi. This one also includes a small but respectable private home for the Ruby Champion himself.

The Topaz Champion

The Topaz Champion is far and away the least influential of the Jeweled Champions, and the one with the shortest duration. While most of the other positions last at least a few years, and in many cases are lifetime appointments, the Topaz Championship has always been an annual event. Each year, the Great Clans have the opportunity to send a handful of their finest young samurai, typically no more than two or three per clan (plus a small number of Imperial or Minor Clan attendees), to the city of Tsuma in the Crane lands. There, the most prestigious gempukku ceremony in all the Empire is held, a grand competition spanning several days. The competitors are tested in a wide variety of skills, with each successful contest awarding points to the participants. Those who gain enough points may also participate in the climactic iaijutsu tournament, the winner of which is declared the Topaz Champion for a period of one year. The position is accompanied by numerous material rewards, the most significant of which is an exquisite suit of armor crafted and maintained by Imperial smiths. The Topaz Armor is the most immediate badge of authority associated with the position, but it is typical for a Topaz Champion to be offered a number of different prestigious positions as part of the victory. The most frequent appointment is as an Emerald Magistrate, indirectly serving the Emerald Champion. Enough of the Champions enter this arrangement that there is a very small and very elite subset of Emerald Magistrates known as Topaz Magistrates, consisting exclusively of former Topaz Champions. There are typically no more than ten or twelve of these individuals at any given time.

Related Positions

Due to the nature and extent of the power possessed by the Jeweled Champions, they tend to create a hierarchy wherein others are elevated exclusively due to their association with the Champions themselves. Most of these fall within the organizations of individual Champions, but some exist outside that power structure and have their own abilities and obligations. And some, of course, are merely inspired by their more egalitarian counterparts, having as their own portfolio a rather sinister set of responsibilities indeed.

The Jeweled Smith is a position initially created during the Iweko Dynasty, and is intended to support the Jeweled Champions. It is an appointed position, although the possibility that it could eventually gravitate toward a contest like the Champions themselves is quite high. The purpose of the position is to create items of great quality for use by the Champions and their subordinates. Most of the Champions already have significant resources and items at their disposal, of course, items that have been inherited through centuries of tradition and use.

During eras in which the Spider Clan is active, the Obsidian Champion is that sinister pseudo-clan's answer to the Emerald Champion. Obviously, the Obsidian Champion does not enforce Imperial law, but rather the mandates, orders, and whims of the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands. This makes the position a strange combination of yojimbo, champion, general, and assassin, given the often mercurial and unpleasant mentality of Spider Clan leadership. Like many of the Jeweled Champions, the Obsidian Championship is held annually, and the existing Champion must defend his position against any who might covet it. These are terrible events filled with absolute brutality and ruthlessness, but are not necessarily always lethal, as the Spider would not wish to lose their finest warriors all in one fell swoop.

As the Obsidian Champion is the dark mirror of the Emerald Champion, so is the Onyx Champion a sinister version of the Jade Champion. The Onyx Champion has fewer concrete duties than the Obsidian Champion, and is simply expected to be the personal shugenja of the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands. Of course, it is often the case that the Dark Lord is a powerful maho-tsukai in his own right, so this is something of a redundancy. For the most part, the Onyx Champion spends his time weeding out the weak from the Spider Clan's ranks and fomenting heresy and blasphemy among the citizens of the Empire.

The Life of a Courtier

The life of a courtier in the Emerald Empire can be considerably more complex than that of a bushi or shugenja, whose roles for their clans are straightforward and direct. On the other hand, the courtier routinely deals with matters of great import. Diplomats speak for their clan and have the weight and prestige of that clan behind them. A minor daimyo who insults or ignores a courtier without legitimate cause could well be forced to commit seppuku. This does not mean courtiers can always achieve whatever they want, obviously, especially when dealing with officials from hostile clans, but they can bring political pressure to bear that mere bushi and shugenja cannot muster. Conversely, because politics in Rokugan is integrated so deeply into the culture, a group of samurai without an accompanying courtier may not even be allowed access to a daimyo or other important figure.

Clans trust their courtiers to handle delicate situations, investigate misconduct, and reprimand dishonor. Even without a specific mission, courtiers can call on the trust of their clan to give their word great weight in court. Minor daimyo or provincial officials will have difficulty keeping their positions if a powerful, influential courtier speaks out against them to their feudal lord—especially if the courtier's accusations are true. Rokugan, after all, is a society which relies on civilized discussion and courtly proceedings to maintain its system and keep wars from spinning out of control. In such an environment, courtiers' words can be weapons as devastating as any bushi's sword.

The Art of the Insult

The key to surviving in the courts—literally and figuratively—is wit. To insult someone without wit is to show your neck to the enemy and hand him the sword with which to cut it off. Being properly and effectively insulting, however, is not only extremely effective but can also reduce an enemy's public appearance to that of a fool or a weakling. All skilled courtiers practice the art of being effectively insulting. A successful insult is one to which its target cannot even reply, and skilled courtiers observe a series of basic principles to ensure their insults are always truly effective.

Keep it personal. An effective insult must be delivered against its target alone, not against his family, his clan, or any other figure or institution on whose behalf he can take offense.

Keep it true. An effective insult must be based on real information rather than wild speculation or specious slander. If ammunition for an insult is not yet available, a skilled courtier will wait until it is instead of hurling obvious falsehoods. Conversely, obvious openings should not be ignored; if someone is known as greedy, insult him for that, instead of calling him ugly.

Be amusing. A truly effective insult is one which brings smiles and laughter from those who hear it. An insult that fails to amuse will be seen for what it is—a petty attempt to degrade an enemy's character. Conversely, a funny insult will not only charm the court, it may keep them listening to see what the insulter says next.

Do not talk to your enemy. Talking directly to the object of the insult will give him the chance to reply, which may allow him a counterattack. Instead, a wise courtier talks to someone else loudly enough for the target to overhear—preferably, someone of higher status, so that if the enemy interrupts, he is offending someone of superior station.

Quote the sages. A truly effective practitioner of insult will never rely on his own words, or even those of another contemporary samurai—instead he will quote a famous book or philosopher. An insult from Shinsei is more devastating than anything a mere samurai can compose. Further, by quoting the sages the insulter forces the target to do the same if he wishes to reply effectively.

Skew titles. Everyone in Rokugan has a proper rank and appropriate form of address. Twisting or mis-stating these titles, such as referring to a higher-ranking samurai with "-san" or a woman as "-chan," is a very blunt but effective insult. This form of insult is especially favored by those who are trying to goad someone into issuing a challenge.

Be prepared for the consequences. Rokugan is a society of warriors in which reputation and face are all-important. Pushing someone too far with gibes and insults will often result in a duel. Naturally, some courtiers expect this, keeping a skilled duelist available to back them up and using their insults, in effect, as a form of indirect assassination. The Scorpion are especially effective at this maneuver, although other clans are not above employing it on occasion.

Courts of the Empire: What to Expect & How to Act

Part of the challenge of making a career of diplomacy in Rokugan is that the experience of participating at court can vary greatly depending on the host. Each clan holds court in its own distinctive style, and those invited must be prepared for these idiosyncrasies. In fact, beyond the clan level even individual families and provinces can have radically different customs and expectations for courts convened there. But such differences are best examined at the clan level, where the themes are broadest and most are generally applicable to the courts beneath them.

The Crab Clan

To describe the court of any Crab lord as austere would be a significant understatement. The Crab do not enjoy court, and given an option would likely not hold them at all—but they understand that such things are often a regrettable necessity. The sons of Hida go to no particular lengths to make their guests feel comfortable or even welcome, preferring instead to allow their guests to experience the harsh and unforgiving lifestyle the Crab must endure in carrying out their centuries-old duty of protecting the Empire from the Shadowlands. Some Crab courts will even welcome their guests with advice on how to commit suicide in the event of a successful Shadowlands attack.

Of the Crab families, only the Hida, Kaiu, and Yasuki hold court with any real frequency. The Kuni and Hiruma have no interest whatsoever in such things; the Toritaka, after they join the Crab, lack the political clout necessary for such an endeavor.

As lords of the Crab, the Hida hold the highest ranking and most heavily attended Crab courts. Even so, an appointment to Kyuden Hida or one of the lesser courts is considered an extremely unpleasant duty for courtiers of virtually every other clan. The Hida are brutish, insulting, and completely unpleasant to their guests in virtually every respect, offering only token attempts at hospitality or cordiality. They remind their guests at every turn that their safety is being ensured by the deaths of Crab samurai virtually every day, and seem to expect some manner of recompense. Only those guests who treat their hosts with absolute respect and deference, with frequent thanks offered for the enormity and difficulty of their duties, seem to garner respect in return. The frequent displays of martial prowess the Crab hold throughout their court season present another opportunity for guests to earn the respect of their hosts, although the prowess of Crab warriors makes this a difficult task.

Guests of the Kaiu and Yasuki have a much less difficult time executing their duties. The Kaiu are somewhat indifferent about court, and conduct it only as a matter of duty. They tend to invite those who are like them in thought: engineers, architects, magistrates, and some of the Empire's more practical artisans. Courts of the Kaiu are an opportunity for the free exchange of ideas in all matters relating to construction and craft. Guests who attend with an open mind and a willingness to discuss such topics will be welcome among the Kaiu any time.

The Yasuki, on the other hand, are far more interested in matters of commerce and the traditional diplomatic wrangling that goes on at court. They are a manipulative group, and guests would be well advised to be on their guard. However, the Yasuki recognize that the greatest profits can be reached by taking risks, and they not only respect those willing to embrace such a philosophy, but can also be overcome by those willing to play the same game with their hosts.

The Crane Clan

The court of a Crane lord is the quintessential court of Rokugan in virtually every way. Lady Doji, the founder of the Crane, created the culture and customs still observed in court today, and the Crane have made it their duty to see to it that their Kami's contribution is never forgotten. Toward that end, they convene more courts than any other clan, and they tend to invite more guests as well. Not only that, but it is rare to find any court held by another clan's Champion or family daimyo that does not have at least one Crane representative, even among those small courts convened by the Minor Clans. The Crane's true strength, greater by far than their military or spiritual might, is their powerful political presence, and they are unwilling to risk losing that edge in even the least significant courts in the Empire.

The Doji and the Kakita are most likely to host a Crane court, as both families have over a thousand years of experience with the Empire's complex political system. As hosts, neither family spares any expense in ensuring their guests are made to feel welcome. While it is traditional and expected for arriving guests to offer their hosts a gift, it is not uncommon for Crane lords to offer personalized gifts to each of their guests as well, and the quarters afforded even to the least among their guests are beautiful and comfortable, well beyond those found in most families' guest accommodations. Even when they first arrive, the Crane's guests are treated as if they are family. This serves to put them at ease and lower their guard, making them more amenable targets for whatever political advancements the Crane hope to achieve through them.

Unlike other families or clan courts, where the entertainment provided tends to reflect the tastes of the host, the Crane provide a variety of distractions to ensure that all their guests can find something of interest, whether it be a dueling tournament, a circuit for playing go with various guests throughout the season, or the clan's normal preference for the arts in all forms: poetry, plays, or exhibitions of painting, sculpture, and ikebana.

The Crane will not attempt anything that would risk their reputation as impeccable hosts, so guests are greatly tempted to relax and feel at ease. This is deceptive, however, for there are no more skilled orators or rhetoricians in the Empire than the Crane, and to enter their domain without being prepared for the ruthless assault of

their kindness and hospitality is to set oneself up for inevitable failure.

The Dragon Clan

The courts held by the Dragon Clan are in many ways as strange and enigmatic as the clan that convenes them. More than one playwright over the centuries has made the observation that Dragon courts are the only courts in the Empire convened with no sense of purpose behind them. Naturally, even the most esoteric Dragon lord recognizes that he must meet the needs of his people and the duties given him by his Champion, so the average Dragon court does contain the typical assortment one would expect: diplomats, allies, and enemies. In addition, however, Dragon courts tend to invite any individual samurai the lord finds of interest. This means many magistrates, heroes, scholars, or individuals of note can find themselves with unexpected invitations to prominent Dragon courts. The mixture of samurai at these events is quite diverse and prone to unexpected interactions.

The majority of prominent Dragon courts are convened by the Mirumoto or the Kitsuki. The Tamori, and before them the Agasha, tend to eschew major social events as much as their duties allow, and the notion that the Togashi would convene a court (unless by personal order of the Clan Champion) is plainly absurd—the monk-samurai of the tattooed order tend to dismiss all courtly activity as frivolous and non-productive. The number of courts held in the High House of Light over the course of the Empire's history can be counted with the fingers of one hand.

The Mirumoto are far and away the most traditional Dragon family, and their courts more closely resemble those held elsewhere in the Empire than those of their brethren. Mirumoto palaces are quite minimalist, however, and guests should not expect the comforts found in Crane, Phoenix, or Mantis courts. From a physical standpoint the Mirumoto courts are closer to those of the Crab or Lion, although the Dragon are far more courteous and respectful of their guests than either of those clans.

Most clan courts follow clear agendas that incorporate their guests' needs as much as possible, but the Dragon tend to prefer a more free-form environment where the participants, particularly the guests, determine the agenda for any given day. The Mirumoto consider the spontaneous organization of entertainment or spirited discussions an indicator of their guests' comfort and discovery of their own path, which they of course wish to foster as much as possible.

Although the Kitsuki family is generally more socially adept than the Mirumoto, its unique philosophy and practices generally make Kitsuki courts even less traditional than those of their cousins. The Kitsuki observe proper etiquette, of course, but they seem to do so more out of habit rather than from any particular zeal for tradition. Guests of the Kitsuki have few expectations placed upon them; their presence is all the Kitsuki require.

Those who find themselves within the Kitsuki court are subjected to perhaps the most intense scrutiny in the Empire, their hosts analyzing their every movement and word in an attempt to infer all they can about their intentions and agenda. Needless to say, clans with something to hide (like the Scorpion) send only their most inscrutable representatives to the Kitsuki lands.

The Lion Clan

Although not as stark and unforgiving as the Crab, the courts of the Lion are severe nonetheless. The style of court varies considerably among the families, with the Akodo and Kitsu providing a hospitable if somewhat dull setting for their guests, the Matsu bordering on open hostility toward most attendees, and the Ikoma regaling their guests with bold tales, plays, and all manner of entertaining diversions. Not surprisingly, the Ikoma courts tend to be the most popular. The other families do not find this particularly concerning, since the Ikoma's duty is to serve as the clan's public face. Still, the Ikoma family's relatively small size ensures that the courts of other families are required in order to meet the clan's diplomatic needs as a whole.

The Akodo and Kitsu often hold their courts together, following the example of their joint control of the Castle of the Swift Sword. Their guests are made comfortable and offered token entertainments, but many visitors find their courts boring and uneventful despite the frequent sparring matches and tactical games the Akodo favor. Some also find the courts uncomfortable because of the ability of the Kitsu to sense ties to one's ancestors, as they correctly believe the Kitsu are able to gain insight into individuals and families with very little social interaction. To maintain successful relationships with the Lion, most clans send martial representatives from honorable and noble bloodlines in order to provide their hosts with amenable interaction.

The Matsu and Ikoma courts are vastly different from one another, and tend to be uncomfortable for their guests in different ways. A Matsu court is much like a Hida court, save that the Matsu are likely to be less directly insulting but more openly hostile. They are quick to judge others and hold them to a near-impossible standard of honor, one many enemies secretly believe the Matsu themselves are not capable of meeting. To suggest such aloud would be tantamount to suicide, however, so representatives for Matsu courts are selected by their clans based on their self-control and their ability to meet the Matsu on their own terms without provoking them needlessly. Ironically, often the best way to deal with the Matsu in their own house is to match their fervor without escalating it.

Finally, although the Ikoma courts are far and away the most popular Lion courts, they still make their guests somewhat uncomfortable. The open display of emotion is foreign to the average samurai. To see the Ikoma surrendering to their emotions during their speeches and storytelling is disconcerting to many. Still, the courts are pleasant and entertaining, and those who find themselves invited or appointed to an Ikoma court usually enjoy the experience despite their initial misgivings.

The Mantis Clan

No clan, whether Great or Minor, maintains so ostentatious a display of wealth in its courts as the Yoritomo family of the Mantis Clan. Although the Moshi and Tsuruchi have much more traditional courts than their Yoritomo cousins, the remote location of their provinces and the more limited resources they have available ensures they host far fewer events than the Yoritomo. Often entire seasons go by when the Yoritomo host the Mantis Clan's only meaningful court.

The Imperial Histories: Tsuruchi and the Wasp Clan

The castle which became known as Shiro Ashinagabachi was originally a key Scorpion castle known as Shiro no Uragiru. In the late eleventh century, the lord of the castle, Bayushi Uchinore, fell in love with a beautiful Lion maiden named Akodo Tameko. The two became lovers and soon Tameko was with child, forced to flee her clan and take refuge within Shiro no Uragiru. Uchinore, devoted to his love, cancelled his own arranged marriage and acknowledged Tameko's child as his own.

The situation was displeasing to both clans. The Lion could not openly disown Tameko without great loss of face, but were left fuming at the constant stream of rumors and insults which the incident created. The Scorpion Clan was pleased at the embarrassment Uchinore had inflicted on the Lion, but their attitude quickly changed when Uchinore refused to hand the child over to them for training, instead raising the boy himself and training him with Tameko's help. Raised with far too much of his mother's Lion honor, the boy named Tsuruchi was displeasing to the lords of the Bayushi.

The Scorpion leadership decided that Uchinore had betrayed his loyalty to the clan, and that meant only one punishment: he and his family must die. The Scorpion spread rumors that Uchinore planned to make a claim on Akodo lands based on his wife's lineage. The Lion could not endure such a thing and dispatched an army to attack Shiro no Uragiru. Before the army could arrive, Shosuro assassins slipped into the castle to murder the family. The mother and father perished, but young Tsuruchi escaped the killers' grasp and rallied his troops to defend the castle. He asked for help from his father's family, but none was forthcoming—the Scorpion had an army nearby, but when they realized Tsuruchi had escaped their assassins, they chose to surrender the castle rather than save him. The Young Wasp, as his parents had called him, had no choice but to try to arrange a peaceful surrender to the Lion army. That too failed when orders from superiors forced the Lion commander to betray the agreement and slaughter Tsuruchi's followers. The young man escaped with only a tiny handful of comrades, and the Lion occupied the castle.

Tsuruchi, having seen the treacherous and dishonorable nature of so many samurai, broke his sword and swore the bow would be his only weapon henceforth. Two years later, he and his followers slipped back into Shiro no Uragiru—having grown up in the castle, Tsuruchi knew its secrets better than any. He slaughtered the Lion garrison, then declared himself the ruler of the castle and refused to swear allegiance to either Scorpion or Lion. Both clans would gladly have destroyed him... but Tsuruchi brought his case before the Emerald Champion, presenting the entire story of betrayal, treachery, and revenge. The Champion persuaded the Emperor to recognize Tsuruchi as the ruler of a new Minor Clan, and personally granted the Young Wasp's followers the right to serve as bounty hunters for magistrates across the Empire. In this way the Wasp Clan was born, eventually to become the Tsuruchi family of the Mantis Clan.

The location of the Yoritomo lands is the first and perhaps most significant difference from more conventional events. The Islands of Silk and Spice are so distant from the mainland that it requires several days, sometimes even weeks depending on distance and weather, to reach them safely. Sea life does not agree with many courtiers, especially those with a delicate constitution, and thus most guests arrive with a poor disposition and are somewhat more vulnerable than normal during the season's early days. Furthermore, the conditions on the islands are considerably different than the mainland, with hotter temperatures and greater humidity. All in all, it creates a rather hostile environment where the normal court costume (heavily layered clothing and thick face-paint) can become quite physically taxing.

The Yoritomo are well aware that their guests are often at a disadvantage, and are more than willing to exploit it to their advantage. In addition to the island environment, the actual court chambers themselves are equally alien to those accustomed to a conventional environment. The Mantis were once a Minor Clan, and were distinguishable from their fellow Minor Clans only by their ostentatious wealth. Generations of pride in their material abundance form a major component of the Yoritomo's inheritance, and their homes and chambers are decorated with all manner of valuable minerals and gemstones. They likewise prize gaijin artifacts and decorate their homes with them, a controversial practice which sets many other clans on edge. Again, this is primarily a means by which the Yoritomo, ever ambitious and cunning, can gain an advantage over their guests, who they almost always view as potential opponents rather than allies.

Guests to the Mantis court are chosen by their clans for their ability to quickly assimilate new information and new situations, and for their mental fortitude to resist manipulation and bullying by their overzealous hosts.

Moshi and Tsuruchi courts, while much less common, are also far more traditional. The Moshi, ever a pious family, tend to place greater emphasis on spiritual pursuits during their court season, and shugenja are far more likely to receive an invitation than anyone else. Likewise the Tsuruchi, who place tremendous importance on law and order, tend to invite magistrates and honorable warriors or courtiers. Those with questionable methods or ethics are rarely welcome, and the Tsuruchi do little to make their Scorpion neighbors feel accepted within the confines of Shiro Ashinagabachi. In earlier eras, when the Tsuruchi ruled the independent Wasp Clan, both Scorpion and Lion were forbidden from attending at all due to the circumstances of the Wasp Clan's birth.

The Phoenix Clan

The courts held by the Phoenix are among the most popular in the Empire, second only to those of the Crane, and more than a few Emperors have spent their winters in Phoenix lands—indeed, the Phoenix have hosted more Imperial Winter Courts than any other faction save for the Imperial families and the Crane Clan. The Phoenix offer the same comforts their Crane allies can bestow, but typically without any pressing political agenda. The clan is renowned for the beauty and tranquility of its courts, and perhaps that is why the greatest of their courts, Kyuden Asako (also known as Morning Glory Castle), has been host to at least one Imperial Winter Court from almost every Emperor for the past 300 years.

The majority of Phoenix courts are convened in the lands of either the Asako or the Isawa. The Shiba are generally considered somewhat bland by outsiders (and even some of their comrades within the clan) and their castles tend to be ill-suited to major social gatherings. On top of that, the Shiba are responsible for protecting the courts of all the other families in the clan, leaving them precious few resources to devote to their own political agenda. They usually don't even have one in the first place. Thus, it is exceedingly uncommon for the Shiba to hold any court outside of Shiro Shiba, their main seat of power—and sometimes not even there.

After the Agasha join the Phoenix Clan, they hold very few courts, normally restricting themselves to small events in the City of Remembrance and their newly built estate at Kyuden Agasha. While they do have the resources to conduct larger affairs, the family as a whole prefers to keep a low profile—they are still regarded as untrustworthy by many in the Empire in the wake of their mass defection from the Dragon to the Phoenix.

Both the Asako and the Isawa tend to avoid aggressive political agendas, albeit for different reasons. The Asako consider court to be an opportunity to bring samurai that are traditionally rivals together in an environment of peace and tranquility. They are the consummate advocates of peace, and constantly strive to end hostilities between their guests. More than one burgeoning border skirmish between different clans—conflicts that could have escalated to full fledged warfare—has been defused at a court held by the Asako.

The Isawa have a radically different approach with regard to political agendas. They do not pursue one because the Elemental Council believes that they are above such petty concerns. Instead, the Isawa view a large court as an opportunity to demonstrate proper behaviors and philosophies to their guests. This unfortunately tends to come across as arrogant, but this is in keeping with the perception many already have of the Phoenix. Regardless, most clans send their philosophers, priests, and artisans to the Phoenix courts in order to make best use of the opportunities there.

The Scorpion Clan

There are no courts in the Empire so feared as those hosted by the Scorpion Clan. For all that the sons and followers of Bayushi may claim the stereotype many hold of them is false and unfair, the simple truth is that they are by and large deceitful and manipulative samurai who will use almost any tactic, no matter how dishonorable or ruthless, to gain an advantage over their opponents. This has always been true of the Scorpion in battle, but the truly wise recognize that facing them in their own court is by far the deadliest confrontation imaginable.

Scorpion courts are for the most part held in the Bayushi provinces, with a small number of supplemental courts in Shosuro lands. The Soshi and Yogo have other concerns, and it is rare for there to be courts in any of their provinces, save for obligatory courts convened within their ancestral estates by their daimyo. For the most part, outsiders find these particular families so strange and intimidating that they have no desire to attend their courts, even in the rare instances that these Scorpion families have something of value to offer them.

Bayushi and Shosuro courts are in many ways a dark reflection of the courts convened by their traditional rivals among the Crane. Scorpion political power comes from both knowledge and lack of constraint, and many a samurai has found his deepest secrets turned into bargaining chips by the clan of Bayushi. Additionally, a samurai whose hands are tied by honor can rely on the Scorpion to handle the problem discreetly... for a price. In Scorpion courts, customs and protocols are observed with unfailing devotion, never granting guests the opportunity to suggest the Scorpion might be failing in their duty or engaging in any practice that could be considered dishonorable. At the same time the Scorpion go to work undermining their guests' loyalties and rooting out their secrets. Manipulation is a game that was practically invented by the Bayushi, and they stage any number of false ploys and gambits, setting up their opponents against threats both real and imagined. By creating a field of constant opposition and hostility, not only do the Scorpion make it difficult for their opponents to discern the true threat they offer, but they also set their guests against one another and prevent them from uniting against their hosts.

One tactic unique to the Scorpion involves the presentation of food to their guests. Scorpion courts integrate meals as major social events as well as presentations of artistry. While the Crane value poets, painters, and sculptors, the Scorpion value chefs above all other artisans. They enjoy presenting new and unusual foods to their guests, incorporating typical ingredients with unusual spices in new and unusual ways. In addition to garnering the admiration of those who practice this unique brand of artistry, the Scorpion are very well aware that many of their more paranoid guests are terrified these new dishes might contain poison. Thus, the guests are in a position where they must either decline the offer of food, offering a potential serious insult to their hosts, or eat it and then worry for hours or days that they may be suffering the adverse effects of some unknown herbal compound. Either way, the Scorpion win a psychological victory over their guests.

The Unicorn Clan

Unicorn courts have never been traditional at any time since their return to the Emerald Empire. During the centuries the Shinjo oversee the clan's affairs, they make a genuine and concerted effort to fit in with the other clans, but not to the point of sacrificing their own traditions and customs. Other families have been less willing to compromise their unique practices, and as a result the Iuchi and Utaku Families have rarely hosted any courts of note during their time in Rokugan. The Ide Family is a notable exception, of course, since they are the clan's diplomats and are trained to overcome their own customs in order to meet the needs and expectations of friends, allies, and even enemies from other clans.

The Moto are a far less accommodating people than the Shinjo, with much more pride in their history and customs, and after they take control of the clan their courts become the most prominent in the clan, with the Ide courts a close second. The two are radically different in almost every respect.

The Ide are the voice of the Unicorn in court, and as such they have the most experience with normal Rokugani traditions. They have observed how business is conducted in the courts of every other Great Clan and most Minor Clans, and have incorporated a wide variety of practices from other courts into their own. The result is a strange combination of practices that draws on multiple traditions. This has had a most beneficial result in that every guest of the Ide, regardless of their patron clan or family, finds something familiar and comforting within the court, putting them at ease in an otherwise strange environment.

Moto courts are barely recognizable as such by most courtiers familiar with the Empire's traditions. The Moto family embraces architecture and decoration that is almost entirely gaijin in origin, which sets the majority of their guests on edge (to put it mildly). Even worse, the Moto seem completely unashamed of their somewhat barbaric traditions, including such delights as the wearing of fur and leather, the drinking of fermented mare's milk, and the frequent consumption of red meat. All of these things are considered disgusting by polite society in Rokugan, ensuring that only the most unflappable and strong-willed ambassadors are sent as emissaries to the Moto courts. In fact, most clans prefer to send their courtiers to speak with the Ide and send their warriors (and those with particularly strong constitutions) to the Moto courts.

The Minor Clans

It is impossible to make any sweeping statement about the courts maintained by Rokugan's Minor Clans, since any claim would be true for no more than half at the very most. As might be expected of such a diverse group with such radically different histories, cultures, and even geographies, the Minor Clan traditions are often directly opposite each other in philosophy and execution.

The smallest and newest Minor Clans tend to lack the resources to hold court at all; for example, the Wasp Clan never held a court until after they joined the Mantis Clan, and

The Shifting Walls of Kyuden Bayushi

Kyuden Bayushi, the seat of Scorpion power, is the principle site for Scorpion courts and is the city chosen to host the Emperor on those occasions when the Imperial Winter Court comes to Scorpion lands. One of the many other physical oddities of Kyuden Bayushi is that the castle has almost no interior walls save for a few load-bearing necessities. This allows the hosts to easily change the layout of the castle and its halls, moving partitions and shoji screens around to reconstruct the interior with almost no effort. Visitors have been known to go to sleep only to awaken in what seems to be a totally different part of the castle from where they were before. Needless to say, this can cause problems when attempting to reach a meeting or appointment on time, so the Bayushi often employ this trick to place a petitioner in a position of weakness—by showing up to his meeting late, he has already insulted his hosts, forcing him to curry their favor.

the tiny Oriole Clan participates in the courts of its patron Great Clan, the Dragon.

The Badger Clan holds courts but rarely, and those it hosts resemble the clan's progenitors among the Hida, at least on the surface. There are few creature comforts to be offered to guests high in Northern Wall Mountains. Unlike the Hida, however, the Ichiro try not to be hostile toward their guests. They can hardly afford to risk offense even at the best of times.

The Dragonfly Clan traditionally have but a single court, convened in their seat of power at Kyuden Tonbo. Generally, the Tonbo family has little interest in the activities of others, and is content to fulfill its role as a gate-keeper for the Dragon Clan. It is uncommon for any Great Clan guests other than the Dragon and Phoenix to be in attendance.

The Fox and Hare Clans both host traditional courts, although the Fox have enough strange customs to deter any significant attendance from outside parties. The Hare were friendly to outsiders for most of their history, but after the clan was nearly destroyed at the end of the eleventh century and rebuilt a generation later, they became far more paranoid of outside influences and restricted themselves to inviting only a handful of their most trusted allies.

The Monkey and Ox Clans both bear striking resemblances to the families that gave rise to their clans. Although the Monkey were created primarily from the ranks of ronin, their close relationship with the Akodo family ensured many similarities between the court practices of the two. The Toku are far more gregarious and welcoming than their Lion allies, however, and generally are well regarded by all who have visited their court sessions. The Ox likewise mirror the Shinjo traditions in many ways, although they are less willing to pander to the needs of outsiders.

The Sparrow Clan are much like their Crane relatives and patrons save that they exist in a state of near-poverty at all times, and are thus much more somber in their attention to artistry and the entertainment of guests.

Finally, the Tortoise host courts of their own, although they rarely have any attendees from the Great Clans given their perceived dishonorable and dubious natures.

Courts of the Ronin

Very few ronin organizations and certainly no individual ronin have the resources or political acumen to host a successful court regardless of the season.

For much of the Empire's history, the independent settlement known as the City of the Rich Frog was home to Rokugan's only ronin court. The city was ruled by an obscure and secretive ronin family, the Kaeru, and they hosted small courts attended by minor diplomats and merchant patrons, discussing the city's trade relations with its Lion and Unicorn neighbors. Eventually, however, the city was annexed by the Lion Clan and the Kaeru became a vassal family of the Ikoma.

In modern times, the only ronin court of any real significance anywhere in the Empire is the one held every season in the village of Nanashi Mura. Overseen by the ronin band called the Eyes of Nanashi, the Nanashi court is a simple affair. It is rare for more than two or three Great Clans to be represented, although there are often several Minor Clans in

attendance in one form or another. The only true fixtures are the Dragon, the patrons of Nanashi Mura for generations. Regardless of their scarcity, samurai affiliated with any clan can be expected to be treated with respect and admiration during their attendance at the Nanashi court. Merely making an appearance is essentially a show of support for the Eyes, and the ronin within the village are greatly appreciative of such gestures. Likewise, gifts for the hosts are not expected, but greatly appreciated when they are offered.

For their parts, guests are expected to behave with a modicum of honor and etiquette, but have few expectations placed on them. The Eyes host demonstrations and sparring sessions, inviting any in attendance to participate. Standing offers to study or even teach in the Eyes of Nanashi Dojo are not uncommon.

Those who cannot abide by such simple requirements of courtesy and decency find themselves treated with cold, impassive hospitality, and little else. The Eyes will not risk offending any guest, regardless of their behavior, but neither will they make any effort to offer such boors any warmth or courtesy. Such rude guests will not be addressed unless they speak first, and while they will be invited to every function taking place during the court, they will not be made to feel welcome. Most such individuals leave in short order, their prejudice against ronin confirmed by their own behavior as well as that of their hosts.

The Imperial Families

Of the Imperial families, only the Otomo and the Miya hold formal courts with any regularity. The Seppun are more often content to attend and protect the courts of their cousins, although on some occasions they have staged courts of their own. The Otomo primarily concern themselves with the Imperial Court, but when their own court is held, it is the perfect reflection of the Emperor's court in every way save for the presence of the Emperor himself. Every tradition must be upheld, every custom observed. This makes for a particularly rigid and ritualized event, but it is one the Otomo in particular feel comfortable with, as it gives them a sense of control over the proceedings.

Guests in an Otomo court should be prepared to act on the defensive. The Otomo are rarely if ever overtly aggressive with their guests, but their polished and polite exterior hides ruthless intent. The Otomo consider it their sacred duty to fan the flames of aggression between the Great Clans so they can never unite against the Emperor. This duty dates from the Gozoku era, and although many among the Great Clans take offense at the notion they would ever betray the Emperor, the Otomo remain convinced their role is essential. Toward that end, the Otomo tend to place their guests in situations where they are confronted by their traditional rivals and given reason to renew such rivalries. The Great Clans attempt to respond by sending very even-tempered, level-headed diplomats to the Otomo courts, hoping to avoid unnecessary hostilities with their neighbors.

The Miya are radically different from the Otomo in their philosophy of court, if not in its execution. Like the Otomo, they follow a highly ritualized process that observes centuries' worth of customs and procedures, but in their case this is done out of genuine reverence rather than a desire to control the flow of events. The Miya are perhaps the most pious and sincere of the Emperor's servants outside of the clergy, and they genuinely work for peace and understanding among the Great Clans; in that respect, they are very nearly the opposite of the Otomo.

Guests in the Miya court are made to feel welcome and appreciated, and are treated with the utmost hospitality. Sadly, due to the Miya's reluctance to involve themselves in major events, the environment at their courts is one in which little of significant political importance can actually be accomplished. Thus, few truly important personages attend the Miya courts despite the esteem which almost all samurai feel for the Miya family. Still, those who do attend can expect to be welcomed with open arms into an environment of cooperation and congenial discussion. More than one great friendship between members of rival clans has been forged at the Miya estate, and it is exactly that sort of atmosphere the Miya hope to create both in their home and throughout the Empire.

The Spider Clan

During its limited career as a self-titled "Great Clan," the sinister Spider Clan holds no court that is known or understood by the people of Rokugan. That is not to say they do not hold court of sorts, of course, but they keep such gatherings private, limited to their own ranks and a handful of trusted friends or potential allies. The lords of the Spider Clan pay lip service to many of the more common court customs, such as the offering of a gift to the host and the holding of entertainment bouts for the amusement of guests, but most of this is merely deception to lull those few outsiders in attendance into a false sense of familiarity. Religious rituals are offered as usual, but are strangely absent of any identifiers for those to whom they are offered... save for simply "the Kami." Naturally, the Spider are actually offering thanks to their dark patron Fu Leng, but the ignorant or distracted among their guests may not notice this at all.

There are precious few "guests" at any Spider court, as even those who believe they are there voluntarily might better be described as hostages. Being invited into the Spider's lair means those within the clan believe an individual has something to offer them; that, or the individual has some fundamental weakness that can be exploited to bring him into the Spider Clan's web of involuntary allies. The overtures toward such individuals are cautious at first, with various discussions, debates, and contests held in an attempt to discover the guest's weaknesses and appetites. Once a suitable approach is identified, the Spider appeal to their targets in an almost irresistible manner. Those who lust for wealth are shown the vast reserves of gold and jewels at the Spider Clan's disposal (of course, it is never mentioned that these riches have been harvested from the Shadowlands). The wrathful are probed to discover the names and talents of their rivals, and then are shown incontrovertible proof that Spider samurai can eliminate the object of their enmity with no negative consequences for the guest. Lust, sloth, pride, regret, and countless other sins and flaws can be exploited in a similar fashion.

Those rare few who cannot be tempted are rarely seen again, as the Spider cannot allow anyone who has visited their lair and remained untouched to escape alive. Guests of the Spider must tread carefully, for the very least they can hope to lose is their life. Far worse, most lose their honor and their soul.

Play Aid: Random Events at Court

The following tables can be used by GMs to create interesting and plausible occurrences for any court-based adventure. If the GM is stuck as to how next to challenge the PCs, or if the action is losing momentum and something needs to happen to get it going again, feel free to consult Table 4.1—either roll randomly, or just pick an option that seems attractive.

Table 4.1: Random Events Root Table

d10	Result
0-1	You are asked or invited to... (see Table 4.2)
2	You are challenged to a duel
3-4	A representative of another faction approaches you... (see Table 4.3)
5-6	You overhear a rumor that... (see Table 4.4)
7-8	You stumble upon... (see Table 4.5)
9	Specific event; varies by host (see Table 4.6)

Table 4.2: You Are Asked Or Invited To...

d10	Event
0-1	You are invited to hear a musical performance put on by the court host.
2-3	You are invited to a performance of a noh play put on by the court host.
4	The author of a poem asks for your opinion of it.
5	A samurai-artisan asks for your opinion of his work.
6	An orator from another delegation asks you for your opinion of a speech that he plans to give at court.
7	You are asked to judge a formal challenge based on an Artisan Skill between two delegates.
8	You are asked to judge a formal challenge of oratory between two delegates.
9	You are asked to serve as witness for an iaijutsu or taryu-jiai duel.

Table 4.3: A Representative of Another Faction Approaches You...

d10	Event
0-1	... and tries to befriend you for no apparent reason.
2	... and heaps scorn on you, your faction, and the way you look.
3-4	... and asks a favor of you.
5-6	... and asks your opinion (in all confidence, of course) of a matter being debated at court
7	... and tries to blackmail you.
8-9	... and tries to bribe you.

Table 4.4: You Overhear a Rumor That...

d10	Event
0-1	...one delegation is spying on or intriguing against another delegation.
2-3	...one delegation is spying on or intriguing against the host.
4-5	... the host is spying on or intriguing against a delegation.
6-7	...a delegate is planning to betray his faction.
8	...a delegate will be assassinated.
9	...an important member of the host faction will be assassinated.

Table 4.5: You Stumble Upon:

d10	Event
0	...members of the same faction arguing with each other.
1	...a clandestine (until now, at least) romantic liaison between delegates from different factions.
2	...a note in a faction cipher, apparently dropped by mistake.
3-4	...a personal item that seems to belong to a delegate.
5	...a personal item that seems to belong to a member of the host faction.
6	...a dead guard.
7	...a dead delegate.
8	...an unauthorized person in a delegate's quarters.
9	...an unauthorized person in an area that is off-limits to everyone except the host faction.

Table 4.6: Host-Specific Random Event

Host Faction	Event
Crab Clan	You are gratuitously insulted by a Hida bushi.
Crane Clan	A Crane courtier tries to ingratiate himself with you through a gift fashioned by a Kakita artisan.
Dragon Clan	A Togashi monk attempts to engage you in an obscure theological debate.
Lion Clan	A Matsu bushi challenges you to a test of swordsmanship.
Mantis Clan	A Yoritomo invites you to view an ostentatious display of his clan's wealth.
Phoenix Clan	A Phoenix courtier insists on mediating a well-known dispute in which you are involved.
Scorpion Clan	A Bayushi courtier invites you to dine with him, with the intent of observing your anxiety over the possibility of being poisoned.
Unicorn Clan	A Moto invites you to view a contest of horsemanship—or worse, challenges you to one.
Imperial Court	An Otomo takes you aside and passes on a rumor meant to create suspicion between your clan and another clan.

New Mechanics

This section contains new mechanics for use in the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition RPG. Here we present the Lion's Shadow, a rather unconventional school maintained by the Ikoma. Although it is a bushi school, its students are taught to approach the battlefield of the courts with the same ruthlessness as any other field of conflict, and almost all Lion delegations to major courts include one or two of the Lion's Shadow.

New Basic School: The Ikoma Lion's Shadow [Bushi]

Although many modern Ikoma no longer recall it, or have chosen to forget, the first Ikoma was not a particularly honorable man. He served his lord Akodo with great distinction and loyalty, but the means by which he executed his duties are frequently omitted from any historical record. Most Ikoma do not consider this an issue, but there are some among them who understand this omission is a means of protecting the family's honor, as the first Ikoma was a ruthless, pragmatic individual who would gleefully embrace dishonorable tactics as a necessary means of completing his duties.

The Ikoma Lion's Shadow are a small and extremely secretive group within the Ikoma family who remember exactly who and what Ikoma was, and they celebrate his memory. They consider themselves extremely practical individuals who exist as a sort of foil to the dire machinations exercised by the Scorpion and other unsavory individuals. Although they frequently are called upon to sacrifice their honor for the sake of their clan, they do so willingly and without regret, and almost always with the greater Lion Clan remaining completely ignorant of their activities.

The Ikoma Lion's Shadow [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette, Kenjutsu, Investigation (Notice), Sincerity, Stealth, any one High or Low skill
- **Honor:** 3.5
- **Outfit:** Traditional Clothing, Daisho, any one weapon, Calligraphy Set, Traveling Pack, 5 Koku

Techniques

Rank One: No Boundaries

Those who walk the path of Ikoma choose a life of self-sacrifice and questionable actions in order to serve their clan as their founder did. You do not lose Honor for using Low Skills if they are used directly for the goals or glory of the Lion Clan (subject to GM judgment). As a Free Action you may target a number of opponents equal to your School Rank; you gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all attack rolls and Contested Rolls made against these opponents. This bonus may be activated a number of times per day equal to your School Rank, and lasts until the end of the day.

Rank Two: The Lion Cannot Fail

The first true lesson of the great Ikoma is that surrender is never an option, and failure can be overcome regardless of circumstances. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to all Skill Rolls using School Skills.

Rank Three: The Spirit of Ikoma

Although many among the Lion remember him differently, the followers of the Lion's Shadow know that Ikoma was a warrior who cared for victory first, and the means of attaining that victory second. Once per Round, you may lose three points of Honor as a Free Action to add +2k1 to your attack, damage, and Contested Social Skill Rolls until the end of the Round.

Rank Four: The Quiet Lion's Claws

Although their principle battleground is that of the court, those who bear the name Lion's Shadow are sons of Ikoma first and foremost, and carry the ferocity of their ancestor within their veins. You may make melee weapon attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank Five: Ferocious Determination

The wrath of a disciple of Ikoma is terrible to behold. You may spend a Void Point to take a Free Action to make a Contested Roll of your Courtier / Awareness versus against an opponent's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness. If you win the roll, you have shaken his resolve by reminding him of his past failings. The opponent subtracts a penalty equal to your Awareness plus the opponent's own Honor Rank from the total of his attack and Contested Social Skill Rolls against you for a number of hours equal to your School Rank. This Technique does not work against those who possess no Honor Rank (animals, oni, etc).

The Arts

The student frowned as he examined the sculpture. It sat on a small column that had been placed within his master's private instruction room. There was no indication of who had created it, no information about it at all. There was only the stone item itself and the column on which it sat, made from the same stone. The student could not glean any useful information from it.

"What do you know of the arts?" the master asked.

"Nothing," the student admitted at once. "There was no art to speak of in my father's village. I was able to acquire reading materials from the greater Empire on occasion, but nothing like this."

"Interesting," the sensei mused. "What can you tell me about it?"

The boy shook his head slowly. "I am sorry, master, but I do not have any experience with anything like this."

"Look again," the sensei admonished. "What can you tell me?"

The boy drew a deep breath and stared carefully at the piece of art. "It appears to be made of granite. That could have come from any mountain range, but I would assume the Twilight Mountains."

"Why?"

He pointed to the side. "The marks are very abrupt. They remind me of the Crab."

"Good. Continue."

"It seems like the artist changed tools halfway through the piece," the boy said. He pointed to the side. "Do you see how the chisel marks change here? Whether he started at the top and moved down or at the bottom and moved up, the tools changed halfway through."

"Excellent," the sensei said. "Incorrect, but excellent just the same."

The boy turned to look at his teacher. "How can it be both, my lord?"

"It is excellent because you have tremendous insight. It is incorrect because it was not the tool that changed, but the artist."

"Ah," the student said, staring more closely. "Two artists created this piece?"

"No, only one," the sensei answered. "However, the artist creating this piece received word that his brother, his only family left in the world, had died. He heard this news when he was halfway completed with the work. He did not touch it for many months, or so I am told, and then finally came back to complete it."

The student stared at the sculpture in rapt attention. He longed to run his hands across it. "Is that why you acquired this piece?" he asked. "Because of the artist?"

"The piece was sponsored by an associate of mine," the sensei said. "He noticed the change in the features and assumed something unusual had happened. All we know about this piece was learned after the fact."

"So much information," the student whispered.

"Exactly," the sensei said. "We study art not only because it sharpens our minds, but because it gives us insight into the minds of others. If you take something a man has created, you have a piece of that man, and you can learn much about him from it." He smiled wryly. "Everything is a weapon, young one. Never forget that."

The Role of the Arts

The arts play many roles in Rokugan. First and foremost, they serve to educate the Rokugani about their past. Few samurai actually study history, but they all grow up hearing stories about their ancestors and about the heroes of their clan and family. The stories may be passed along through a puppet play, depicted on a painted wall screen, portrayed in an interpretive dance, or conveyed through the tales told by a grandparent, but in the end the effect is the same: young samurai always know who is important in the history of their clan, and why their deeds must be remembered.

A natural result of this is that all clan samurai learn a version of history that is slanted in their clan's favor, often quite heavily so. The Rokugani do not readily perceive this, and indeed would not consider it a bad thing if they did. The whole point of a samurai's upbringing is to make him into someone who is dedicated to lord and clan, and if the facts of a particular incident don't promote that, the facts will be replaced with a story that does. While this attitude seems to downgrade the importance of historians (save among the Lion, who take their history very seriously), it gives artists permission to reshape events to suit their plot so long as their clan's hero comes out looking good—or at least looking the way art and honor demand they look, which may be heroic, tragic, noble, or some combination of all three.

Another result of this attitude is that a great many Rokugani stories have a strongly moralistic theme. This is especially noticeable among the Lion, whose stories, plays, and historical narratives almost always stress the importance of honoring your ancestors, obeying your lord, and abiding by the tenants of Bushido—and the dangers of forsaking any of those duties. Lion writers do not hesitate to pen tragic stories where the protagonist finds these injunctions in conflict, but they save their most dire fates for characters who don't even try to live up to Lion standards. (Scorpion stories are almost as moralistic as Lion ones; this is not immediately obvious to the rest of the Empire due to that clan's somewhat unique brand of morality.)

Art also serves as a way to express the beauty of nature or the artist's emotional reaction to the natural world. The founding Kami of the Great Clans were exiles in Ningen-do, and yet Lady Doji found herself profoundly moved by the things she saw in the mortal realm. The knowledge that these things were short-lived seemed to increase, rather than decrease, the effect they had on her, and she tried to communicate the wonders she had discovered through art. Her followers and children followed her example, and from them came the idea that nature was both something worth admiring and a source of inspiration for many sorts of art. Indeed, natural beauty remains the single most popular topic for art in the modern Empire.

Poetry is the most frequent medium for art about nature. Poetry in Rokugan tends to be both short and highly improvisational, which makes it ideal for capturing the emotions created by seeing a moment of natural perfection: the sun rising over a mountainside, or a fall of cherry blossom petals set loose by the northern wind. For those who find words don't say enough, there is painting, and painters depict everything from the sweep of a mountain valley to a single blooming flower. Landscape gardening and ikebana also attempt to capture the same idea, but by manipulating nature rather than embracing it as-is.

The arts are also a source of entertainment. Many samurai enjoy spending a day at the theater, taking in the performances of whatever kabuki or noh troupe happens to be in town. Especially popular theater troupes can look forward to being invited to the home of the local daimyo to perform for his household and court (and be handsomely paid for their trouble), and a few artisan academies sponsor permanent theaters where the performances are of supreme skill. A samurai with only an evening free might instead visit a local tea house to listen to a story chanter, or go to a geisha house to hear his favorite geisha sing and play the biwa. Many geisha are also

trained in dramatic dance or storytelling, allowing them to offer their clients a choice of different arts.

Samurai can also actively create art as a pastime. Calligraphy is widely studied both for its intrinsic beauty and because an elegant hand at writing is useful for impressing daimyo, matchmakers, and other persons of importance. Many duelists believe calligraphy sharpens the spirit and aids their swordsmanship. Among the more cultured clans of the Empire, poetry is widely studied even by those who do not consider themselves particularly artistic; the Crane, Dragon, and Phoenix Clans in particular believe that any decently educated samurai ought to be capable of composing a waka or haiku to suit the occasion.

Art is so widely used for entertainment that it can serve as the justification to host a court, evening party, or other major gathering. A lord hosting a famous ikebana master will almost always invite his friends and retainers (and sometimes his enemies) to come and admire the master's work. The tea ceremony itself is a kind of party, of the most decorous and elegant sort. And finally there are poetry parties, where the guests compete to create a poem on the subject provided by the host, or to complete a poem started by another guest. Many poetry parties are in fact thin excuses to drink sake and have a good time, and this is so widely accepted that poetry matches will sometimes spontaneously break out among groups of drunken samurai. Even Crab samurai can be susceptible to this, and while the resulting poetry is generally of very poor quality, no one can doubt its heartfelt nature.

The following sections survey some of the arts of the Empire and how various clans pursue (or ignore) them.

Dance

Regarded on its own, dance is a minor art form. There are a number of courtly dance styles, such as the bugaku in which masked dancers perform fictional characters with stylized steps and movements. Many geisha also specialize in graceful dancing to the accompaniment of the biwa or samisen. Overall, however, dance is more often considered a medium of light entertainment rather than great art. Dance gains most of its respect for its importance in theater, since both noh and kabuki use dance to help convey the drama of the play.

Though the Crane and Scorpion compete for the honor of training the Empire's finest dancers, the Crane are the clear leaders in the art of choreography. This is a result of the differing philosophies between the playwrights of the two clans. Theater fans can spend hours debating which is correct and why.

Scorpion playwrights feel that while the motions of dance are important, it is the nuanced performance of the dancer-actor that creates the real meaning of the dance. Therefore, they often simply take dances from already existing plays and reuse them. Sometimes they will choose a particular dance because it is associated with a well-known character type (a dance establishing that a character is an animal spirit, for example, or an old woman) and sometimes the dance will be chosen to incorporate a reference to an earlier play into the present one.

Crane playwrights believe every element of a play, from the words of the text to the patterns on the actor's costumes, must be chosen to help convey and intensify the effect of the drama. Thus they will commission new dances for their plays,

Clan Morality in Art: The Tragedy of Matsu Uji

One of the more notorious examples of how differing clan attitudes and clan morality can influence the arts may be found in the various plays about the life of Matsu Uji, a young hero of great courage and skill but also great temper and passion. In the conventional Lion version of the tale—recounted in many plays, stories, and pillow-books under the title *The Tragedy of Matsu Uji*—young Uji falls in love with a beautiful Scorpion woman, Shosuro Sushanume, and marries her. Naturally, marrying for love is a violation of Bushido and leads inevitably to tragedy, as the faithless Sushanume conspires with Uji's karo, Sanjuro, to murder her husband and take over the province. The story ends in a massacre, with all parties dead in pools of blood; a suitable lesson, from the Lion viewpoint, in honor, humility, and loyalty.

However, on one infamous occasion a playwright with a Scorpion mother offered a different version of the story, a play called simply *Mercy*. In that version of the tale, Sushanume is a loyal wife, but her husband spends his time at war, and when he needs a woman's comfort he finds it with geisha and concubines. His temper and bull-headedness finally drives his wife into the arms of the karo, Sanjuro—who proves to already be a disloyal man who hates his lord. When the play ends in death and suicide, Uji whispers, "Why did you betray me?" Sushamune replies, "If you were a better man, you would not need to ask. But if you were a better man..."

According to legend, at the premiere of this play the audience—entirely Lion—was brought to tears by Sushamune's plight. The moment the play was over, the Akodo daimyo executed the half-Scorpion playwright and all of the actors, and forbade *Mercy* to ever be performed again. Illicit copies of the play, however, have circulated ever since.

Art and the Spider Clan

As discussed earlier in this book, while the Lost samurai of the Shadowlands do sometimes engage in something that might be called art, their work is hardly a fit topic for a Rokugani to discuss. Once the Spider Clan comes into existence, it forms a partial exception to this; while some Spider samurai are born into the clan, the majority of non-Lost Spider are samurai of other clans who joined the Spider though choice or mischance. As a result, what art does exist is in a mix of styles and sensibilities borrowed from other clans, lacking any unified artistic tradition. Players and GMs running Spider characters or NPCs should feel free to work out individually what trends and traditions influenced the character's view on art.

working with the dancers who will first perform the roles to establish the correct sequence of motion that will precisely create the tone the playwright is seeking. Dancers and playwrights who work especially well together will establish relationships that can last years, sometimes becoming permanent by means of marriages between the families.

Ikebana

"Tomorrow I expect to find the sun rising in the west and gold-hued elm leaves to fall upwards, because today I attended a viewing of ikebana done by a Matsu. A Matsu! And not some lord's wife who married into the family; Matsu Tae is a bushi who took up the art, she says, to clear and focus her mind before battle. If this is truly the case I am quite glad I will never be forced to meet her in combat; just watching her trim flower stems was terrifying.

"Anyway, her arrangements were quite well done. Takauji criticized them harshly, pointing out the errors she committed, but I think he (as usual) has missed the point. I think the errors were deliberately made; each arrangement had only one and she never repeated a mistake. This is not the way of someone who doesn't know what she is doing, it is the way of someone feeling for the limits of good style. It's a pity that getting her into the Academy is an impossibility. Perhaps a winter court spent among the Shiba? They might know what to do with her."

—From the pillow-book of Doji Barihime

Ikebana is the art of arranging cut flowers, and emphasizes using them to create something both aesthetically pleasing and spiritually harmonious. An ikebana arrangement is similar to a *haiku* (see Poetry below) in the sense that both use limited means to evoke a larger reality. The Crane Clan credits Lady Doji with the invention of ikebana, and the art is widely loved and practiced throughout that clan. The rough soldiers of the Daidoji may not practice it, but they will have ikebana arrangements in their home to mark special occasions, and some will go to great lengths to make sure their daughters are educated in the art. Among the Doji courtiers and the artists of the Kakita it is considered a necessity to have at least a speaking knowledge of ikebana, and down through the years a number of Asahina have composed books on how the practice of ikebana can promote harmony of spirit.

For the most part the rest of the Empire follows the Crane lead in ikebana, with the Lion, Phoenix and Scorpion clans all producing great masters of the art. The Yoritomo of the Mantis generally find it too minimalist for their tastes, though the Moshi relish its air of natural elegance. The Kitsune, both before and after they join the Mantis, likewise enjoy ikebana's close connection to the beauty of nature. Although the Unicorn and Dragon have little interest in ikebana, only the Crab will admit to actually disdaining the art, considering a perfect example of the frivolous waste found in Crane lands.

Ikebana is largely unknown among the heimin, but monks and geisha will frequently study it—albeit for entirely different motives.

Landscape Gardening

The classical Rokugani garden tries to recreate the look of a natural landscape on a small scale, and usually includes a water feature in the form of a running stream and a pond. This style of gardening is especially prized by the Crane because of its ability to evoke the simple beauty of nature, not to mention that it makes a wonderfully elegant backdrop for parties.

Samurai and wealthy merchants who want a classical garden but could not afford to put in an artificial stream often turned to using pebbles to signify the path of a stream's bed. In the reign of Hantei IX a Togashi monk took this to the logical extreme of creating a garden entirely out of rocks, pebbles, and sand. This new style of gardening—called, appropriately enough, rock gardening—spread rapidly through the Empire, with the Crane soon setting aside sections of their classical gardens for the new form and the Crab embracing it with a whole-hearted love. No Crab castle goes without a rock garden, and it is a common thing to find tiny rock gardens tucked in behind barracks along the Wall, each of them maintained by the bushi who bunk there. The Brotherhood of Shinsei also embrace rock gardens, considering them to be aids to meditation and spiritual serenity.

Painting

Painting is one of the most highly regarded arts, and very few samurai homes or palaces lack some kind of decorative painting. The preferred subjects are serene natural landscapes or images of wild animals (birds taking flight are an especially popular topic), but individual families and clans may seek out other topics—battle scenes are popular with the more warlike clans, and many samurai also seek out pictures depicting the deeds of great ancestors or their clan's founding Kami. Regardless of topic, it is generally agreed that no samurai's home is complete without a wall scroll or a painted screen.

Down through the centuries great painters have arisen in every clan, but no clan can match the Crane for sheer numbers of great painters or for the influence those painters have had on painting styles across the Empire. The Crane also lead in the numbers of ordinary samurai who practice painting as a hobby: rare is the Crane lord who cannot create an elegant piece of calligraphy, or capture the mood of an ancient tree with a few stokes of a brush. The Phoenix Clan runs a close second to the Crane in this, and their artisans are held to be especially gifted in creating paintings of nature. Many Shiba artisans have achieved great fame for their flower studies, and a fan painted with such a study makes an impressive gift.

The Unicorn created a particular type of painting, the narrative scroll, soon after their return to the Empire. In their wanderings through gaijin lands it had been common for Unicorn samurai to record a journey in a scroll: such a scroll would consist of a running series of sketches and notes on things done and seen. When artists of the Unicorn began mastering the arts of calligraphy and traditional painting they realized all of these things could be combined to create a continuous narrative. Narrative scrolls quickly became popular throughout the Empire, and in modern times artists from other clans produce them as well.

Poetry (Waka)

"Today I finally had the chance to meet the Ide boy that Yuu-chan is always prattling about, and not a moment too soon. I had been worried that he was a threat to her virtue, but now I realize the truth is even worse than I suspected: he is a threat to her development as a poet. He spent some time explaining to me the "Unicorn style" of poetry, which evidently is based on the initial sounds of the words chosen. I was aghast. To think something as shallow as sound could trump the meanings of a word! Never before have I been so grateful for the protection of a fan, or so profoundly tempted to beat someone with it. I will not allow this bumpkin to go on poisoning Yuu-chan's mind. I have written him a note forbidding him to see her ever again. If that doesn't work, I shall set Nobutaka on him. Crane steel can always be relied on to defend the artists of the Crane."

—From the pillow-book of Doji Barihime

Poetry is the most celebrated of the literary arts. Many of the most famous books of literature in Rokugan's history are poetry collections, and no samurai can be ignorant of them and still be considered educated. This tends to annoy the samurai of the Crab Clan, many of whom have never read a poetry book in their life; the lords of the Crane, who have taken upon themselves the duty of defining what it means to be educated, are unwavering on the importance of poetry.

Though the Crab seldom read poetry, it would be a mistake to assume they never compose it. The shortness of the standard Rokugani poetry forms encourages spontaneous compositions, and a Crab bushi is just as capable of appreciating a sunrise as anyone else. (Indeed, the Crab might argue they appreciate it more than anyone else in the Empire.) But it is a fact that Crab poetry is usually off-the-cuff, unrecorded, and of uneven quality... none of which bothers them.

The true glories of Rokugani poetry can be found in the more cultured clans, and none of them can rival the Crane for creating or appreciating it. Crane courtiers use poetry for everything from making political observations to morning-after notes to their lover, and even the clan's bushi feel the need to be able to produce a respectable verse at need. Not all of them study it formally, but most know the basic forms and have memorized a list of appropriate seasonal words.

Poetry Styles

The most widespread and traditional poetry form in Rokugan is the *haiku*, which is practiced to a greater or lesser degree by all samurai (and even many commoners) in the Empire. A haiku is composed of 17 syllables divided into three lines of five, seven, and five syllables respectively—a structure often expressed shorthand as "5-7-5." The poem is expected to use highly evocative allusions or comparisons, often involving nature or the seasons. Often, though not always, the third line offers a twist or ironic contrast to the two previous lines, changing their meaning and adding further depth to the poem as a whole.

A more antique and complex style of poem is the *tanka*, which has two additional lines each of seven syllables, for a total structure of 5-7-5-7-7. Tanka are not as popular in the modern Empire, since they require more time to compose and appreciate, and thus are not as well-suited to courtly games. However, books of poetry often make use of the tanka form to express more complex thoughts or to tell stories.

The Unicorn Clan developed its own form of poetry during the eight centuries it spent roaming the Burning Sands. So-called "Unicorn travel poetry" follows a very different format than traditional Rokugani forms. It usually involves five lines without any consideration for the number of syllables, rhythm, or meter, and a separate sixth line that sums up the poem. The first two lines of the poem will alliterate, and the third line will alliterate within itself. This pattern is repeated with the fourth and fifth lines alliterating and the sixth line alliterating within itself. A separate sub-style of Unicorn poetry is the so-called death poem, in which the last line does not alliterate—a jarring shift designed to capture the abrupt end of death.

It may be noted that while Unicorn poetry makes use of alliteration, none of the Rokugani poetry forms use rhyme.

All of the other clans save the Unicorn follow the Crane Clan's lead in poetry. Most lords and courtiers of any rank at all will be able to compose an appropriate poem at a party or, failing that, memorize one someone on their staff has composed for them. The samurai of the Dragon Clan are nearly as famous as the Crane for their skills in poetry, although their approach tends to be more extemporaneous and less practiced than the children of Doji. The Unicorn do not dismiss traditional poems (or *waka*), but only the Ide and Shinjo families really embrace them. Most other Unicorn cling to the travel poetry of their ancestors, feeling that to do otherwise is to insult them.

Prose Literature

The bulk of Rokugani prose literature falls into three major categories: war tales, pillow books, and travelogues. The Empire does see the creation of some pure fiction, mostly as short stories or novelettes, but as a general rule the Rokugani prefer to have prose that presents itself as being about real happenings. Even fictional works often follow the structure of non-fiction books—for example, Kakita Ryoku's novel *Winter* takes the form of a pillow-book about Winter Court, even though the events it portrays are entirely fictitious.

Writers of all clans produce war tales based on their history, but few of them can match the power and mastery of material shown by the Ikoma storytellers. Ikoma war tales are popular with every level of society, so much so that peasant story chanters will pay to have them read out loud so they can memorize them.

While war tales glorify the past, pillow books—journals containing incidents from the writer's life, along with commentary and observations—are treasured for being witty and up-to-date. No fashion or trend will be accepted by the lower ranks of samurai until it gets mentioned in the published pillow book of a famous courtier or artisan. Pillow books are also the best sources of gossip and scandal; though it is dishonorable to mention such things directly, a skillful writer can relate absolutely sordid stories through indirect language and pseudonyms. It is quite common for pillow books to use symbols or nicknames for the people they are written about, leaving the readers to speculate on who "Cho" or "D-chan" really is. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the Crane and Scorpion lead the Empire in both the publication and consumption of pillow books.

Travelogues are usually the diaries of courtiers or magistrates who have traveled the Empire as part of their duties, of artisans who have gone on an artist's journey, or of samurai who have engaged in a *musha shugyo* (warrior's pilgrimage). Depending on the temperament of the writer, these works can contain descriptions of important historical or religious sites, accounts of especially good or bad meals, sketches of other travelers, stories drawn from local folklore, studies of flowers and trees, descriptions of duels, or poems inspired by things seen or experienced.

Shortly after their return to the Empire the Unicorn seized on the travelogue as the ideal literary form. For the first century or so after they arrived, the works of Unicorn writers were read only by their clansmen, but as time went on and they gained more familiarity with classic Rokugani writing forms their works gained a wider and wider audience. Unicorn travelogues are generally admired for their innovative and lyrical descriptions of landscapes.

Sculpture

Sculpture in Rokugan is a relatively minor art. It is not looked down upon, to be sure, but the demand for it is quite limited. Temples, shrines, palaces, and tombs are often highly decorated with statues of fortunes and guardian spirits, but in their private homes samurai prefer to use unshaped rocks in their gardens, and Rokugani architecture makes their houses more congenial to paintings than sculptures.

The Mantis Clan is a strong exception to this. In their early history the sailors of the Yoritomo took to wood-carving as a way of entertaining themselves during long voyages. The results of their efforts were cherished by their families and friends when they were away, spurring them on to improvements in technique. Eventually Mantis lords began to notice who among their retainers showed promise in the art and arranged for them to receive training in sculpture on the mainland, thus creating a lively artistic tradition that continued and flourished after the Mantis attained Great Clan status. Many Mantis samurai enjoy collecting figurines done by their favorite artist, or relating to a certain theme such as Fortunes of the sea, sea animals, or people engaged in fishing or sailing activities.

The Phoenix also have a strong sculpture tradition among their Shiba artisans, though it is modest compared to the other arts the clan admires. Their primary focus is sculptures of the Fortunes, the Kami, and famous monks, and the many temples to be found in the Phoenix provinces are filled with examples of their work.

In discussing sculpture some mention of netsuke should be made. These are small toggle-shaped or button-shaped objects intended to help secure items to an obi; kimono have no pockets, so this allows one to keep small personal objects handy. Netsuke are everyday useful things, made by heimin craftsmen and not samurai artisans—no samurai would consider them art, but nevertheless some of them show great talent and care in their making. The finest netsuke are eagerly sought after as gifts. More than one peasant family has risen to prosperity on the strength of its netsuke production, and a samurai who sponsors a skilled netsuke carver can gain considerable success for himself as well.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an art loved in every clan and at every level of society. Among the heimin, most storytelling is done by a village or family elder; there is also a professional class of wandering story chanters who draw enthusiastic audiences at village festivals. Chanters recite stories taken from the Ikoma histories or the works of the Kakita masters, usually to musical accompaniment.

Samurai favor storytellers of their own class, and every refined lord will try to have a storyteller as a member of his court: either an artisan trained in the art or a retainer who has a gift for it. It is not uncommon for a lord to arrange for such gifted retainers to receive training to enhance their skills. Training a t the Kakita Artisan Academy, or by an artisan who trained there, is highly sought after and many favors are exchanged to make this happen. To have an actual Kakita storyteller at one's court is even better, of course. Many Kakita lords will send their artisan vassals to visit allied lords, or to persuade lords whose alliance they seek, as a gesture of goodwill. Such efforts rarely go unrewarded.

The Ikoma bards (or *omoidasu*) are also highly regarded, but they are tightly focused on the immediate needs of the Lion Clan and rarely visit other courts merely to entertain. A samurai who has the opportunity to hear an Ikoma spinning a story is in for an amazing time, however: the Ikoma pride themselves on bringing out the emotional highs and lows of characters' conflicts while at the same time delivering a solid account of whatever battle happens to be central to the story. It should be noted that Ikoma stories almost always center on a battle, fight, or feud; they leave love stories and the like to lesser storytellers... like the Kakita.

The Shiba artisans also train in storytelling, and if they are less famous than the Kakita they are no less dedicated to their craft. The winter courts of the Phoenix Clan are the richer for their efforts, and many Dragon daimyo will invite them in preference to Crane storytellers. The Shiba have a vast store of 'priest stories'—stories where a priest or monk must expel some supernatural spirit from a location by means of negotiation or force—and their audiences in the Phoenix and Dragon lands never tire of hearing them.

Tattooing

The art of the tattoo is most strongly associated with the Dragon Clan—with good reason, for it is rare to find a Dragon samurai who does not have at least one. Of course, very few of them have the mystic properties associated with the famed Togashi tattoos, but neither are they merely decorative. Dragon samurai favor tattoo designs that have some special meaning in them, such as a challenge still to be met or one triumphed over, a battle won, or some special insight they wish to preserve. Naturally they seek out artists who will do full justice to the subject, and over time a flourishing artistic tradition has grown up in the Dragon lands. Tattoos have spread from there to the rest of Rokugan, but in limited numbers, for many clans disdain such art.

The greatest tattoo artists show the same mastery of color and form that marks the work of the great painters, and even the Crane will praise the artistry of a fine tattoo. Praise, but not practice it: very few Cranes outside of the Daidoji have tattoos, and the Daidoji usually limit themselves to the wrist tattoos that symbolize their devotion to family and duty. Aside from the Dragon, it is chiefly among the Crab and the Mantis Clans that tattooing is most embraced as a purely decorative art. It is not uncommon to find a Hida warrior or Yoritomo sailor who wouldn't be caught dead buying a painting spending hours contemplating which tattoo design he wants.

Tattooing is also an art form that has migrated into the commoner population, albeit at a much cruder level of

The Artist's Journey

The tradition of the artist's journey dates to the reign of Hantei XVI, the infamous Steel Chrysanthemum. Kakita Saigyu, a poet in service to a Crane courtier in the Imperial Court, became worried that one of his poems might offend the mercurial Emperor. Needing an excuse to leave town that wouldn't attract scandal or attention from the Throne, he hit on the idea of requesting leave to go on a "poet's musha shugyo" and travel across the Empire. Permission was granted, and he spent the next six years happily wandering the remote corners of the Empire, recording everything he saw in poems, journal entries, and hastily-done ink paintings. After the Steel Chrysanthemum's death, Saigyu returned to the capital and started publishing his journals, which proved to be wildly popular. The link between travel and art was made, and the tradition continued in the centuries that followed. By no means do all artisans go on artist journeys, but many do, and those who indulge in this tradition are expected to publish afterwards.

artistry than what is found in the samurai caste. In particular, commoner criminals such as pirates, bandit gangs, and urban criminals often tattoo themselves to show their affiliations and loyalties.

Tea Ceremony

The tea ceremony can be considered as the most intimate of the performing arts: it is performed by one person in the small confines of the tea house for a handful of other people, the only props being the tea set itself. It is an art of motion and clarity, its only goal to bring the participants together in harmony with the eternal now.

The Crane credit Lady Doji herself with the creation of the tea ceremony, and no other clan can quite match their obsession with creating the perfect ceremony. Crane practitioners will go to great lengths to obtain a perfect tea set, or will fret endlessly over the correct placement of the tea house in their garden. Needless to say, once the ceremony is begun a Crane tea master is the very essence of serene grace—to be otherwise would be to perform incorrectly, which a Crane would never do.

The samurai of the Dragon and Phoenix clans are also great devotees of the tea ceremony, though they tend to approach it as a spiritual exercise rather than an artistic one. However, students of the tea ceremony can be found all throughout the Empire; its single-mindedness in execution and the clarity it leaves behind has made it one of the most popular arts.

Theater

"I must admit that Kakita Tamami's Dawn of Fire is one of the finest puppet plays I have seen in some time. She has skillfully reflected a puppet's lack of ability to express nuances of gesture by creating dialog that possesses no emotional depth at all. I am stunned by the magnitude of her achievement. One might have thought the actors of the Jeweled Garden troupe, who were performing the play, would have difficulty reproducing the wooden mannerisms the play requires, but no: they managed to faithfully embody the play's complete absence of grace, energy, and mood. Truly a wonder."

—from the pillow-book of Doji Barihime

Theater is a popular entertainment at all levels of the Empire, and every clan can boast its share of playwrights and actors. The Crane are generally considered to be the leaders in noh and the Scorpion in kabuki, but the truth is that both clans have produced great artists in both forms.

There are broad variations among the clans as to which forms of theater are favored. Lion daimyo tend to barely tolerate kabuki, regarding it as a debased entertainment for undisciplined minds. However, commoners, ji-samurai, and ronin sometimes need distraction, so kabuki troupes are permitted in Lion lands so long as they adhere to the long list of legal requirements imposed on them. The Crane, after some initial resistance, soon came to regard kabuki as a legitimate dramatic form and attach no shame to attending a performance. The Crab simply adore kabuki, and the favorite actors of a Crab lord can count on being well-rewarded for a tour in the shadow of the Wall.

On the other hand, the Crab have little patience with noh theater, and "it's a noh play" is common Crab slang for "it's boring." The Dragon love noh, especially those plays that deal with ghosts or spirits. It should be no shock that among the Unicorn the cosmopolitan Ide are fans of noh, but more surprising is that the Moto rival them in fervor. The first Moto daimyo to see a noh play thought the plot was incomprehensible, but compared the grace of the actors to "a fine horse running across an open field under the setting sun"—thus establishing a fashion for it within his family.

Samurai of all clans enjoy puppet theater as a light diversion, and though the actors and chanters in a puppet troupe are traditionally all heimin, playwrights of samurai rank consider it a compliment to have one of their plays adapted to be performed by puppets. Some have even gone so far as to write plays specifically for their favorite puppet troupes.

Prominent Artisan Traditions

All the clans of Rokugan include artists in their ranks—even the brutal Crab boast playwrights, sculptors, and poets. However, only a few clans have pursued the arts to such an extent as to have actual schools and deeply-rooted traditions.

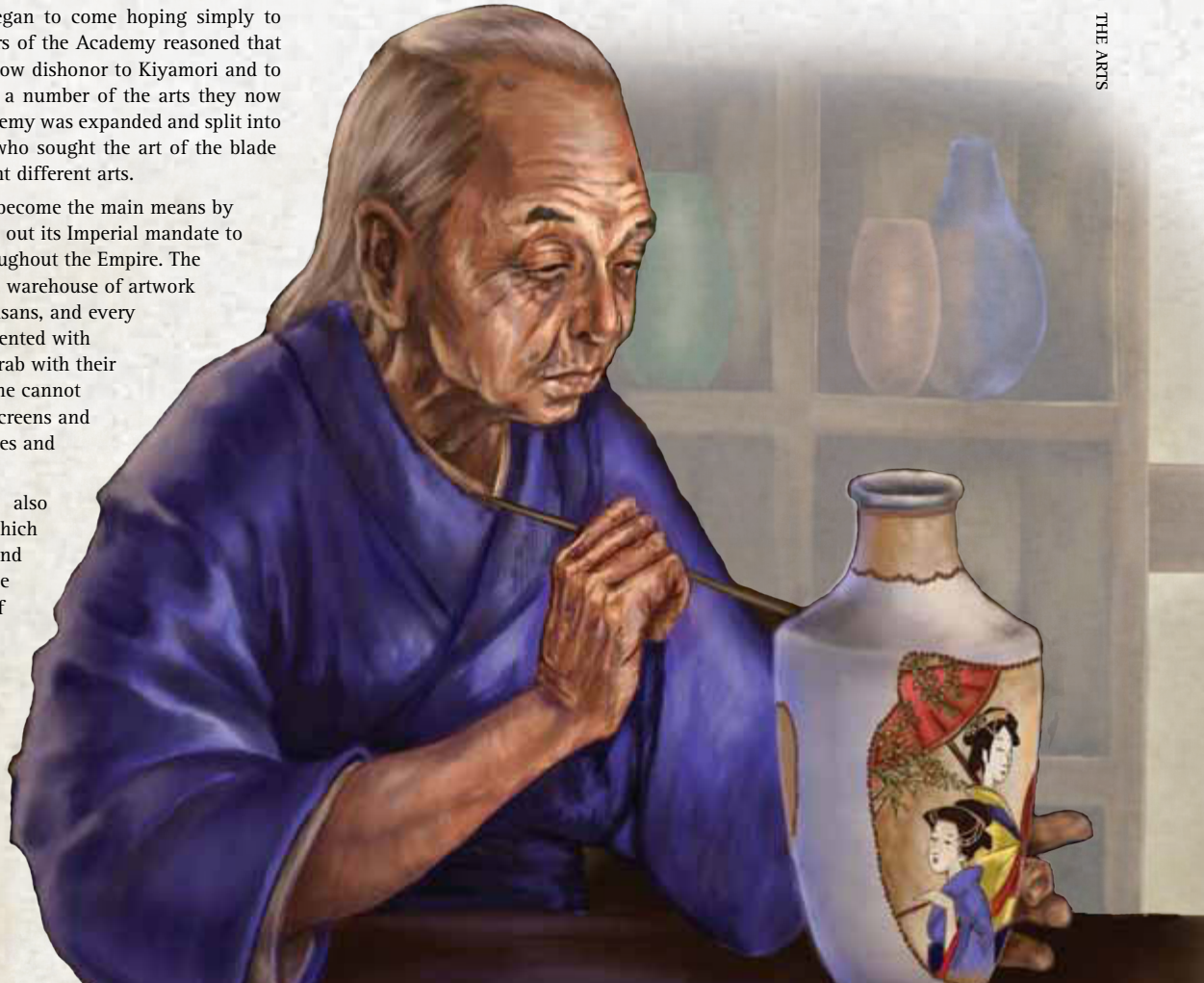
The Kakita Artisans

The history of the Kakita Artisans goes back to Kakita himself, the husband of Lady Doji and the creator of the formal dueling style known as iaijutsu. While he is most remembered for his swordsmanship, Kakita was also fascinated by a number of arts and how the quality of mind they cultivated was so similar to the quality of mind to be found in a fine duelist. He studied music and painting with the same burning focus he applied to the sword, and when men came to him in hopes of learning the art of dueling, he required them to study other arts as well. Kiyamori, Kakita's twin sister, was herself a talented poet, storyteller, and painter, and she dedicated herself to helping teach her brother's students.

As time went on the students of Kakita's dueling school, now known as the Kakita Dueling Academy, became as famous for the art they could create as for their skill with the sword. New students began to come hoping simply to be trained in art. The masters of the Academy reasoned that to turn them away would show dishonor to Kiyamori and to Lady Doji, who had created a number of the arts they now taught. Thus the Kakita Academy was expanded and split into two schools, one for those who sought the art of the blade and one for those who sought different arts.

The Kakita Artisans have become the main means by which the Crane Clan carries out its Imperial mandate to promote beauty and art throughout the Empire. The Imperial Palace is a veritable warehouse of artwork created by Kakita master artisans, and every Great Clan's palace is ornamented with Kakita paintings. Even the Crab with their traditional dislike of the Crane cannot help but treasure the panel screens and wall scrolls that extol the lives and deaths of their great heroes.

The Kakita Artisans are also one of the main means by which the Crane generate favors and friendships to empower the political maneuverings of their courtiers. The gift of a beautifully painted wall scroll, a visit from a Kakita storyteller to enliven a winter court, an ikebana arrangement to grace a wedding feast, an invitation for a talented child to study at the Kakita Academy—there are a multitude of such favors, large and small, that a Crane courtier can provide for an ally, and those allies are only too happy to repay such favors at a later time. In an Empire where art has been defined as important by Imperial decree, having a connection to the supreme guardians of art can be as necessary as having a well-trained army.



The Shiba Artisans

Although they lack the stylish presence of the Kakita Artisans, the quiet and unassuming artisan tradition in the Shiba family has been a mainstay in Rokugan's world of art for generations. Some find it curious that the stoic Shiba would produce such a significant number of artists, but those who have spent time among the Shiba on the battlefield understand that even their most stalwart bushi have within them a quiet serenity that mirrors the creative genius in the greatest of artisans. In contrast to the Crane approach to art, which sees their creations as part of the clan's larger dedication to excellence in culture and politics, the Shiba artistic tradition is based almost solely on the need to capture and express beauty in as pure a form as possible. Kakita artists always want an audience; Shiba artists do not need one.

That being said, the Phoenix Clan as a whole recognizes the value of art in forging alliances and long-term friendships, and the clan's representatives in the courts do not hesitate to take advantage of the artistic gifts of their Shiba brethren.

The Ikoma Bards

The Ikoma *omoidasu* are the only group that can seriously and consistently challenge the Kakita Artisans for primacy in an art form. The Ikoma are famed for only one art, storytelling, and they have poured generations of Lion tenacity and tactical wisdom into honing their skill. Kakita storytellers do not precisely fear the Ikoma—fear, after all, is unbecoming in a samurai—but they never, never underestimate them.

Despite this, many samurai in the Empire have only the dimmest notion that the Ikoma have storytellers of such quality, and most will never hear one tell a story. Ikoma storytellers are found mostly in the courts of the powerful, aiding the courtiers of the Lion or serving as courtiers themselves. Combining their deep knowledge of history with their talent for spinning tales, the Ikoma can stymie their opponents by pointing out they might be acting in a way contrary to their ancestor's good example. Since everyone in the Empire agrees (out loud, at least) that one should always act in a way pleasing to the ancestors, this can be a devastating political attack. Scorpion courtiers who would cheerfully betray their dearest friend or stab an Imperial magistrate in the back will go to great lengths to avoid being publicly labeled "unfilial."

It is important to note that in virtually every case the story an Ikoma cites is the unvarnished truth. The Bards consider themselves the spiritual heirs of Ikoma, a fun-loving, hard-living samurai who told outrageous stories about himself—most of which were true. Using falsehood to score a political point demeans both Ikoma's example and Lion Clan honor, and storytellers are trained to avoid it whenever possible. As it happens, this is a relatively easy task. The combination of centuries of history and a good memory for detail gives an Ikoma plenty of material to work with, rendering lies more trouble than they are worth.

Because their duties are so heavily politicized, the Ikoma are reluctant to train outsiders in their techniques. Talented samurai of other Lion families will be accepted, so long as they come from proper bloodlines and show suitable dedication to Bushido. It is extremely rare for the Ikoma to accept a student from another clan, since their sensei do not want to have their own techniques turned against them. Ironically, it is their rivals in the Kakita family who have had the most success in placing students among the Ikoma storytellers. The Ikoma reasoning is that the Crane are already so overwhelming powerful in the courts that they will have little temptation to copy the Lion techniques. On the other hand, they can use a Kakita student's presence as a way to study the Crane storytelling techniques.

New Mechanics

This section provides a new mechanical option for players of the L5R 4th Edition role-playing game: the Shiba Artisan school, repository of the Phoenix artistic traditions. Although not as prestigious or politically connected as the Kakita Artisans, the Shiba Artisans are still much-admired in the Empire and few Phoenix or Dragon daimyo will let themselves go without a sample of their work.

New Basic School: Shiba Artisans

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Artisan (pick two), Calligraphy, Etiquette, Lore (pick one), Sincerity, any one High or Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Sensible Clothing, Wakizashi, tools necessary to practice your chosen specialty, Traveling Pack, 5 Koku.

Techniques

Rank One: Soul of Brilliance

A true child of the Shiba line finds his perfect center in the serenity and beauty of creation. Select any one Artisan Skill. Whenever you spend a Void Point making a Skill Roll using that Skill, you gain a bonus of +2k2 instead of the normal +1k1.

Rank Two: The Way of Sincerity

Through use of his craft, a Shiba artisan can forge close bonds with others that allow for long-term alliances to be formed. Once per month you may make an Artisan Skill Roll against TN 15. You gain a number of Experience Points equal to the amount by which your roll exceeds the TN, but these Experience Points may only be spent to purchase the Allies Advantage (subject to GM approval). These Allies are temporary and last for a period of time equal to your School Rank in weeks.

Rank Three: The Art Speaks

An artisan has the ability to fall back on his art when pressed in a social situation, allowing its beauty and simplicity to speak for him. Choose one Artisan Skill. When you are called upon to make a Social Skill Roll, you may use your Ranks in the Artisan Skill in place of whatever Social Skill is called for. You gain no Mastery Level benefits when using this Technique, since you do not actually possess ranks in the Social Skill in question.

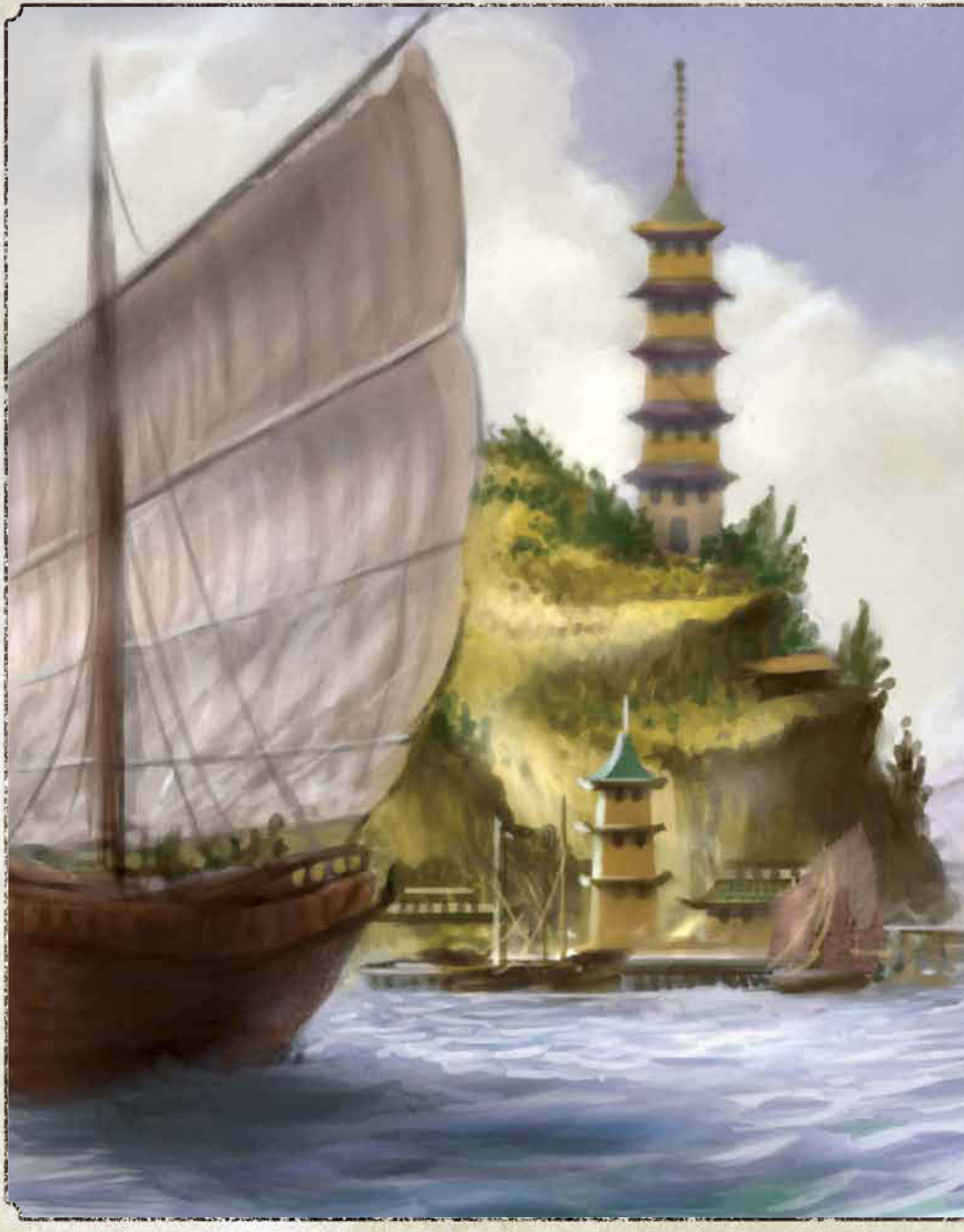
There may be social situations where this Technique is not applicable; when in doubt, the GM has the final say.

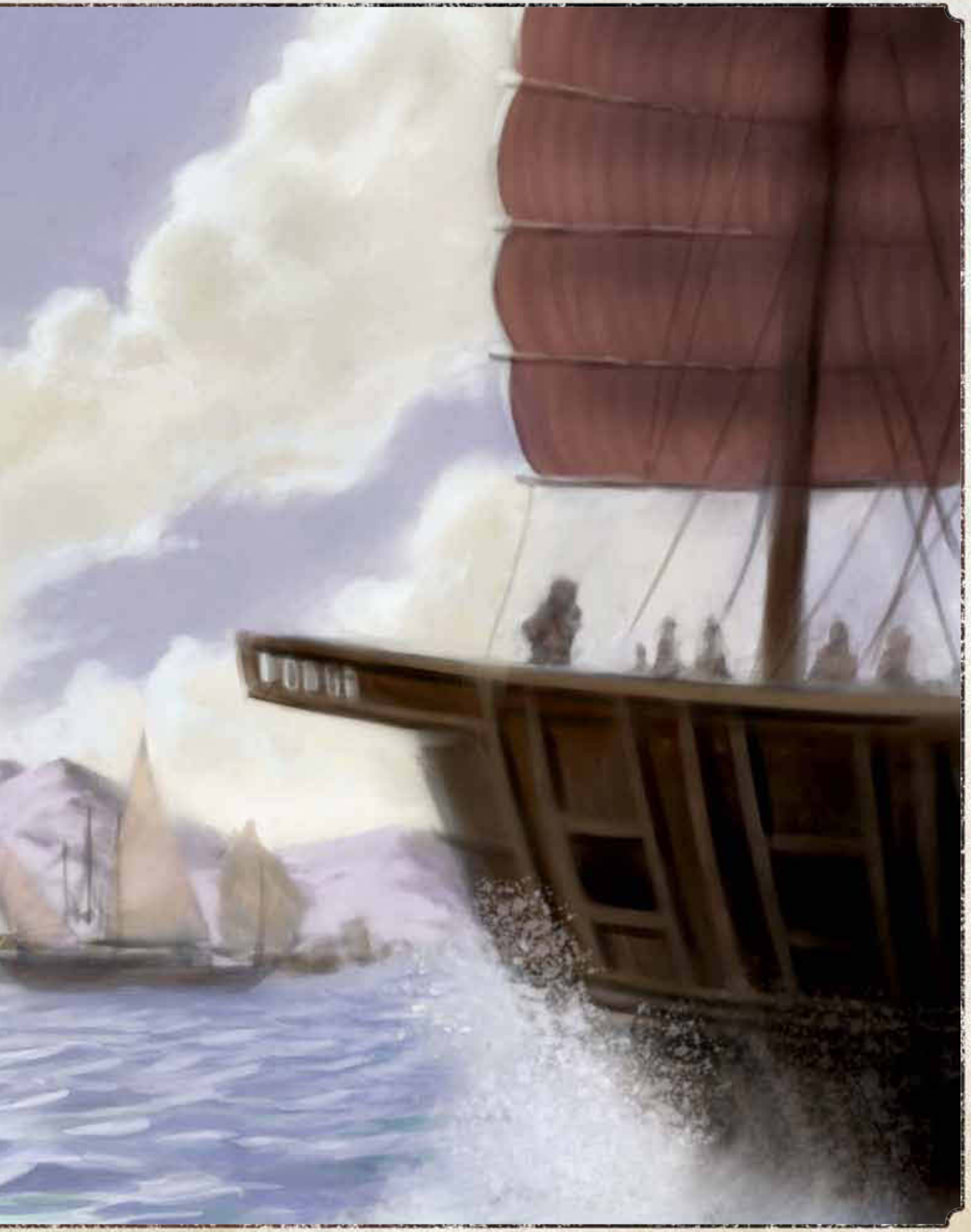
Rank Four: Bounty of the Craft

When presenting your art to others, you increase not only your own understanding of your place in the universe, but you aid others in perceiving theirs as well. Once per day you may make an Artisan Skill Roll against TN 30. If successful, you and a number of other people up to your School Rank who are present at the time regain all Void Points. This ritualized presentation of your craft requires at least fifteen minutes to complete. This Technique cannot be used in the Shadowlands.

Rank Five: The Touch of Destiny

The work of a true master requires no explanation to inspire others to greatness. When your work is on display in court or in the home of a lord, all present in the chamber where it is displayed gain one additional Void Point. If you are present, you gain two additional Void Points instead, and you may choose to deny the benefit of this Technique to any in attendance. An individual may only receive a maximum of one additional Void Point per day in this manner (or two, in your case).





Money and Commerce

The student stood in the doorway of the chamber, seemingly incapable of movement. The morning sunlight slipped in through the eastern window, glinting off of the surface of countless gold, silver, and copper discs that littered the various tables spread around the room. He was familiar with money, of course; his father had been the village magistrate and as such had overseen the collection of taxes for the Imperial tax collectors each season. Still, for all that he had seen more money than most of the villagers would ever see in a lifetime, the sum total of the coins in this room was easily ten times that of any amount he had ever seen.

"A relatively meager sum," the sensei told him. "When you work in the clan's ancestral estate and grow accustomed to seeing the annual taxes each year, something like this seems quite mundane." He regarded the boy curiously. "Although I suppose you might be unaccustomed to such things."

"Yes, master," the boy said quietly.

"Common convention tells us that money, whether koku, bu, or zeni, means nothing to a virtuous samurai." He walked to one of the tables and ran his finger through the loose metal, causing an almost musical jingling sound. "We should care nothing for such base concerns. We should take what is given to us by our lord and fulfill his commands without thought for material possessions." He glanced at the boy again. "What do you think of that?"

"It is just and right," he answered at once. "I have seen how money can corrupt a man's thoughts."

"That it can," the sensei agreed. "Do you see the fallacy, however?"

The boy shook his head.

"The line of thinking leads to the notion that while we are above concerns of money, that our lords should worry about such things. Does this not imply that they are less virtuous?"

"No, master," the boy said. "They have vassals for such things, do they not? Merchants and the like?"

"In which case the essential matters of food and equipment for all of a lord's followers and warriors falls into the hands of men who are beneath them in the Celestial Order."

The boy frowned. "That does seem... odd."

"As it should," the sensei replied. "As with so many things in this Empire, there is the ideal, and there is the reality. For many, mostly within other clans, the ideal of a life lived without care for money is occasionally recognized. For most, however, money must be given some consideration in order to ensure a family's survival." He chuckled. "Honor and bushido have their place, to be sure, but can you live on those things alone? Should you ever abandon the notion of a concept that is so essential to your survival as money?" He shook his head. "Do not become absorbed with such things, but regardless of your perspective on honor, do not allow yourself to remain ignorant of factors that are part and parcel of how you survive from day to day."

Money in Rokugan

The samurai class is home to the deep Rokugani ambivalence toward money and commerce, attitudes which filter down to the lower classes as well. As a general rule, it is socially inappropriate, and in some cases borderline dishonorable, for a samurai to seek financial gain or even to be seen as worrying too much about financial matters. Valuing material wealth smacks of excessive self-interest and self-preservation—the Sins of Desire and Fear—whereas Bushido honors fearlessness and selfless devotion to one's lord and clan. But at the same time, money is essential to the samurai class, as it is material wealth that enables them to maintain not only the standard of living to which they have accustomed themselves, but also the trappings that express their proper place in the Celestial Order. It is one thing, after all, to decree that the Mandate of Heaven has given you the right to lord it over your fellow man, but it requires ostentation and splendor to keep your fellow man convinced of your legitimacy.

The clothes a samurai wears—especially at court—must be made of the finest materials. The culture of court also requires the giving of gifts, often quite expensive or beautiful ones, and making sure one has appropriate ones often requires sponsoring artisans and acquiring rare materials. And of course, a superior daisho and a suit of fine heavy armor can cost the equivalent of enough rice to feed a man for his entire lifetime. Samurai, in theory, are supported by their lords and supplied with the necessaries to live and perform their duties, but replacing a broken katana, procuring more arrows, repairing a suit of armor, or buying new clothes to replace those that are old, worn, or hopelessly soiled—all of those things require someone somewhere in the feudal order to lay out some koku to pay for them.

At the level of governance, both the clan/family and the Imperial governments levy stiff taxes on commoners—recognition by itself that the governing class, the samurai elite, cannot exist without considerable material wealth. Palaces cost a great deal to build and maintain, and every family has at least one. Imperial and clan officials alike must be maintained in a style befitting their position, and the Imperial bureaucracy in particular is staffed by an army of petty functionaries and attendants who must be supported from tax revenues. And of course the clans support real standing armies of thousands of samurai, all of whom are armed, housed, trained and fed at the clan's expense. These military establishments are expanded during wartime, in part by drafting ashigaru and purchasing the services of ronin. While the former are not necessarily paid in coin for their service, they must still be provided with food, arms, and armor. And while ronin generally supply their own gear, their services do not come cheap.

Even the Emperor maintains his own personal standing army, and while the Imperial Legions don't hire mercenaries, the Emerald Champion (and when the office is active, the Shogun) has authority during emergencies to recruit additional forces through any appropriate means.

So while samurai are raised to believe it is unworthy of them to concern themselves with money, they are also very much aware that material wealth is crucial to maintaining their position at the head of the Celestial Order in the mortal realm. Samurai heroes who have found themselves separated from the Great Clan structure with great deeds still to accomplish, men like Toturi, have been keenly aware that there is always a limit to what charisma and great leadership can do by themselves. Followers need to be rewarded or they will desert (except perhaps for those few who truly exemplify Bushido at its best). Thus at some point, all samurai must face the fact that, like it or not, money does matter.

Those at the lower end of the samurai class cannot afford to care any less about material gain than their betters in the kuge. Vassal samurai and Minor Clans do not have nearly as secure a purchase on their rung of the Celestial Order as those born into the main Great Clan families. It would be no great matter for them to slip back into obscurity, and sometimes a family fortune is all that prevents them from having to live like commoners.

And it is certainly the case than ronin, lacking the security of allegiance altogether, have no way of acquiring even the basic necessities of life without coin in hand. These samurai at the low end of the buke caste must live every day with the realities of money and commerce, and the notion that a samurai should not stoop to concerning himself with such things is at best a polite fiction.

Money and the Bonge: Merchants

Since the samurai class consider it unworthy of them to take too great an interest in money, it is the bonge who attend to the nuts and bolts of commerce in Rokugan, and they are often held in contempt for handling something so disreputable—yet at the same time, their social betters would have a difficult time of it if no one took care of those tasks. The commoners who make their money as middlemen—the merchants, who earn profit by redressing local imbalances between supply and demand of various goods—play a crucial role in Rokugani life. The silk from which a courtier's fine kimono and peaked cap are made does not appear by magic; it must be acquired from whoever spun it and brought to a tailor who will fashion it. When a clan relies on imported food to keep its population from starvation, the food must be brought from wherever it is grown to where it will be consumed. In all cases, it is a merchant who runs the risk (and reaps the profit) of doing so... but what they do receives little respect from their social betters, or even their fellow peasants.

All throughout the year, especially during the warm-weather months, merchant caravans great and small flow through the Empire like lifeblood, bringing food, finished goods, and raw materials to places where they are needed. The merchants who transport them generally pay for their cargo on receipt from their suppliers and are paid on delivery to their buyers, so trade always carries the risk of loss or bankruptcy. Small-time peddlers also travel the roads of Rokugan, carrying all of their wares on their back or on a single pack animal, selling to any travelers they meet. In all cases, these commoners must brave bandits, wild animals, and the fury of

nature to make the Empire's economy work, and they are not always well compensated for their risks and troubles.

Clever and fortunate merchants have learned to ingratiate themselves with the samurai caste to gain a measure of financial security and protection. Having a samurai "patron" means you will have your lord's financial resources to fall back on if a caravan meets with misfortune. This also means the merchant gains protection against bandits, and other samurai who might wish to interfere with his trading had best think twice lest they incur the patron's wrath.

Occasionally, clever samurai who understand the value of a koku more than their hidebound peers will go into business themselves; the financial resources at their call through their personal fortunes or those of their family make them formidable competitors to any commoner, no matter how successful. Certainly the Yasuki, the only samurai family to openly and unreservedly embrace the world of commerce, have been very successful and are all but indispensable to the Crab Clan. As a general rule, social prejudice against commercial pursuits compel any samurai who takes this route to set himself up as a "merchant patron" (similar to the patron of a heimin artisan) who takes commoners under his protection, letting them do the actual (distasteful) work and at least pretending not to involve himself in operational details.

Money and the Bonge: Peasants

The lives of Rokugani peasants are very much bound by the traditional bonds of feudal obligation, and the more flexible and complex world of commercial transactions in which merchants live does not affect them a great deal. The peasant class mostly deals in a barter economy, providing food and labor (crafts) to their samurai lords in exchange for the right to live on the land they work. Of course, in theory everything they need to work and live actually belongs to their lord, not to them, but most samurai recognize the reality that they need the peasants as much as the peasants need them.

To the extent that they may have a little left over for themselves from the year's harvest or production, peasants and craftsmen may participate in the cash economy, selling surpluses directly to merchants and buying minor creature comforts to supplement what their lords provide them. The samurai class as a general rule does not like the idea that part of the economy can exist beyond their direct control and ownership, but they also recognize that allowing the peasantry to contribute to the cash economy keeps small villages prosperous.

Money and the Clergy

No matter the temple to which they belong or the sect of Shinseism or Fortunism in which they are trained, all monks take vows of poverty. Their education teaches them they are to focus on perfection of the inner self and shun material possessions such as fine clothes and jewelry. They seek to understand the underlying nature of reality, not to get rich. Luxury and the pursuit of wealth only distract from those quests, and so monks are taught to live simply and to purge themselves of desire for worldly comforts.

An itinerant member of the Brotherhood is content to live without a fixed abode, wearing only the simplest of clothes, performing all manner of manual labor without complaint, and carrying nothing except what is absolutely essential to live, study, pray, and meditate—often no more than a bo staff and a pack carrying dried food and a few mundane items. But not even a follower of the Little Teacher can live purely on air and sunlight. Somewhere,

somehow, he must acquire a meal and perhaps also a place to sleep. Itinerant monks usually live on charity, asking for alms whenever they come to a town, or relying on the generosity of those for whom they perform a blessing or a ceremony of passage. Of course, some monks have been known to abuse such generosity, but these are thankfully a small minority.

This reality sheds a rather different light on the monks' attitude toward material things. They are not absolutely immune to the need for wealth—someone has to provide them with the food they consume, or at least a few zeni to buy it. This implies an exchange of some sort at some level, in which monks provide a service that benefits patrons with the implied expectation the patrons will in return provide monks with a material benefit. When they turn out the begging bowl, monks also bank on the reverence that most Rokugani have for them and the willingness of those people to support monks in return for the satisfaction of having given freely to someone spiritually superior.

Of course, aside from a few cynical souls, monks do not view their lives this way, but it is nonetheless possible to see that they do, in fact, engage in commercial transactions all the time, though of a more subtle sort than those of merchants.

The fact that monks need to find material support in spite of their sworn detachment from worldly things becomes an even greater contradiction at the level of temples and monasteries, where not only are there more monks to support, but also a permanent physical location to acquire and maintain. If a lone monk on the road cannot support himself with air and sunshine, neither can twenty living in a monastery. Here, too, the Brotherhood of Shinsei banks on the reverence in which they are held from their reputation for holiness. Temples are often built and subsidized by clan daimyo and wealthy commoners, and further supported by donations from countless individual samurai and commoners. In addition, many monasteries maintain their own farms, craft shops, or artisans, and can sell their surplus to merchants just like commoners.

Shugenja are technically part of the Rokugani priesthood, but because of their roots in the samurai caste their attitudes and relations to money and commercial activity cannot really be separated from those of other samurai. Their power to speak with the kami sets them apart, but as a practical matter, shugenja are just as much a part of the governing class as warriors and courtiers, and the ideals of Bushido apply to them also.

To the extent that wealth helps all samurai express their status as Rokugan's ruling class, though, shugenja must concern themselves with its acquisition and maintenance whether they like it or not.

Economic Warfare

Trade and commerce in Rokugan are not just ways to provide goods for the samurai. They are also weapons in the clans' arsenals, weapons used to weaken their enemies and strengthen their own positions. The Crane are probably the clan most notorious for this sort of indirect warfare, because their immense agricultural production makes them the primary suppliers of food to the rest of Rokugan. During times of drought or famine, the Crane gain enormous leverage on the other clans and can often bring their opponents to their knees with a mere threat to restrict trade. Trade embargoes are also a popular Crane tool, especially if an actual war breaks out—because trade is so dependent on travel papers, the Crane (or any other clan, for that matter) can effectively shut down large parts of the Empire's trade network simply by refusing to issue or accept travel papers.

The Crane are not the only clan to engage in economic war, though their position and wealth makes it easier for them than for many others. The Mantis are also known to employ such methods, especially given their near-monopoly on exotic foods, foreign curiosities, and other such luxury goods. Few Rokugani ports can thrive without regular visits from Mantis trade kobune, so the clan can exert considerable leverage by refusing to use a particular port.

The Scorpion are capable of running a subtler form of economic warfare, based on their involvement in many forms of illicit goods and activities. Although these forms of trade are illegal and socially scandalous, they are also very much in demand, and the Scorpion can cause considerable disruption and social unrest within rival clan territories.

On some occasions, economic warfare has actually trumped battlefield outcomes. More than one war between the Crane and their Lion and Crab enemies has ended in Crane victory solely because trade embargoes threatened starvation to the other side... even through their armies had repeatedly defeated the Crane in the field.

Trade Routes: Overland

Wherever there is a border between two clans, there will be points where they meet to trade with each other, making the roads leading in and out of these places trade routes of some consequence. For instance, Crane and Crab traders often meet at the city of Jukami Mura, one of the southernmost Crane settlements; the town also serves as a point of contact with Mantis trade vessels, allowing transshipment between the Crab and the Mantis.

During the centuries that Beiden Pass functioned as the main passage through the Spine of the World Mountains, the Scorpion village of Beiden was a major trade site for commerce between the Scorpion and the northern Empire, especially the Lion who lay on the immediate far side of the pass. After Beiden Pass was destroyed and trade shifted north to the newly expanded Seikitsu Pass, the Scorpion village of Pokau at the southern end of the pass became another such point, serving as a hub for Scorpion trade with the Unicorn lands. Scorpion grain and herb merchants would travel there to meet Unicorn merchants bearing fine horses and other exotic goods.

Trade between the different parts of the Empire is vast and complex, and the steady flow of goods throughout the centu-

ries has caused many roads and paths to grow into major trade routes. For example, in the south the famous Kaiu Road, which runs roughly parallel to the Kaiu Wall, was originally built solely as a military road to facilitate movement of troops along the border with the Shadowlands. But it also facilitated the movement of iron ore from mines in the Twilight Mountains to the Great Forge at Kaiu Shiro, not to mention the transport of dried fish and seaweed from Earthquake Fish Bay to garrisons all along the Wall. Large bodies of soldiers moving along the road also drew hordes of peddlers hawking their wares to the passing troops; one can find almost any sort of trinket or curiosity hawked on the Kaiu Road, from good-luck tokens to jewelry to candy.

Just about every major north-south road that runs through the center of the Empire is an overland trade route of some consequence. Although the River of Gold is the preferred route for products headed from the Crab or southern Crane lands to the Unicorn provinces, the highway that runs from the Crane city of Mura Sabishi Toshi in the south to the great Scorpion metropolis of Ryoko Owari Toshi in the north plays an important role in facilitating Crane and Scorpion trade interests. Mantis luxury goods must pass through Crane ports and then along this road to reach the Scorpion, and the Crane charge a hefty fee for passing them along. (Of course, they charge a hefty fee to everyone who wants some of what the Mantis bring into their ports.) The fact that the highway cuts through the Scorpion's agricultural heartland also makes it an important conduit for the movement of foodstuffs. And of course Ryoko Owari makes it not only a route for food and trade goods into and out of the city, but also for the trade of medicinal (and illicit) opium, which is grown and processed in Ryoko Owari and then dispersed throughout the Empire.

The destruction of Beiden Pass in the War of Spirits puts a serious crimp in the movement of goods between the northern and southern halves of the Empire, since the Seikitsu Pass is far less convenient for the movement of goods than Beiden. In the era after Beiden Pass' closure, caravans wishing to pass through the mountains have to either swing far to the northwest through the Unicorn lands or take a ship to or from a Doji-controlled port in the south. This arrangement benefits the Crane and Unicorn, of course, and to a lesser extent the Phoenix (who also control a couple of ports), but decreases traffic through the Lion and Scorpion territories. The Lion in particular suffered from the closure of Beiden, since they controlled the northern side of the pass and were able to charge stiff fees to anyone who wished to pass through.

Probably the most important trade route in the Lion lands is the Way of Elements Highway, which runs from Otosan Uchi to Shiro Akodo, then west and north to the Akodo holding of Shiro Sano Ken Hayai (the Castle of the Swift Sword). During the centuries that Otosan Uchi was the Imperial capital, this route was choked with commercial traffic almost year round. After the devastation of Otosan Uchi and the relocation of Rokugan's capital to Toshi Ranbo, the importance of this

route diminished somewhat, but its relative proximity to the new capital allowed it to maintain some degree of prosperity. Lion copper from mines in the Spine of the World Mountains, timber from the forests in Akodo territory, and grain from the clan's central plains flow along this road, both for circulation within the Lion Lands and for shipment north to the Dragon or west to the Unicorn. Shiro Sano Ken Hayai is one of the liveliest trading cities in the northern half of the Empire.

Caravans headed north to the Dragon Lands also tend to route through the Lion village of Oiku on their way to the Dragon trade center of Toi Koku. Since the Dragon import grain from both the south and east, Toi Koku is a natural focal point for the clan's trading activities. Finished goods from the Mirumoto and Tamori come here from the west, as does gold from the mountains to the north.

Trade Routes: Rivers

The River of Gold is the southern Empire's primary inland waterway. It is a popular trade route for barges taking Scorpion grain and opium to the Crab lands, since the journey flows with the current and can be made in very good time. Coming back upstream is more difficult, but even so it is generally the preferred route for Crab traders headed for Ryoko Owari or, in more recent eras, the Seikitsu Pass. The abundant trade on the river does sometimes attract pirates, and during eras of intense war or social unrest the River of Gold can be rendered near-unusable for trade.

In the north, the Drowned Merchant River flows from east to west, and provides the main avenue of trade for the Phoenix and Dragon to ship goods to and from the Unicorn, as well as contact with Lion traders on the southern shore. Of even greater importance is the Three Sides River, which flows from the Drowned Merchant southward along the Spine of the World, passing through the Lake of Sorrows and Red Shore Lake and then on southeast to the sea. Both the Crane and the Lion use the river to move goods within and into each other's territories. The Scorpion also consider it a valuable route, and more than once they have ventured over the Spine of the World Mountains to try to take it for themselves, or at least to seize a point they could use to levy tolls on the riverine traffic.

North of the joint with the River of the Drowned Merchant is the Firefly River, a holding of the Unicorn. The Firefly River serves as a conduit for Unicorn trade with both the Lion and the Crane, with the most notable goods being horses, grain, and diamonds from the Unicorn lands and dried fish from the south.

The Empire's major rivers also are choke-points for land trade, since these waterways are generally too wide and deep to be bridged using Rokugani bridge-building techniques. Instead, ferries are used to move wagons and goods across these rivers, and a large caravan will often take an entire day to cross a river. Most lesser rivers and streams are crossed by wooden bridges, either flat or arched depending on the size.

Trade Routes: Seagoing Trade

The Mantis Clan does not have a monopoly on shipbuilding—the Crab, the Crane, the Imperial Families and even the Tortoise Clan own shipyards and maintain ocean-going fleets. However, the Mantis Clan does heavily dominate this form of trade, especially the shipping lanes between the Islands of Spice and Silk and the Rokugani mainland. Luxury goods harvested or crafted on the Isles, especially the famous spices, are much in demand on the mainland, and Mantis ships carry these to Crane and Phoenix ports in exchange for grain and a variety of mundane finished goods.

During the thousand years and more that Otosan Uchi is the Imperial capital, it is the most popular single destination for Mantis and Crane ship captains bearing goods and riches to trade, as the Imperial city's appetite for both basic goods and for luxuries such as gems, precious metals, ivory, and rare spices can never be truly sated. After the city's destruction, demand for these items scarcely abates, as the new capital of Toshi Ranbo desires them no less. But with the old capital's great port no longer usable, trade between the Imperials and the Mantis must flow through lesser ports such as Dragon Guard City and the Phoenix port at Toshi no Omoidoso.

The Crane are always quite happy to serve as middlemen between the Mantis and the landlocked clans and factions. Mantis ships put in at Crane ports constantly, especially Mura Sabishii Toshi. The village of Aketsu also serves as an important trading post, where merchants from further inland come to purchase Mantis goods shipped to the mainland.

Mantis, Crane, Phoenix, Imperial, and Tortoise captains earn a great deal of income out of coastal trading missions, sailing up and down the mainland to run goods and passengers from port to port. Mostly, this represents trade between the Crab, Crane, and Phoenix, or between the northern and southern Crane provinces. The Mantis do not dominate this coastal trade in the way they do the oceanic trade routes; this suits the Mantis perfectly well, since they consider it far more important to maintain their control of the routes that run between the mainland and their own ports on the Islands of Spice and Silk. This also ensures they have near-full control over access to the gaijin lands beyond the sea, especially the Ivory Kingdoms—aside from the Mantis, only the Tortoise Clan visit foreign ports, and they do so primarily for intelligence gathering rather than trade. Thus, the Mantis Clan get first look at whatever wonders foreigners may have for trade, and they alone can reap huge profits from selling Rokugani goods to the gaijin. This sort of trade is very much under-the-table, of course, since official Imperial edicts issued after

The Imperial Histories: The Mantis and the Ivory Kingdoms

Far to the south of Rokugan, beyond the Tainted Sea of Shadows, is a remote chain of islands stretching far off to the south and west. The Mantis call these the Coral Islands, and first discovered them in the eighth century when one of their ships was blown off course. The islands were uninhabited by man, but they were abundant source of exotic timber, beautiful coral, and pearls. The Mantis visited them for decades, bringing back their bounty to trade with the rest of the Empire.

Several decades after they first began visiting the Coral Islands, the Mantis discovered that another group of sailors were visiting the isles for the same purposes. These strange dark-skinned gaijin folk hailed from a land far to the west which they called the "Kingdoms of Ivory." After a tense initial confrontation, the two groups agreed to trade rather than fight.

Ever since that time, the Mantis make an annual voyage to the Coral Islands to trade with the merchants of the Ivory Kingdoms. The Mantis bring gold, spices, silk, and Unicorn curios and trade them for rare gems, ivory, exotic feathers, and timber. In more recent years, the Mantis have even brought back a representative from the Kingdoms, a man named Rama Singh, to visit Rokugan and meet with the Empire's leaders.

the Battle of White Stag forbid any open commerce or contact with the gaijin lands.

Pirates (*wako*) are often a major hazard of naval trade, and the Mantis themselves have engaged in such sea-borne banditry more than a few times during their history, especially in the many centuries before they were elevated to Great Clan status. Ronin pirates and independent fleets have also ravaged the Rokugani coasts and shipping routes many times, and have occasionally even acquired Empire-wide fame (or at least notoriety), such as the infamous Yasuki Fumoki in the seventh century.

After the Mantis gained the respectability of a Great Clan, their interests shifted more toward legitimate trade with other Great Clans, and piracy was seen as more of an embarrassment than a source of revenue. (The admission of the law-enforcing Tsuruchi family into the Mantis Clan doubtless had some influence on this shifting attitude as well.) The Mantis officially disavowed piracy and purged their clan of those recalcitrant elements who continued to practice it. In fact, the Mantis began devoting much of their naval strength to suppressing independent pirates, greatly reducing the hazards of sea trade for other clans.

Rokugani Ships

In the early centuries of the Empire, the Rokugani made ships from softwood timbers, easily worked and easily harvested. The only drawback to this was that the wood tended to be devoured by worms in warm salty seas, but since the Rokugani seldom sailed out of sight of the mainland and had an abundance of such timber, this seemed a trivial problem. It was the Mantis, living year-round on tropical islands in the middle of the ocean, who began experimenting with tougher woods and with methods of curing timbers for greater endurance. Eventually these methods made their way back to the mainland and more sophisticated ship designs emerged, using oak or cedar wood and caulking their seams with pitch. However, in the sixth century most refinements in ship design came to a halt; in the wake of the ugly encounter with seafaring gaijin at the Battle of White Stag, the Hantei Emperors proclaimed shipbuilding to be a "perfected art" and forbade any further innovations or the construction of any deep-sea voyaging craft. Although some minor adjustments to these rules were made later, for the most part this proclamation still holds true, and the Rokugani continue to make ships much like those used by their ancestors half a millennium ago.

Rokugani ships are very different from those which the gaijin sailed into the Bay of the Golden Sun so many years ago. The Rokugani do not lay down a keel for their ships, nor do they fasten their deck planks down, so their vessels do not withstand storms very well. Traditional Rokugani ships all use square sails rather than fore-and-aft sails, and thus can only rely on the wind when it is coming from the stern. Thus, their ships all must rely on banks of oars to propel them when the wind is poor or the currents unfavorable (as they often are).

It is interesting to note that most Rokugani consider it inappropriate for samurai to pull oars. Thus, the war-galley is a tradition which has not found much popularity among them. The Mantis, as always, are something of an exception to this rule, but even they rely primarily on commoners to row their vessels.

Navigation is also not a strong point for the Rokugani. Although the ancient race of the Naga possessed the secret of navigating by astronomy, the Rokugani have only a rudimentary understanding of this technique, and can take only the most general directions from the stars. However, the Rokugani do possess an interesting navigational aid known as a sunstone, a crystal which always shows the direction of the Sun when it

is above the horizon (even during an overcast day). For the most part, however, Rokugani ship captains must rely on dead reckoning and on sets of secret navigational directions known as *koukainisshi*, which offer specific directions for reaching a destination. (For example, "sail three days down-coast until you reach shoals where the water is green, then turn east.") The Mantis Clan have also become adept at using the kami to help them navigate, and few of their ships go to sea without a specially-trained shugenja on board.

Smaller Rokugani boats, used primarily on the coasts and rivers, are called *sampans*. They measure 15 to 30 feet long, and have a crew of between 2 and 6. They are used for both fishing and short-distance commerce. On shallow rivers or in coastal marshes, folk will build so-called "duck" sampans with flat-bottomed hulls, allowing them to operate in very shallow waters.

The rivers of Rokugan are filled with barges, great flat-bottomed vessels measuring anywhere from 45 to 120 feet long, with multiple giant sails and crews that can be as numerous as 200 sailors, including samurai officers. These ships are used primarily for trade, and every clan that relies on river traffic builds them. They are far too easily swamped to venture into the ocean, however.

The primary seagoing vessel is the *kobune*, and it is this design which most people think of when discussing Rokugani shipbuilding. Measuring 75 feet long and with a crew of 25 or more (usually with 5 or more samurai officers), the kobune is able to carry cargo or passengers in its three large holds, and has a raised quarterdeck for the helmsman which can also function as a fighting platform during battle. The ship typically has two square sails (although a few vessels add a third), and the larger aft mast has a limited ability to be turned to meet the wind.

In the late eleventh century, a visionary ship-builder named Watanabe begins working in the Mantis shipyards. Recognizing the flaws with current Rokugani shipbuilding, he increases the size and (more importantly) covertly improves the designs of Mantis kobune, while keeping their outward appearance close enough to maintain the fiction of obeying the long-standing Imperial decree. These ships, called *sengo-kobune*, measure 90 feet long and boast a crew of 40 or more, plus 5 samurai officers. They boast internal bracings to strengthen the hull, overlapping planks that are resistant to ruptures and leaks, and lateen (angled) sails that make it easier to catch the wind. The Mantis use these ships solely for ocean-going voyages, since their draft is too deep to risk river journeys.

Agriculture, Mining, and Craft

Much of Rokugan's economy revolves around the production and processing of two types of raw materials crucial to the life of the Empire: grains and metals. Rice is the predominant Rokugani foodstuff, of course—so much so that the value of the Empire's coinage is in theory based on it, and the standard greeting in the Empire is "Have you eaten rice today?" Wheat, barley, and other grains are also cultivated, especially in regions like the northern plains that are less well-suited to growing rice. Livestock are also present wherever there is agriculture, but ranching is unheard of in Rokugan, and large-scale herding is found only among the Unicorn. Because many regions of the Empire operate at a food deficit,

trade in food is the most fundamental and continuous form of commerce in Rokugan.

Iron is a crucial commodity because of its key role in the manufacture of steel weapons and armor (not to mention mundane iron tools and cutlery), but copper is also valued for its role in fabricating tools and other mundane items. The Crab, Dragon, and Lion dominate the trade in metals, although most clans have at least a few modest mining interests.

Precious metals, gems, pearls, silks, spices, and other luxury goods are always in demand for the samurai caste, but the rarest and most desirable of commodities are precious materials with magical or semi-magical properties: jade and crystal. The rarity of such things means they account for a relatively small physical portion of trading activity in Rokugan, but there is considerable money to be made for those fortunate enough to have access to them.

Of course, crafted and processed goods fashioned from these raw materials are also traded heavily and form another important segment of Rokugan's economy. They can vary widely in quality; a storage jar can be either a cheap, plain item meant for the peasantry, or a thing of beauty as well as function fashioned by a Kakita or Shiba artisan for a noble household. Production of finished goods tends to cluster by availability of raw materials—pottery clay can be found almost anywhere, for instance, but metal forges congregate near mines.

Fundamentally, Rokugani trade is driven by demand and scarcity. Important commodities and goods are not distributed equally or even fairly between clan territories, and every clan must trade what it has in plenty for what it lacks. No clan is truly self-sufficient, and thus every clan must rely on commerce with allies and rivals alike to keep itself supplied with all the necessaries of a complex society. This makes the delicate political relationships between them all the more difficult and treacherous.

A Vital Commodity: Paper

Washi, or paper, is one of the most important finished products in Rokugan, a necessity of the complex civilized life of the samurai. The Rokugani use it for all manner of things—for the walls of their houses and the panels of their lanterns, for court fans, for writing their letters and decrees, for wrapping gifts, and for making art (origami). However, paper manufacture is neither easy nor cheap, and every clan in the Empire, every district and city, has its own expert paper-makers, men and women who specialize in the fine art of making paper.

Paper is manufactured from the bark of a mulberry tree (whose leaves also feed silkworms). The bark is laboriously steamed and stripped from the branches, then the inner layer of soft white fibers is heated in an alkaline solution before being rinsed in cold water. After cleansing any impurities, the fibers are beaten into a pulp which is mixed with water and vegetable mucilage. The resultant material is spread across a bamboo screen and shaken to remove excess water. After drying, it becomes washi.

Washi is a tough paper and takes ink well, making it superb for the many uses the Rokugani have for it. That being said, there are considerable differences in paper quality, and high-grade paper is nearly as esteemed in the Empire as high quality silk. Every self-respecting samurai wants only the best paper for his calligraphy; after all, sending an official message or important correspondence on cheap, poor-quality paper is an insult, suggesting the sender does not esteem the recipient enough to use the proper materials. Likewise, a samurai who cannot afford good paper can only further harm his own reputation by sending letters on cheap paper.

Within the highest ranks of society, especially in political environments such as the major courts, a fierce if rarely acknowledged rivalry exists over paper. When every word and action has triple meanings, even paper can start wars. The quality of a samurai's paper, whether used for letters, interior walls, or even lamps, is a sign of his place in the world. Many clans have paper made with subtle or even invisible dyes mixed in with the raw pulp, or place barely visible watermarks of their clan mon on each sheet. Since paper is expensive, re-use is quite common, and proud samurai guard their own paper so closely that they sometimes enchant their documents to self-combust should anyone else try to write on them.

Regional Supply and Demand

The Crab Lands

The Crab lands are mostly rugged and barren, and relatively little of their territory is well-suited to agriculture. It doesn't help them, of course, that so much of the Hiruma and Kuni lands were lost to the Shadowlands or devastated by exposure to the Taint. Even in a good year, the Crab barely produce enough food to feed themselves, especially since the enormous standing garrison of the Great Carpenter Wall is a perpetual drain on their food supplies. The clan therefore exports no rice, and often has to rely on food imports to get by. Fortunately, the Crab can claim possession of Earthquake Fish Bay; rich in fish, Earthquake Fish Bay not only supplements the clan's food supply but also provides them with a useful export product to landlocked areas who tire of eating only fowl and vegetables with their rice.

Tea is also an important Crab export, and tea plantations dot the slopes of the Twilight Mountains and the Wall Above the Ocean. More tea is grown in the Crab lands than anywhere else in Rokugan, and given the social importance of tea to the Rokugani, this export is viewed by some in the Empire as rivaling the importance of the Crab Clan's role of defending the Empire against the Shadowlands.

The Crab's most important commodity, however, is without a doubt the abundant and high-quality iron ore mined in the Hida lands, which in turn is used to create the clan's most valued export: Kaiu steel and the weapons, armor, and tools made from it. Of course, the Crab keep most of the weapons crafted in the Great Forge at Kaiu Shiro for themselves, but they know the rest of the Empire will pay well for them, and they usually allow some of their output to leave their lands for the right price. Ingots of Kaiu steel also do quite nicely as

export products, since the Kaiu name carries with it an almost mystical aura of expert craftsmanship.

The Crab also maintain a number of jade mines in the Twilight Mountains, but they are far less willing to export this sacred stone despite its high value. The Crab can never have enough jade to satisfy the needs of their armies, and during eras of shortage, when jade production falls, the Crab often are forced to trade other goods for more jade in order to keep their armies fully supplied.

Of course, pretty much all trade to and from the Crab lands flows through the Yasuki family, as no one else in the clan can approach their knack for striking deals and getting the best possible price, whether buying or selling. The Yasuki import food and silk for the Crab, running ships up the coast (and occasionally as far as the Islands of Spice and Silk) and sending caravans to all corners of the Empire. Their lands are also notorious as havens for gambling and other illicit activities—a fact that does not sit well with the other Crab families, but they turn their gaze aside in consideration for the unique skills the Yasuki bring to the clan.

The Crane Lands

When it comes to trade, the Crane are blessed by geography. Thanks to their possession of both bountiful farmlands and coastal lands, as well as their central location in the Empire, trade with other clans has a central place in their economy.

The western Doji holdings are the Crane's breadbasket, providing not only rice but also cheaper grains like wheat, barley, and millet. Vegetables are also grown in large quantities, along with the mulberry leaves that fuel silk production. The Crane have no problem exporting agricultural products, using them for both wealth and political leverage. One of the few commodities the Crane are somewhat short on, however, is lumber, so the fruit of the Doji lands often flows north to the Phoenix in exchange for wood harvested from the Mori Isawa.

The Crane have numerous port cities and towns along the coast, and do not hesitate to take advantage of this. Mantis ships bring exotic luxury goods to the Crane from their islands, picking up food, art, metal, and various staple goods in return. Samui Kaze Toshi (Cold Wind City), Mura Sabishi Toshi, and Jukami Mura are the most important trade ports as far as contact between the Mantis and Crane are concerned, but all of the coastal ports do a brisk trade with their off-shore neighbors.

The Crane also benefit from the flow of goods into and through their lands from the rest of the Empire. Other clans' trade caravans, eager to procure Mantis goods, must pass through Crane territory, as must those overland caravans running back and forth from the Crab lands. Crane merchants happily play middle-man between buyers and sellers, especially in the ports, where they have learned how to get first crack at whatever goods Mantis traders bring from their islands. Both the Doji and Daidoji have set up trading grounds to ensure their merchants can profit from the movement of goods. The most prominent of these are located at Aketsu and Mura Sabishii Toshi.

As a result of their position as a natural trade hub, the Crane tend to be wealthier in koku than in natural resources. Their comfort is that they can always buy whatever they need, and their perpetual food surplus (even during years of bad harvest) makes it easy for them to maintain their cash riches.

The Dragon Lands

For all its famous introversion and focus on the otherworldly, the Dragon Clan still cannot avoid the basic realities of the world. The clan lacks much arable land, and since it cannot grow enough food to feed its own population, it must get it from someone else.

The perpetual conundrum of the Dragon is the need to support a population base worthy of a Great Clan while dwelling in rugged, mountainous holdings less suited for food production than those of any of their Great Clan peers (except possibly the far-smaller Mantis Clan). The flatlands held by the Mirumoto family produce most of the grain grown in the Dragon lands, but they simply cannot grow enough to feed the entire clan by themselves. The clan also covertly raises goats—the only livestock well-suited for mountainous terrain—but that, too, cannot keep the Dragon fed. The clan is thus very much at the mercy of its trading partners, and poor relations with them can easily lead to famine.

Fortunately, the Dragon are not wholly without natural wealth. The Great Wall of the North blesses them with deposits of gold and iron; in fact, they own more gold mines than any other Great Clan. The Serpent's Tail Mine, in the holdings of the Agasha and later the Tamori, is particularly famous as a source of both gold and iron ore, and it keeps the forges in the nearby city of Suigeki Toshi well supplied.

As long as their mines hold out, the Dragon usually have enough wealth to persuade other clans to keep them fed, although vagaries of Great Clan politics can disrupt this at times, especially during years of Empire-wide dearth.

The Lion Lands

The Lion are fortunate in that their holdings provide them with a helpful variety of natural resources—they are actually more self-sufficient than many clans, and have more than one substantial export product. Although the dignified art of soldiering is and always will be the Lion Clan's emphasis, they have the potential to exert considerable influence through trading—or choosing not to trade—their commodity surpluses. That they are not more influential in the Empire's economic affairs is largely the result of their clan culture: more than any other Great Clan, the Lion embrace the notion that commerce should be beneath the notice of a samurai, and there are very few merchant patrons in their ranks.

The northern plains of the Lion, lying just south of the Drowned Merchant River and the border with the Dragon lands, are the clan's prime agricultural area. Rich and fertile, they allow the clan to grow vast crops of rice, so great that in many years they can exceed their needs despite their vast armies. When a surplus is available, it usually heads south to the Crab in exchange for Kaiu steel, weapons, and armor. The Unicorn also sometimes import rice from the Lion when they can.

The Lion are also blessed with Rokugan's most significant copper deposits, found in the Spine of the World Mountains. The clan operates mines all along their section of the range, and has even been known to use enslaved zokujin to assist in the labor. Copper ingots constitute the Lion's single most significant export. Copper is an important industrial commodity that figures in the production of a variety of commercial and household items; every temple needs braziers for burning incense, for instance, and there are a lot of temples in Rokugan. Also, bronze—an alloy of copper—is commonly used for producing decorative items and highlighting luxurious arms and armor.

Akodo Mori, the only major forest in the Lion lands, is a major source of timber, and through careful management the clan usually produces enough to meet its needs and even export a little. The Katai, a vassal family to the Akodo, handle the timber trade for the clan; they make sure the traders who buy from the local woodcutters set aside enough to cover the clan's military needs, which take priority over trade and civilian construction projects.

Although the Lion do not think highly of commerce, that's not to say they don't welcome trade caravans passing through their domain. The Way of Elements Highway is an important trade corridor and the Lion, proud as they are, are nonetheless sensible enough to serve and profit from the merchants who pass constantly under the noses of the Akodo.

The Lion Clan's only significant import needs are iron (usually supplied by the Crab) and sometimes food—any time they suffer a poor harvest, they must rely on imports to make up the difference and keep their vast armies fed. This has often worked to their detriment when a poor harvest coincides with a war against the Crane.

The Mantis Lands

The Mantis are positioned to take advantage of trade in unique ways. Difficult as it is for them to grow enough food in their jungle island home to maintain a substantial population, they nonetheless have the wherewithal to trade with the mainland for whatever they want to eat and anything else they need. Geography, good fortune, and their own native cunning have given them all they need to prosper and then some.

Even before they became a Great Clan, the Mantis were quite wealthy, rivaling the far larger Crane Clan in riches. Visitors to their holdings on the Islands of Spice and Silk often comment on their ostentatious displays (and questionable taste). In earlier centuries much of the Mantis' wealth came from piracy, but that hardly explains most of the clan's good fortune. The Mantis have also accumulated a significant amount of wealth through trade with gaijin peoples, especially those of the Ivory Kingdoms, though in the eyes of most Rokugani that is a pursuit scarcely more respectable—perhaps even less so—than piracy. Still, there is no doubt that exotic foreign goods can fetch more than a few koku if one knows where to sell them. Competition from foreign traders has driven up demand for the luxury goods the Mantis have wrested from their islands, allowing them to sell to Rokugani for higher prices.

Above and beyond these dubious sources of wealth, it is primarily the export of rare exotic goods to the Rokugani mainland that drives the economy of the Mantis lands.

Unusual timber from the rain forests, beautiful coral and pearls from the coasts, powerful and vivid spices and delicious fruits that can only grow in a tropical climate—these are commodities found nowhere (or almost nowhere) else in Rokugan, and Mantis traders can always fetch a good price for them, especially in the Crane coastal ports.

The mountains that rise at the heart of many of the Mantis islands also contain rich lodes of gold, silver, and gemstones. The Islands of Spice and Silk are far and away the largest source of

gemstones in Rokugan, exceeding even the Unicorn Clan's diamond deposits, and the clan's mines are so valuable that the Yoritomo keep their exact locations secret from all outsiders.

All of which is very much to the good, since the Mantis also possess very little arable land. The Islands of Spice and Silk are mostly beaches at the edges, and sand quickly gives way to tropical forest and mountains as one moves inland. Where there is flat land, the jungle can be cleared away to make room for rice paddies, but these forests are also lucrative sources of export goods, making the decision to clear them a difficult one. Thus geography significantly limits the Mantis' agricultural output. Fishing in the rich waters off their islands can make up for this to some degree, and in some years the Mantis can actually generate a surplus of seafood, but more often the clan uses the luxury goods sold to the mainland to buy rice and other food in return, along with lumber, iron ore, and other items they do not possess on their islands.

Mantis shipwrights find their services very much in demand elsewhere in Rokugan, as no one else in the Empire can match their expertise. But while Mantis-crafted ships do command high prices, the Yoritomo never let their craftsmen sell their best work and thereby reveal their most valuable trade secrets—some of which could be seen as violations of Imperial law.

The Phoenix Lands

With a neighbor as chronically short of food as the Dragon Clan, it is fortunate for the Phoenix that they are not only agriculturally self-sufficient but also capable of running sizable surpluses in some years. The flatlands of the Shiba provinces are well suited to growing both rice and, in drier areas, the less prestigious grain crops.

Grain merchants can therefore make a steady living transporting rice, wheat, and barley from the Phoenix lands to the Dragon lands. The Phoenix are also the primarily supplier of food to the ronin city of Nanashi Mura, which the Dragon forbid from establishing its own farms. Grain caravans pass through Mamoru Kyotei Toshi and the trade hub of Nikesake on a regular basis. After Toshi Ranbo becomes the new capital, many Phoenix merchants stop there instead of continuing west, eager for the honor of serving as the Imperial City's breadbasket. Of course, this also raised the price of food for the Dragon and to a lesser extent for the Phoenix as well.

The Phoenix's other main export is timber, harvested from the Mori Isawa. The clan reveres its great forest, which holds a reputation for supernatural mystery as strong as the Shinomen Mori but with less sense of danger. Reverence notwithstanding, the Phoenix do not hesitate to use the forest as a resource, and woodcutters harvest from its edges throughout the year. There is no doubting the wood from Mori Isawa is unusually strong and fibrous, and it is well known to make better paper pulp than wood found anywhere else in Rokugan. It is popularly believed the kami have blessed the woodlands of the Isawa and shugenja spell scrolls made from its trees are said to be unusually powerful. Lumber from Mori Isawa trees is also prized as a construction material, particularly for temples and for the manor houses of the kuge, the only Rokugani who can afford to import it.

Given their generous supply of basic natural resources and their access to the sea and ocean-going trade, it should be no surprise the Phoenix do not often lack for what they need to survive and prosper. They can easily trade for whatever they do not have in adequate quantities. Their main imports are gold, iron, and silver ingots from the Dragon lands.

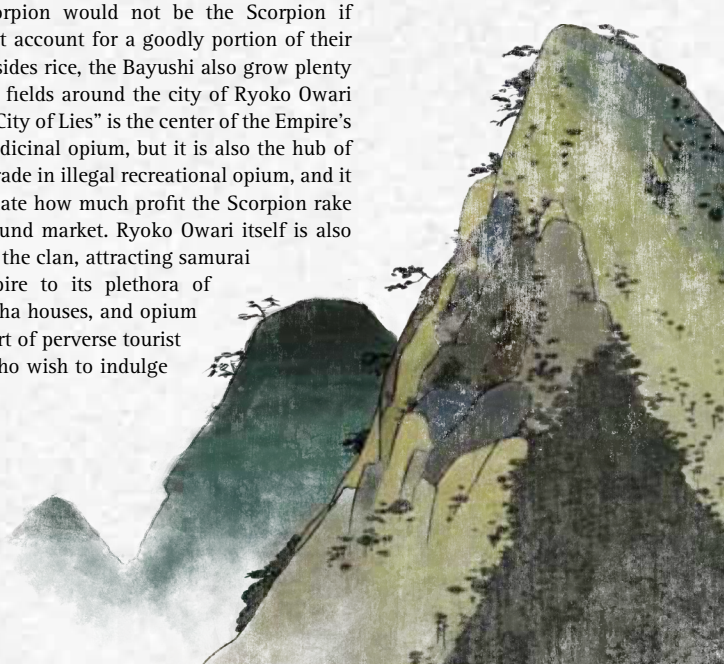
Perhaps the most unusual trade activity in Phoenix lands is the clan's occasional furtive meetings with gaijin Yobanjin traders, who bring exotic but useful goods from beyond the Empire's northern border. Of particular interest to the Phoenix (or at least to the Isawa) are the foreign herbs and strange alchemical compounds they bring and trade for rice and cloth. The herbs are not native to Rokugan, and the alchemy has yet to be reproduced by Rokugani researchers. These meetings are held in Yobanjin Mura, a remote settlement built for this express purpose, but more illicit contacts also take place in Hopeful Rest City, where items that official Phoenix representatives would not dare to acquire or give to gaijin change hands. Regardless, in all cases the Phoenix keep these contacts as discreet as possible, as they do not wish the rest of the Empire to know that they regularly violate the decree against dealing with foreigners.

The Scorpion Lands

Under normal circumstances, the Scorpion Clan is self-sufficient in food. Both the Bayushi and the Yogo control productive agricultural land, and barring a drought or other disaster the Scorpion run rice surpluses with some regularity. This fact does not give them quite as much leverage as they might like, since their neighbors the Crane and Lion are both high-output food producers as well, but they do find active markets for food exports among the Unicorn to the north and the Crab to the south. In most years, the Bayushi prefer to stockpile rice rather than flood the export market (or their own domestic market, for that matter), hoping they can dole out their surplus in return for favors from other factions.

Rice is not the Scorpion Clan's only valuable economic asset. They also control productive silver mines and a few jade deposits on their side of the Spine of the World Mountains. Both produce valuable trade commodities and make their side of the great mountain range an asset worth protecting. For much of the Empire's history the Scorpion lived with the constant worry that the Lion might force Beiden Pass, seizing not only a valuable trade route but the equally valuable mountains around it. After the closure of the pass this concern becomes much less, since the minimal passages remaining in this part of the mountain range are too small to allow the passage of hostile armies.

Of course, the Scorpion would not be the Scorpion if illicit activities did not account for a goodly portion of their regional economy. Besides rice, the Bayushi also grow plenty of poppies in the vast fields around the city of Ryoko Owari Toshi. The notorious "City of Lies" is the center of the Empire's legitimate trade in medicinal opium, but it is also the hub of Rokugan's far larger trade in illegal recreational opium, and it is impossible to calculate how much profit the Scorpion rake in from this underground market. Ryoko Owari itself is also a source of wealth for the clan, attracting samurai from across the Empire to its plethora of gambling houses, geisha houses, and opium dens. In fact, it is a sort of perverse tourist attraction for those who wish to indulge (discreetly) in vice.



The Unicorn Lands

The lands held by the Unicorn Clan offer a range of natural resources that make their regional economy unique among the Great Clans. The Unicorn intentionally keep much of their fertile land untilled, preferring to maintain it as pasture for their vast herds of horses, the famed Unicorn steeds that form their feared cavalry units. They do mine iron in quantities more or less adequate to meet their needs, but still like to import Kaiu-made weapons from the Crab whenever they are available. They also own the only significant diamond mines on mainland Rokugan, second in production only to those of the Mantis.

In theory, the Unicorn lands should give the clan all the food they could possibly need and then some. The vast northern plains are more than suitable for agriculture—although they are usually too dry for rice cultivation, they can and do accommodate wheat and barley very well indeed. But as mentioned, the Unicorn instead place vast stretches of their plains off limits to farming. This is not simply a matter of needing horses for their officers and mounted troops, since those could be raised in stables as easily as on the open plains. Rather, the Unicorn believe their edge in cavalry warfare relies in large part on the vigor and ferocious spirit of their mounts, and they believe horses raised in the wild are far superior to stable-bred mounts. The value the clan places on its steeds creates significant economic activity for those who raise and use horses, and horse-trading is central to most commerce within the Unicorn clan.

The rest of Rokugan rides native ponies, animals the Unicorn do not even consider to be real horses but merely "cart-ponies." Unicorn steeds are thus a very potent potential trade resource, and while the clan makes sure to keep the best of its horses for itself, even its lesser animals make excellent exports; their reputation for strength, speed, and stamina is well-known throughout the Empire.

The net result of this particular focus, however, is that the Unicorn don't produce as much food for themselves as they could. They are never able to export grain, and sometimes have to rely on imports from the Scorpion, Lion, or Crane to make ends meet. Most of the Unicorn Clan's limited domestic rice production comes from the Utaku lands, primarily from farms clustered around two towns nestled against the Great Wall of the North, Bikami and Akami. The great northern mountain range traps any weather systems that pass through this part of Rokugan, so the area gets significantly higher rainfall than the rest of the northern plains and its climate is fairly well-suited for rice cultivation.

The superior fishing in White Shore Lake does support the nearby large settlements of Mizu Mura and White Shore Village, with some left over to export to the other Unicorn provinces. It is widely believed among the Unicorn that the fertility of the lake depends on the extraordinary purity of its

The Imperial Histories: Ownership of the City of Lies

The city of Ryoko Owari Toshi has probably changed hands more often than any other settlement in Rokugan save perhaps Toshi Ranbo. Although it has spent the majority of its history in the hands of the Scorpion, the notorious city has fallen into the hands of other clans at least four different times—only to return, inevitably, to the control of the Scorpion, the only clan which can truly understand and control it.

The briefest and most obscure instance involved the Lion, who besieged the city during the seventh century and largely destroyed the limestone walls that had given Ryoko Owari the nickname "City of Green Walls."

The Crab occupation is much better known. During an inter-clan war late in the sixth century, a Crab general named Hida Atsushige attacked the city. The Scorpion commander, Shosuro Sanekata, retreated from the city rather than fight to the death. This drew protests from the rest of the Scorpion Clan, especially the Yogo who feared the Crab would march on them next. Sanekata, however, confidently declared, "Have no fear. Atsushige is far too good a strategist to hold Ryoko Owari, let alone take Shiro Yogo." Atsushige established martial law in the city and seized much of its treasury, but within a few months his army succumbed to uncontrollable indulgence in drinking, gambling, geisha, and opium. With his army in no condition to fight, Atsushige had no choice but to withdraw without giving battle. Legend has it that when Atsushige negotiated with Sanekata for the return of the city, the Scorpion stalled him, declaring that now that the Crab knew how hard Ryoko Owari was to govern, they should keep it. Ultimately, the only surviving legacy of the Crab visit to the City of Lies is a pair of formidable watchtowers, the Towers of the East and West, guarding the River of Gold south of the city.

The Unicorn history in Ryoko Owari is more complex. During the ninth century, soon after their return to Rokugan, the Unicorn established a major commercial and diplomatic presence within Ryoko Owari, so much so that they influenced the city's architecture. However, they also quickly became disgusted with the city's vices, especially the opium trade which they had inadvertently started when they brought poppies back to the Empire with them.

In the twelfth century at the beginning of the so-called Four Winds Era, the Unicorn took direct control of Ryoko Owari, attempting to impose law and order on the notoriously corrupt and violent metropolis. The city was also briefly privileged with the title of Imperial capital when Naseru, the youngest of the Four Winds, named it as his seat of power after the destruction of Otosan Uchi. That title was soon surrendered to Toshi Ranbo, of course, and within a couple more years the Unicorn were forced to hand the seemingly ungovernable City of Lies back to the Scorpion once more.

water, and if anything were to happen to the lake waters, the supply of fish could dry up entirely.

Ultimately, the Unicorn Clan has little difficulty buying whatever it cannot make for itself. Not only are their second-best horses valuable enough to be lucrative trade goods themselves, but the diamonds mined from the mountains on their western border are much prized by noblemen, especially among the Crane. A jade deposit near the village of Yashigi also provides a basis for trade with the Crab, although the Unicorn prefer to avoid mentioning this asset to outsiders. To all outward appearances, the village is simply a small waystation on the road to Shiro Shinjo.

The Unicorn produce enough of other important commodities to at least meet their minimum requirements most of the time. The Unicorn section of the Spine of the World Mountains is dotted with small iron mines, as well as forges that process the ore into wrought iron and steel. Also, the Dragon Heart Forest (which takes its name from nearby Dragon Lake) supplies enough timber to meet the clan's needs.

Imperial and Minor Clan Holdings

As a general rule, the economic health of most Minor Clans is fragile, utterly dependent on having nearby Great Clans to trade with for what they do not have. Most Minor Clans do not have enough land or other assets to be able to produce goods that are cheap for them but dear to others. Some Minor Clans also rely on importing the ample surplus rice production of a ronin village called Koeru Mura. Of course, given the nature of that food source, it is often both expensive and fickle.

One of the few Minor Clans to be truly self-sufficient in food for most of its history was the Fox, and the Kitsune family remained so after they joined the Mantis Clan. The Fox not only control fertile land near the Kitsune Mori but also learned from their spirit allies how to harvest the bounty of the great forest itself: fruits, nuts, edible seeds, and wild fowl. (In their desperate early days they also hunted red meat to survive, but gave up that practice as soon as they were able.) The Fox also harvest medicinal plants and plant products from the forest, giving them a modest source of export goods. Very few Minor Clans are anywhere near as fortunate.

The Oriole, created in the twelfth century from the ronin Tsi family, can produce weapons and other items of excellence in metalworking, items often much in demand elsewhere in the Empire. This does generate some revenue for them, which is good since they control almost no farmlands of their own. Of course, as with the Fox, what revenues they do receive are almost negligible by comparison to the volume of trade done by most Great Clans.

The direct holdings of the Emperor and the Imperial Families are limited in scope, consisting mainly of the Imperial Capital itself (Otosan Uchi for eleven centuries and Toshi Ranbo thereafter) and the estates of the three Families who directly serve the Emperor. The devastation of Otosan Uchi deals a terrible blow to their collective fortunes, but the rise of the new capital quickly restores most of their financial strength.

The Imperials also control a number of lesser holdings near Otosan Uchi, notably the four Hub Villages that ring the Imperial city. These serve as major trade centers throughout Otosan Uchi's long history, but go into a steep decline after the Imperial city is destroyed. Somewhat farther up the coast is Dragon Guard City, an independent city that serves as a secondary port to Otosan Uchi. After Toshi Ranbo becomes the capital, Dragon's Guard City also goes into decline, though not as steeply. Most of Toshi Ranbo's trade either goes north through the Phoenix lands or down the Drowned Merchant River to the Crane ports.

The only other notable Imperial holding from an economic standpoint is actually on the Mantis Isles. The great shipyard of Koutetsukan is located at the northern end of the Mantis archipelago. There, shipwrights who consider themselves subjects of no one but the Seppun family and the Emperor fashion elegant ships for the use of the highest nobility, and strictly according to the traditional construction methods endorsed by the Son of Heaven.

Price, Availability and the Curse of Interesting Times

Price and availability of goods in Rokugan may be affected by a host of temporary and extraordinary conditions, such as a military campaign rampaging through a local area, a drought, or an epidemic. These disasters can wreck the fortunes of even the most careful and experienced merchants in a single season.

- *War:* An army on campaign cannot help but leave its mark wherever it goes, especially if it has chosen to live off the land rather than carry its own supplies or bring them forward from its base of operations. The presence of a campaigning army will drive up the price of weapons, arrows, armor, food, alcoholic beverages, and a great many mundane traveler's items.
- *Drought:* Prolonged drought will drive up the price of food, with the extent of the increase depending on the length and severity of the drought. It will also drive up the cost of other products that rely on cultivated plants, such as cloth, paper, and silk. Drought will also increase pressure on the price of horses in the Unicorn Lands, as less rain means poorer grazing and fewer horses that can be supported.
- *Plague:* In an area disabled or depopulated by plague, the price of medical supplies will go up, especially the cost of any kind of herbal curative. Herbalists looking for plants with healing properties will encounter much competition. If there are too few farmers left who are well enough to work the fields, the price of food can go up almost as sharply as it would in a severe drought. However, the price of just about everything else will decrease, as an enervated or decimated population will reduce its consumption of goods.
- *Flood:* A flood severe enough to dislocate entire local populations will drive up the price of just about anything and everything that can be carried, especially food. On the other hand, large lots of items, or individual items that are too heavy or bulky to move easily, may be sold at rock-bottom prices before they must be abandoned to rising waters.
- *Bountiful Harvest:* An unusually good growing year will decrease the price of food as well as the cost of products that rely on cultivating plants—cloth, paper, silk, herbs, and the like. However, the prosperity of a bumper harvest will also drive down the value of coinage, especially since the koku is based on the value of rice. Thus, just about everything else will actually cost more.
- *High Official Visiting:* Visits by high-ranking personages and their retinues will drive up the price of just about everything, as local merchants prepare for the sudden influx of wealthy customers. This is especially true of villages (as opposed to larger towns and cities), for which such an event is truly extraordinary. A particularly large retinue will also drive up basic demand for all manner of goods, especially those used by courtiers, like peaked caps, fans, perfume, and cosmetics. Not all of the price inflation caused by such an event comes from testing the travel budgets of the wealthy; a large visiting party with abundant koku to spend can put upward pressure on prices just by increasing local demand.

Optional GM Tool: Availability of Goods

The list of items and prices in the *L5R RPG 4th Edition Core Book* represents an abstracted "average" of prices across the Empire, and as such is not a very useful tool for those who might like to add a dash of economics to their campaign, or even simply to know whether a particular item is readily available in a specific part of the Empire. As this chapter makes clear, many commodities and trade goods are more common in some parts of the Empire than in others. Although most samurai have little interaction with the world of economics, a group of characters that includes Yasuki, Daidoji, or Yoritomo merchant patrons may well need to concern itself with prices. Even more, if some or all of the characters are ronin, prices may become very important indeed.

Table 6.1 offers a sample classification of items by how easy it is to locate them. There are three basic grades of rarity:

- *Common:* This item is easy to find. Even a small farming village will have a merchant's or craftsman's shop that sells it, and any traveling peddler met on the road will likely have some available.
- *Average:* This is an item that can only be found new and in decent quality at a significant population center. A town of a thousand or more people will certainly have at least one shop or marketplace trader selling it. But it is highly unlikely to be found in a small village out in the country unless that village happens to host a specialized industry that produces such items. Otherwise, the best that can be done out in rural areas is to track down lower-quality specimens, whether they be second-hand or perhaps old or damaged versions.
- *Rare:* This is a luxury good or a specialized item, one that can only be found for sure in a major urban center. A smaller town might not even have it unless something unusual in the town's character or history would make it plausible (i.e., a palace nearby would make it more likely that one could find a high quality courtier's fan). Even an old or low-quality version of this item will be difficult to find in small villages.

Table 6.1, like the *L5R RPG 4th Edition Core Book,* assumes that prices of items are the same in every corner of Rokugan. GMs who wish to more accurately reflect regional imbalances in the cost and availability of certain goods may wish to use the additional supplemental tables, Tables 6.2-6.9, to reflect these regional differences in price and availability.

New Mechanics

This section includes new mechanics for the Legend of the Five Rings roleplaying game 4th Edition. In this case, in keeping with the themes of this chapter, we present a new Mantis Advanced School that allows players to captain their own ship, conducting trade, war, or piracy as their storyline demands.

New Advanced School: Kobune Captain [Bushi]

The majority of the Mantis Clan's holdings are removed from the mainland by a vast expanse of sea, resting amid the Islands of Silk and Spice. The clan has lived this way for one thousand years; although the ascension of the Mantis to Great Clan status resulted in the addition of small mainland provinces held by the Tsuruchi and Moshi (and later the Kitsune), the lifeblood of the Yoritomo family still flows through the fleets of kobune that ferry materials and personnel back and forth to the mainland. The captains of these vessels are the trusted servants of the Mantis Clan Champion, and are responsible for ensuring their clan endures and prospers in spite of the perpetual threats they face from enemies, pirates, weather, and any number of other hazards. Young samurai look upon these masters of the waves as an inspiration, admiring them for their bravery, their reputation, and their wealth. If some are possessed of the stereotypical arrogance of the Yoritomo family, it is at least well deserved, for they are surely the true sons and daughters of clan founder Kaimetsu-uo and the chief bearers of his legacy in the modern Empire.

Requirements

- **Rings/Traits:** Water 3
- **Skills:** Commerce 4, Knives 3, Sailing 4
- **Other:** Must possess the Leadership Advantage, and have been appointed to a position of command within the Mantis Clan

Techniques

Rank One: The Joy of Plunder

The promotion to the rank of captain in the Mantis navy is one that comes with considerable benefit and reputation. Your Status Rank is considered one higher when interacting with all members of the Mantis Clan and with any merchants from the heimin caste. When you spend a Void Point to augment any Merchant Skill, you gain +2k2 instead of +1k1. Once per month you may make a Commerce / Intelligence Roll (TN 25) and gain an amount of koku equal to the amount by which your roll exceeds the TN.

Rank Two: Strength of the Mantis

The true measure of a captain is the quality of those who pledge their loyalty to him. You gain 30 Experience Points which may only be used to purchase the Servants Advantage. The servants purchased in this manner represent a portion of your crew. Budoka servants purchased in this manner are instead considered to be Rank 1 Yoritomo Bushi. You may also spend 10 points to gain a Rank 1 Moshi Shugenja as your navigator. This shugenja is considered to have Air 3 rather than all Rings at 2.

Rank Three: Master of the Seas

A true captain of the Mantis Clan excels in all areas pertaining to his duties. You may spend a Void Point on any Merchant Skill Roll (excluding Craft Skills) to replace the normal amount you would roll with 10k10. You also add a bonus of +3k0 to all Bugei Skill Rolls made while onboard a waterborne vessel.

Table 6.1: Distribution of Items

Item	Rarity
Arrows, Yumi, Chain Weapons, Masakari, Knives, Peasant Weapons, Staves	Common
Daikyu, Hankyu, Bisento, Nagamaki Naginata, Sasumata, Sodegarami, Yari, Swords, War Fans, All Armor	Average
Dai Tsuchi, Masakari, Ono, Tetsubo	Rare
Backpack	Common
Ball, Kemari	Rare
Baskets	Common
Blacksmith's Hammer	Common
Blanket	Common
Bottle of Bleach or Dye	Average
Bottle of Sake or Shochu	Common
Bottle, Empty	Common
Books and Scrolls	Rare
Bowyer's Kit	Common
Brazier	Common
Bucket	Common
Candle	Common
Chest, wood	Common
Chest, metal	Average
Chopsticks	Common
Cloth, Silk Bolt	Average
Coin Purse	Common
Daisho Stand	Average
Dice and Dice Cup	Common
Divination Kit	Average
Finger of Jade	Rare
Fishing Kit	Common
Flint and Steel	Common
Furoshiki Sack	Common
Games, Traveling	Common
Grapple Hook	Average
Kiseru	Common
Kubi Bukuro	Average
Lanterns and Lantern Oil	Common
Lucky Cricket	Average
Medicine Kit	Average
Mirrors	Rare
Mortar and Pestle	Common
Musical Instruments	Average
Palanquin	Rare
Paper, Writing	Rare
Parchment and Charcoal	Average
Personal Seal and Chop	Rare
Pet	Average
Pillow Book	Average
Pot, Iron	Common
Quiver	Common
Rope	Common
Sake Cup	Average
Shovel	Common
Small Back Banner	Average
Small Folding Stool	Common
Small Knife	Common
Small Painting or Statue	Average
Spices	Rare
Sweets	Common
Tatami Mat	Common
Tattoo Needles	Average
Tea Set	Average
Tent, Small	Average
Tent, Chomchong or Yurt	Rare
Traveling Rations	Common
Umbrella	Common
Walking Stick	Common
Whetstone	Common
Writing Box (Sumi-E Kit)	Rare
Clothing	Rarity
Cap, Courtier's	Rare
Fan, Courtier's	Rare
Hakama	Common
Haori	Average
Kataginu	Average
Kimono	Common
Makeup Kit	Average
Mask	Average
Netsuke	Average
Obi Pouch	Average
Perfume	Average
Sandals	Common
Snow Shoes	Common
Traveling Cloak	Common
Wide-Brimmed Straw Hat	Common
War Paint	Rare
Wig	Average

Table 6.2: Availability and Price of Goods in the Crab Lands

Item	Price	Rarity
Courtier's Cap and Fan	-20%	Rare
Food/Traveler's Rations	+20%	Common
Iron or Steel Utensils	-20%	Common
Perfume	-20%	Rare
Spices	+50%	Rare
War Paint	+/-0%	Average
Weapons	-20%	Common

Table 6.3: Availability and Price of Goods in the Crane Lands

Item	Price	Rarity
Books and Scrolls	-10%	Average
Paper, Cheap	+/-0%	Common
Paper, High Quality	-10%	Average
Perfume, Poor to Average Quality	+10%	Average
Perfume, Fine or Excellent Quality	+20%	Average
Pillow Book	+/-0%	Common
Silk and Silk Clothing	-10%	Common
Small Painting or Sculpture	-30%	Average
Tea Set	-10%	Common

Table 6.4: Availability and Price of Goods in the Dragon Lands

Item	Price	Rarity
Divination Kit	-30%	Common
Food/Traveler's Rations	+20%	Common
Iron or Steel Utensils	-20%	Common
Netsuke/Jewelry	-20%	Average
Silk and Silk Clothing	+10% to +20%	Average
Tattoo Needles	-30%	Common

Table 6.5: Availability and Price of Goods in the Lion Lands

Item	Price	Rarity
All Armor, Bows, Spears, Swords	-10%	Common
Brazier	-20%	Common
Pillow Book	-20%	Common
War Paint	+/-0%	Average

Table 6.6: Availability and Price of Goods in the Mantis Lands

Items	Price	Rarity
Finger of Jade	+50%	Rare
Food/Traveler's Rations	+20%	Common
Iron or Steel Utensils	+20%	Common
Netsuke/Jewelry	-20%	Average
Lucky Cricket	+/-0%	Common
Perfume	+20%	Average
Spices	-30%	Common

Table 6.7: Availability and Price of Goods in the Phoenix Lands

Item	Price	Rarity
All Armor, Bows, Spears, Swords	+20%	Rare
Books and Scrolls	+/-0%	Average
Medicine Kit	-30%	Common
Paper, Fine Quality	-30%	Common
Parchment and Charcoal	-30%	Common
Pillow Book	+/-0%	Common
Small Painting or Statue	-20%	Average
Tea Set	-20%	Common

Table 6.8: Availability and Price of Goods in the Scorpion Lands

Items	Price	Rarity
Dice and Dice Cup	-40%	Common
Finger of Jade	-10%	Rare
Food/Traveler's Rations	-30%	Common
Netsuke/Jewelry	-10%	Average
Mask	+/-0%	Common
Pillow Book	+/-0%	Common

Table 6.9: Availability and Price of Goods in the Unicorn Lands

Items	Price	Rarity
Books and Scrolls	+20%	Rare
Fingers of Jade	-10%	Rare
Perfume	+/-0%	Rare
Tent, Chomchong or Yurt	+/-0%	Average
War Paint	+/-0%	Average
Yumi	-20%	Common

Law and Order

"Today and for the foreseeable future," the sensei said as the morning light illuminated a series of scrolls spread across an open table, "we will be discussing matters pertaining to the enforcement of laws throughout the Empire." He glanced at the student, who could scarcely contain his enthusiasm. "I take it you have been anticipating this particular field of study?"

The young man was smiling broadly, although the cloth mask he bore removed all signs of it save his bright eyes. "My father has been a magistrate since before I was born," he said. "I always took an interest in his work. In a way I have been studying law enforcement since I was a small child."

"Well then, I trust you will be an apt pupil," the sensei said, his expression bemused. "Let us begin with our own provinces, shall we? Can you tell me what crimes in our lands are punishable by death?"

"Treason, foremost," the boy responded at once. "Any act that compromises the welfare of the clan and its families. Also sometimes any action that places at risk a samurai's lord can be grounds for death if the lord wishes it. Blood sorcery or other consorting with the Dark Kami is grounds for immediate execution as well."

"Is that all?"

The boy frowned. "Those are all that came up during my father's lectures, but I suspect there may be others that were not relevant to the goings-on in our village."

"You suspect correctly." The sensei gestured to one of the tables. "There are many laws pertaining to the cultivation of medicinal opium, for instance, and even more regarding the existence of its non-medicinal counterpart. You mentioned treason and blood sorcery, but what of blasphemy? The religion of Rokugan is mandated by the Emperor, and there are many cults that do not venerate the Dark Kami but which are no less criminal for it."

"There are?" the boy asked, his expression shocked. "Such as what, master?"

"That is a discussion for another time, or perhaps not at all," the sensei said. "Certain knowledge can be a burden most should never bear. Tell me, young one... why do we have laws?"

The boy blinked. "Master?"

"Why are there laws?" he repeated.

The boy sat quietly for a moment. "If there were not, then... then there would be chaos."

"Chaos." The sensei folded his arms in his sleeves. "Some think chaos is the innate state of man, that order is an illusion. The truth is that mankind normally seeks order. In what you call chaos, the strongest would rise to the top and assert their will on others. That would be a form of law in and of itself, would it not? To force others to obey your wishes?"

The boy thought for a moment. "I suppose it is. So... law is simply the assertion of the strong over the weak?"

"Sometimes it is the strong. Sometimes it is the worthy. Ideally it would be both, but that is not always the case." The sensei turned and walked toward the front of the room. "When you serve a lord, ask yourself if he is strong or worthy. If he is neither, then what are you accomplishing by enforcing his laws?"

A History of Law Enforcement in Rokugan

"Beware the arrival of the Emerald Magistrates, for we will shed light on your darkest hidden crimes and bring the iniquitous to answer for their sins. You cannot escape the Emperor's justice."

—Moto Najmudin

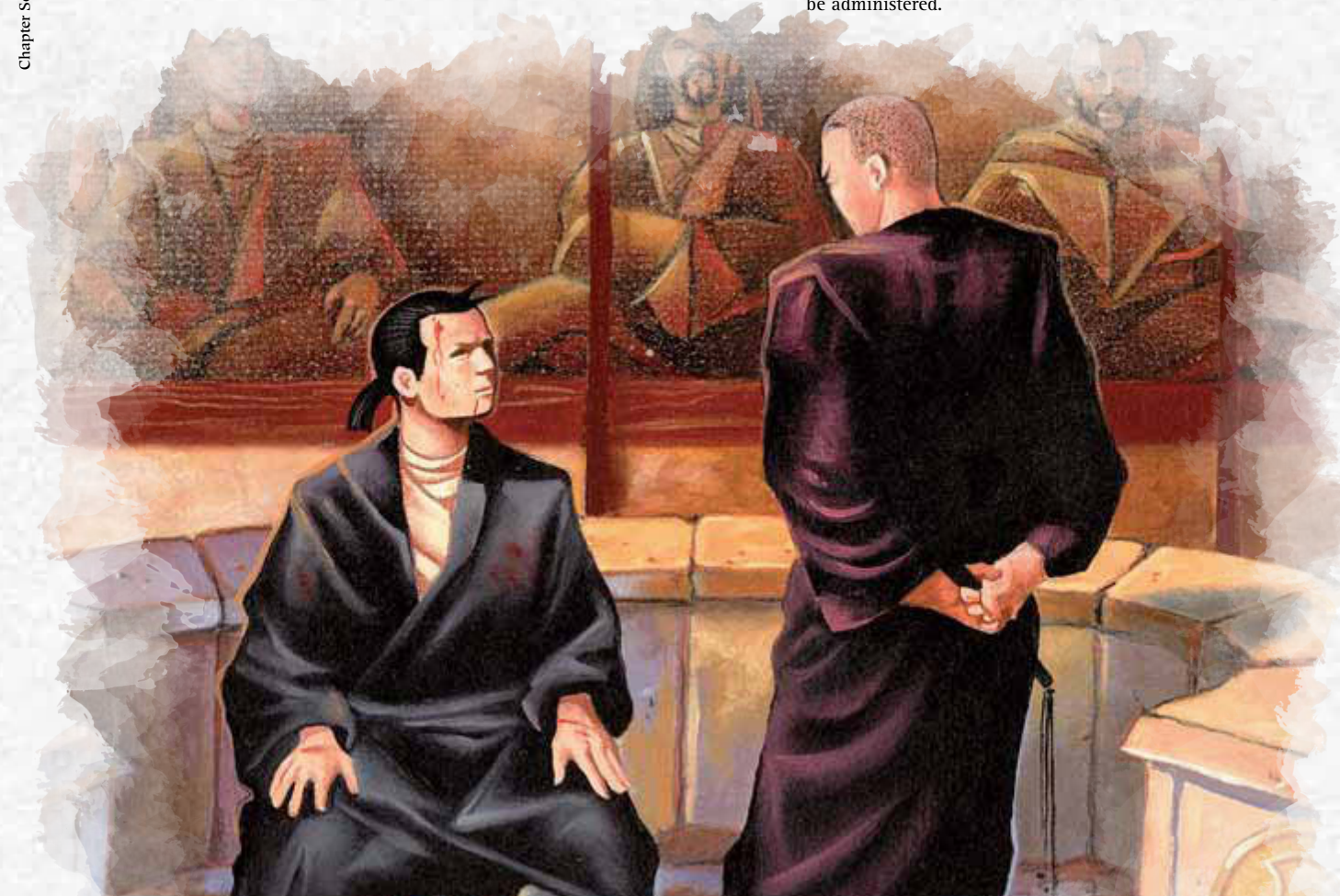
When the Kami fell from the Heavens and landed in the mortal realm, they created an Empire that would bring order and peace to all the humans who followed their words. As soon as society began to come together, the Kami established laws to shape society into a continuation of the will of the Heavens. At first, humans rebelled against the new rulers, startled by the sudden appearance of gods walking amongst them. They did not believe they should be forced to follow these new laws, and there were several times when the Kami had to use the threat of physical sanction to impose their rule.

Thus began the first instances of law enforcement in Rokugan, as the Kami Akodo dispatched his followers to establish order among the various tribes of humans. Akodo did not march to destroy his enemies, but to enforce the word of law for the ultimate benefit of the Emperor's future subjects. Those who refused to submit to the law of the Kami ultimately fled the land, becoming barbarians such as the Yobanjin.

Once society was unified within the Empire, each Kami devoted himself or herself to developing a different aspect of their emerging society. Akodo worked to refine the art of war, so Rokugani warriors would be the finest in the world. Shiba worked with the powerful tribe of Isawa to develop their methods of speaking with the Elements and giving proper reverence to the Fortunes. Doji created high society, art, and culture for all of Rokugan, and so forth. Soon after they began their work, Hantei and Doji released a tome of laws and distributed them across the new Empire. Each city and town received these rules and was expected to obey and enforce them.

Nevertheless, problems arose. During these early days of the Empire, there was no actual unified Imperial system for enforcing the Emperor's laws. Each locality had to rely on itself to make sure every person obeyed the laws and lived as a good and loyal citizen. The soldiers of the newly formed Great Clans often served as law enforcement officials, and many cities and provinces began appointing judges to administer the law within their boundaries. As a result, the laws were often interpreted differently from place to place, and travelers had to be very wary of different customs whenever they entered a new land.

As the Empire became stable and prosperous after the Day of Thunder and the end of the First War, the need for a centralized system of justice became more apparent. Though the Empire was whole, few people felt connected to those who lived outside their own clan's boundaries. How could anyone identify with strangers who did not even follow the same laws as they did? It would take many years for the Empire to develop a unified understanding of the law and how it should be administered.



The Journey of the Single Strike

The iaijutsu style was first created by the famed swordsman Kakita, who proved its superiority when he defeated all his opponents in the Empire's first Emerald Tournament. (His notoriously humiliating defeat of Matsu set the stage for a thousand years of blood feud between Lion and Crane.) His work *The Sword* is legendary, the Empire's first treatise on swordsmanship; it helped spread the iaijutsu technique across the Empire.

In the second century, a writer named Kakita Takamitsu helped spread iaijutsu's popularity among the samurai populace with one of the Empire's first novels, a famous prose epic called *The Journey of the Single Strike*. The book is essentially a series of duels between the protagonist, Hiro, and an assortment of criminals, corrupt officials, and other stylized villains. Although the book was formulaic and sensationalist, its dramatic depictions of duels captured the imagination of the Empire's early readers. In the following excerpt, Hiro faces off against a skeptic and gains the admiration of the entire crowd with a beautiful show of swordsmanship. This is a good example of the many detailed descriptions of swordfights in *The Journey of the Single Strike,* which retains a certain fame even in the modern Empire.

"You are a fool to start a fight with no weapon in your hands," Taro said. He sneered, and the scar on his nose stretched obscenely across his face. It made the bandit look uglier than before, if that could be believed. He lifted his giant no-dachi and laid it on his shoulders. Blood, still fresh from his last kill, dripped down from the edge of the monstrous blade.

"Come at me, if you are so confident," Hiro replied. His calm eyes bored holes in the bandit, and Taro flinched. Without taking his eyes off of his opponent, Hiro placed his sword hand on top of the hilt, palm facing the heavens.

A small murmur rose from the mob that circled him, and Taro's face flushed with anger. The bandit snarled like an angry bear and rushed forward. The no-dachi sliced through the air as Taro swung down at the righteous hero.

Hiro slowly drew in a breath and held it for a long moment. He took all the worries and miscellaneous thoughts in his mind and pushed them far away. The world stopped, and disappeared. All that remained was the slowly moving form of his ursine opponent.

Hiro shifted his wrist and grabbed the hilt of his blade. He breathed out as he lunged forward. The blade left the saya with blinding speed. Hiro's katana flashed golden in the light of the sunset, and the bandit's no-dachi clattered on the ground...

Early Legal Developments

The principle of the primacy of personal testimony in determining the truth of disputes developed early in the Empire. In a land where gods themselves walked on the earth, it was easy to point to the behavior of these gods and be inspired by the unmistakable honor that emanated from their every word and step. Samurai sought to emulate the purity of the founding Kami and to make their word synonymous with truth. On top of that, the Empire had no real concept of forensics—witnesses were the principle method of investigating a crime, and the testimony of samurai soon became the deciding factor in the Rokugani legal system. In a world where social rank was quickly become all-important, the side which could call the highest-ranking witness would likely win any given dispute. In situations where the disputes could not be resolved, the presiding judge responsible would decide the victor from his own personal interpretation of the law.

This system quickly encountered problems. The judges had no standard method of questioning and often ceded too much control over investigation and interrogation to their samurai witnesses. The results of criminal investigations were usually incomprehensible to the officials of other localities, even if they were only a few miles distant. Further, if one disagreed with the rulings of a judge, there was little recourse available. At best, one could attempt to get the attention of an official placed higher in the clan's hierarchy, but those men were often too busy to attend to such lowly matters; after all, they had established the judge system in the first place to ease the workload on higher-ranking samurai.

Another early problem was with the involvement of the kami. In the beginning of the Empire, the testimony of supernatural beings was often accepted as fact in Rokugani court. The elemental kami presumably had no reason to lie and could serve as a set of eyes in a place where no human might be. Shugenja often called on the Earth kami from the scene of a crime to testify on the identity of the criminal. The Kitsu shugenja of the Lion Clan specialized in magic concerning the ancestors, and would often ask the spirits of the victims to testify through them, accusing their killers from beyond the grave.

Unfortunately, the elemental kami do not view reality in the same way as a normal human. Their testimony was often vague or confusing, subject to interpretation or even manipulation by the shugenja who summoned them. They sometimes singled out the wrong criminal or even a completely innocent person. In one famous trial, a Lion and a Scorpion were in dispute over the murder of a famous Lion general, and their conflict had become important enough to be brought before the court of the Emperor himself. The Kitsu shugenja summoned the soul of their dead general to place blame on the Scorpion murderers. After the ancestor had given his testimony, the Scorpion produced the Lion general, still alive, and declared the Lion's ancestral magic suspect. The Emperor agreed, and after that trial the use of magical testimony and evidence was forbidden by Imperial decree.

All of these problems highlighted flaws in the early justice system. Other than relying on the wisdom of often-fallible judges, how could disputes be settled if there was no clear answer? The answer came from one of the Empire's most fundamental aspects: Rokugan is a land of warriors, where the brave and strong are commended and the purity of

combat is seen as the most honorable pursuit. Kakita's style of drawing the sword and attacking in a single motion had gained popularity across the entire Empire and was seen as the perfect expression of the swordsman's honor. With the help of aggressive lobbying by the Crane Clan, the iaijutsu duel was adopted as the official method of dueling to settle unresolved disputes. Whenever an answer could not be clearly determined via testimony, samurai on trial could ask for the right to prove their innocence (or their opponent's guilt) with an iaijutsu duel. The winner of the test by steel would be considered the one in the right.

Once the iaijutsu duel became the formal method of resolving open disputes, by custom it came to cover even those disputes that did not involve an actual violation of law. Samurai would use iaijutsu duels to settle everything from perceived insults to the outcome of battle (by a duel between army champions). This led to a rapid growth of iaijutsu dojo across the Empire as each clan scrambled to train their warriors to in the new method. The Crane, the originators of the iaijutsu style, became the undisputed leaders in this system, dominating most iaijutsu duels for centuries to come. The courtiers of the Crane likewise developed techniques to goad others into iaijutsu duels so they could prove themselves in the right again and again. Over time, the iaijutsu duel lodged itself in the very heart of Rokugani society, and the impact of its creation can be felt even to the present day.

The Era of Saibankan and Hatsuo

Though the custom of using iaijutsu duels to resolve disputes spread across the Empire by the second century, the judiciary system as a whole did not drastically change. It was not practical to have a sword fight each time any dispute rose between two samurai. The judges remained the first word on everything, and duels occurred only when they could find no clear resolution to a problem.

The flaws of the judge system were clear to all. Good and honorable judges did their best to uphold law and order, but even the best of them had to rely heavily on their own preferences and instincts... and far too many judges were cruel, corrupt, or arbitrary. The Emperor and his senior advisors were aware of the problems, but could see no obvious solutions. How could they normalize all decisions across the Empire without slowing trials down to a halt as the judges looked for official word from more powerful authorities?

The answer to this dilemma came, unexpectedly, from a Scorpion who lived during the second century. Soshi Saibankan was the most famous judge of this era. He presided over the city of Tayo One Toshi as its judge for over ten years. During his rule, few complained of unfair rulings, and with time Saibankan gained a reputation as the wisest judge in the land. When the Emperor's Champion Doji Hatsuo heard of Saibankan's reputation, he secretly attended one of the Scorpion's judgments. He thought Saibankan's methods were unorthodox, for the judge used parables and fables about his supposed uncle Sochoku to illustrate his judgments. Nevertheless, Hatsuo was impressed by the man's wisdom and his obvious devotion to the cause of justice. Hatsuo invited him to the Imperial City and the two of them joined forces to refine the legal system.

Saibankan and Hatsuo examined the system and decided a drastic overhaul was desperately needed. The first and biggest task was to enforce a single, unified concept of the law across all judges and all localities. The Imperial government had to issue detailed explanations and commentaries on existing law that all authorities would obey. Secondly, the Empire needed an organization that would have the right to enforce the law all across Rokugan regardless of clan boundary. This organization would answer only to the Emperor's authority and thus would have no bias for or against any one clan or faction, ensuring the law would remain impartial. The two men went to work with those two goals in mind, and succeeded beyond anyone's biggest hopes. Saibankan created a single tome filled with clear, authoritative principles for anyone who would enforce the Emperor's law. Together they created the Emerald Magistrate organization, a system that has carried forward through all the centuries since with very few adjustments. The new system was hailed as a triumph and after Saibankan's death, the Emperor elevated him to become the Fortune of Magistrates and Judges. In his honor, magistrates are called "saibankan" to this day.

Officials and Organizations

The system of magistrates and other officials of the peace was established in the second century and has remained more or less unchanged since then. The judges were re-designated as clan magistrates (appointed by local authorities such as daimyo, governors, or Clan Champions) and the Emerald Magistrates were installed as a check against their power and abuses. The samurai who became Emerald Magistrates were dedicated to enforcing the Emperor's law and answered directly to the Emperor through his chief servant, the Emerald Champion, rather than reporting to the Great Clans.

Since then, other organizations with more specialized missions have emerged, such as the Jade Magistrates dedicated to countering rogue shugenja, Shadowlands incursions, and the practice of maho. However, the overall structures of law enforcement created by Saibankan and Hatsuo have remained unchanged for many centuries since their time.

Peasant Enforcers

Law enforcement is generally placed in the hands of the ruling class, the samurai. However, it is simple truth that there are not enough samurai to uphold law and order in every single village in Rokugan. For every samurai in a town, there are a hundred commoners who perform the smaller yet essential tasks of everyday life. Peasants and eta must be regulated but are far too numerous to be closely monitored by samurai. This necessity has given rise to the lowest ranking form of law enforcement officer, called a *doshin*, a peasant elevated to watch over a town or city district, permitted by law to carry certain types of weapons (primarily non-lethal ones) for that purpose.

These peasant enforcers are the descendants of simple law enforcers from the beginning of the Empire, even before the Kami fell and the Celestial Order was established. Lawmen existed before samurai existed, though on a far more casual and improvised basis than the doshin. In modern times, doshin are appointed by samurai and are most often found in either large cities (where the sheer population overwhelms samurai law enforcement) or in small villages far from the main traffic routes (where samurai often visit only once or twice a year). They are often simple farmers or laborers, distinguished from their fellow heimin only by the modest authority and duty the samurai have bestowed upon them. Most of the time their duties are simple, and during periods of inactivity village doshin usually work at a second profession. In larger cities being a doshin is a full-time job, and the local clan magistrate will often choose an entire force of doshin to assist him in upholding law and order.

Doshin have jurisdiction only over their local area—a village and the immediately surrounding area, for example, or a district within a city. Doshin always report to their local clan magistrate, and a conscientious magistrate often uses them not only for direct law enforcement but also as a network of informal enforcers and intelligence agents.

Doshin only have the authority to punish crimes committed by peasants and eta, not samurai. Their foremost duty is to ensure peace within the commoner community so that work and public order will not be disrupted. They handle minor crimes such as theft and assault, and resolve them quickly and efficiently. For more serious crimes, including murder, kidnapping, treason, and blasphemy, the doshin must turn over authority to their supervising magistrate. Within cities, doshin usually have authority to apprehend samurai who are engaged in public drunkenness, brawling, or similar minor breaches of the peace, but any serious crime involving a samurai requires the doshin summon the magistrate or one of his yoriki (see below).

Doshin are expected to have some martial proficiency to aid in their line of work. Though doshin positions are not officially filled by heredity, some villages have family lines that have proven their worth to their samurai lords and thus regularly serve in this martial capacity.

Yoriki (Deputies)

There are many crimes that are serious enough to require the attention of a samurai, but magistrates (whether clan or Imperial) are few in number and have numerous duties demanding their attention. Consequently, most of them make use of samurai assistants called yoriki, with each magistrate deploying anywhere from one or two yoriki all the way up to a dozen or more. Yoriki function as direct personal deputies to the magistrate, and are considered to share his authority for investigating crimes and punishing criminals. They are

Specialized Organizations

In addition to their general magistrates, several clans maintain more specialized law enforcement groups with specific duties. The most notable of these are the three clan organizations dedicated to hunting down those who use maho, forbidden blood magic. The Scorpion Kuroiban (Black Watch), the Crab Witch-Hunters, and the Phoenix Inquisitors all are considered to have the same authority as clan magistrates, but with jurisdiction only over crimes relating to maho and the Shadowlands.

The Asako Inquisitors are dominated by the Asako family but also include samurai from the Phoenix Clan's other families. They are the most prominent and socially acceptable of the three groups, especially during eras when the Jade Champion's office is left vacant. Most Rokugani daimyo are willing to allow Inquisitors into their court and show them deference and respect.

The Kuni Witch-Hunters, on the other hand, are regarded by most Rokugani as uncouth superstitious louts. The organization includes shugenja but is most notorious for its small order of mystical warriors who battle the Shadowlands with both the strength of their arms and the purity of their spirits. Witch-hunters, or *tsukai-sagasu*, often wander freely across the Empire, showing little respect for clan boundaries or authorities, rooting out the influence of Jigoku wherever they can find it.

The Scorpion Clan's *Kuroiban* (or Black Watch) is a secretive group maintained by the clan's two shugenja families, the Soshi and the Yogo. Like the other two, it is tasked with rooting out maho and Shadowlands infiltration, but it operates in the shadows and most samurai are not even aware of its existence. The Kuroiban does share information and resources with the Kuni, however, marking a rare instance of Crab-Scorpion cooperation in defense of the Empire.

required to report daily to their superior, keeping him well informed of their investigations and the results. A yoriki who fails to do so is likely to lose his position quickly, a great loss of face and honor.

Since yoriki are trusted to act in the name of their superior, magistrates try to choose them carefully, although they may also find themselves saddled with inept or obstructive yoriki appointed by their superiors. Emerald Magistrates, due to their need to maintain freedom from clan influence, will often hire ronin as yoriki—wave-men are usually loyal to whoever is paying them, work for relatively meager wages, and tend to have no distracting commitment to other factions.

Clan Magistrates

Most law enforcement within the Empire is handled by clan magistrates, usually appointed by the local daimyo or governor, more occasionally by a higher authority such as a family daimyo or Clan Champion. Clan magistrates are empowered to investigate any crime which takes place within their area of jurisdiction—traditionally the clan boundaries, although often magistrates are appointed with a more limited area of authority, such as a single city. If a clan magistrate visits an area outside of his immediate jurisdiction, it is considered proper etiquette to notify the local authorities. A clan magistrate who repeatedly strays outside of his authority, or refuses to notify others of his presence, can be reprimanded for his actions. Repeated infractions can lead to the magistrate being dishonored and stripped of his position.

Clan magistrates supervise the yoriki and doshin who serve under their command and are expected to personally patrol their jurisdiction with at least some degree of regularity. They check travelers to make sure they have legitimate travel papers. All crimes that occur within a magistrate's lands fall under his purview, from thievery and murder to trivial matters like property disputes. Although doshin can handle many of the lesser crimes that occur in the land, when more serious incidents happen, especially those involving samurai criminals or victims, a clan magistrate must be available to step in and deal with the investigation. In part this is function of the samurai's position in the social order; the more serious the problem, the more important it is for a samurai to handle it and thereby show his right to govern.

Clan magistrates also oversee the collection of clan taxes and the administration of tariffs on goods being transported through clan lands for the purpose of sale or trade.

Clan magistrates must defer to Emerald Magistrates in situations where their authority overlaps (see "The Charter of the Emerald Magistrates" for more details of these areas of authority). Also, a few crimes are so heinous that a clan magistrate will nearly always call for additional aid from higher authorities. Crimes that violate Imperial Law, such as the practice of *maho* or an organization plotting against the throne, require the aid of Emerald Magistrates. Crimes that are Empire-wide in scope are also the purview of the Emerald Magistrates, being well beyond a clan magistrate's jurisdiction.

Finally, if a criminal is wanted in the lands of another Great Clan, a clan magistrate of the clan in question may be called in to help with the case.

Emerald Magistrates

The Emerald Magistrates are the highest legal authority in the Empire, the personal representatives of the Emerald Champion, who is in turn the Emperor's direct champion and lieutenant. Emerald Magistrates serve Imperial law everywhere, regardless of clan borders. They can move across and through clan territory freely if their mission requires it. Emerald Magistrates have jurisdiction over a wide variety of crimes that are considered threats to the Empire or the Emperor. They also are usually responsible for collecting Imperial taxes (except during those eras when the office of Imperial Treasurer is active).

The Jade Magistrates are a specialized variant of the Emerald Magistrates, and exist only in those eras when the Jade Champion's office is active. They have the same authority and powers as the Emerald Magistrates, but are limited to investigating magical crimes, religious blasphemy, and Shadowlands influence.

It is worth noting that a position as a magistrate (whether clan, Emerald, or Jade) is usually not something which a samurai earns through training or expertise in the law. Rather, most magistrates are appointed to their positions—perhaps because their superiors consider them trustworthy or capable, or because they have earned a reward for their loyal service. Some magistrates are also appointed because they have pulled strings and accumulated political influence in order to win a higher position among the buke, and it is these sorts who are most likely to succumb to corruption or abuse of power.

The Charter of the Emerald Magistrates

The powers and duties of the Emerald Magistrates are extensive and have changed relatively little since the days when Soshi Saibankan and Doji Hatsuo first established them as the principle enforcers of the Empire's law. The Charter lays out their areas of authority and the powers and methods they can use to enforce that authority.

Most major cities in the Empire have at least one Emerald Magistrate, and sometimes a team of them, permanently assigned to maintain law and order and guard against abuses of power by the local authorities. Other Emerald Magistrates are assigned more generally to clan territories or geographic regions. The Emerald Champion usually keeps a significant number of his magistrates in the Imperial Capital, ready to be sent out to investigate whatever problems might catch his attention.

Jurisdiction

The Emerald Magistrates' charter describes broad areas of jurisdiction that fall under their authority—broad by design, in order to ensure the Emerald Magistrates can become involved in nearly any matter relating to serious criminal activities. There are some areas kept deliberately outside their authority, however. Hatsuo and Saibankan ensured such would be the case in order to prevent any perception among the Great Clans that the Emerald Magistrates could or would usurp their authority in their own lands.

Crimes Against the Emperor

Any attempt to harm, slander, endanger, insult, or even inconvenience the Emperor is a matter to be investigated by the Emerald Magistrates. This decree extends to the Emperor's family, including the Empress, their children, and even extended family members within the Otomo, Seppun, and Miya lines. Likewise, anyone who commits a similar offense against one of the Emperor's direct servants, including officers in the Imperial Legions, Emerald or Jade Magistrates, Imperial Heralds, the guards of the Imperial Palace, or other such individuals has committed an offense to be investigated by the Emerald Magistrates.

Crimes of an Imperial Nature or Scope

Crimes that exceed the jurisdiction of any single clan in execution or even in planning fall under the auspices of the Emerald Magistrates. Such crimes can potentially include theft, murder, treason, robbery, armed uprising, smuggling, and tax fraud, among others. Although these sorts of crimes are usually limited to a local level, declaring they have been planned on an Empire-wide scale is an easy claim to make and a difficult one to refute. In this way, the Emerald Magistrates can involve themselves in almost any criminal activity they consider serious enough to warrant their attention, even if the daimyo or Clan Champion in the area would prefer to handle the matter internally.

Mechanics versus Reality

It is important for GMs and players to be aware that being a magistrate is primarily a political appointment and does not necessarily have anything to do with whether the samurai is actually trained or qualified to be a magistrate. This carries over into the domain of mechanics. Several of the clans do have "magistrate schools" (such as the Doji Magistrate and Soshi Magistrate schools presented at the end of this chapter), but only a minority of those trained in such schools actually get appointments as magistrates—most of them serve their clans in more mundane ways, such as border patrols, city guards, and yoriki. A Crane magistrate is just as likely to be trained as a Kakita Bushi, Daidoji Iron Warrior, or Doji Courtier as he is to be taught in the Doji Magistrate school.

The counterpoint also holds true. Just because a character has gained an appointment as a magistrate does not mean the character will be allowed to take Multiple Schools and switch to a magistrate school. After all, he won the magistrate position with the training he received in his original school, so asking to change over would be an insult to his sensei.

Likewise, a PC who wins an appointment as an Emerald Magistrate (whether through skill or political influence) will not automatically be enrolled in the Ruby Dojo and taught the Emerald Magistrate Path. Only the most successful and influential Emerald Magistrates gain that honor.

Shadowlands Incursions

Although any incursion of significant size by the Shadowlands hordes falls under the auspices of both the Crab Clan and Imperial Legions, such matters are traditionally also investigated by the Emerald Magistrates to ensure the incursion has been detected and destroyed in its entirety. If any aspects of an incursion escape the attention of the military forces sent to deal with it, the Magistrates are responsible for tracking it down and eliminating it. Isolated infiltration by Shadowlands creatures is likewise under their charter.

Fugitives from the Law

Any criminal who has escaped custody or is otherwise fleeing apprehension and who crosses the border from one clan's provinces to another immediately becomes the responsibility of the Emerald Magistrates. This is among the Magistrates' most controversial duties, because many clans prefer to handle such matters themselves. The Emerald Magistrates themselves, however, consider it important that they handle such matters as arbiters standing above the authority of individual clans. Conflicts between clans over the right to deal with fugitives have been known to escalate into violent border skirmishes.

Organized Blasphemy

Any activities practiced in defiance of the religious conventions endorsed by the Emperor of Rokugan are blasphemous in nature and fall under the auspices of the Emerald Magistrates. For most of the Empire's history this area of jurisdiction specifies such activities have to be practiced by two or more individuals in order to qualify as a crime, technically allowing lone practitioners of maho to escape Imperial attention (although they were usually still dealt with by individual families and clans). This restriction changes shortly after the Clan War when the then-current Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshimoko, petitions the Emperor for permission to alter it.

Civil Disorder

Any activity that results in widespread civil disorder or general disregard for the law and its enforcers, whether Imperial or clan-affiliated, falls under the auspices of the Emerald Magistrates. Because these activities tend to manifest and resolve fairly quickly, however, the Magistrates tend to get involved only after the fact—unless they happen to be in the area when the unrest occurs.

Duties

The duties of the Emerald Magistrates are various, but typically fall under one of several categories. Like matters of jurisdiction, these are defined broadly in order to ensure the Magistrates can choose their level of involvement as they deem appropriate.

Tax Collection

The least glamorous duty of Emerald Magistrates is also perhaps the most important. As the Emperor's most visible and diversely located servants, Emerald Magistrates are responsible for overseeing the yearly tax harvest, which involves millions of bushels of rice all across the Empire. Due to both the mercantile nature of these activities and the sheer volume of work and record-keeping involved, officials specializing in such affairs are often appointed to oversee these matters on the Magistrates' behalf. After the creation of the office of Imperial Treasurer late in the twelfth century, most of these duties are taken away from the Emerald Magistrates and pass to the Treasurer's own agents.

Authorizing Travel Papers

Emerald Magistrates are the lowest-ranking members of the Imperial bureaucracy who are authorized to sign travel papers granting an individual or group permission to travel beyond the borders of a single clan's provinces. Clan Champions and family daimyo have similar authority, while clan magistrates and governors can only sign papers granting permission for individuals to leave clan lands to travel to a specific location in another clan's territory. No one else outside the Imperial ranks can grant papers for travel from one clan's provinces to another's.

Emerald Magistrates may also authorize travel papers for any individual who requires valid papers for longer than one year but less than five years, and for individuals not native to the Empire of Rokugan (on the rare occasions such things are needed).

Emerald Magistrates are also authorized to provide travel documents of a more limited scope, such as for those traveling between points within one clan's borders. Although any Emerald Magistrate can provide such papers, it is traditional for them to be provided only by those Magistrates who are stationed within the clan provinces for which the papers grant travel rights. In practice, Emerald Magistrates who receive requests to provide such papers usually try to make certain a similar request was not made and denied by local authorities. Failure to do so can cause animosity between an Emerald Magistrate and his clan hosts.

Due to the importance of travel papers in the affairs of merchants, Emerald Magistrates often find themselves perpetually beset by petitioners seeking such papers. For those Magistrates of a dishonorable nature, or for similarly corrupt clerks and assistants in their service, this can be a considerable opportunity for graft and profit. Conversely, for an honorable Emerald Magistrate this duty can be a constant thorn in the side, a perpetual clamor of petitioners whose requests must be evaluated carefully to prevent crime or corruption.

Protection of Visiting Dignitaries

It is the right of any dignitary visiting another clan's lands to request protection from any local Emerald Magistrate. There are limits to such requests, of course, and if it is determined the dignitary in question is taking advantage of the Emperor's servants for purely personal reasons this would be considered a matter of great dishonor.

Briefing the Emerald Champion

According to their charter, Emerald Magistrates must meet once per month with the Emerald Champion and inform him of any significant matters related to their duties within their assigned region. In reality, however, these meetings happen far less frequently for most such Magistrates. For those in the Crab lands, for example, a trip to the Imperial Capital could consume the entire month, leaving no time for the execution of their duties. In practice, reports are sent to the Emerald Champion by messenger, frequently in cipher; Magistrates may also report to the Champion in person when his duties bring him into the area.

Notification of Non-Jurisdictional Crimes

When an Emerald Magistrate becomes aware of any crime or transgression that does not fall within his own jurisdiction, it is his duty to inform the local authorities under whose jurisdiction the crime actually falls. This requires a close relationship with local rulers and clan magistrates, something often difficult to maintain in practice.

Briefing the Governor

It is the right of any daimyo in whose area of influence an Emerald Magistrate operates to request an accounting of all activities and investigations currently underway by the Emerald Magistrate in question. If this right is invoked, it is the duty of the Magistrate to fulfill the request and make a full accounting of his actions. This must be provided within three days of the request being made. Such a request may be made no more than once per month, and even to do so that often is considered a demonstration of a daimyo's lack of faith in the local Emerald Magistrate.

Notification of Accusations

If any member of the samurai caste has been accused of a crime that warrants the attention of an Emerald Magistrate, it is the duty of that Magistrate to inform the samurai in question, or to inform the family and clan if the target is dead. The charter does not specify a timetable as to when this duty must be performed, although many Magistrates consider it a matter of honor to do so immediately. When doing so could create difficulty or embarrassment, or the accused is someone who might be able to obstruct the investigation, some Magistrates choose to wait until the investigation is well underway to inform the accused.

Restrictions

Despite their position as the direct enforcers of the Emperor's laws, there are some restrictions placed upon Emerald Magistrates. This is largely to ensure the organization does not inspire too much resistance or subversion from resentful clan officials. Consequently, several duties are specified as being the responsibility of lesser authorities in order to create a clear boundary between the two levels of authority.

Incidental Law Enforcement

It is not the duty of Emerald Magistrates to perform simple patrols of city streets or rural areas in order to detect, prevent, or punish criminal activities. In practice, this restriction is often overlooked by both the Magistrates and the local authorities in the region. Few honorable samurai will object to help from additional forces of law and order.

Problems of Limited Scope

It is not the concern of Emerald Magistrates to investigate crimes of a purely local nature that do not fall within the crimes defined under the jurisdictional section of their charter. Like the previous restriction, this one can be overlooked by both Magistrates and the local authorities if it benefits both to do so.

Authorization of Blood Feuds

Emerald Magistrates have no authority whatsoever in the matter of adjudicating blood feuds and the permissions required for such affairs of vengeance to be conducted. This particular restriction is adhered to with almost religious consistency, as its violation can easily lead to serious complaints being lodged against the Emerald Champion and his chosen representatives. Any Magistrate who violates this edict will quickly find himself stripped of rank and perhaps even banished from his clan for such shameful behavior.

Levying of Troops

Emerald Magistrates have no authority to assume command of troops, either local or Imperial, except under the auspices of their Right to Commandeer Troops and their Right of Imperial Levy (see below). Since those specific situations arise only infrequently, many Emerald Magistrates try to overcome this

restriction by maintaining several yoriki and using portions of their stipend to hire ronin enforcers to assist them in the more violent aspects of their duties.

Acceptance of Gifts & Monies

Emerald Magistrates are not permitted to accept gifts, favors, monies, services, or special considerations in exchange for any portion of their duties or the executions thereof. This does not prevent Magistrates from accepting gifts under social circumstances that normally allow such things, however. Weddings, for example, are usually cause for gifts to be offered to the bride and groom, and Magistrates who are being married are no exception. Of course, corrupt magistrates routinely disregard any such rules.

Rights

Emerald Magistrates have special dispensations and powers given them in order to fulfill their duties, so long as they do not violate any of the restrictions on their authority and jurisdiction.

Right of Questioning

Emerald Magistrates have the authority to, at any point, detain non-samurai individuals in order to question them about any suspected participation in crimes that fall under the jurisdiction of Imperial representatives as detailed above. This right also extends to individuals of the samurai class that are of equal or lesser social standing than the Magistrate so long as the Magistrate apprehended the samurai in the process of committing a criminal act. If such individuals are not caught in the act of a crime, they may only be detained for questioning if the Magistrate gains an Order of Appearance (see below). Samurai of higher social standing may not be questioned at all without an Order of Appearance.

It may be noted that "questioning," in the context of Rokugani law, can include torture unless the person in question is a child or elderly.

Right of Sentencing

Criminal investigations in Rokugan must be closed out with a confession by the suspect. Once a confession has been signed (or transcribed if the criminal is illiterate) and notarized by the investigating Emerald Magistrate, that Magistrate has the authority to pass sentence on the criminal. He may also choose to defer to another Magistrate of equal or greater rank to pass sentence in his stead. Sentences vary according to the crime, but typically include the following: execution (beheading is

customary for samurai, hanging for lower classes); execution of spouses, parents, or families of criminals; placing the criminal in restrictive cuffs for periods of up to three months; public beatings, which may be performed with whips, rods, or sticks; and fines of varying sums, which are remitted to the office of the Emerald Champion.

Orders of Appearance

In instances where Magistrates are faced with criminal behavior by samurai of greater status than they, or wish to question a samurai-caste suspect of equal or lesser status who was not caught in the act of a crime, an Order of Appearance must be obtained before questioning or arrest can take place. An Order of Appearance contains a detailed accounting of the crime in question, and must be signed by either the Emerald Champion, the provincial daimyo or city governor, or the chief local clan magistrate. This can lead to tensions and problems if the samurai being sought for questioning is closely associated with the local authorities.

Right to Prior Information

It is the duty of the governor or daimyo who oversees the region in which an Emerald Magistrate operates to inform said Magistrate prior to commencing any large scale military or police action. This notification must be given at least one full day in advance. Realistically, however, strict adherence to this edict can compromise the security of a military maneuver, and thus it is occasionally "forgotten" by overly cautious governors or daimyo. One popular ploy is to send the Magistrate away on some pressing business shortly before the action, and upon their return explain it was simply impossible to inform them within the prescribed time.

Right to Commandeer Troops

Emerald Magistrates are authorized by the Emerald Champion to marshal troops as necessary for the lawful execution of their duties, provided they inform the local daimyo or governor of their intentions prior to doing so. They may commandeer troops under the control of local authorities if and only if they can demonstrate a clear need for doing so and they can guarantee compensation for the troops' usage.

Right of Imperial Levy

At any point, an Emerald Magistrate may petition the Emerald Champion for use of forces taken from the Imperial Legions. Whether or not this request is granted, and how many troops are actually granted, is completely at the Emerald Champion's discretion. This is considered a matter most severe, and such power is not to be invoked lightly. Those who do so quickly attract the ire of the Champion and the Imperial Families, sometimes even angering the Emperor himself. The Legions have duties to perform, after all, and their personnel are not to be reassigned casually or without dire need. When this permission is granted, however, Imperial Legionnaires have the right to be housed and armed in any military facility anywhere in the Empire.

Right of Privy Investigation

In any matter where the jurisdiction of an Emerald Magistrate and that of a lesser magistrate overlap, the Emerald Magistrate may invoke his right of Privy Investigation. The Emerald Magistrate's authority immediately supersedes that of his colleague, and this cannot be disputed. This requires the Emerald Magistrate to serve his colleague with an Order of Privy Investigation, at which point the local magistrate must immediately cease all investigations into the matter specified within the order. Such an order must be signed on the day it is completed, must be signed by the Emerald Magistrate, must specify the crime in question, and must present a clear and detailed explanation as to why the two investigations cannot proceed in tandem with one another.

The Kitsuki Method

Most criminal investigations in Rokugan follow a fairly simple and straightforward methodology. Personal testimony is considered the most important evidence, and the higher the rank of the person testifying, the more weight his evidence carries. Some physical evidence is allowed, but only the most direct and obvious inferences may be taken from it—if a Crane sword was found by the victim, clearly the killer was a Crane. Once a suspect is found, he or she can be tortured for a confession, although an extended refusal to confess may prompt a magistrate to reconsider the suspect's guilt.

However, there is one group in Rokugan who rejects these methods: the Kitsuki. Founded in the ninth century by the eccentric Dragon samurai Agasha Kitsuki, the family promotes an unconventional approach to investigation that includes logical deduction, inference, and psychological evaluation. Kitsuki himself is renowned both for proving his own innocence of a crime in a single day, and for saving a Mirumoto diplomat from assassination—the second deed leading to the founding of his family. His descendents strive to uphold his traditions.

The Kitsuki are the only Rokugani to consider the sort of evidence which a modern society takes for granted. They examine all aspects of a crime scene, even the dead body of a murder victim, when conducting investigations. They consider things like motive and honesty, obsess over subtle physical clues like smudge-marks or a killer's handedness, and even have concocted an alchemical substance that acts as a crude form of fingerprint powder. Of course, most of the Empire firmly rejects their strange methods, and a Kitsuki in another clan's court is more likely to be mocked or ignored than to have his clues taken seriously.

On the other hand, the Kitsuki do gain a grudging respect from the Scorpion Clan, mainly because the Kitsuki have managed to thwart so many Scorpion plots. The two are wary antagonists even during those eras when the Dragon as a whole are enjoying good relations with the Scorpion.

Crimes and the Punishment Thereof

Rokugan is not a forgiving land. The samurai class rules the land with strong laws and even stronger traditions that dictate the privileges, restrictions, and duties that face each hinin, peasant, and samurai. The Rokugani expect these laws to be followed to the letter in order to preserve the Celestial Order. The founding Kami fashioned the shape and structure of the Empire to their liking, and the Rokugani intend to follow their will for all time. The laws first established by the Kami have been modified and expanded by subsequent Emperors and other authorities, but their basic form remains unchanged.

The Empire's laws are strict on all crimes, regardless of severity. Punishments are draconian by design, so they leave a deep impression on the criminal, his family, and the town where the crime occurred. Many crimes are punishable by death, often coupled with public humiliation. Although samurai are less strictly constrained by the law than commoners, the Code of Bushido and Rokugani social convention binds their actions no less severely. Etiquette and the code of honor supplement and can sometimes even be said to supplant Imperial Law in making sure samurai act properly. If social pressure and Bushido ultimately fail to keep a samurai in line, though, the Empire's legal system attempts to correct that failing.

The essential forms of Rokugani law and punishment were described in the *Book of Air in* the L5R 4th Edition core book; this section examines these topics in greater depth and detail.

Dishonorable Conduct

"When the noble samurai-sama come into our establishment, they feel they can lay down the weight of the world. They laugh, dance, and enjoy simple pleasures. Occasionally the mood and the sake affect the samurai. It doesn't matter who it is, if anyone causes trouble in my building, my guard Domon will throw him out of the building."

–Komomo, Mama-san
of the House of Flowing Silk

As a member of the ruling class, a samurai is expected to act with decorum whenever he is in the public sphere. No matter how rowdy and excitable he may be in private, a samurai must show no emotions in front of others. To do otherwise would be to bring shame to the samurai and dirty his honor and name. Many samurai carry this strict self-control even into their private homes, although this is not a universal practice. Ultimately, the only time when it is acceptable for a samurai to show emotion is in the pleasure quarters. Geisha houses were created so a samurai could relax and enjoy life for a short time without concern for dignity or face.

When a samurai begins to lose face and show public emotion, the Rokugani react with caution. If the samurai is causing only a minor disturbance and is not endangering

others, his actions will be ignored. After all, if no one else acknowledges the loss of face, it is as though it never happened. Thus, while the night-time streets of most Rokugani cities are usually full of inebriated samurai making their way home, no one draws attention to their behavior.

However, if a samurai (drunk or otherwise) engages in a brawl, destroys minor pieces of property, or otherwise causes a significant disturbance, the authorities must step in. Peasant doshin are often the ones who have to apprehend rowdy samurai in these situations. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, such disturbances are considered to be minor crimes, beneath the attention of a samurai magistrate. Second, being arrested by a peasant doshin is more shaming to the samurai, hopefully teaching him to better control himself in future. Of course, some samurai take offense at being reprimanded by a peasant and retaliate violently, escalating their crime and bringing the attention of a magistrate.

The usual punishment for disorderly conduct is a public reprimand and exile from the area where the samurai committed the crime. For example, if a samurai started a brawl in the city's pleasure quarter, he will be forbidden for a time from entering that part of the city. This sort of banishment is sometimes coupled with house arrest, confining the samurai to his residence for a time. If the samurai's superiors deem his conduct was especially unbecoming a representative of their clan, he may be demoted from any positions he held in his clan's court or army. In such serious cases, the samurai is usually sent far away from the scene of the crime and stationed at some remote outpost, far away from criticizing eyes.

A peasant guilty of public nuisance is typically subject to harsher and more physical punishments than a samurai. Much like a samurai, the peasant will be banned from re-entering the scene of his crime. However, a variety of additional punishments await him. The peasant could be jailed or forced to live with his wrists handcuffed in front of him for a short time. Public beatings or whippings are not uncommon. For severe transgressions, a peasant may be exiled from the town or sent to a mine to work off his debt to society.

A merchant guilty of a public disturbance can have his business stripped from him, a punishment that is referred to as *kessho*. Unscrupulous magistrates have been known to use this as an excuse to rob honest businessmen of their livelihood, so merchants must take special care to avoid drawing the attention of potential predators.

Corruption

"Perhaps your son would have made a marvelous magistrate, but the situation forced me to reject his assignment. However, I have been known to make mistakes from time to time. I could be convinced to review his case once more..."

—Seppun Kuroki,
shortly before his arrest and seppuku

Crimes involving loss of face or dishonorable behavior are generally committed in the heat of the moment, but crimes of greed and corruption are a matter of calculation, a deliberate rejection of Bushido in response to the demands of the world. Still, the prevalence of corruption should not be all that surprising. Though mercantile efforts and the exchange of money is supposed to be beneath the notice of a samurai, it often is the only way for him to get what he needs to live in the comfort he desires. A samurai's stipend from his lord is usually too little to allow any sort of luxury, and sometimes not even enough to allow basic comforts. Greedier and less scrupulous samurai inevitably turn to ways to cheat and exploit the system around them, embracing vice and corruption in order to gain the wealth they crave.

The easiest and most frequent way to find extra funds is graft: demanding bribes to perform one's duty, to forget one's duty, or to show someone favoritism. Magistrates and yoriki are especially prone to this sort of crime, but almost any samurai can find opportunities for graft, and major bureaucracies like the Imperial Palace are positively riddled with such corruption.

Corrupt samurai can also take a more direct approach to acquiring wealth, such as robbing commoners (merchants are a favorite target) or extorting money or goods from common folk with the threat of violence.

These are all crimes which must be punished with the full extent of the law. A samurai who violates his duty for personal gain, or who robs the peasants under his care, is a samurai who disrupts the Celestial Order and sows dissent and unrest among the heimin. A samurai who is guilty of corruption is given the chance for seppuku to cleanse his name; otherwise he is likely to be executed. Even if the samurai can escape this punishment, he will at the very least be dishonored, stripped of his office, and exiled.

Adventure Hook: Watching the Watchmen

Challenge

The PCs are recruited by an Emerald Magistrate for a most unusual task—he wants their help to investigate a fellow Emerald Magistrate based in a major port city. He claims to have evidence implicating the other Magistrate in local opium smuggling rings.

Focus

There are indeed many suspicious patterns to the city magistrate's activities. Careful investigation reveals he is connected with a local gang who run several opium dens and gambling houses.

Strike

The Emerald Magistrate who originally recruited the PCs is actually in cahoots with a rival gang which hopes to take control of the local opium market. Clever and aggressive investigation may be able to expose and destroy the gang, but proving the Magistrate's involvement is liable to be much more challenging, and may well end with the PCs fighting a duel to the death.

A samurai stealing from his lord is considered an even more serious crime, and unfortunately is not an unknown one. Officials in charge of things like military logistics or tax collection may well oversee the transportation of thousands of tons of goods in a single year. For a samurai of loose morals, it can be very tempting to simply note that a portion of the delivery was damaged during shipping and then quietly move it to the black market, or even divert it for personal use.

The Laws and Clan Traditions

"There is no law here. The Crab would pluck the very stars from the sky if they thought they could burn the Fallen Kami with them."

—The Letters of Kakita Nanmaru

Clans, whether great or minor, sometimes display a certain amount of leeway in their interpretation and enforcement of Imperial law. Though samurai are strict in their adherence to tradition, they are not wholly blind to reality. They realize certain variations may be required in order for the Empire to function, for the peasants to serve their lords properly, and to accommodate for the different conditions and problems in various parts of the Empire.

The clearest and most notorious example of this is can be found in the Crab lands. All across Rokugan, it is forbidden for peasants to bear arms unless they are serving as doshin to enforce the laws or as ashigaru warriors in an army of their lord. The Crab, however, long ago chose to unofficially amend this law to allow their peasants to wield certain weapons in defense of their homes and farms in the event of a Shadowlands threat. Despite the best efforts of the Crab, the forces of Jigoku do manage to get past the borders from time to time. Goblin raiders can slip through the Kaiu Wall and lurk in the Crab lands for weeks before the Hida finally root them out. By tacitly allowing their peasants to use simple weapons in their own defense, the Crab minimize the damage from these incursions. Instead of finding the easy prey they might encounter in Crane or Lion lands, goblin infiltrators face strong opposition from even the smallest village.

This sort of modification does not ultimately change the Empire's status quo; heimin are still heimin, and their role in life is not altered. Even the Crab do not allow a peasant to use a samurai weapon. For a Crab peasant, touching a katana is still a grave and probably lethal offense. While the pragmatic Crab realize it makes sense to let their peasants defend themselves against the Shadowlands, they would never support an actual subversion of the Celestial Order. Of course, this distinction is seldom appreciated by other clan samurai who visit Crab lands.

Corrupt samurai have been known to sell everything from rice from their farmers to weapons and armor from their lord on the black market. These samurai may even link up with other miscreants to funnel material across the Empire, becoming part of a smuggling ring (see "Organized Crime" below).

Stealing from the rightful lords of the Empire is a serious offense, and selling on the black market (thus avoiding taxes and tariffs) is itself a form of theft. All who are convicted of involvement in such crimes, whether samurai or commoner, should expect execution. Samurai may be given the opportunity to commit seppuku. As a consequence, however, those guilty of such crimes tend to put up a serious fight when cornered by magistrates; they know surrender to those who uphold the Emperor's laws will only briefly postpone their demise.

Bribery, corruption, and theft are hardly limited to the samurai caste. Angry, desperate, or thuggish peasants will often become pick-pockets or burglars, especially in large cities where poverty is widespread and potential targets are numerous. Merchants will bribe magistrates or doshin to conceal illicit merchandise or to avoid paying tariffs and taxes. Such heimin criminals are beaten publicly and then executed, often in a cruel or painful manner such as crucifixion or boiling in oil. The punishment can sometimes extend to the families of the criminals, who are beaten or even killed along with the criminal. The guilty families also lose their homes and businesses and are driven into exile.

Violence Against Persons

Samurai are bred for war, and thus it is not surprising that they can be very violent people. Though Bushido keeps the worst of a bushi's ferocity in check, often it is not enough to maintain the peace when emotions rage. A samurai should only draw his sword in the defense of his lord or the Empire, but few men are honorable enough to withstand the urge to violence at all times. Fights break out constantly in sake houses and the entertainment districts of cities. Occasionally, weapons are drawn and the authorities must intervene.

Assault is commonplace in the licensed entertainment quarters of any city. When sake flows freely, emotions can easily flare into violence. As with dishonorable behavior, if others are not forced to acknowledge the violent actions the loss of face can be minimized and the law need not be involved. Thus, fights that do not become too violent usually only draw the attention of doshin who break up the altercation and escort the offenders home. After all, warriors need a way to vent their restlessness. In some circles, these sorts of fights are actually viewed with fondness. Crab samurai often see a good brawl as wonderful fun for the evening, and participate with cheerful vigor.

If a fight gets out of hand, resulting in serious property damage or injury, the magistrates must step in and take charge of the situation. The guilty samurai are separated and placed under house arrest. They must pay for any property damage they may have caused. Magistrates often ban the brawlers from entering the area where they caused so much trouble for a few weeks, longer if the damage was particularly severe.

If a brawl actually results in the death of a samurai, the offender faces the potential for much more severe penalties. If the situation can be interpreted as an unauthorized duel, it

will be treated as such (see below), but if it was an instance of general violence resulting in death, the offender will often be expected to commit seppuku to atone for taking the life of another samurai. Exceptions may be made during periods of high tension or wartime, when samurai from rival clans are liable to draw blades with the slightest excuse—such situations are often treated as military skirmishes rather than crimes.

Violence between peasants tends to be punished with beatings or cuffing. However, if it escalates into serious destruction, injury, or death, the peasants will usually be punished severely, since their behavior has disrupted the peace and productivity of their community. Beating followed by execution is the typical penalty.

A samurai who kills another in a brawl or an unauthorized duel (see sidebar) may be able to seek leniency, but there is one form of killing which is always treated with the utmost severity: willful and deliberate murder. Unauthorized duels are illegal, but at least they follow the forms of honor and tradition. A murder is a base act with no excuses or graces to mitigate it. A convicted murderer may be given the opportunity to commit seppuku, but if his victim was in any way prominent or famous, there will be no seppuku—execution, usually hanging, is required. Peasant murderers are usually killed in much more brutal ways, such as being torn apart, boiled in oil, and so forth.

If a murderer has considerable political backing and can find some very clever and persuasive justifications for his actions, he may be able to avoid execution. However, he will be publicly disgraced and dishonored, and is permanently exiled to a remote location within the Empire or even, in some cases, beyond the very borders of Rokugan.

Organized Crime

Corruption, whether by samurai or by peasants, can often expand beyond mere graft into more ambitious crimes, crimes bringing groups of like-minded people into an organization dedicated to evading the law. Groups of warriors may become bandits, raiding villages for whatever catches their fancies, or stealing from the strongholds of major clans. Pirates may raid coastal villages or capture ships traversing the Empire's rivers and seas. Bands of smugglers conduct illegal trade across the entire Empire. All of these activities are considered organized crimes under Rokugani law.

Magistrates do their best to take down these sorts of illegal organizations. Bandits are usually killed on sight, often in military campaigns—those who surrender are executed after a short

Illegal Duels

Duels between samurai must be sanctioned by the daimyo of both duelists. To fight a duel without such sanction is illegal. Unfortunately, bushi being who and what they are, extra-legal duels occur quite frequently. Though this is technically a violation of the law, magistrates usually do not reprimand illegal duelists as heavily as with other crimes, even if the duel was to the death. Many Rokugani consider it socially acceptable or even honorable to participate in extra-legal duels, and some famous duelists have made their reputations entirely on them. After all, the duel is an established and socially acceptable method of conflict in the Empire, and death is understood to be a logical consequence of the ritual.

If neither duelist is killed in an unauthorized duel, often the worst punishment is house arrest for a few days. The duelists' rivals have some ammunition to use in the courts, of course, but for the most part this is a simple and minor crime with few lasting repercussions. If the duel was for a noble cause, the offenders might even gain fame and respect among their peers for their deeds.

If an unauthorized duel is fought to the death, some repercussions for the winner are unavoidable. The duelist is dishonored and faces house arrest for a longer period of time. He is also expected to pay some sort of recompense to his victim's family. At the very least, the victim's swords should be returned to his family. Magistrates watch closely whether or not the duelist follows these social protocols—if he fails to do so, the law is more likely to treat the case as a murder rather than an unauthorized duel.

Political connections also have a great deal to do with the consequences of an unauthorized duel. If the duelist has the protection of allies or higher-ranking patrons, he can sometimes get off without any direct repercussions. In fact, if his allies are proficient in the ways of the court, the duelist can actually use his deed to further his standing. However, if his enemies are powerful or he lacks connections, he is much more likely to face harsh penalties for acting outside the law. Daimyo often reassign troublesome or embarrassing duelists far away from the courts, both to protect the lives of their followers and preserve their own political power. The famous "Letters of Kakita Nanmaru," for example, were written by a Crane who killed a man in an illegal duel; he was reassigned to the Kaiu Wall, where he lived out the brief remainder of his life.

It should also be noted that duels fought between samurai from clans which are at war with each other receive some extra consideration. In these cases, it is usually assumed that duelists from such clans already have permission from their lords to fight. Few, if any, official repercussions fall on the duelists unless their superiors deliberately withdraw permission after the fact.

trial. No punishment other than death is considered suitable for this type of transgression, and most notable groups of bandits are eventually hunted down and wiped out—although it can take some time. Occasionally, exceptionally powerful bandit groups such as the Forest Killers can survive for many generations.

Pirates likewise tend to enjoy relatively short careers, especially after the Mantis are named a Great Clan and turn their fleet to the task of exterminating piracy. (Of course, the Mantis themselves engaged in considerable piracy in earlier eras, using their remote island location and superior naval strength to shield themselves from retaliation by the rest of the Empire.)

Trade in stolen and contraband goods has always very profitable despite measures taken by the authorities to suppress it. Recreational opium is especially popular after the Unicorn bring it back with them from the Burning Sands; such narcotics are created in Ryoko Owari Toshi and covertly transported to nearly every major city in the Empire. Similarly, some gaijin goods trickle into the Empire through the Unicorn, Phoenix, and Mantis lands, circulating through the black market to those who seek such exotic delights.

No one organization or person controls all of the Empire's illegal traffic, and the balance of power constantly shifts as magistrates destroy those groups who catch their notice. Much of the Empire's opium smuggling is controlled by Scorpion cartels, but there are also countless smaller groups who traffic in the drug. The Scorpion themselves always make sure to work through intermediaries (peasants or ronin) who can be easily discarded if they are discovered.

Of course, organized crime also includes groups who band together for political ideals or philosophical goals that stand against the Empire's order. The Kolat, discussed at length in the L5R 4th Edition sourcebook *Enemies of the Empire*, are the most powerful example of this sort of conspiracy. Of course, crimes of this nature also cross over the border into treason.

Treason

Treason in all its forms is the gravest crime one can commit in Rokugan; it is considered to be an insult to the Emperor himself. To betray the Imperial government is to betray the Celestial Order, and this cannot be forgiven under any circumstances. These types of crimes are rarely committed, but when treason is discovered, the entire Empire mobilizes to punish it. Emerald and Jade Magistrates are usually called in to personally investigate any matter involving treason, traveling to the lands where the crimes were committed to dispense justice.

The simplest form of treason is aiding and abetting the enemies of the Imperial government. This definition is a wide umbrella that covers many different crimes. For example, anyone who aids the Shadowlands is guilty of this crime. Those who kill Imperial officials are guilty of treason (as well as murder), as are those who work to undermine the power of the government, such as the Kolat and the Gozoku.

Breaking Imperial laws meant to protect the Empire is also considered treason. Dealing with gaijin is technically considered treason, unless specifically sanctioned by the Emperor. Using gaijin technology, especially the substance known as "gaijin powder," is also highly illegal and subject to the maximum punishment.

The Imperial Histories: The Ninja Myth

Almost since the beginning of the Empire, rumors and tales have spread through Rokugan of mysterious, shadowy killers called "ninja." They are silent, black-clad assassins who slip through the heaviest defenses, steal precious treasures from behind locked doors, and murder lords while their samurai stand guard outside. They can pass through walls, take others' faces, vanish into shadows in a heartbeat. Such stories are found most frequently among the common folk, but samurai hear them too. Most samurai scoff at tales of ninja, deriding them as mere peasant superstition. An easy claim to make in daylight, but harder to hold on to when one is standing midnight guard on a castle wall, squinting into the darkness and wondering if it is moving...

Accusations of "ninja" are likely to fly any time a theft or murder contains mysterious or inexplicable elements, and there have been plenty of times through Rokugan's history when samurai have reported encounters with strange assailants in black clothing. Magistrates investigate these cases as best they can, executing the rare criminals they can actually catch. The Kitsuki family in particular has dedicated itself to investigating the ninja myth and learning if there is any truth behind it.

In reality, the legends of ninja derive from the activities of many different covert groups. Foremost among these, unsurprisingly, is the Scorpion Clan. The Shosuro family's secretive Infiltrator school outfits its graduates with black clothing and specialized equipment and training, then sends them forth to serve the clan through covert actions such as eavesdropping, theft, and assassination. Early on, the Shosuro realized they could often perform their missions better if guards and other security forces could be distracted by a more obvious threat. Accordingly, the Infiltrators' younger students and apprentices were assigned to play the role of "ninja," lurking ostentatiously and assailing guards with exotic but only mildly effective weapons such as shuriken and nageteppo (smoke grenades). Guards might spend hours chasing these "ninja" around the castle, only to return and find their lord strangled or poisoned by a far more capable assassin. Naturally, these incidents only furthered the mystique attached to the ninja myth, much to the amusement of the Scorpion. In fact, some Scorpion claim the very word "ninja" came from a castle guard mis-hearing an Infiltrator barking orders to his fellows.

The other major source behind the ninja myth is a far more sinister one: the alien force known variously as the Nothing or the Lying Darkness. The Darkness' strange shadowspawn creatures, the Goju, have haunted the Empire almost since its founding, killing and kidnapping according to their own enigmatic goals. Their strange powers of mimicry and their ability to move through darkness and even penetrate physical barriers, not to mention their inhuman resilience, are the source of most of the more exotic and mystical tales associated with ninja. (For more detailed information on these creatures, see the "Nothing" chapter in the L5R 4th Edition sourcebook *Enemies of the Empire*.) After the Darkness was defeated at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, most Rokugani believe the Goju are gone forever, but in fact small numbers of them survive as the agents of the Shadow Dragon, and their actions continue to maintain the ninja legend in modern Rokugan.

Other smaller groups and organizations throughout the Empire's history have also unleashed covert operatives whose activities help sustain and expand the ninja myth. The Kolat conspiracy, for example, maintains its own stable of highly skilled assassins whose skills and activities are similar to those of the Shosuro. Some ronin bands also pursued a career as assassins, employing "ninja" methods and weaponry as convenient. There have even been criminals who have tried to exploit the ninja legend to enhance their own fame or to frighten their victims—for example, at the end of the eleventh century a group of "ninja thieves" terrorized the citizens of Ryoko Owari Toshi for several months. That era also saw the notorious career of the "white ninja," Matsu Hiroru, a Lion who had been groomed for membership in the Kolat. Hiroru rejected his would-be Kolat masters and spent many years as an independent assassin, killing not only agents of the conspiracy but also the minions of the Lying Darkness.

Blasphemy is also considered treasonous, as the structure of the government is inextricably linked with the Celestial Order; an offense against the Celestial Order is by extension an offense against the Emperor and his government. Embracing Shadowlands corruption or the knowledge and use of maho is treason, and Jade Magistrates make it their duty to find and destroy all maho cults as soon as they can. Likewise, the worship of Fu Leng or any other Shadowlands figure is a treasonous offense.

Convicted traitors receive no mercy. At the very least, these criminals are killed by magistrates once they are found. When traitors can be safely detained by officials, they are instead publicly executed in a very painful manner. The most brutal forms of execution are reserved for traitors, who have been hanged, burned, boiled alive, crucified, decapitated, and sawed in half. After the death of the criminal, his head is cut off and displayed to the public, often for an extended period of time. The punishment may well extend to the criminal's family, business, neighborhood, and associates. Magistrates have executed entire peasant families for the fault of one heimin who assassinated an Otomo. Likewise, magistrates have killed entire villages to make sure a maho cult is thoroughly stamped out.

Punishments for treason are slightly different in the Unicorn lands, for the Unicorn have adopted methods learned during their centuries abroad. Their favored method is to draw and quarter the traitor with four of their strongest horses. Other Rokugani tend to regard this gaijin method as distasteful and disturbing. Oftentimes criminals who fear capture will flee the Unicorn lands to avoid the clan's peculiar punishment style.

Samurai convicted of treason are generally treated worse than traitors from the lower orders. They are stripped of their name and written out of all the Empire's histories. They are forbidden the right to seppuku and are often beaten viciously during their imprisonment, then publicly humiliated by being paraded around town in chains. Finally they are executed, usually in the same harsh manner as a heimin traitor. Samurai who are in service to a lord convicted of treason are frequently given the opportunity to commit seppuku, or they may be turned out and made ronin. In extreme cases they are executed alongside their lord.

The Law and Gaijin Pepper

During the Battle of White Stag in the fifth century, thousands of Rokugani samurai perished from strange thundering weapons fielded by the gaijin. After the battle, investigation revealed the gaijin used a sorcerous black powder that exploded ferociously when set afire. The new Emperor and his court were appalled at the thought of magic weapons that could allow a mere barbarian peasant to strike down trained samurai from hundreds of yards. The Emperor officially decreed it a crime to possess or use the strange powder, which he called "gaijin pepper."

Many decades after White Stag, the Agasha family of the Dragon Clan introduced a remarkable new alchemical creation which they called *hanabi*, or fireworks. The colorful explosions quickly became very popular at festivals, but raised an obvious question: were they actually gaijin pepper? The Agasha insisted they were not. *Hanabi*, they declared, were an alchemical creation made from native Rokugani herbs, and had nothing to do with the forbidden gaijin magic. After some consideration, the Emperor agreed, and *hanabi* remain an important part of Rokugani celebrations to this day.

Of course, the secret of gaijin pepper has not gone wholly unused in the centuries since the gaijin fled Rokugan. The Shosuro Infiltrators, for example, have been known to use something closely resembling gaijin pepper, not only for their nageteppo (smoke bombs) but also to destroy vital enemy targets such as bridges and supply warehouses. The Daidoji family of the Crane also used gaijin pepper as a secret weapon to off-set the superior numbers of the enemies, although this hidden treason was eventually discovered and terminated by the Clan Champion at the end of the twelfth century. Some criminal and pirate groups have used the forbidden weapon as well, such as the sinister Dark Wave fleet that raided the Mantis and Phoenix lands. Given the incredible power of gaijin pepper, it is probably inevitable that it will find use again in the future.

Criminals of the Empire: Bandits

Bandits have plagued the Empire since its foundation. Ronin who can find no other way to support themselves often turn to banditry, supplementing their numbers with embittered runaway peasants. In remote parts of the Empire where samurai are few on the ground, bandit gangs can prosper for years, traveling long distances to raid and extort lightly-defended peasant villages. In more settled regions, bandits favor raids against trade caravans, villages, rural temples, and other sources of lightly-defended wealth which they can keep for themselves or fence to corrupt merchants or samurai.

Most bandit gangs are poorly organized and poorly led, controlled by whoever is strong enough to keep the rest in line. Internal dissension and violence are frequent, and battle tactics usually tend to be crude and direct. Most bandits will readily flee from a losing battle—they would not have become bandits if they believed in Bushido, after all. However, if they are unable to escape most bandits will fight bravely and to the death; they know only torture and execution await them if they are captured.

Somewhat more rarely, a bandit gang may acquire a capable and charismatic leader or series of leaders, allowing it to achieve long-term success and become a serious threat to the peace of the Empire. These sorts of bandit gangs usually wind up attracting large-scale military responses from the Empire. Probably the most notorious example of this phenomenon is the long-lived gang called the Forest Killers, who terrorized many generations of Rokugani from their hidden lair in the Spine of the World Mountains.

Criminals of the Empire: Gangs

Rokugan does not have yakuza, organized Empire-wide criminal gangs; however, the beginnings of such organizations may be found in many places around the Empire, most notoriously in the various smuggling cartels and in the fireman gangs of Ryoko Owari.

Smuggling cartels focus most of their attention on moving illicit goods (such as opium or gaijin items), but also do a brisk business in covertly transporting the more expensive legal goods (such as jewelry) to avoid tariffs. In contrast with bandits or pirates, smugglers usually try to avoid violence, maintaining a front of respectable activity and relying primarily on bribes and stealth to carry out their crimes. However, they are certainly not above paying a few ronin to kill a troublesome magistrate who is snooping into their affairs.

Many of the strongest cartels are based in Ryoko Owari and are to some degree controlled (or at least supervised) by the Scorpion Clan, but other such gangs may be found all around the Empire. During its heyday the Kolat conspiracy also covertly runs many such cartels, using them to monitor and manipulate the Empire's trade. In the twelfth century, many of the smaller independent smuggling groups are unified into a major new cartel calling itself the Black Lotus, the first true Empire-wide smuggling operation in Rokugan's history. Whether the Black Lotus is a preview of the future development of organized crime in Rokugan, or merely a shocking aberration, remains to be seen.

Local criminal gangs in Rokugan seldom operate above the level of a large town or a city district. These are usually little more than packs of thugs who try to shake down the local peasants for protection money; they scatter quickly when the forces of law begin to look into matters. However, in the city of Ryoko Owari Toshi, these gangs found a way of becoming "legitimate" by infiltrating the Fireman Gangs—the district teams assigned the duty of fighting fires. In a Rokugani city where most construction is of wood and paper, fires are a deadly threat, and all city districts organize Fireman Gangs from the local populace: citizens whose task it is to gather and fight fires when the need arises. In Ryoko Owari, however, the Fireman Gangs have evolved into independent criminal organizations, using their fire-fighting mission both as a perfect protection racket ("it would be a shame if we didn't show up when a fire broke out, eh?") and also as a cloak to protect themselves from legal interference. Many of the gangs are openly criminal, wearing grotesque tattoos to identify themselves and sponsoring various other forms of vice such as opium dens and extortion rackets. So far, such criminal methods have not spread beyond the City of Lies, but in the future, that might change...

Criminals of the Empire: Pirates

Pirate gangs, or *wako*, are a perpetual threat to Rokugan's rivers and seas. These gangs spring up frequently throughout the Empire's history, especially during periods of war or political instability, recruiting their ranks from ronin and disaffected peasants; most *wako* gangs are short-lived, eventually ending their careers at the hands of magistrates or clan navies if they don't destroy themselves with in-fighting. The

The Imperial Histories: The Definition of Maho

For much of the Empire's history, the crime of *maho* was poorly understand by most Rokugani. Outside of the Crab Clan, very few people knew anything about what *maho* actually was and what it did, so Imperial law defined it as "using magic to increase one's own power, in a way contrary to the natural order of the elements."

This vague definition of the crime nearly caused the death of a pious but rather naïve ninth-century samurai named Shiba Tsuna. Tsuna had some magical power, but the Isawa regarded him as lacking any real talent and did not allow him to study at their libraries. However, one night a tiny Air spirit visited Tsuna in his sleep and told him the finest sound it had ever experienced was the laughter of children. Inspired by this visitation, Tsuna began using his magic to create delightful and awe-inspiring illusions for the entertainment of others. He quickly became famous, gaining the favor of the Emperor himself, and attracted many students... all much to the irritation of the Isawa and Asako families, who saw his practices as frivolous and insulting.

A jealous Phoenix Inquisitor named Asako Bokkai decided to accuse Tsuna of *maho*, claiming his use of the kami for mere entertainment constituted an insult to the spirits and thus matched the definition of *maho* in Imperial law. Although the Isawa Elemental Council knew Bokkai was mis-using the law, their own jealousy of Tsuna's actions caused them to remain silent. Within a few weeks, Shiba Tsuna found himself on trial for his life before the Imperial Court itself. It seemed he was certain to be executed... but then outside forces took a hand in the matter.

The Crab Clan Champion, Hida Namika, stormed into the court and demanded Asako Bokkai face her in a duel. The startled Inquisitor demanded the grounds for her accusation, and she replied, "Your duty is to destroy *tsukai*, not entertainers. When you pervert your position, it becomes my duty to destroy you." When Bokkai tried to laugh off her words, she drew her sword and cut him down in disgust.

Hida Namika's actions were a huge scandal, of course, and led to months of high tensions between the Crab and the Phoenix. In the meantime, though, the case against Shiba Tsuna was quietly dismissed, and a few decades later Imperial law was amended to offer a more concrete and accurate description of *maho*

Mantis Clan at one time included many *wako* within its ranks, but after attaining Great Clan status it expelled its piratical elements—and in the process, created a number of new *wako* gangs, most notably the infamous Rolling Waves fleet.

Pirates sometimes acquire a romantic reputation among Rokugan's common folk. Since they prey mostly on merchant shipping, few peasants feel the pain of piracy in the same way they do banditry, and popular legend often portrays pirates as "noble rogues" who steal from the wealthy and help the downtrodden. Probably the most famous example of this (somewhat naïve) view of piracy is the legend of Yasuki Fumoki, a Crab pirate from the seventh century who left his clan to wage a private war against the Crane aboard his mighty ship, the Dealthless. Supposedly, Fumoki sank over a hundred Crane ships and hid the accumulated wealth on a remote island; it was lost forever when Fumoki died, hurling himself sword-forward into the throat of the King of the Orochi.

GM's Toolbox: Who Are These Outlaws?

For GMs who wish to incorporate a bandit gang into their campaign at a level more profound than a one-off encounter, the following listings provide some ideas for fleshing them out into more serious opponents or villains.

Jiyuu: Rank 0

Jiyuu is a heimin bitter at the injustices of the caste system. His gang, The Raised Kama, is composed entirely of other heimin who follow his lead. Though they are ill-equipped and physically weak, their zeal and dedication should not be underestimated.

Koshi: Ronin Insight Rank 1

Koshi grew tired of the stigma of being a ronin. He has gathered other malcontents under his banner. He and his gang, Koshi's Horde, have set out to create a name for themselves. Minor bullies at best, Koshi's Horde preys on small farming villages.

Tomisu: Ronin Insight Rank 2

Legend claims Tomisu began thievery to steal money for his home village, which was stricken with a dangerous disease. No one knows the truth of the matter, but those who have met the aging bandit say an air of nobility surrounds the old man. Tomisu's gang, the Fallen Leaf, tends to keep a low profile, eager to avoid altercations with the authorities.

Tetsuka: Ronin Insight Rank 2

Rumors say Tetsuka is a former Crane yojimbo who was stripped of her name when her charge was killed by an assassin. Tetsuka never addresses these rumors, but her amazing beauty only adds to her air of mystery. She is often referred to as the Steel Rose, a fitting counterpoint to her gang's name, the Rose's Thorns.

Justice: Shiba Bushi 3

No one has ever seen the true features of this bandit lord; his face is obscured by an elaborate mask. He calls himself Justice, yet there is nothing righteous about his brutal assaults on helpless villages. Tengoku's Judgment, as his gang is called, shares his merciless style, leaving hundreds of victims in its wake.

Maburo: Ronin Shugenja 4

Maburo looks like a fearsome warrior and is skilled with the katana. The fire kami flock to his aid; Maburo keeps his skill with the sword to himself, preferring to use it as a secret weapon during an emergency. His gang, the Fallen Star, follows Maburo because they are truly devoted to him, and obey his orders with zealous fanaticism.

Ide Jobenai: Shinjo Bushi 3

Jobenai is a trader, not a warrior. He formed the Crossed Blades to supplement his income, using his diplomatic activities as a cover. The gang has a reputation for ruthlessness, killing innocents in each of its raids. As the secret leader of the Crossed Blades, Jobenai publicly deplores the gang's actions while privately counting his earnings.

Adventure Seed: The Pirate's Treasure

Challenge

In the official histories of Rokugan, Fumoki's lost treasure is finally located in the year 1158 by the Lion hero Ikoma Otemi. However, in your own game this need not be true, especially if an old-fashioned treasure hunt would allow your players a change of pace from the intense pressures of samurai drama. The PCs might find clues leading to Fumoki's lost island in any number of places, such as forgotten Crab Clan records (Fumoki remained in touch with his old clan during his war against the Crane).

Focus

The PCs must undertake a hazardous sea voyage to Fumoki's island. If word of their quest has leaked out, they may face all manner of obstacles, including pirates, corrupt authorities, rival treasure-seekers, and Fumoki's Crab descendants seeking their ancestor's legacy.

Strike

Once the PCs find the island and its treasures (which include the legendary ship Deathless) they still face one final obstacle: the Orochi King, a sea-serpent of immense power.

Soru: Bayushi Bushi 2 (Insight Rank 4)

Soru believes he was betrayed by the Scorpion Clan. To exact his vengeance, he left the Scorpion lands and began a spree of violence. His gang, Soru's Vengeance, prefers to make raids at night; they burn many of the buildings in their victims' village, marking their presence for miles.

The Legendary Sanada, Pirate King: Ronin (Insight Rank 5)

Sanada is a self-proclaimed ruler of the seas, and has successfully continued his piracy off the Rokugani coast for over a decade. His wako (pirate fleet), Serpents of Sanada, is skilled and dangerous and has killed countless magistrates and Mantis samurai bent on bringing him to justice.

Yasuki Torinaga: Hida Bushi 3 (Insight Rank 5)

Torinaga is the leader of the local sect of the Black Lotus smuggling cartel. He has many talented samurai under his control, both Crab bushi who serve him publicly and ronin hirelings in the gang. If anyone becomes too large a problem for his gang, he can always call for reinforcements from the rest of the cartel...

New Mechanics

This section presents two new basic schools for use in the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition role-playing game. It should be noted that these schools both have the word "Magistrate" in their title, but not all samurai trained in their techniques will automatically be given magistrate appointments (see the "Mechanics versus Reality" sidebar earlier in this chapter for details). Both of these schools incorporate unarmed martial arts techniques; the history of Rokugani martial arts is discussed in the "War" chapter later in this book.

New Basic School: Doji Magistrate [Bushi]

The Doji family is dedicated to protecting its lands and people from all threats, an expression of the Crane Clan's devotion to the Virtue of Compassion. Consequently, they maintain this school to teach their bushi techniques of law enforcement and peace-keeping. Although generally less famous for their deeds, the Doji family's magistrate tradition actually predates their more sensational counterparts in other clans by centuries. The Kitsuki family, the Soshi Magistrates, and even the Emerald Magistrates were not created until well after the Doji tradition had been in place for a very long time. In fact, it is often against the Doji that other such schools are measured, although this is not a conscious comparison.

Despite the name of the school, in actuality only a minority of its students are actually appointed as clan magistrates—students are far more likely to serve as yoriki, assisting other magistrates, or simply as guards patrolling the borders and maintaining law and order in cities and towns. Still, those who are trained in this school are often among the first to receive an appointment when a magistrate position becomes available, and it is not uncommon for many Doji to serve in the ranks of the Emerald and Jade magistrates as well.

Doji Magistrate [Bushi]

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

Skills: Defense, Horsemanship, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Knives (Jitte), Polearms, any High or Bugei Skill
Honor: 5.5

Outfit: Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon (or 2 Knives), Traveling Pack, 10 koku

Techniques

Rank One: Temper Steel with Honor

Doji Magistrates are trained to fight with compassion, avoiding injury to both themselves and whenever possible to others, a style known to the Crane as Mizu-do (the Way of Water). They specialize in the use of weapons designed to disarm or capture foes rather than kill them. You may add an amount equal to your Air Ring to your Armor TN (unless caught helpless or unaware). You gain a +1k0 bonus to your attack rolls when fighting with a jitte or a sasumata.

Rank Two: Flowing Like Water

The Magistrates are taught the art of subduing law-breakers non-lethally by turning their own strength against them, an especially useful skill when dealing with drunken samurai whose deaths might carry political repercussions. When rolling to control a Grapple or to resolve a Disarm attempt, you may use your opponent's Strength Rank in place of your own.

Rank Three: Breath of the Law

The Doji Magistrates practice a variety of submission holds designed to disarm and disable lawbreakers without harming them. If you successfully Grapple or Disarm an opponent, they are also Dazed.

Rank Four: Flowing Like Air

A true student of the Doji path can move as swiftly as the wind of justice that brings ruin to his enemies. You may make attacks as a Simple Action when fighting unarmed or when wielding a jitte, sasumata, or a weapon with the Samurai keyword.

Rank Five: The Willow in the Storm

In their final lesson, Doji Magistrates are taught to maneuver around their opponents, redirecting their energy and defeating them with their own momentum. You may spend a Void point during the Reactions stage of a skirmish Round to force anyone who attacks you on the next Round to subtract their Air Ring from each of their dice. (Dice which explode have their final total reduced.) This technique cannot be acti-

vated or used while you are in the Full Attack stance or the Center stance.

New Basic School: Soshi Magistrate [Bushi]

The Soshi magistrate school is descended from a set of techniques taught to the yoriki of Soshi Saibankan during his many years as a judge, and some rumors claim the first three techniques were invented by Saibankan himself. Whether this is true or not, the school remains the principle method the Scorpion use to educate those who must maintain order within their lands—magistrates, yoriki, city guards, and border patrols. Like many such schools, the Soshi Magistrate school teaches a mixture of armed and hand-to-hand techniques, allowing its students to suppress brawls and defeat lethal bandits with equal skill.

Soshi Magistrate [Bushi]

Benefit: +1 Agility

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Intimidation (Control), Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Lore: Underworld, any Bugei skill

Honor: 2.5

Outfit: Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, 5 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Face of Justice

The Soshi Magistrates are trained to control their environment through a mixture of fear and force, intimidating even the most violent street gang with ease. You gain a +1k0 bonus to the Intimidation skill; when you use it against someone of lower Status Rank than yourself, the bonus is +2k0 instead. You also gain a +1k0 damage bonus with melee attacks.

Rank Two: Rise to Meet the Challenge

Soshi Magistrates often deal close-up with criminals and thugs who employ dishonorable tactics, so they are taught brawling techniques and learn to quickly recover any time they find themselves in a vulnerable position. Any time you are Prone, you may take a Free Action to roll Athletics / Agility at TN 20 to regain your feet. You gain a +1k1 bonus to any roll made to control a Grapple.

Rank Three: The Magistrate's Cut

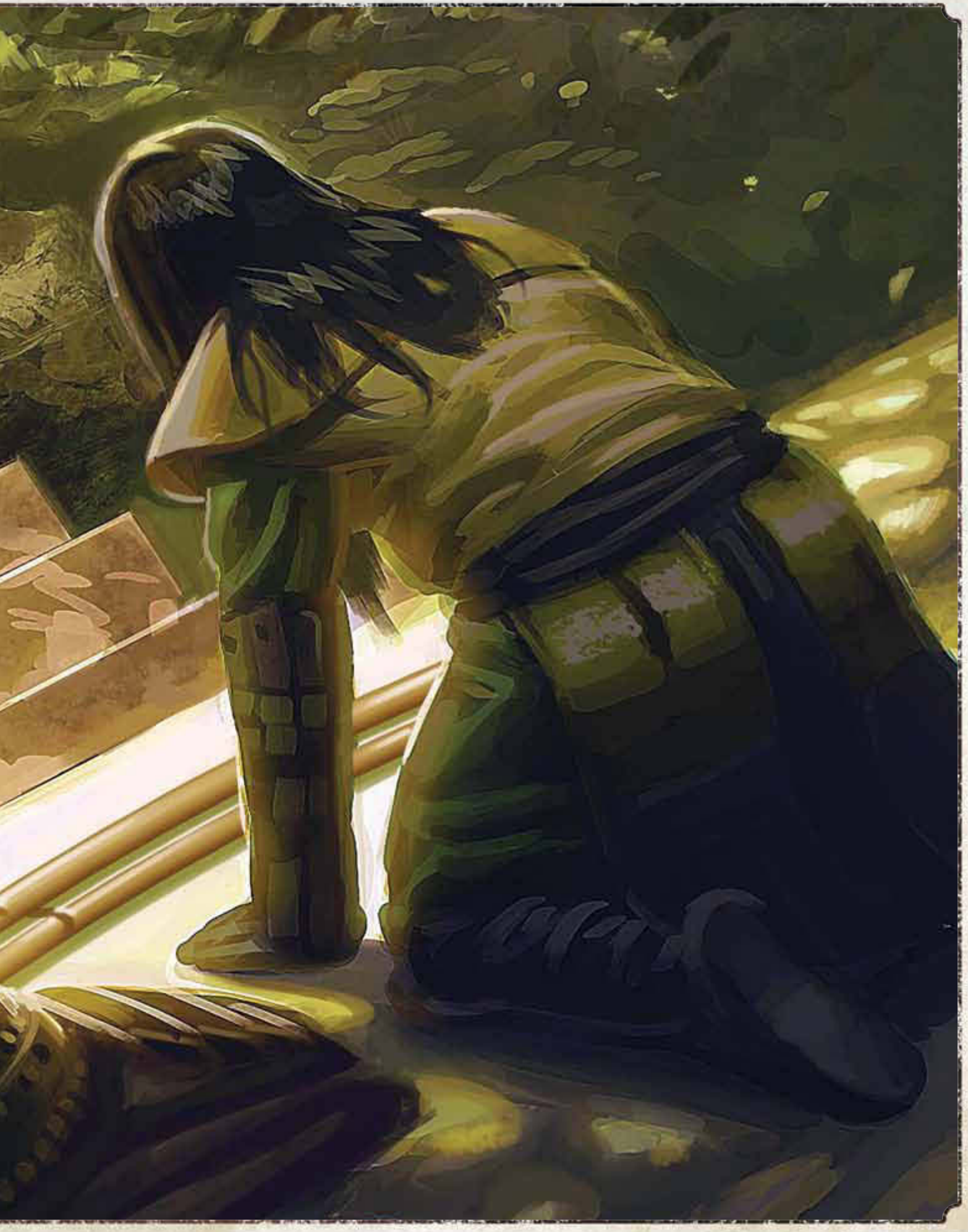
Soshi Magistrates prefer to disable foes rather than kill them outright, since prisoners can be useful when ferreting out criminals and enemy spies. In a skirmish, once per opponent, by successfully making three Raises for a Called Shot on a melee attack you may temporarily Blind a foe. They are considered Blinded until the Reactions stage of the following Round.

Rank Four: Certainty of Purpose

When the time comes to fight, the Soshi Magistrate does so with vicious speed and ruthlessness. You may make melee attacks (including unarmed attacks) as Simple Actions rather than Complex Actions.

Rank Five: Relentless Resolve

The Soshi Magistrates are taught to wait for the perfect moment and then overwhelm their enemies with fear and aggression, crushing lawbreakers with a few swift blows. Once per skirmish, you may gain extra unkept dice equal to your Intimidation skill rank on your attack rolls for one Round. This technique cannot be used in the Center Stance.



"Your education so far has addressed many of the inadequacies of your upbringing," the sensei said one morning.

"However, given that this is a dojo devoted to the fighting arts, I would expect that, up until this point, your education has dealt only sparingly with matters of the spirit and religion."

"Yes, master," the student said.

"What experience have you had in your childhood with matters of religion?"

The boy drew a breath. "A man my father later told me was a shugenja visited the village in my sixth summer," he said. "I did not speak to him or observe anything unusual, but he did bless the crops. At the time I thought he was simply another monk."

"Monks," the sensei said. "You are familiar with the Brotherhood of Shinsei, then?"

The student frowned slightly. "I have never completely understood the distinction between different groups of monks," he admitted. "The monk with whom I have the most familiarity is called Musabi, and he identifies himself as a member of the Order of Stone. I always assumed that was perhaps a faction of the Brotherhood? Or is it a competing organization?"

The sensei laughed heartily. "Monks are not a particularly competitive group, young one," he explained. "Your first assumption was correct. The Order of Stone is one of the dozens or perhaps hundreds of different and unique orders that exist within the Brotherhood of Shinsei. In truth, the Brotherhood is little more than a term created by Imperial decree to make it easier to codify, communicate with, and interact with the members of Rokugan's various monastic orders."

The boy nodded. "I asked Musabi once about the Tao," he said. "His response was somewhat... clipped. I could tell it irritated him, which is why I never thought to ask him about his affiliation in more detail. He was never particularly forthcoming. Or pleasant. But he assisted the villagers in building and maintaining certain defensive structures my father felt were necessary."

"Yes, the Order of Stone enjoys things such as construction and feats of strength," the sensei observed. "They are useful but ultimately rather crude. The reason he eschewed your question regarding the Tao is because the Order of Stone is a Fortunist sect, meaning that they revere the Fortunes to the general exclusion of the Tao."

"Monks study one or the other, not both?"

The sensei held out his hands, palms up. "Some sects study both. You might say at least half, perhaps, but most focus on one or the other. Some so much so that the other is often overlooked or ignored outright. Shugenja are vastly more well rounded in that regard, if I may be so immodest as to suggest so."

The boy's mouth gaped open. "You are a shugenja, master?"

"You seem surprised."

"But, but..." the boy could not contain his disbelief. "You are the master sensei of a warrior dojo!"

"Indeed I am," the sensei said with a slow smile. "Curious, is it not?"

The Religions of Rokugan

"Understand the Will of Heaven, and you make all things possible. Ignore it, and you will accomplish nothing."

— The Tao of Shinsei

Worship of the Kami

The Empire of Rokugan was founded by the eight Kami, the divine children of Lord Moon and Lady Sun who fell to the earth after Hantei's epic battle with his father. The Kami lost most of their divine powers when they reached the mortal realm, but they remained far greater than mortal men and women, and mortals flocked to them with joy and reverence. A legendary contest between the Kami resulted in Hantei's coronation as the first ruler of the new Empire of Rokugan. The other seven Kami founded the seven original Great Clans, forging each in their own image based on the skills and virtues they most strongly believed in. The knowledge and wisdom the Kami brought to the world forever changed its face, and the people of the Emerald Empire owe everything they have achieved to the guidance of their founders.

Most Rokugani are well aware of this fact and have instituted their reverence and gratitude to the Kami in formal religion. Almost as soon as the Kami died and passed into Tengoku, the Rokugani began establishing shrines to their memory; in modern Rokugan, all members of a clan regularly offer prayers to their founding Kami. In many cases these shrines also pay homage to later heroes and legendary figures within the clan. For the Rokugani this expanded reverence does not mean disrespecting the founding Kami. Rather, worshipping both the Kami and the other great ancestors of the clan together is a way for the people to honor those mortals who have successfully risen to their Kami's expectations.

Worshipping a Kami or a clan's great ancestors is typically only done within that clan's lands. Thus, Akodo and the legendary heroes of the Lion Clan are worshipped almost exclusively in Lion provinces, where many shrines and temples have been built to honor them. In the holdings of other clans the name of Akodo is still respected but no shrine has been raised to pay tribute to him. That being said, dishonoring another clan's founding Kami is a great offense, and no pious samurai will do such a thing, even during times of war or political enmity.

Rokugani in need of the support of Heaven frequently invoke the Kami who was particularly renowned for the sort of activity that needs to be blessed. Bayushi, for instance, was renowned for his cunning and guile, so anyone who needs these particular traits can benefit from praying to him. Similarly, those who practice the arts might call upon Doji, or even Shiba, since both of these Kami were known for their appreciation and skill with artistic matters. This practice of calling on the Kami for a particular reason is especially common among those who belong to the Kami's clan, but this is by no means always the case. A Scorpion artisan, for instance, might pray for Doji's blessings to help him complete an important poem, while a Crane courtier who desperately needs to win a contest of wits might pray to Bayushi for inspiration.

Two particular Kami are not worshipped in the same way as the others. The first of these is Fu Leng, He Who Is Not To Be Named, who fell apart from his siblings and became the corrupted champion of Jigoku. The other is Ryoshun, who died within Lord Moon's stomach and remained there when his siblings fell from the Celestial Heavens. The people of Rokugan were not even aware of the existence of Ryoshun for countless centuries, since he had died before the Kami even encountered the mortal world. Ryoshun spent most of the Empire's long history protecting the Rift, the boundary between Yomi, the Realm of Honored Ancestors, and Jigoku,

The Imperial Histories: Draconic Manifestations

The great Dragons of Tengoku seldom take direct action within the mortal realm, in part because their power is so great that any direct intervention is liable to upset the Celestial Order. However, on some occasions they have chosen to make themselves manifest to mortals, often with profound results.

In the first century, after the Day of Thunder ended the First War, the Kami Hida was despondent. His wife had died in the war and their only son, Hida Atarasi, had never returned from the battle with Fu Leng. Hida still led his clan, but he did so alone, mourning his loss. His suffering touched the heart of the Thunder Dragon, and one night Hida returned to his quarters to find a beautiful woman standing in the room's open window, her hair whirled around her by the wind. "I am the Dragon of Thunder," she told him, "and I love you." Nine months later, she returned to Hida and handed him his son, Osano-Wo, the man destined to lead the Crab Clan against the trolls and who would eventually become the Fortune of Thunder.

The Thunder Dragon, always the greatest friend of mortals, eventually sacrificed its position in Tengoku and entered the mortal realm in order to ensure Yoritomo, the hero of the Mantis Clan, could remain in the heavens alongside the Kami of the original Great Clans.

During the late twelfth century, the chaotic era known as the Race for the Throne prompted the Fire Dragon to intervene in Rokugan. Emerging from the Heavens, the Dragon of Fire joined with the Phoenix Clan to protect the Imperial capital, Toshi Ranbo, from all possible attackers. The Dragon remained in the mortal realm for several months before the demands of the Celestial balance required it to return to the Heavens.

the Realm of Evil. After the Battle at Oblivion's Gate in the early twelfth century, the spirit of Ryoshun moved to Meido, the Realm of Waiting, where he now guards the afterlife. Once the Rokugani became aware of Ryuoshun's existence, many began to pray to him, seeking his help in guiding their loved ones' souls through the afterlife.

The corrupted Ninth Kami, Fu Leng, was once the strongest among the Kami—perhaps the most powerful of them in all ways. He is feared in Rokugan but is not worshipped; in fact, few even dare to openly speak his name for fear of bringing his attention to them. Fu Leng's power, however, is undeniable, and all Rokugani recognize it. His influence over the very soil of the Shadowlands and the power he holds over all those who inhabit the vile place is clearly evident. Fu Leng is revered by the creatures of the Shadowlands and by the Lost, those mortals who have been consumed by the Taint. In the twelfth century, the so-called Spider Clan—created by the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands in an attempt to infiltrate the Empire—attempts to claim Great Clan status on the basis of worshipping Fu Leng as a Kami, much as the rest of Rokugan worships the other Kami. Needless to say, most Rokugani regard this idea as blasphemous.

The Rulers of Tengoku

In the Heavens the absolute rulers are the Sun and Moon, although the exact identities of these two supreme beings has changed over the course of 1100 years. For most of Rokugan's history, Onnotangu the Lord Moon and Amaterasu the Lady Sun held these positions, watching over the Empire founded by their children. During the Hidden Emperor era, both of these divinities perished and were replaced by a pair of mortal heroes, Hida Yakamo (who became Lord Sun) and Mirumoto Hitomi (who became Lady Moon). The reign of these elevated mortals proved an unstable one, however, and near the end of the twelfth century the Celestial Order reasserted its primacy. Yakamo and Hitomi were cast out of the Heavens and replaced by the Jade and Obsidian Dragons, who became the Jade Sun and the Obsidian Moon.

Regardless of their identity, the Sun and Moon are the undisputed rulers of the heavenly court. However, they are themselves bound by a number of very stringent restrictions on how they must act and how they can use their power. Like all truly divine beings, they are susceptible to fluctuations in the balance of forces influencing the cosmos; as such they are required to maintain the Celestial balance or risk a heavenly catastrophe. Indeed, it was the threat of such a catastrophe that ultimately led to the ouster of Yakamo and Hitomi.

Beneath the Sun and Moon are their primary servants, the Seven Fortunes and the Elemental Dragons. Both of these groups command power that is incomprehensible to mortals—less than their masters', but with fewer restrictions on how it may be used without creating an imbalance in the Celestial Order. The Fortunes and the Dragons are permitted to take direct action in the mortal realm, but they exercise this power only very rarely to avoid disruptions.

The Dragons inhabit a specific portion of the Heavens known colloquially as the Dragonlands. There is one Dragon for each of the five Elements, as well as a number of other Dragons, including the Celestial Dragon, who holds the Heavens aloft, and the Thunder Dragon, the spirit and patron of heroes in the mortal realm. During the twelfth century, two new twin Dragons manifest: the Jade Dragon, a being of virtue and purity, and the Obsidian Dragon, a being of vice and dishonor. Eventually, these Celestial twins ascend to hold the positions of Sun and Moon.

The Dragons typically observe the mortal realm by bestowing a fraction of their inestimable power upon a mortal vassal, creating individuals known as the Oracles of Light. There is only ever one Oracle in existence for each Dragon, and if an Oracle somehow perishes or abandons its post, the Dragon chooses another one. It is extremely rare for the Dragons themselves to manifest in Ningen-do, and when they do it is always a major event that has long-lasting repercussions.

Beyond the lesser dragons and Oracles, the Elemental Dragons are also served in the Heavens and the mortal realm by the *ryu* and *fushichiko*, dragon and phoenix spirits (described in the L5R 4th Edition sourcebook *Enemies of the Empire*). Below them in the mortal realm are the elemental kami, the basic spirits that comprise all things.

The Seven Fortunes are similar in many respects to the Elemental Dragons. They have nigh-infinite divine power

restricted by their role in the Celestial Order, using their power in the mortal realm on an infrequent basis. The Fortunes will often bestow their blessings on mortals who seek their favor, or curse those who have offended them in some way. The Fortunes also sometimes take stronger action and manifest directly in the mortal realm; such events always make a significant impression on the Empire's affairs. For example, in the mid-twelfth century Bishamon, the Fortune of Strength, manifested in the mortal world to personally curse the Scorpion Clan for failing to protect the prophet Rosoku, descendant of Shinsei. The Seven Fortunes existed before the rise of Rokugan, and were worshiped with great zeal and fear by the scattered tribes who lived in those ancient days; as such they are quite comfortable with the codified worship offered them by the people of Rokugan.

Like the Elemental Dragons, the Seven Fortunes have servants as well, but theirs are more powerful. The countless Lesser Fortunes or *mikokami* are treated by the Seven Fortunes as vassals and servants—indeed the Seven have been known on occasion to treat them poorly. The mikokami are more powerful than the dragons' servants, and are somewhat more likely than the Seven Fortunes to visit the mortal realm and to bestow blessings or curses on those who draw their attention. A handful of the mikokami existed before mankind, in the same manner as the Seven Fortunes, and these entities tend to be more mysterious and powerful as a result (they are typically referred to as primal Fortunes). Most, however, are former mortals who were elevated to divinity by Imperial decree or through divine intervention. The Emperor's ability to create new Fortunes is rarely used and is considered one of the most telling signs of the favor of the Sun Goddess on her child Hantei. Over the centuries hundreds of heroes have been elevated to the position of lesser Fortune within the divine courts of the Celestial Heavens.

The Seven Fortunes

Benten, Fortune of Romantic Love

Benten is the lone female entity among the Seven Fortunes. These deities do not have ranks among their own number, but on the rare occasions when they appear together, Benten often speaks for the group—presumably because of her greater gift for oratory and diplomacy. Benten can only be described as beautiful beyond imagining, although her rarely seen wrathful aspect is as terrifying as it is glorious. She always takes the aspect of a beautiful woman and is frequently depicted as wearing finery of the grandest sort, her clothing arrayed with patterns taken from the ocean waves. She is not a cruel or spiteful entity, and it is rare for her anger to be fully roused by any mortal being. Benten is particularly beloved by the Crane Clan, and returns their adoration with frequent blessings among their ranks as well as on marriages between the Crane and those of other clans. The Scorpion also maintain a regular following devoted to her, but the evidence of that adoration is less obvious.

Bishamon, Fortune of Strength

Great Bishamon is the mighty warrior of the Seven Fortunes, as well as the one with the shortest temper. Although he is not particularly cruel or wrathful, his anger is more easily aroused and he is far more likely than the other Seven Fortunes to levy a punishment against those in the mortal realm he perceives as having failed their duties to the Celestial Heavens. Despite his relatively tempestuous nature, however, Bishamon is a patron of philosophers and idealists as well as bushi, and barring an eruption of anger he will turn to war only if there is no other solution. Bishamon is always depicted as a huge man in full armor, armed with at least one massive weapon worthy of his size. He is particularly venerated by the Crab and Lion clans, although bushi of all clans pay him homage.

Daikoku, Fortune of Wealth

The Fortune of Wealth is extremely popular among the lower classes of Rokugan; not only is he the patron of farmers and merchants, but there are countless numbers of peasants who crave more wealth so their lot in life will be easier to bear. Daikoku is generally regarded as the most approachable of the Seven Fortunes, and is known for his good sense of humor. He appears as a pleasantly fat man in fine clothing, carrying a large bag of rice which constantly trickles away as he walks—though he never seems to run out. Daikoku is accompanied by a large rat that consumes the rice he leaves behind; he and the rat are great friends and the Fortune sometimes sends the rat to watch over those he favors greatly. The Fortune of Wealth is quite mischievous and often travels the Empire in disguise to sate his curiosity regarding the oddities of mortals. He favors the Unicorn Clan above all others, but also frequently bestows his blessings upon the Crane and Mantis as well. Ironically, outside of the shrine dedicated to him in Unicorn lands, one of his greatest temples is found in the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari, a place where wealth and crime often go hand-in-hand.

Ebisu, Fortune of Honest Work

The Fortune of Honest Work is a being of unassuming appearance and distant temperament. His most favored subjects are the peasants of the Empire, if for no other reason than that they work harder than any other mortals and receive virtually no reward. In Ebisu's mind this is just, for the fruits of hard work are their own reward, and the disappointment of failure is punishment enough for those who do not achieve their goals. Ebisu traditionally appears as a man in rough garb more befitting a common laborer than a divine entity, but his otherworldly aura ensures no one but the most obtuse buffoon would ever mistake him for a mortal commoner. Ebisu favors the Mantis heavily (although this may seem contradictory given their sometimes illicit activities). This is because they earned their position among the Great Clans rather than having it given to them as a birthright.

Fukurokujin, Fortune of Wisdom

To the Rokugani, the Fortune of Wisdom is the entity most closely associated with the concept of enlightenment, and many pray to him in hopes of achieving that elusive state. Many scholars in the Empire's theological circles equate the Fortune with Shinsei in some way, with some insisting Fukurokujin is somehow an aspect of Shinsei, while others respond to this suggestion with accusations of blasphemy. He is less well known than many of the other Seven Fortunes, and has far fewer documented appearances in the mortal realm. He is normally depicted as an older man with long, sharp features but bright and alert eyes. Fukurokujin has a history of favoring the Dragon and Phoenix clans, as there are more theologians and scholars among them than in most other parts of the Empire, and far more who seek wisdom for its own sake rather than as an means to an end. The few times the Fortune has appeared or intervened in mortal affairs have often coincided with some form of conflict between his two favored clans, an event which appears to upset him considerably.

Hotei, Fortune of Contentment

Hotei is the Fortune of Contentment and Serenity, and blesses those who have accepted their place in the universe. Those who seek his blessings must first accept that their life can be endured and enjoyed; only then will his gift of genuine serenity be bestowed upon them. Those who constantly seek something else or something more will be forever denied his favor. Hotei abhors violence and is unique among the Seven Fortunes in that his wrath is virtually non-existent. He genuinely likes all mortals and has no animosity toward any particular group. Those rare individuals who incur his disfavor find themselves constantly out of place and never fitting in no matter where they go—a mild form of disfavor compared to his brethren among the Seven Fortunes. Hotei universally appears as a heavyset monk-like figure with a perpetual smile and a warm greeting for all he encounters.

Jurojin, Fortune of Longevity

The Fortune of Longevity represents health and vitality as well as long life, but is also known as a keeper of sacred wisdom. Depending on the Fortunist sect one consults, this makes him either a rival of Fukurokujin or the closest ally of the Fortune of Wisdom. Some believe Jurojin can speak to the animals of Rokugan and knows all they see. Whether this is true or not is a much-debated topic, with some holding it is an exaggeration of his existing portfolio of divine abilities while others insist all of the Seven Fortunes possess such abilities. Regardless, the Scorpion generally believe all that is said of Jurojin and revere him for the secrets he possesses. For whatever reason, Jurojin seems to return their favor.

The Lesser Fortunes

Ekibyogami, Fortune of Plague and Pestilence

Ekibyogami is a cruel and merciless Fortune, feared throughout the Empire. She is regularly entreated to spare her curses from friends and family, and offerings to her are made often during the winter months or times of plague. Ekibyogami occasionally must submit to the will of Jurojin by sparing mortals from her powers, but at other times she is given free will to do as she pleases. She particularly enjoys cursing those who have failed to observe the sovereignty of the Fortunes.

Emma-O, Fortune of Death

Emma-O is usually represented as a tall bearded man with an unkind countenance; perhaps he is bitter because his duties have permanently removed him from the Celestial Heavens. Some traditions depict him as an empty suit of armor instead. As the Fortune of Death, Emma-O holds dominion over Meido, the Realm of Waiting. Those who perish in the mortal realm come to Meido to await Emma-O's judgment. He weighs the sum of each person's worth and judges them, perhaps naming a period of time they must wait until they can be reincarnated, condemning them to a place like Jigoku or Gaki-do, or more rarely deeming them worthy of ascending to the Realm of Blessed Ancestors for fulfilling their destiny. Emma-O is known to have fathered at least one child with a mortal woman, an exceedingly unusual act for a Fortune of any sort.

In the twelfth century, the gaijin gods known as the Lords of Death are granted recognition by the Celestial Heavens and assigned to Meido, where they fulfill the duty of judgment

while Emma-O simply oversees the souls under his care and hunts down those who have avoided their fate.

Goemon, Fortune of Heroes

Matsu Goemon lived in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, serving the Lion Clan armies with distinction for decades. He participated in the Clan War as a young man, and went on to fight in the War against the Darkness, the War of Spirits, and countless other skirmishes as well. He came to the attention of the Lion generals because of the high morale and success rate among those in his unit; the younger soldiers considered him an unstoppable warrior and fought with great fervor, leading to victory on the field of battle. Goemon was finally brought low in the war between the Lion and Unicorn over possession of the City of the Rich Frog, during a particularly intense battle that coincided with the supernatural incident known as the Rain of Blood. Fearful the loss of such a hero might damage morale, and concerned over the possible impact of the mysterious Rain on the destination of his soul, the Kitsu family petitioned Emperor Toturi III to elevate Goemon as a Fortune. Toturi Naseru responded by proclaiming Goemon the Fortune of Heroes, a position that placed him in service to the Thunder Dragon.

Hachiman, Fortune of Battle

The Fortune of Battle is particularly revered among soldiers actively serving in their clan's army, as well as among military officers of all sorts. Hachiman is seen as a vassal of either Bishamon or Fukurokujin, depending on the inclinations of the individual offering worship. Hachiman has shrines at the sight of many major battles from the past. His favor is often invoked en masse by an army immediately prior to taking the field.

Hamanri, Fortune of Stability and Government

A bureaucrat who devoted his life to increasing the efficiency of the Imperial government, Otomo Hamanri was quiet and unassuming, with others often taking credit for his innovations and improvements. This did not deter Hamanri, however, who considered duty vastly more important than glory or reward. A magistrate associate of his took it on himself to document Hamanri's various innovations, and after the bureaucrat's death he presented these accounts to the Emerald Champion, who in turn showed them to the Emperor. The Emperor levied stern punishments against many who had exploited the work of the quiet scribe, and elevated Hamanri to the position of Fortune in recognition of his devotion and efficiency.

Haruhiko, Fortune of Fishermen

The tale of Haruhiko is one of inspiration to the lower classes throughout the Empire. Haruhiko began life as a simple peasant, a fisherman who worked tirelessly to feed not only his own family but also others who needed assistance. He never seemed aware of his own poverty, and in one instance shared a fish with a hungry stranger—who turned out to be the Emperor. This particular Emperor had a penchant for wandering the Empire disguised as a peasant to learn more about his people, and for Haruhiko's simple act of kindness the Emperor elevated him to be the Fortune of Fishermen upon his death.

Haruhiko is a rare example of a Fortune who later died—he is killed by Fu Leng during the Dark Kami's assault on the Celestial Heavens in the twelfth century.

Hikora, Fortune of Oak

The Fortune of Oak is a stoic and removed entity, generally entreated by those who dwell in forested regions or who depend on the forest for their livelihood in some way. Carpenters, for example, revere Hikora and the other Fortunes who embody the virtues of wood, offering prayers to them while cutting lumber and constructing wooden goods, asking for durability and beauty.

Hujokuko, Fortune of Fertility

The Fortune of Fertility has few shrines or temples, but is frequently invoked by those who wish to bear children or who have had no success in beginning their own families. She is considered to be a vassal of Benten and many worshippers invoke both divinities at once. Nuns and Shugenja-ko devoted specifically to Hujokuko are rare but extremely popular, always in demand for their rituals and blessings, believed to increase fertility in those who receive them. Hujokuko's adherents are almost invariably female.

Inari, Fortune of Rice

Unquestionably one of the most venerated of all lesser Fortunes, Inari is invoked regularly by virtually every farmer in the entire Empire. Inari is depicted primarily as female, and is considered by most to be a benevolent Fortune—even when harvests are poor it is generally blamed on a more malevolent entity, or simply assumed the farmers failed to be pious enough or to offer a sufficient sacrifice to the Fortune to gain her blessing. Inari's rarely depicted wrathful aspect is known as the Frost Dragon, a creature that brings untimely frosts that can devastate the crops of the arrogant or disobedient.

Isora, Fortune of the Seashore

A lonely and isolated being, Isora's prayers are invoked by sailors who hope to return safely home, as well as by those who dwell along the coastline anywhere in the Empire. Isora is known to be a wrathful Fortune and can devastate those who are loyal to her for no other reason than to sate her periodic flares of anger. Some attribute this to her grief, as it is believed her lover, another Fortune, was eradicated by the Lying Darkness long ago. Even Isora herself cannot fully remember her lost love.

Jikoju, Fortune of the East Wind

Jikoju is one of four lesser Fortunes who are associated with the four directional winds, in this case the East Wind. The connection between these four Fortunes and the long-recognized Fortune of Wind, Kaze-no-Kami, is ill understood. For most of Rokugan's history, monks and clergy believed Jikoju and the other three represented facets of Kaze-no-kami, but following that enigmatic entity's death at the hands of Fu Leng in the twelfth century, the other Fortunes of wind endured, proving they did not exist as mere facets of a larger being. Because the east wind blows from the seas of Rokugan, it is considered a thing of exoticism and mystery, bearing the unknown from whatever lands lie across the seas.

Jizo, Fortune of Mercy

Jizo is an extremely popular Fortune who is most often entreated by those suffering from some malady or another, whether an actual illness or simply bad circumstances. There is some debate among theological circles as to whether Jizo is a unique entity or simply an aspect of Fukurokujin, as no formal records exist of the promotion of any mortal named Jizo to the position of Fortune. Detractors counter this by arguing that Jizo is a primal Fortune who predates the existence of mankind.

Jotei, Fortune of Morning Dew

A Fortune of very little influence by even the most generous estimation, the Fortune of Morning Dew is most famous for his involvement in the creation of the Shrine of Reverse Fortunes. The formerly dilapidated shrine had been devoted to Jotei, but a farmer who happened by misheard and believed it was devoted to Hotei, the Fortune of Contentment. Knowing virtually nothing of proper prayers or rituals, the farmer spent much of his life tending to the shrine and revering the Fortunes for their guidance. Although he eventually discovered he had been invoking the wrong name, he died without regret, having lived a happy life. Jotei blessed the farmer's grave and memory, and in modern times the shrine (now known as the Shrine of Reverse Fortunes) receives many visitors.

Kaze-no-kami, Fortune of Wind

This enigmatic entity is one of the three so-called Unnamed Fortunes, beings with no proper names but rather approximations of their purpose and existence. It is generally believed these three entities are among those Fortunes who existed prior to the development of Rokugan's cosmology, along with the Seven Fortunes and a few other powerful entities such as Inari. Fortunist Monks who devote their study to Kaze-no-kami, known as the Order of Wind, make no effort to understand the object of their worship but simply accept its enigmatic nature.

Kaze-no-kami is killed in the twelfth century during the assault on the gates of Tengoku by the dark god Fu Leng and his demon army.

Kenro-ji-jin, Fortune of Soil

It is possible that there is no other Fortune to whom more shrines are devoted than the Fortune of Soil. Virtually every farmer and gardener in the Empire maintains a small shrine to Kenro-ji-jin near his fields, offering prayers before begin-

ning the day's farming or ending it, and sometimes additional times throughout the day. Kenro-ji-jin is notoriously impartial and it is extremely difficult to gain his attention one way or another, so regular devotions are a must. Kenro-ji-jin is one of many Fortunes involved with producing crops, including Inari, Kuroshin, and Toyoyuki-omikama.

Kisada, Fortune of Persistence

The legendary hero Hida Kisada is remembered for a number of reasons, both successes and failures. Perhaps his most impressive feat, however, came at the end of his life when Fu Leng stabbed him through the stomach with the Ancestral Blade of the Hantei. Despite the terrible wound from a weapon reputed to instantly slay all it struck, Kisada survived another two years, assisting his clan in redeeming itself for its terrible deeds during the Clan War. For this, and for his brilliant tactical mind and service to the Empire (interrupted though it was by tragically poor judgment), Emperor Toturi I declared Kisada the Fortune of Persistence.

Later in the twelfth century, Kisada returns to the mortal realm and regains human flesh, setting aside his divinity as he passes through Oblivion's Gate. He remains with the Crab for several years before falling victim to Scorpion assassins, whereupon he returns to the Celestial Heavens and resumes his duties as a Fortune.

Koji, Fortune of the Kitchen

Sometimes jokingly referred to as the Fortune of Housewives, Koji's likeness is omnipresent in the kitchens of all castes throughout the Empire. Housewives and mothers pray to her with great fervor and regularity, asking her to protect their homes from the ever-present threat of fire, which can devastate even the largest and wealthiest estate. Koji is often depicted as a plump and happy woman with nimble hands. She also oversees the art of cooking, which some artisans consider a ritualized process rivaling the sanctity of the tea ceremony or formal flower arrangement.

Komoku, Fortune of the West Wind

Komoku is the second of the so-called "Four Winds Fortunes," entities associated with the four directional winds of superstition and folklore. Komoku is associated with the west wind, generally regarded as the mildest of the four winds. The western wind is considered the herald of prosperity and early spring, and as such is well-regarded by the superstitious lower classes. The Mantis in particular favor the west wind, as it is the wind that propels their ships home from the mainland to the Islands of Silk & Spice.

Ko-no-hama, Fortune of Flowers

The Fortune of Flowers is a petite and delicate entity, mirroring the plants that are her dominion. She is childlike in appearance and depiction, and is favored by artisans of all sorts, although she is naturally particularly popular among ikebana artists and gardeners. She is a special favorite among the Kakita and Shiba families, who have strong artisan traditions, but all samurai families who embrace the outdoors and natural beauty maintain small and unobtrusive shrines to her in the most beautiful regions of their homelands.

Koshin, Fortune of Roads

Most Rokugani travel infrequently at best, and it is not at all uncommon for many, particularly among the lower castes, to go their entire lives without leaving the boundaries of a particular province. Those who do travel, however, tend to travel rather extensively. The Unicorn and the Miya heralds are among the most prominent such folk, but merchants of all stripes also travel widely, not to mention scouts, magistrates, and tax collectors. Caravan masters frequently maintain small mobile shrines to Koshin to ensure their travels are safe and prosperous.

Kuroshin, Fortune of Agriculture

The Fortune of Agriculture is venerated by farmers, and is closely associated with other Fortunes of similar nature such as Inari, Fortune of Rice, and Kenro-ji-jin, Fortune of Soil, and to a lesser extent Toyouke-omikama, the Fortune of Grain. Kuroshin is an extremely patient and kind Fortune, and will favor all those who are truly pious and patient in taking the time and effort to learn to farm properly. Those who are respectful of their farms, who take pains to ensure each year that the next year's harvest will be as bountiful and the land properly maintained, earn his particular favor. Those who are careless and leave the land depleted or barren, on the other hand, earn his ire. The largest shrines to Kuroshin can be found in the Unicorn and Crane holdings, who boast some of the most fertile plains in the Empire.

Kyufoki, Fortune of Earthquakes

A wrathful and fearsome entity, Kyufoki is sometimes associated with Osano-Wo simply because the two are so well known for visiting their ire on the mortal realm. Unlike Osano-Wo, however, the Fortune of Earthquakes has no favored descendants of his own and shows mercy or leniency to none. Certain regions are known to have the Fortune's particular disfavor and are subject to frequent earthquakes. Earthquake Fish Bay, certain portions of the Spine of the World Mountains, and even the city of Otosan Uchi are among these unfortunate locations.

Megumi, Fortune of Heroic Guidance

Some believe the Fortune of Heroic Guidance is a facet of the Thunder Dragon, the entity widely regarded as the Celestial patron of heroes. This is not the case, although the two entities are bound by fate and mutual purpose to a strong alliance. Megumi is a mischievous entity, prone to interference in mortal affairs in a manner more powerful Fortunes cannot indulge due to the restrictions placed on their power. Megumi likes to appear in mortal form as an aged man, usually from the lower classes, in order to test the worth and honor of samurai. Those who pass his tests are granted his blessings, while those who do not are left to their own devices. Whenever he is in mortal form, Megumi always possesses one item of brilliant blue color, no matter how out of place it might seem.

Although Megumi is well-known for his appearances as an elderly man, he actually appears even more frequently in the form of a crane. For this reason he is very well regarded by the Crane Clan.

Musubu-no-Kami, Fortune of Marriage

The second of the so-called Unnamed Fortunes, Musubu-no-Kami is a primal Fortune intricately bound to the tradition of marriage among mortals. The Fortune has no set form, and can appear as male or female, adorned in any manner one can imagine. Musubu-no-Kami is especially venerated by matchmakers, who invoke its favor in an attempt to ensure the matches they arrange will be both happy and prosperous, not to mention politically beneficial for all parties (although in truth the latter is of the most interest to most matchmakers). It is believed the benevolent influence of this Fortune can lead those who are meant for one another together, and can bring serenity and happiness to even the most cool and dutiful arranged marriages. Benten and Musubu-no-Kami are often associated with each other but not directly connected, since love and marriage are not always the same thing.

The Otomo family particularly venerates Musubu-no-Kami and maintains an enormous and elaborate temple to the entity, invoking its favor in the course of their frequent duty as matchmakers. A major shrine to the Fortune is also maintained in Musume Mura, the town which is home to the Crane Clan's finest matchmakers.

Muzaka, Fortune of Enigmas

As mysterious as might be expected given the nature of his position within the Celestial hierarchy, Muzaka is a Fortune poorly understood by mortal minds and lacks any significant number of devotees. The Fortune of Enigmas is extremely obscure, and typically only theologians and scholars know of his existence; occasionally, however, an individual will have reason to seek out this entity and entreat his favor.

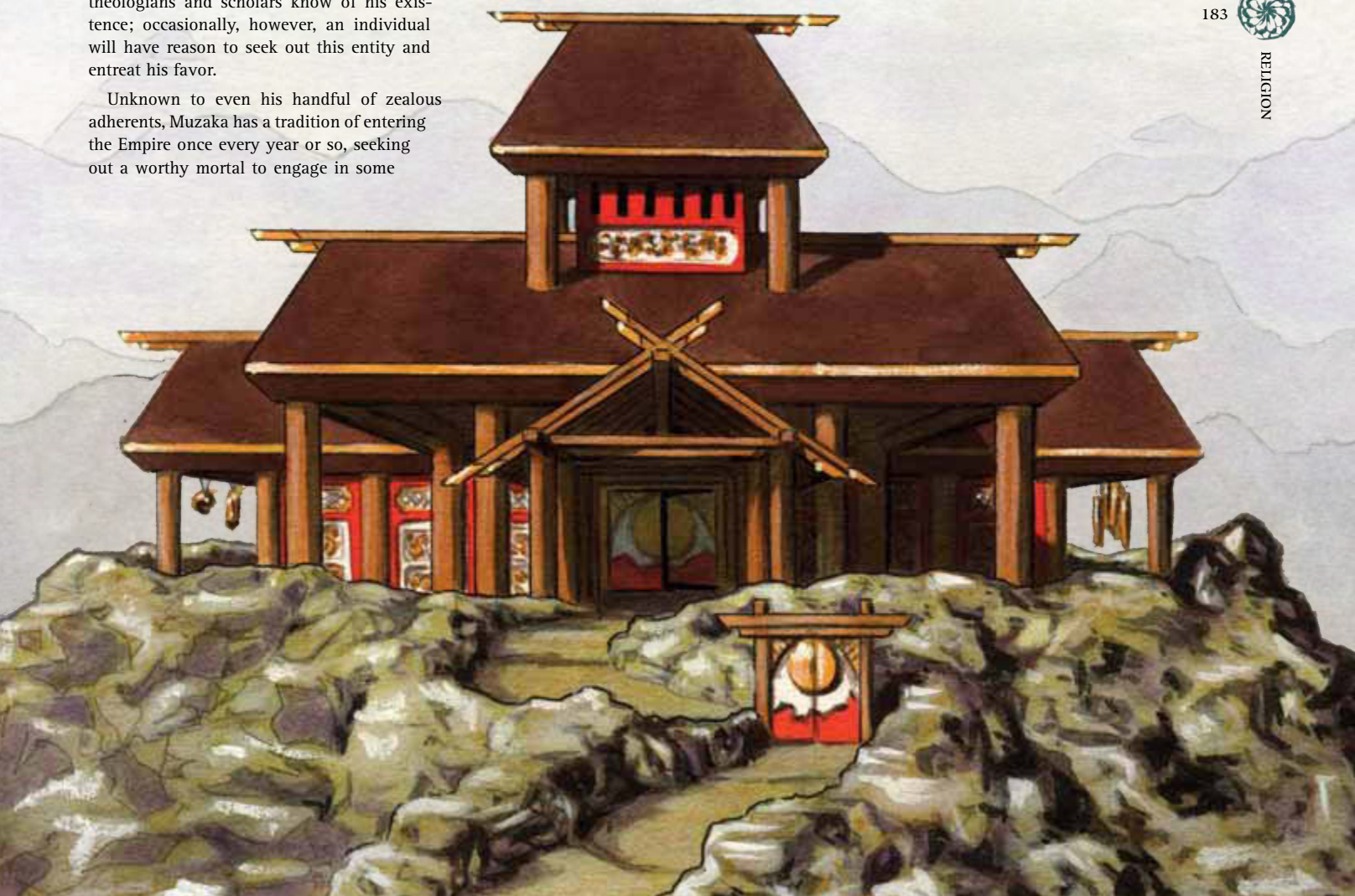
Unknown to even his handful of zealous adherents, Muzaka has a tradition of entering the Empire once every year or so, seeking out a worthy mortal to engage in some sort of contest, usually a game or a competition of riddles. Those who are found truly worthy are granted a vision of things to come, but only as a sense of a fate the individual can alter if he or she chooses a path very carefully. These visions frequently lead to ruin, but the truly strong-willed and intelligent can come through them stronger and more prosperous than before.

Natsu-togumara, Fortune of Travel and Experience

A lesser-known Fortune, Natsu-togumara is considered a patron by those who crave adventure and excitement. More than one samurai who felt trapped in a minor role somewhere in an obscure holding has prayed fervently to the Fortune of Travel and Experience for a greater duty in the Empire. Magistrates often pray for his blessings in order to better fulfill their duties. Those who undertake an artist's journey or the warrior pilgrimage of *musha shugyo* also frequently invoke the name of Natsu-togumara.

Nagiroko-to, Fortune of Forgiveness

The Fortune of Forgiveness is usually invoked by the penitent and the guilty. Those who have committed some shameful act that cannot or will not be forgiven by mortal minds may pray to Nagiroko-to in the hope that she will favor them with her blessing and place forgiveness in the hearts of the wronged parties. The only group known to entreat the Fortune en masse are the Deathseekers of the Lion Clan, who often



pray that their acts of heroic death will bring forgiveness from the spirits of their ancestors.

Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder

Perhaps the most powerful of the mikokami, Osano-Wo was once the mortal Hida Osano-Wo, son of the Kami Hida and his wife, the mortal avatar of the Thunder Dragon. With such lineage Osano-Wo quickly became a great hero and legendary figure among the early Crab. He did not die of old age but instead was murdered; his death was avenged by Kaimetsu-uo, his elder son and the founder of the Mantis Clan. When Kaimetsu-uo assaulted the Phoenix fortification where his father's murderer was hidden, he called on his father and the gates were struck down by lightning, clearly indicating Osano-Wo's favor still held power in the mortal realm. Some have argued that this proved Osano-Wo had already ascended to the Celestial Heavens, but regardless, the Phoenix soon successfully petitioned the Emperor to declare Osano-Wo a Fortune.

Sadahako, Fortune of Geisha and Artists

The existence of a Fortune of Geisha is something of a quiet controversy, primarily because geisha exist on such a low level of the Celestial Order. Although records are somewhat incomplete concerning this matter, it is believed Sadahako was a geisha favored by a member of the Hantei dynasty, so much so that she was elevated to Fortunehood following her death, many years after the association between the two had ended. Possibly in order to forestall controversy, Sadahako was also made the Fortune of Artists, and it is this aspect of her divinity that receives the most attention. Some go so far as to identify her solely as the Fortune of Artists, although most are too pious to omit part of a Fortune's portfolio even if they find it distasteful. Artisans revere Sadahako and pray for her inspiration, particularly among the Kakita and Shiba families.

Saibankan, Fortune of Magistrates and Judges

Soshi Saibankan was a key figure in the Empire's older system of law enforcement, wherein individuals accused of criminal acts were brought before regional officials known as judges for determination of guilt or innocence. Because of his prominence and skill as a judge, Saibankan was approached by an early Emerald Champion, Doji Hatsuo, and together the two developed the justice system that eventually became the Imperial Magistrates, a system which has endured for a thousand years with almost no change whatsoever. Saibankan died one decade after leaving Imperial service, and was promptly elevated to the position of Fortune. Although magistrates and other law enforcement personnel throughout the Empire pray to him daily, he is also the object of prayers from members of the Scorpion Clan who wish for his wisdom and assistance in avoiding detection by the same magistrates Saibankan created.

Sengen, Fortune of Mount Sengen

Sengen is one of the oldest known primal Fortunes, but despite having been identified early on in the Empire's history, little is known about its true function or role in the Celestial Order. Shugenja agree the kami in the area around Mount Sengen are particularly powerful and more receptive to mortal entreaties, but no one knows exactly why other than that it is in some way tied to Sengen's presence. The prevailing theory is that the mountain was in some way involved in important supernatural events prior to the rise of man. When the Naga were briefly awake and active in the twelfth century, Rokugani scholars attempted to discover if the serpent-men had any records of the mountain's unique properties, but the Naga were strangely reluctant to discuss it or to permit the scholars to access their records of that region.

Sudaro, Fortune of Perseverance

Sudaro is a minor Fortune whose place in the heavenly order was somewhat upset by the ascension of Kisada as the Fortune of Persistence. Sudaro lacks the sheer force of will and strength of personality Kisada possesses; although he may perhaps be somewhat resentful of the newcomer's greater prominence in the hearts and minds of the Empire's samurai, he has accepted his role as a kindred spirit, perhaps even somewhat subservient to Kisada due to the latter's vastly greater number of worshipers and adherents. It is a bit ironic that the Fortune of Perseverance has been placed in a difficult position in which he has little choice but to accept his position and persevere.

Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea

The Fortune of the Sea is one of the primal Fortunes, having existed long before mankind was capable of elevation to divinity. Unlike many primal Fortunes, Suitengu has a fixed appearance and always manifests in the same manner: a rather unassuming male samurai with wind-blown hair and robes, a wild wrathful look in his eyes. Suitengu is not a kind or merciful Fortune. Most prayers offered to him are to avoid his wrath rather than to entreat his mercy, for those most familiar with the sea know all too well that Suitengu and the waters he rules are absolutely merciless. Shrines to Suitengu appear all across Rokugan's coastline, and hurricanes are considered at least partially a manifestation of his anger. The largest such shrine appears in Clear Water Village in the Crab lands. A major port of the southern Empire, the city sees hundreds of ships coming and going every day, and thousands of sailors pray and make offerings to Suitengu to seek permission to trespass across his domain.

Tamon, Fortune of the North Wind

Tamon is one of the "Four Wind Fortunes," representing the northern wind. As the embodiment of the northern wind, Tamon is generally associated with the coming of autumn and winter. He is feared by farmers and those who are dependant on the seasons for their livelihood. Of the four winds, Tamon is the most malevolent, whereas Jikoju is the most mysterious.

Tengen, Fortune of Writing and Literature

The Fortune of Writing and Literature is, as might be expected, particularly revered by shugenja and priests throughout the Empire. He is a quiet and reserved figure, remaining largely absent from many of the more prominent displays of the Heavens' power in the mortal realm. He prefers to quietly bless those who seek his favor and prove worthy of it. Tengen is particularly popular among historians and those who create works of fiction, and frequently has shrines in major historical archives and artisan holdings. The largest temple to Tengen was once located in the Ikoma provinces of the Lion

lands, but was destroyed during a war. An ambitious member of the Miya family ensured an even larger shrine was created within the Miya provinces, accomplishing a minor political victory at the expense of the Lion.

In addition to the more common scholars and historians, Tengen is sometimes invoked by spies, scouts, and any others who are dependant on codes and ciphers to protect them from their enemies.

Toku, Fortune of Virtue

The Fortune of Virtue is one of the most famous figures in the Empire's modern history, and one of the greatest anomalies to exist within the Celestial Order. Toku was born a peasant, but desired nothing more than to live the exciting and virtuous life of a samurai. Through an almost absurd combination of fortuitous events, he became a ronin, concealing his true birthright from all others. He joined the army of the outcast Lion Champion, Akodo Toturi, and helped save the Empire from its enemies during the Clan War. After Toturi's ascension to Emperor, he formally granted Toku samurai status, made him captain of the Imperial Guard, and eventually granted him his own Minor Clan, the Monkey.

Upon Toku's death years later, Toturi's son elevated Toku to the status of Fortune of Virtue. In the late twelfth century Toku is revered by thousands across the Empire. He is known as an active and benevolent Fortune, free with his blessings and rare indeed with his condemnation of mortals.

Toyoyuke-omikama, Fortune of Grain

Vastly less revered than Inari, the Fortune of Grain, Toyoyuke-omikama's repute suffers from the fact that grain is raised far less widely than rice throughout the Empire. Bread and other grain products are not terribly popular with most Rokugani, certainly nowhere near as popular as the omnipresent rice. Grain is extremely useful as horse feed, however, so Toyoyuki-omikama is quite popular in the Unicorn lands. The largest temples to him can be found in that part of the Empire. Despite his lesser status, the Fortune of Grain is not resentful of Inari's superior standing in the Celestial Order, accepting his lot and performing his role in the universe as a dutiful Fortune should.

Uzume, Fortune of Dancing

The Fortune of Dance is a carefree and capricious being, often depicted as a joyously laughing young woman—a sharp contrast to many of the more severe and humorless immortals who populate the courts of the Celestial Heavens. Many dances in the Empire are highly structured and ritualized, but just as many are drunken revelries, and Uzume celebrates both with equal fervor and joy. Earning Uzume's wrath is difficult indeed, as she is simply not a wrathful Fortune and prefers to ignore those who eschew dance or who take themselves too seriously.

Xing Guo, Fortune of Steel

Tsi Xing Guo was elevated to the position of Fortune of Steel not by Imperial decree but instead by the will of the Sun and Moon, who appreciated his exquisite craftsmanship and desired his weapons in order to continue their ongoing periodic feud across the skies. He first came to the awareness of the Great Clans in the early twelfth century when he crafted a series of Celestial Swords granted to the Great Clans by the Heavens. Although Tsi Xing Guo allegedly possessed something of a temper in mortal life, he is known as a calm and even-tempered Fortune who is content to focus on his craft and do what is asked of him. He is revered by families with strong smithing traditions, such as the Kaiu of the Crab and the Dragon Clan's Tamori, as well as the Tsi family itself. He is also favored by bushi, who pray for his blessings on their weapons as they prepare for battle.

Yama-no-kami, Fortune of Stone

The third of the Unnamed Fortunes is by far the most mysterious of the three, and one whose existence raises more questions about the entire triad of primal Fortunes. Yama-no-kami appears to have chosen to be forgotten by the majority of mortals, for what reason no one can say. A very small sect of monks, the Order of Stone, tend to his one and only known temple, which exists deep within the mountains, far outside normal travel routes, and well away from the holdings of all the Great Clans. Complicating what is known about the Unnamed Fortunes is the Order of Stone's insistence that Yama-no-kami once had a name, but allowed it to be forgotten for reasons they will not reveal to outsiders.

Yozo, Fortune of Vengeance

Certainly one of the most unique Fortunes in Rokugan's cosmology, the Fortune of Vengeance was once a mortal shugenja named Yozo. He retired to a monastery at the traditional age despite many misgivings about the unfulfilled aspects of his life. Yozo took a new name to reflect his new life, but never abandoned his research and curiosity. Years later, in a moment of frustration, weakness, and regret, he committed an unforgiveable act and summoned an oni. Immediately afterward he was filled with regret and self-loathing, and he destroyed the beast, banishing it back to the depths of Jigoku. Filled with remorse, Yozo left the monastery and spent the rest of his life tirelessly fighting against corruption and evil within the Empire. Upon his death years later, his spirit spontaneously ascended to Tengoku as the Fortune of Vengeance. Unfortunately, a fragment of his soul remained with the demon he had created, and when Fu Leng assaulted the gates of the Celestial Heavens in the twelfth century, the demon was among his followers. It consumed numerous smaller Fortunes and was ultimately destroyed in combat with Yozo, who likewise perished. The fate of the mortal Yozo's soul is unknown, and this entire incident is completely unprecedented in Rokugani theology.

Zocho, Fortune of the South Wind

The last of the so-called "Four Winds Fortunes," Zocho is the embodiment of the south wind, a wind generally well regarded because it heralds the coming of the summer, the growing season and the time of many early harvests. Although not as feared as Tamon, who brings the harsh northern winds that herald winter, Zocho is still somewhat feared by the people of Rokugan because the summer winds can also bring fierce summer storms, not to mention that samurai consider summer the season of war. The Mantis respect Zocho for his storms, and while the famers of the Empire do not have as much reason to fear his arrival as his northern counterpart, they still seek to avoid his wrath and attempt to placate him by whatever means possible.

The Celestial Dragons

The Celestial Dragons are entities of incredible power and influence who hold dominion over the substance of the universe itself. In a very real way, all matter governed by a dragon's aligned element can be considered a part of that dragon, although the ties between them are not sufficient to cause harm. The kami who occupy physical materials are generally associated with the dragons as well, and it is possible the dragons actually created them. Most theologians reject this and believe the kami were created at the same time as the dragons, during the forging of the mortal world by Lady Sun and Lord Moon.

- **The Air Dragon** is capricious and whimsical, or at least as close to such a description as a celestial entity can truly be. Air is easily the most curious of all the dragons, and is known to visit the mortal realm with greater frequency than the others, often taking an innocuous form in order to witness important events. The dragon is also believed to be the patron of prophets and visionaries, and some believe it whispers hints of the future into the ears of those who are best equipped to hear and understand them.
- **The Earth Dragon** has no trace of the curiosity that marks the Air Dragon's character. Earth is not interested in the goings-on of the mortal realm or the activities of humankind in any way, but instead is content merely to exist as is its mandate in the Celestial Order, taking only what actions in the mortal realm are necessary due to its position in the heavenly hierarchy. Perhaps because it offers its blessings so infrequently, the Earth Dragon's favor tends to manifest itself in a very significant way, and those who receive its attention find themselves changed forever by it.
- **The Fire Dragon** is a popular figure in the mythology and literary history of the Emerald Empire. Fire is the only dragon that spends more time within the mortal realm than it does in the Celestial Heavens, as its interests in Ningen-do are even greater than the simple curiosity of the Air Dragon. The Fire Dragon is seen as a force of change, creation, and destruction. It is rightly feared by many, but it rarely if ever takes any direct action in the world of men, preferring instead to inspire others to a course of action. This extends to creative endeavors as well as war, and many artists consumed with a passion for their work are said to bear the Fire Dragon's blessings.
- **The Water Dragon** is mercurial and ever-changing, and has perhaps the least regard for humans of any of the dragons. It is not hostile toward them, simply disinterested. There are occasional exceptions to this, of course, and in the case of those exceptions the dragon is very active toward those few humans who capture its attention. The majority of the time, however, it simply ignores them altogether. Water is associated with movement, transformation, and sometimes warfare, leading to some degree of overlap between its areas of influence and those of the Fire Dragon.
- **The Void Dragon** is as enigmatic as might be expected of an entity that simultaneously embodies everything and nothing. Void is strangely enough the dragon with the most vested interest in the mortal realm, and while it may not spend the same amount of time there as the Air and Fire Dragons do, it does spend a very considerable amount of time watching over events there. It communicates with mortals with much greater frequency than the other dragons. Because humans embody all elements simultaneously, the Void Dragon feels a great connection with them, and looks on them

The Shadow Dragon

There is one more dragon that warrants mention: the insidious entity known as the Shadow Dragon. In the twelfth century, when the forces of Rokugan fought against the Lying Darkness at the site of the ancient artifact known as Oblivion's Gate, the Air Dragon sacrificed itself to aid in securing victory for the Empire. Corrupted by the Taint and consumed by the power of the Lying Darkness, the dragon became something completely different: the Shadow Dragon. The Shadow Dragon is the avatar of Nothing, the power that fueled the Lying Darkness. It is sometimes at least nominally allied with the Lost (and later the Spider Clan), but is highly secretive and always keeps its own goals to itself. It is known for putting plans into motion that take years or decades to come to fruition, and its motivations are both mystifying and deeply suspect. The remnants of the old Goju family are its vassals, and while the survivors of the Ninube family believe they have free will, in truth they serve it as well.

as favored vassals—at least as much as such a thing is possible for one of the great dragons.

- **The Celestial Dragon** was a mystery to mortals through most of history, and its existence was only confirmed in the twelfth century. The Celestial Dragon is forever apart from its kin, for it holds the Celestial Heavens aloft from the mortal world on its mighty back. It is the guardian of the Heavens and its tail touches down in the mortal world near the city of Otosan Uchi so the spirits of deceased Emperors can follow the Dragon Road up its spine to the Heavens, taking their place with the other members of the Heavenly Court. It is believed that the Celestial Dragon moved its tail after the Imperial Capital relocated to Toshi Ranbo, since Emperors continued to ascend promptly to the Heavens after that date.
- **The Jade Dragon** began its existence as a relatively minor entity, but rose through the ranks of the Celestial hierarchy with amazing speed. Jade is essentially one half of a dragon, comprising all that is pure and virtuous in the mortal world; its sibling Obsidian exists as its opposite number. Because of the duality of their nature and their ties to the original Lady Sun and Lord Moon, Jade and Obsidian rose to the position of Sun and Moon when the communal will of the Celestial Heavens rejected the rule of Yakamo and Hitomi, the mortals who had ascended to the positions of Sun and Moon after the War Against the Darkness.
- **The Obsidian Dragon** is the opposite side of Jade, representing all that is sinful and dishonorable in the mortal realm without succumbing to the corrupting influence of other realms. The Obsidian Dragon was born from the remnants of Lord Moon's power, born on the place where his avatar in the mortal realm perished, as a counter to the imbalance created by Jade, who is the favor of Lady Sun made manifest. Just as the Jade Dragon eventually rose to become the Jade Sun, the Obsidian Dragon eventually ascended to the post of Obsidian Moon.
- **The Thunder Dragon** is not truly a creature born of storm, even though its name clearly implies otherwise. Thunder represents the potential in every mortal's soul for strength, courage, and power, and the potential for greatness those traits imply. Students of Rokugan's cosmology see the Thunder Dragon as the patron of heroes, and that is an accurate statement, for this dragon exists to foster hope and courage in the hearts of mortals. Its oracle, the Oracle of Thunder, is the most active of all oracles, actively encouraging mankind to overcome adversity and become greater through facing challenges and threats.

Shintao

Almost everyone in Rokugan knows that the religion called Shintao was born out of the words of Shinsei, the "little teacher," the prophet who changed the fate of the Empire in the course of a single night. Rokugan was crumbling under the onslaught of Fu Leng's mighty armies, and even the mighty forces of Akodo and Hida could do no more than delay the onslaught of the Shadowlands horde. It was in this dire hour that Shinsei appeared in the capital and requested an audience with Hantei, claiming he knew a way to vanquish

The Emperor and the Mendicant: Quotations from the Tao

The meeting between Hantei and Shinsei has passed into legend, and no doubt would have done so even if Shiba had not transcribed the event. It is simply too compelling a premise—the god-become-Emperor eagerly receiving the counsel of a wandering mystic of uncertain background. The meeting and associated discussion remain a topic of keen study, and a subject of plays and poems.

There are many famous quotes from the Tao that have passed into common parlance in Rokugan. The following are some of the more commonly quoted excerpts, those known to most Rokugani who have made any study of theology.

"The more corrupt the soul, the more painful it becomes to look upon the pure. So it is with crystal and jade and the creatures of the Dark Lands. Remember this, Hantei, for it will one day save your life."

The Emperor asked: "How do I find enlightenment?" Shinsei replied: "I do not know." The Emperor persisted: "But you found it." Shinsei replied: "How does that mean I know how you will find it?"

"If a general is wise, he knows that a single man can halt an entire army."

"The higher you stand above modesty, the easier it becomes to lose your footing."

When asked the meaning of dreams, Shinsei said: "If only men put so much thought into what they see when they are awake."

"Do not be wary of men who take risks with titles and land; be wary of men with nothing to lose."

"When you are gone," asked Hantei, "where will I find wisdom such as yours?" Shinsei replied: "In rice cakes."

"I am only the ladle and the Way is the well. When you are not thirsty, is your mind on the ladle or the well?"

"When you are doing one thing, be concerned with that one thing and nothing else. Distraction breeds disaster."

"Wherever there is light, there must be shadow."

Shinsei said: "What binds you?" The Emperor replied: "No one binds me—I am the Emperor." Shinsei smiled: "A contradiction in itself."

"Those with pure purpose have the strength to never fail."

The Emperor said: "I have a question." Shinsei replied: "I have an answer." The Emperor said: "But you do not know my question." Shinsei said: "You do not know my answer."

When the night had ended, and Shiba showed what he had written to Shinsei, the little prophet lifted one of the pages and asked, "Do you know what this is, Shiba?" The Phoenix Kami replied, "A record of your talk." Shinsei shook his head. "No. To you, this is only the present, a single evening's labor to be passed on to another for transcription. But to those who will come later, this is history. Mistakes made, glories hallowed, battles won and lost... lessons learned. You cannot appreciate history, because you will live forever."

Fu Leng. Although Shinsei's past was shrouded in mystery—even to this day no one truly knows where he came from, or where he went later—Hantei agreed to meet with him. The two spent long hours conversing, and Hantei was stunned by the wisdom of the old man's words. By morning the first Emperor had agreed to Shinsei's plan, and the Little Teacher soon won over the support of the other seven Kami as well.

Shinsei and the seven mortals known as the Thunders—Hida Atarasi, Doji Konishiko, Mirumoto, Matsu, Isawa, Shosuro, and Otaku—journeyed to the Shadowlands and defeated Fu Leng. Although all but one of the Thunders died, Shinsei survived and returned to the Empire along with the sole surviving Thunder, Shosuro. Shinsei disappeared soon after, further adding to the mystery surrounding the prophet, but none ever doubted he had been blessed with unearthly knowledge and unsurpassed wisdom. His fate remains a mystery.

The Kami Shiba scribed Shinsei's conversation with Hantei, along with many of his discussions with the other Kami. These writings became the basis for the work known as Shinsei's *Tao*. Shiba gave these scrolls to the Isawa family, who meticulously studied them for many years afterward. None of them were able to find any flaw in its wisdom. Even the most conservative among them, those who were at first fervently opposed to the philosophies and revelations in the *Tao*, could not deny that the text contained mysteries that had until now escaped mankind.

The Emperor proclaimed the wisdom found in the *Tao* of Shinsei was too important to be kept secret, and he commanded each of the Great Clans to study what became the foremost religious text in the Empire. Even the Lion, who rejected the *Tao*'s teachings of peace and enlightenment, display copies of the sacred tome in every dojo.

The Tao and the Early Brotherhood

When Shiba wrote the *Tao* of Shinsei, Rokugan already had an established religion which predated even the fall of the Kami. Before the *Tao* the Rokugani already paid tribute to powerful beings known as the Fortunes. The most important of these were the Seven Fortunes, but many lesser deities called *mikokami* were also worshipped throughout the land. This religion, Fortunism, did not share many of the principles and beliefs expressed by Shinsei. As the followers of the Tao became gradually more numerous and the new faith grew more influential, rivalry developed between the two religions.

Fearing the rent between the old religion and the new would cause dissension within the Empire, the second Emperor, Hantei Genji, issued an imperial edict that officially merged the two faiths. The Emperor took great care to make sure the two religions merged into a single philosophical and institutional structure, which he called Shintao. His servants worked diligently to that end. Members of the Phoenix Clan helped in great part to create this new religious philosophy, which they embraced more enthusiastically than the other clans.

Even in the early days of the Empire, both religions already had established a good number of shrines and temples, and one major consequence of the Emperor's edict was to meld these monastic systems into the so-called Brotherhood of Shinsei. However, even in the early days of the Brotherhood, it soon became evident that this organization would never be a homogenous group. For starters, the monks in the early days had to find ways of making two very different philosophies work together. They had to respect the old worship of the

Fortunes and all the traditions bound to this faith, while at the same time trying to understand and embrace the knowledge and wisdom contained in the *Tao*. Furthermore, the wisest among them differed in how to interpret the *Tao* itself. Mortals seldom have the same memory, opinion, or understanding of past events—even those moments they have all shared—and have innumerable ways of seeing the world around them. In no time at all divergent interpretations emerged of the same passages in the *Tao*. Eventually, the monks of the Brotherhood decided true unity of opinion would be impossible; instead, they embraced several different interpretations within the overall rubric of Shintao.

This divergence in interpreting the *Tao* inevitably led to another important question: how should the Brotherhood interact with the world around them? There were, of course, as many answers to this question as they were ways to view the *Tao* itself. Eventually, however, two primary philosophical views emerged.

The first view, often called **ascetic**, argued that the mortal world was a distraction from Shinsei's wisdom, so those seeking true enlightenment should practice self-denial and withdrawal, allowing the hand of destiny to guide the mortal world. The monks who embraced this interpretation concluded they should have as little to do with mankind and civilization as possible, and argued the Brotherhood should be a reclusive organization that would teach by example but never meddle in worldly affairs. They also tended to embrace pacifism, often to the point of taking oaths against ever committing violence for any reason.

The opposing philosophy, sometimes called **worldly** Shintao, offered a much more proactive approach. The monks who adhered to this doctrine argued that nothing could be truly learned or taught without engaging the world on its own terms. They suggested the Brotherhood should not only be deeply involved in the Empire's affairs but that they should actually strive to be the force guiding the Empire toward wisdom and understanding. These monks still eschew aggressive violence, but are often quite willing to take physical action in the defense of what they believe is right.

Such divergent opinions about the meaning of the sacred text and the place of the Brotherhood in the world could be expected to doom the organization, but this proved not to be the case. The monks of the Brotherhood had a great many things in common. Most importantly, they all believed in the wisdom held in the *Tao* of Shinsei, which emphasized the importance of peace and harmony. The early monks embraced these ideals and accepted that divergent opinions need not lead to conflict, and thus were able to remain united despite their widely divergent philosophies. Instead of forging a single conformist order which imposed the same philosophy everywhere, the Brotherhood of Shinsei created several different sects, each free to pursue its respective interpretations, philosophies, practices, and studies. In effect, the Brotherhood of Shinsei became a coalition of different sects with different approaches, while remaining united toward a single goal: to bring peace and harmony to the world through the search for enlightenment.

Although they take different paths, the monks of the different Brotherhood sects respect their brethren as allies in the pursuit of peace and enlightenment. All followers of Shintao believe in the sacred words of Shinsei. They study the *Tao* of the Little Teacher, interpret the meaning of his words, and do their best to follow his wisdom.

The Tale of Two Monks

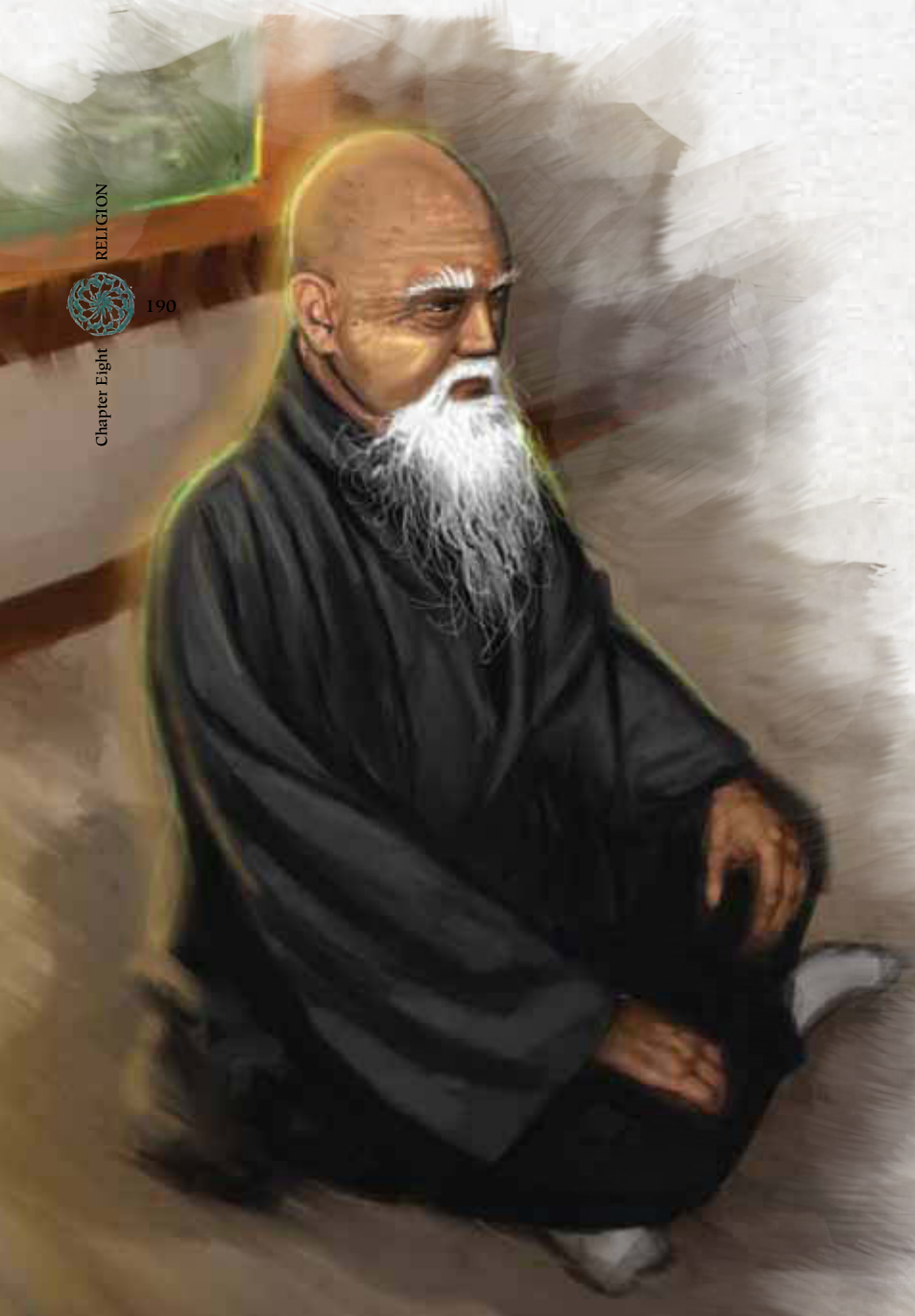
A popular Rokugani story tells of two monks who undertake a journey from one monastery to another. One of them adheres to the worldly philosophy, while the other is an ascetic. Midway through their journey, they come to a ford in a river. While they are preparing to cross, a pretty peasant girl approaches the river and looks apprehensively at the swift waters. The ascetic monk turns away, unwilling to let the sight of earthly beauty distract him from his quest for enlightenment. The worldly monk, in contrast, steps forward and volunteers to carry the girl across the ford on his back.

After they cross the ford, the two monks travel on, and the ascetic scolds his companion. "You should not have carried that girl," he says. "The desires of the flesh are a dangerous distraction. How could you place yourself in the path of temptation like that?"

The worldly monk replies with a smile. "I set her down at the riverside. Why are you still carrying her?"

Shintaoist Philosophy and Influences

According to Shinsei, the building blocks of the Rokugani universe are the Five Rings, comprising the four basic Elements of Air, Earth, Fire, and Water, plus the least understood of the Elements, Void. The Little Teacher taught the people of Rokugan that everything in the universe was composed of these five Elements. This revolutionary new comprehension of the world unlocked many secrets, from the ways of shugenja magic to the skill of meditation and the new fighting and healing techniques that could now be developed with this key understanding. The basic principle of Shintao is that everything, no matter how trivial it might seem, is not only a part of the universe but a fundamental piece of a much greater whole. Shintao thus teaches men to live in harmony with the world about them, to respect the spirits of nature and to seek harmony of the soul—the strange and elusive state known as enlightenment.



Because Shinsei was a man of peace and study, many of those who embrace Shintao are also scholars or pacifists, often of a mystical or ascetic nature—especially among the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

The *Tao* showed the Isawa an entirely new way to practice their magic, allowing them to see the universe in a new way. For the first time, they felt they truly understood the fundamental nature of all things and dedicated themselves to the study and understanding of the Five Elements. This caused a veritable revolution in their magical studies, as they abandoned the primitive traditional blood magic which they had practiced since long before the fall of the Kami. In its place they developed a new kind of magic that had never been seen before in the world. They completely changed the way they interacted with the kami, the elemental spirits in all things, and learned to communicate with them, convincing the spirits to do their bidding. Perhaps more importantly, they also learned to respect the elemental kami for what they were: intricate and essential parts of the fabric of the universe. Since the Emperor commanded the Tao be distributed among all the Great Clans, all of the Empire's shugenja were able to learn these new secrets, although the Isawa were the first to master them. Ever since, shugenja magic has followed the principles found in the *Tao* of Shinsei, and most shugenja are fervent adherents to the religion.

A shugenja who devotes himself to the study and practice of Shintao can further his understanding of the kami and strengthen the bonds he shares with them. Indeed, by treating the kami as honored allies, the shugenja is able to convince them to produce more powerful and longer-lasting effects, enhancing his spells. Shugenja adepts of Shintao also try to adhere to its fundamental principles of peace and harmony, and the Phoenix Clan in particular is famed for its pacifism. Other shugenja families and schools also embrace the peaceful ways of the *Tao*, especially the Crane Clan's Asahina family, whose ranks include monks as well.

Practices and Temples of the Brotherhood

The monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei strive to understand the wisdom of his words and to purify themselves, body and soul, as they seek toward enlightenment. Monks are not merely students of the *Tao*, however, and they do not all spend their days meditating in silence in the hope of one day reaching some new level of awareness—although in some sects this can be literally true. The monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei also govern and administer the Empire's foremost religion, and take it on themselves to teach the ways of Shinsei to all Rokugani and to care for countless temples and shrines all across the land. Almost every town and village, even the smallest, has one or two monks caring for the local shrines and tending to the spiritual needs of the peasants. Mendicant monks travel across the Empire,

surviving on donations while spreading the teachings of Shinsei to all who will listen.

Monks come from all walks of life. Some are retired samurai, while many others are recruited from the peasantry—orphans in particular are often collected and raised by the Brotherhood, allowing them to live and pursue enlightenment instead of perishing from starvation. Once a samurai shaves his head and becomes a monk, he is treated no differently from any other member of the Brotherhood, and is expected to join his new brothers in contemplation, the pursuit of enlightenment, and the forswearing of worldly gains and pleasures. Of course, not all samurai can let go of their past lives so easily, and during times of crisis or war it is not uncommon for retired samurai to don their armor and return to the service of their clan. Similarly, while all monks are brothers together in the pursuit of enlightenment, their former lives can still affect their relations toward one another—a retired samurai may find it difficult to let go of a certain sense of pride and self-importance, in sharp contrast to those who have been raised to the Brotherhood's ways from childhood.

There are several major temples within the Brotherhood of Shinsei that focus on studying the words of the Little Teacher, but the **Temple of the Seven Thunders**, probably the largest sect in the Brotherhood, is the most wholeheartedly devoted to the *Tao*. The monks of this order primarily study the sacred text, leaving the worship of the Fortunes to other orders, such as the Temple of Osano-Wo and the Temple of the Thousand Fortunes. Monks of the Seven Thunders value Shinsei's teachings above all else, and strongly believe that the mortal soul is a force that can alter the course of the universe—one of Shinsei's sayings that has become a popular dictum among them. They tend to remain withdrawn from the affairs of the Empire's samurai and are known for their reclusiveness and lack of conventional etiquette.

By contrast, those monks who belong to the **Temple of the Thousand Fortunes** seek reconciliation between the words of the Little Teacher and the wisdom of the Fortunes, although the traditional worship of the Fortunes remains their primary focus. They tend to be both ascetic and highly educated, believing that only the refinement and perfection of the mind can lead to true enlightenment.

The devotees of the **Temple of Osano-Wo**, also known as the Temple of Thunder, likewise follow both the ways of the *Tao* and the worship of the Fortunes, but focus their studies and worship specifically on the Fortune Osano-Wo, the first mortal ever to ascend to the position of Fortune. These monks tend to be of the worldly persuasion, believing the body is essential in order to interact with the physical world, and although they view the study of the spirit and the ability to communicate with the kami as admirable disciplines and qualities, they prefer to explore the mortal world while they are themselves incarnated in mortal flesh. They are among the most martial students of the Brotherhood of Shinsei and their

False Paths

The Shinmaki order represents one of the most extreme approaches to enlightenment that is still tolerated within the Brotherhood of Shinsei. However, sometimes genuinely heretical or blasphemous sects arise, and the Brotherhood's policy of toleration can often allow them to survive for a considerable time. For example, in the late twelfth century the Spider Clan takes advantage of the Brotherhood's tolerance to new sects to create and spread its own heretical monastic group, the Order of the Spider. Usually, however, these groups are eventually identified as False Paths, rooted out from the Brotherhood, and eradicated.

Those who walk a False Path may well destroy themselves and those around them, and often resist being told they are in error. Aside from the Order of the Spider, earlier eras have produced dozens of other False Paths, some of them small and weak, others large and powerful. Some of these sects even succumb to the lure of maho or the seductive whispers of the Shadowlands Taint. For example, the ancient Anshin sect of the Brotherhood embraced a heretical worship of Onnotangu, Lord Moon, following grotesque practices such as human sacrifice. This perversion of proper Fortunist worship quickly drew the attention of malignant *kansen* (evil spirits) whose dark whispers completed the transformation of the Anshin sect into the murderous Cult of Lord Moon. The Cult endured for many years before finally being purged from the Brotherhood; lingering remnants of its heretical faith still pop up from time to time in the modern Empire.

Monastic Rank

Most orders of the Brotherhood of Shinsei observe a structure in which the older and more experienced members receive the most respect and obedience. However, unlike the rest of Rokugan, as a general rule they do not have an elaborate hierarchy of formal titles. Junior members of an order simply refer to their seniors as "Sensei," with the head of a monastery being called an "Abbott" (or "Abbess" for nuns) and the leader of an entire monastic order holding the title of "Grand Master."

In game terms, a monk should properly address as "Sensei" any monk of the same order whose Insight Rank is at least 1 higher than his.

The only vanities monks allow themselves in this regard are a set of titles that are sometimes granted to particularly accomplished monks when they demonstrate great knowledge and mastery of the Elements. Table 8.1 lists these titles and their corresponding Elements. A monk who has a Rank of 5 in all of the qualifying

Rings may assume that title.

Table 8.1: Advanced Monastic Ranks

Title	Elemental Rings at 5 or Higher
Master of Clouds	Fire, Water
Master of the Heavenly Mountain	Earth, Fire
Master of the Hidden Mountain	Earth, Water
Master of the Inner Crucible	Earth, Fire, Water
Master of the Gathering Storm	Air, Fire, Water

ranks tend to attract those who embrace the way of the *sohei* (see "Brotherhood Disciplines" below).

The monks of the **Temple of Kaimetsu-Uo** believe defensive action and non-violence are the best paths to enlightenment (somewhat in contrast to the rough-and-ready Mantis founder for whom their order is named). They include both ascetic monks who remain cloistered for study and worldly monks who travel the Empire promoting reconciliation and compromise among all Rokugani.

The name of the **Four Temples** order refers originally to the cluster of temples and monasteries near Kyuden Seppun, outside the first Imperial capital Otosan Uchi. Of course, in the centuries since its founding this branch of the Brotherhood has opened temples all over the Empire, and after the destruction of Otosan Uchi it constructs a major new temple within Toshi Ranbo. The monks of this order tend to be of the worldly view, and believe enlightenment can only be found by going forth and living among others. These monks are the most at home in normal society and are also the ones most likely to be found serving as advisors to generals, daimyo, and other powerful figures within the samurai caste.

In addition to these major sects there are many smaller temples and local monastic orders which have their own followers, such as the **Order of Heroes** (described in the L5R RPG 4th Edition core rulebook's *Book of Water*). New sects of this sort are constantly arising, growing, shrinking, or disappearing within the Brotherhood's ranks. One of the stranger but more persistent groups are the **Shinmaki** monks, followers of an obscure text called the Diamond Sutra written by a monk named Basso. The Diamond Sutra teaches that Shinsei and the Seven Thunders were one and the same being, and the Seven Thunders were actually avatars of Shinsei from earlier (and later) cycles of the universe. The Shinmaki order is extremely small and elitist, and admits new members only occasionally. Each new member faces a different initiation ritual, and some are granted entrance with only minor requirements while others may undergo physical or spiritual ordeals. Shinmaki monks believe the Diamond Sutra is an encoded source of Shinsei's true wisdom; they live in small, isolated monasteries and spend countless hours meditating on the various Thunders, with whom they can supposedly commune directly

once they attain a sufficient level of enlightenment. Some Rokugani also claim they engage in truly bizarre practices such as meditating in the presence of dead bodies, or copying prayers onto dried flesh. Whether this is true or not, there is no denying that Shinmaki monks disregard almost all Rokugani social conventions, and treat samurai and hinin alike with equal familiarity and honesty.

Brotherhood Disciplines

Although traditionally all Brotherhood monks belong to a specific temple order (such as the Temple of Osano-Wo), they are also divided in their philosophical approaches. The largest divide is between those monks who follow the worldly path and those who prefer the ascetic approach, but there are also a number of more specific distinctions in how monks pursue their studies and the way to enlightenment. These are differences in approach rather than of belief, however, so it is possible (though unusual) to find sohei warrior monks in a relatively peaceable order such as the Four Temples, or a questioner monk among the followers of Osano-Wo.

Monks who follow the *Lotus* discipline are devoted to a specific religious *sutra* (religious document) known as the Eight Petals of the Lotus. They focus on emptying their minds through meditation and repeating the Lotus sutras over and over, purging improper thoughts and emotions. Many of them believe a single perfect utterance of the Lotus sutra is enough to attain enlightenment. Monks of this discipline are most likely to be found in orders such as the Thousand Fortunes and the Seven Thunders, and are rarest in worldly orders such as the Four Temples and the Order of Thunder.

Questioners are monks who believe one must look completely beyond the physical world, denying all needs of the body and questioning reality itself in order to become enlightened. They are ascetics, even more so than other monks of that type, but also tend to be friendly and mischievous, always trying to shatter others' preconceptions to help them along the road to enlightenment. Questioners are found in all orders of the Brotherhood but tend to be most common among the monks of the Seven Thunders and the Order of Kaimetsu-Uo.

Shintao monks are those who believe enlightenment is attained by discarding all notion of self, purging any kind of egotism or self-examination. These monks forsake scholarly study in favor of pure meditation. Unsurprisingly, they are found most frequently in the Order of the Seven Thunders, but may be encountered in any sect that focuses on Shinseist

teachings over Fortunist worship. The most extreme monks of this sort are favorite recruits for the Shinmaki sect.

Sohei are warrior monks who focus on strengthening the body and studying fighting techniques in order to purify themselves and defend the Brotherhood from its enemies. Many of them also devote themselves to protecting the common people of Rokugan, especially in regions where samurai are scarce (or deficient in their duties). Sohei tend to wear cloth wrappings that cover their bodies and heads, and many of them ritually scar themselves as a form of mastery over the weaknesses of the flesh. Sohei are most common by far in the Order of Osano-Wo, which is dominated by their practices, but may be encountered in other sects as well. The sinister Order of the Spider is a dark and twisted perversion of the sohei tradition.

The term *Yamabushi* (or "mountain warrior") is sometimes used by samurai when referring to certain martial traditions within the Dragon Clan, but the Brotherhood uses it to refer to those monks who forsake the conventional temples in order to dwell within the Empire's remote hills, forests, and mountains. Some of them are hermits who dwell alone, pursuing their path to enlightenment without distractions; others form small monasteries in the remote peaks and valleys of the Spine of the World and Great Wall of the North mountain ranges. Yamabushi monks may be either worldly or ascetic, and are best known for their acute connection to the elements and their highly physical nature. They are most common in the Order of the Seven Thunders, the Order of Osano-Wo, and the Order of the Thousand Fortunes. Few if any of the monks from the Four Temples or the Order of Kaimetso-Uo follow this discipline. The Brotherhood's various Elemental Masters (see "Monastic Rank" sidebar nearby) are most often Yamabushi monks.

Fortunism

Fortunism is the oldest religion in Rokugan, a tradition that has truly stood the test of time. Long before the dawn of the Empire, before the rise of Fu Leng and the Shadowlands, before the prophet Shinsei and the Day of Thunder, even before the fall of the Kami, the distant ancestors of the Rokugani worshipped the Fortunes. These powerful but often enigmatic beings play a vitally important role both in the universe as a whole and in the lives of mortals. The Rokugani continue to pay homage to these beings in modern times, samurai and peasants alike. Although the faith has slightly altered over the centuries, especially after the advent of Shinseism, Fortunism remains fundamentally the same as in its origins, and is a hugely important part of the overall religious belief system of the people of Rokugan.

Many sages believe Fortunism originated in the lost city of Gisei Toshi. This ancient settlement, built and maintained by the great sorcerer Isawa and his tribe, is now long gone but remains an important part of the Phoenix Clan's history. The site

of Gisei Toshi is now a major Phoenix holding, and whether or not Fortunism actually originated from there, the religion certainly had deep roots in the ancient city. Artifacts, legends, and archaic written records from that era prove that Fortune worship held a crucial place in the hearts of its residents, and no one doubts this practice was already widespread when the Kami fell from Tengoku. In fact, many modern sites dedicated to the worship of the Fortunes date back to before the creation of the Empire.

The Fortunist religion refers to those it worships as the Thousand Fortunes, though their actual number is far greater—"Thousand" is simply a suitably impressive large number. These deities included the Sun and Moon (in their various forms), the Seven Fortunes, and the countless other mikokami (Lesser Fortunes) who inhabit the Heavens and every part of the known world, whether it be within the cold heart of a rock, the dark depths of a river, the delicate petal of a flower, or the sharp edge of a knife. This type of worship was referred to as "the way of the gods," and for years uncounted it was the only religion known to mankind.

The Thousand Fortunes are still worshipped today, but in the early days of the Empire the followers of this ancient religion had to find a way to incorporate the wisdom of Shinsei's *Tao* into their belief system. Up to that time the actual practices of the ritual worship of the Fortunes had not changed for centuries, but the religion was slightly altered in the years that followed Hantei Genji's edict that Fortunism and Shintao should merge. By merging the two into one, Hantei Genji not only lessened the risks of dissension in the Empire's religious community but also created a religion which could encompass several different philosophies and practices. Since the two religions shared some common principles, particularly their reverence for the elemental spirits, the edict was respected and obeyed by the followers and monks of both groups, who became part of the same monastic brotherhood. The monks worked together to find ways to integrate the ideals and principles of both faiths into one. Thus, hundreds of years after the second Emperor's edict, the central beliefs and rituals associated with the worship of the Fortunes remain relatively unchanged from the religion Rokugan's ancestors followed so long ago.

Although there are literally thousands of Fortunes, not all of them have the same power and influence upon the mortal realm. Aside from the Sun and Moon, the most important of these entities are commonly referred to as the Seven Fortunes. These are universally recognized as the most powerful beings who take an interest in the daily lives of mortals, though they work in subtle and often incomprehensible ways. In fact, the activities of the Seven Fortunes are seldom directly recognized for what they are, since these beings only rarely intervene directly in the affairs of men.

The Seven Fortunes hold an important place in the Celestial Order and are worshipped throughout the Empire. All major cities have temples dedicated to them, maintained by devoted monks and clan shugenja. The main holy sites of the Seven Fortunes receive hundreds of visitors each day, for many samurai and heimin go out of their way to pay their daily respects to the Seven Fortunes, a tradition that predates even the fall of the Kami. Each of the Fortunes also has a supreme temple somewhere in the Empire where that divinity is venerated above all else, and pilgrims from across the Empire visit these holy sights to seek the blessing of that Fortune.

Adventure Seed: The Wrath of Osano-Wo

Challenge

While the PCs are traveling through a city in Scorpion lands, they encounter a large and very angry man who shouts at them to "clean my house!" The PCs quickly realize this man is none other than Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, and the "house" he is referring to must be the Shrine of Osano-Wo on the nearby Plains of Thunder.

Focus

The monks at the Shrine of Osano-Wo welcome the PCs with serenity and complete cooperation, and seem quite puzzled at any claim of anger from their Fortune. The true source of the trouble turns out to be none other than the Abbott of the temple. He has fallen in love with a peasant girl, and the distractions of earthly desire now prevent him from offering his prayers with suitable purity and devotion.

Strike

If the PCs confront the Abbot with the truth, he is likely to fly into a rage and attack them rather than admit to his own sin. He is as powerful an opponent as one might expect from the Abbott of a shrine dedicated to the Fortune of Fire and Thunder. Only if he is defeated will he confront the truth of his moral failure.

Credit Where it is Due: This Adventure Seed was originally published in the City of Lies box set, published for L5R 1st Edition in 1998.

In villages and other small communities that cannot sustain a major temple, the villagers maintain small shrines to the Fortunes, often with one or two monks living in the community to assist. Many Rokugani peasants volunteer to help maintain these shrines, both because showing such respect to the Fortunes often results in good fortune for those who do the work, and because failing to properly maintain these shrines can often draw the Fortunes' wrath in the form of curses and ill fortune. However, worship of the Seven Fortunes is always done out of reverence and never out of fear. Similarly, no one in Rokugan believes the Greater Fortunes will immediately bestow their blessings on those who honor them.

The beings dubbed as Lesser Fortunes do not hold as important a place in the Celestial Order as the Seven Fortunes, but nevertheless have their own roles to play in maintaining it. They are considered much less powerful than the Seven Fortunes, but are also more directly connected to the world of man. The Lesser Fortunes are much more a part of everyday life; they are closer to the people of Rokugan and, whether deliberately or not, they interact with them on a daily basis.

Below the Greater and Lesser Fortunes are the simple elemental kami who are part of everything that surrounds mortals. These kami inhabit every object, every rock, plant, tool, wall, stream, weapon, or mountain in Rokugan. Long before Shinsei showed how these kami were part of the larger Celestial Order, the early Rokugani were already quite aware that the kami were everywhere around them, and they paid homage to them in every part of their lives—a practice that continues unchanged to the present day. When a heimin cuts down a tree to build a house, he offers a prayer to thank the spirit of the tree for providing a roof to his family. He may even thank the spirit of the axe he used to cut the tree down or the kami of the hammer he used to raise the house. When a blacksmith melts iron to forge a sword, he offers his thanks to the spirit of the ore, which will allow him to transform a simple lump of iron into a work of art. The same blacksmith also prays to the spirit of the fire that is essential to complete his work.

There are important difference between the Lesser Fortunes and the elemental kami. The Lesser Fortunes are wholly different from the simple and fairly weak nature spirits that inhabit natural objects, holding far more power and having a far broader area of influence and responsibility, even if they are associated with some mundane but essential aspect of everyday life. For instance, the kami that lives within a piece of paper with an important poem has no power over the creation of this particular poem, but Tengen, the Lesser Fortune of Writing and Literature, might bless the writer and offer inspiration to improve the poem. Similarly, a heimin might pay tribute to a particular Earth kami inhabiting his fields, but Kuroshin, the Lesser Fortune of Agriculture, keeps watch over every field in Rokugan. While a heimin might offer a simple prayer to the spirit of his land, the entire Empire might celebrate a festival to honor Kuroshin.

Another important distinction between the Seven Fortunes, the Lesser Fortunes, and the elemental kami is that while the greater Fortunes seldom intervene to change the lives of mortals, the less powerful Fortunes take a much more active role in the world. In fact, according to many scholars the Lesser Fortunes and the kami actually have the means to alter the course of events; they can greatly affect the lives of those who live in the Emerald Empire. Thus, while they are not given the same honors as the Seven Fortunes, the Lesser Fortunes are nevertheless regularly worshipped.

The Fortunes are frequently depicted in paintings, sculpture, and other forms of art and decoration. In times of prosperity, they are usually represented as beautiful and peaceful beings, but in times of trouble their depictions often take on a much darker aspect. Strangely enough, the wrath of the Lesser Fortunes is often considered to be more terrifying than the anger of the Seven Fortunes. The latter are often viewed as mostly aloof from the affairs of mortals. They simply exist and do what they must, whether it is good for mortals or not. On the other hand, angering a Lesser Fortune is much more likely to have a direct impact on the world. Thus Ekibyogami, the Fortune of Pestilence, is greatly feared, and none would dare to anger Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Fire and Thunder.

All Rokugani monks, even the most ardent Shinseists, regularly pay tribute to the Fortunes, although those who focus on the *Tao* take much less time in their daily routines to venerate the Fortunes than those in other monastic orders. However, some monks of the Brotherhood actually devote their entire lives to the worship of the Fortunes. These monks

seldom focus their attention on the elemental kami, beyond the basic respect all Rokugani afford those entities. Instead, such monks prefer to honor either a particular Lesser Fortune or the Seven Fortunes, studying their wisdom just as their brothers study the *Tao* of the Little Teacher.

Within the Brotherhood of Shinsei, the monks of the Order of the Seven Fortunes focus the bulk of their time and attention to the worship of the great entities for which their sect is rightfully named. Following the ancient ways of their distant pre-Imperial ancestors, these monks venerate the most powerful of the Fortunes, and their ritual practices closely resemble the rites of earliest times.

When Hantei Genji combined Shintao with Fortunism, some Fortunist monks initially regarded this as a usurpation of the old faith by the new, but this anxiety soon dissipated. Those who turned to the Seven Fortunes for guidance realized that embracing the wisdom of Shinsei could only bring them closer to true enlightenment, perhaps even strengthening their understanding of the venerable entities they worshipped. After all, the words of Shinsei did not actually conflict with the belief system that underlay veneration of the Fortunes, and worshipping them did not interfere with following the teachings of the little prophet.

Shugenja and Fortunism

Shugenja have a unique relationship with the elemental kami, since the nature spirits that dwell in everything are essential for them to weave their magic. Regardless of whether they are more inclined to follow the wisdom of the Shinsei or the traditional rituals associated with the worship of the Fortunes, all shugenja depend on these spirits for their magic, and thus they treat them as honored beings and valuable allies. Even more than the heimin and other samurai, shugenja are acutely aware of the elemental spirits, and their relationship with them is deep and profound, beyond the understanding of most other Rokugani. Most devout shugenja also pursue the rituals of Fortunism, worshiping both the Lesser and Greater Fortunes.

Many shugenja name their spells in honor of the Seven Fortunes, doing so out of respect and reverence to these powerful cosmic entities rather than because they believe the Greater Fortunes actually have anything to do with their magic. Indeed, shugenja are quite aware that the Seven Fortunes only rarely meddle in mortal affairs, and when they do their interventions are often so subtle that not even the wisest shugenja can be sure of their actions and the implications and consequences they may have upon the universe. All that being said, shugenja always show proper respect to the Seven Fortunes. Shugenja regularly visit shrines and temples dedicated to the Seven Fortunes. Like most pious Rokugani, shugenja often visit these sacred sites on a daily basis and make devout prayers each and every day.

Shugenja worship the Lesser Fortunes as readily as any other Rokugani, though they tend to feel closer to the ordinary elemental kami than they do to the Fortunes. Many shugenja take great care to thank at least one Lesser Fortune when they weave their spells, in addition to the particular nature spirits they have invoked. When calling on the Air spirits to create a hurricane, for instance, a shugenja might also pray to Kaze-no-Kami, the Fortune of Wind, while one calling fire to burn his foes might honor Osano-Wo. Generally speaking, the more powerful a spell the shugenja weaves, the more he will offer his thanks not only to the nature spirits but also the appropriate Lesser Fortune.

Shrines, Temples, and Monasteries

Though the Brotherhood of Shinsei maintains just about all of the Empire's places of worship and devotion, these facilities are by no means all the same. At the very least, they vary widely in scale, from simple local shrines with one or two monks to vast temples with veritable armies of attendants. Monasteries likewise vary from small remote settlements with a dozen or so residents to great centers of learning that serve as headquarters for the Brotherhood's larger orders and can house the entirety of its smaller ones. Many of these places are supported by donations from the lay community, but clans and prominent individuals also sponsor places of worship by themselves. The Great Clans in particular are quick to offer direct support if a temple or shrine reveres their founding Kami or a Fortune they admire.

Shrines

Shrines are the simplest places of devotion, designed to offer little more than a place to pause and offer worship to a Fortune or to the kami of a particular Element. The smallest are the roadside shrines, which are usually nothing more than a small stone cabinet, a few feet high at most, placed by the side of the road and containing a statuette or small painting of one of the Fortunes. Passersby can pray before the shrine and leave offerings of food, mundane goods, or coin. Receptacles in front of the deity's representation contain sticks of incense for prayers—one container with fresh sticks, one to dispose of burnt ones. These roadside shrines are usually tended by local peasants who volunteer for the task, or by a monk if one lives in the vicinity. Their principle tasks are to collect the offerings, remove spent incense sticks, and bring fresh ones. Wandering itinerant monks also have the right to collect offerings from roadside shrines for their own maintenance.

Larger shrines may be found in villages or other remote locations, and usually consist of a single room large enough to accommodate a handful of worshippers, perhaps with a small antechamber for storing supplies. The main room features a representation of the chosen deity, either a painting or a statue, hung on or set against the wall directly opposite the entrance. A long, low table is placed in front of this icon for offerings and incense sticks. As with roadside shrines, these places are maintained by local monks or lay volunteers.

Notable Shrines of the Empire

Benten Seido

The Empire's greatest shrine to the Fortune of Romantic Love is found in the southernmost peaks of the Seikitsu Mountains, reachable only by a narrow side-road from the Cold Winds Pass. Monks from the shrine place boulders and tree-trunks in the road, forcing pilgrims to brave these obstacles in order to reach the great temple and pray for Benten's blessings. Supposedly, the shrine is built on a cliff where a Crane Champion from many years ago forced his daughter to choose between abandoning her lover or losing her life. She leaped from the cliff, but the winds caught her and brought her back safely; confronted with the Fortune's judgment, the Crane Champion relented and allowed her and her lover to wed.

Bishamon Seido

Rokugan's largest shrine to the Fortune of Strength is a huge and elaborate temple located in the heart of Lion lands. Unlike many of the great shrines, which are maintained exclusively by the Brotherhood of Shinsei, Bishamon Seido is jointly run by the Brotherhood and the Lion Clan. Over a hundred Kitsu priests reside in the temple, which is also home to the dojo for the elite all-female Matsu unit known as the Lion's Pride.

Daikoku Seido

The Fortune of Wealth has many great temples throughout the Empire, including a truly impressive one in Ryoko Owari Toshi. All of those fade, however, before the magnificent temple located in southern Unicorn lands near White Shore Lake. The shrine is opulently decorated with gold plating, jewels, and all the most precious substances. The sheer splendor of the place tends to drive away the humbler sorts of pilgrims, but merchants (and their samurai patrons) visit from all across the Empire.

Fukurokujin Seido

The chief temple to the Fortune of Wisdom is locate deep within the Dragon mountains, making it the most remote of the major Fortunist shrines in Rokugan. Those who visit the shrine are asked by the resident monks to leave something crafted with their own hands as an offering to the Fortune. As a result, Fukurokujin Seido is adorned with all manner of artistic and practical donations, ranging from beautiful paintings and sculptures to simple items like tools and furnishings.

Hotei Seido

The chief shrine to the Fortune of Contentment is found, ironically, in the southeastern Scorpion lands on the shores of the legendary Red Shore Lake, site of one of the bloodiest battles in Rokugan's history. The shrine itself is small but fittingly luxurious, a place of refuge and relaxation for those pilgrims who visit. The Scorpion Clan seems to make a policy of leaving the shrine and its monks entirely to themselves.

Reihaido sano Ki-Rin

The Shrine of the Ki-Rin is dedicated to the mystical and incomprehensible creature whose rare appearances always denote momentous events in the near future—for example, the Ki-Rin appeared shortly before the Unicorn Clan returned to the Empire. The shrine dedicated to venerating this being is located in a high and remote part of the Phoenix Mountains, reached by a single narrow road that snakes up the mountainside. In addition to its role in honoring the heavenly Ki-Rin, the shrine also hosts a periodic shugenja tournament, the Tournament of the White Orchid, sponsored by the Phoenix Clan.

Reihaido Shinsei

The legendary Crow Shrine is dedicated to Shinsei, named for the animal most associated with the Little Teacher. Supposedly, when Shinsei needed a scout for the Seven Thunders, a crow—then a bird with white feathers—volunteered. It fulfilled its duty, but in the process its feathers burned black from the power of Fu Leng. Even since, crows have been regarded as animals of wisdom and bearers of omens both good and bad. The Crow Shrine is said to be home to the most enlightened monks and priests in the Empire, and to be watched over by the legendary kenku. However, it is nearly impossible to find, and only those of pure heart can enter it. Legends also claim it changes location from one generation to the next. Every visitor who has gone to Reihaido Shinsei has returned profoundly changed.

Reihaido Uikku

The mysterious prophet Uikku, who foretold the fabled Dooms of the Clans, is honored by the Phoenix at this shrine in the midst of a great plain known as Yogansha Heigen, or Prophet Plain. The shrine itself is a modest place, devoted chiefly to preserving and studying Uikku's many strange prophecies.

Seido Jurojin

The Phoenix lands are home to the Empire's greatest shrine to the Fortune of Longevity, and Asako priests and mystics often serve there alongside the Brotherhood. The shrine is located high in the Phoenix Mountains, making pilgrims relatively rare, but many of the most faithful choose to live full-time in the small mountainside village outside the shrine's walls.

Shinden Osano-Wo

The chief temple of the Fortune of Fire and Thunder is located in the midst of the great Plains of Thunder west of Scorpion lands. The Emerald Tournament is held here, under the watchful eyes of the monks from Osano-Wo's personal order.

Temples

Although large monasteries are often referred to as temples, strictly speaking the term applies to devotional buildings of moderate size, usually housing at least a few resident monks. They are found in population centers of all sizes, as well as in out of the way places where a monastic order has seen it fit to establish its presence. As with the larger shrines, temples always center on a main hall, where monks and visitors alike gather to worship the temple's patron deity in front of an icon of some sort. In a temple, the hall may also be large enough to accommodate icons of allied or guardian deities. Living quarters and administrative rooms (if needed) are located to the back and side of the main hall. Larger temples may also have a private common room for the monks where they can meditate and study away from any commotion caused by the lay public. Some temples are large enough to form a walled compound, with a courtyard and gardens in between the gate and the main hall.

Depending on their size, temples may be maintained by anywhere from a handful of a monks to two dozen or more who live on the premises, although smaller temples may be maintained by lay volunteers or non-resident monks.

Monasteries

Monasteries are distinguished from other religious locations because they house a substantial resident population of monks. Monasteries may be found both in large cities (where they serve a large community of lay worshippers) or in remote areas where monks pursue enlightenment without the distractions of civilization. Architecturally, monasteries resemble temples in form and design, but are typically larger in scale. The main hall is usually large enough to be a building in and of itself, with storage rooms and various other antechambers located off of the shrine. If the monastery houses any precious relics or other famous items, these may be displayed in the main hall, or in another building set up as a reliquary. Depending on the resources available to the order that maintains the monastery, it may be sumptuously decorated and ornamented, at least in its public spaces—the monks' residences are usually quite spartan and minimal, resembling military barracks as much as anything else. The life of a monk, like that of a soldier, can brook little in the way of distractions.

Shinden

Only the largest temples in the Empire are granted the title of Shinden. The central structure in these vast temples is usually a multi-story pagoda structure, and often boasts a huge statue the Fortune or Fortunes venerated there—sometimes plated in gold or inlaid with precious stones. The central structure is surrounded by numerous smaller buildings, gardens, and other facilities, the whole guarded by a high stone wall with multiple gates. A shinden may house scores or even hundreds of monks; some of them are also home to samurai, such as Shinden Asahina which serves as the seat and capital of the Crane Clan's Asahina family.

The Birth and Death of Gods

To a mortal observer, such as a simple pilgrim attending one of the Empire's many temples, the Celestial Order appears eternal and unchanging. However, as Shinsei has noted, this is not the case. Fortunes and other divine beings are not eternal—they are born and likewise can die. When the universe was first born from the sin of Nothing, it did not immediately have gods or divinities—rather, the primal chaos which followed Nothings' act spawned the Three Gods Who Shall Not Be Named, and those beings in turn created the Sun and Moon, the rulers of the Heavens. The original Sun and Moon both perished at mortal hands in the twelfth century and were replaced by ascended mortals, Yakamo and Hitomi, who in turn gave way to the Jade and Obsidian Dragons. Thus even the very pinnacle of the Celestial Heavens has seen tumultuous changes in its inhabitants.

How can a god die? On first thought this would seem impossible. However, Fortunes are part of the Celestial Order and imbalances can arise in that order for a variety of reasons. Excessive human sinfulness (or virtue) can tilt the balance, as can powerful magical rituals or sacrifices. The activities of powerful entities can also shift or distort the Celestial Order—for example, the Nothing's attempts to unmake the universe. When the Order comes unbalanced, Fortunes—even the Sun or Moon themselves—may become weak enough to die at mortal hands. Furthermore, despite their superhuman nature the Fortunes may fall victim to personal failings such as madness or desire which can make them vulnerable to mortal attack. A mortal may also be able to gain access to divine aid or powerful artifacts that offset the seemingly overwhelming power of a divine entity; the most famous example of this was Hitomi's confrontation with Lord Moon, in which she bore the Obsidian Hand—the Moon's original hand, severed by Hantei at the dawn of time—and fought with weapons forged from obsidian, Lord Moon's own blood.

It is possible for a Fortune to destroy itself, either through despair or as an act of self-sacrifice. When Onnotongu died at Hitomi's hands, his lover Amaterasu left the Heavens and walked through the mortal world for thirty-one days before finally committing jigai. A more noble example is the original Air Dragon, which Tainted and sacrificed itself in order to confront the Nothing and ultimately to contain the last fragment of that primal force, thereby becoming the Shadow Dragon.

Divine entities may occasionally act against each other directly rather than through mortal or supernatural intermediaries. The Shadow Dragon has sought to wage war against its former brothers in the Heavens, most notably the Dragon of Thunder, which regards Shadow as its ultimate enemy. Fu Leng seeks not merely dominion over the mortal world but over all of creation, and in the Four Winds era the fallen Kami briefly manages to invade the Heavens themselves, trying to destroy the other Fortunes. At least two Lesser Fortunes fell before his attack. The death of a Fortune can have a catastrophic effect on the area of life governed by that entity; at the very least, it has a devastating psychological impact on those who actively worship the Fortune. Any blessings the divine being had bestowed on the mortal world instantly cease, and the performance of the faithful usually plummets drastically. When the Fortune of Fisherman was slain during Fu Leng's assault, the yield from the coastline that year was reduced by more than a quarter, which had a tremendous impact on food prices and led to outbreaks of famine in some regions.

When a divine being such as a Dragon or Fortune perishes, the Celestial Order usually does not allow the position to remain vacant, lest imbalance continue and grow worse. In some cases a deceased Fortune's portfolio is assumed by another similar Fortune, or some other Celestial entity steps into the vacated position to ensure continuity is maintained. In other cases a new divine being appears to take the place of the old. Sometimes this happens immediately, such as when Hitomi and Yakamo replaced the first Sun and Moon. On other occasions there will be a pause of days or weeks until the Celestial Order gives birth to a replacement for the missing being—the new Air Dragon emerging to replace the one who became the Shadow Dragon, for example.

The death of a divine being is rare; by contrast, the birth of a Fortune is an event which has happened many times since the dawn of the Empire. The Emperor has the power to elevate mortals to the Heavens as minor Fortunes after their death, and this ability has been used (and occasionally abused) many times throughout the Empire's history. However, the Heavens themselves can also choose to elevate a mortal of exceptional soul to the position of a minor Fortune, and some of these become revered almost as much as the seven Great Fortunes. The most famous example of this may be Hida Osano-Wo,

Imperial Elevation of Lesser Fortunes

Almost since the founding of the Empire, Rokugan has recognized the power of the Emperor—Heaven's representative on earth—to proclaim new Fortunes, elevating a deceased mortal to the position of a mikokami. More than one minor Fortune has been elevated in this manner; for example, the twelfth century samurai Matsu Goemon was proclaimed Fortune of Heroes by Emperor Totori III.

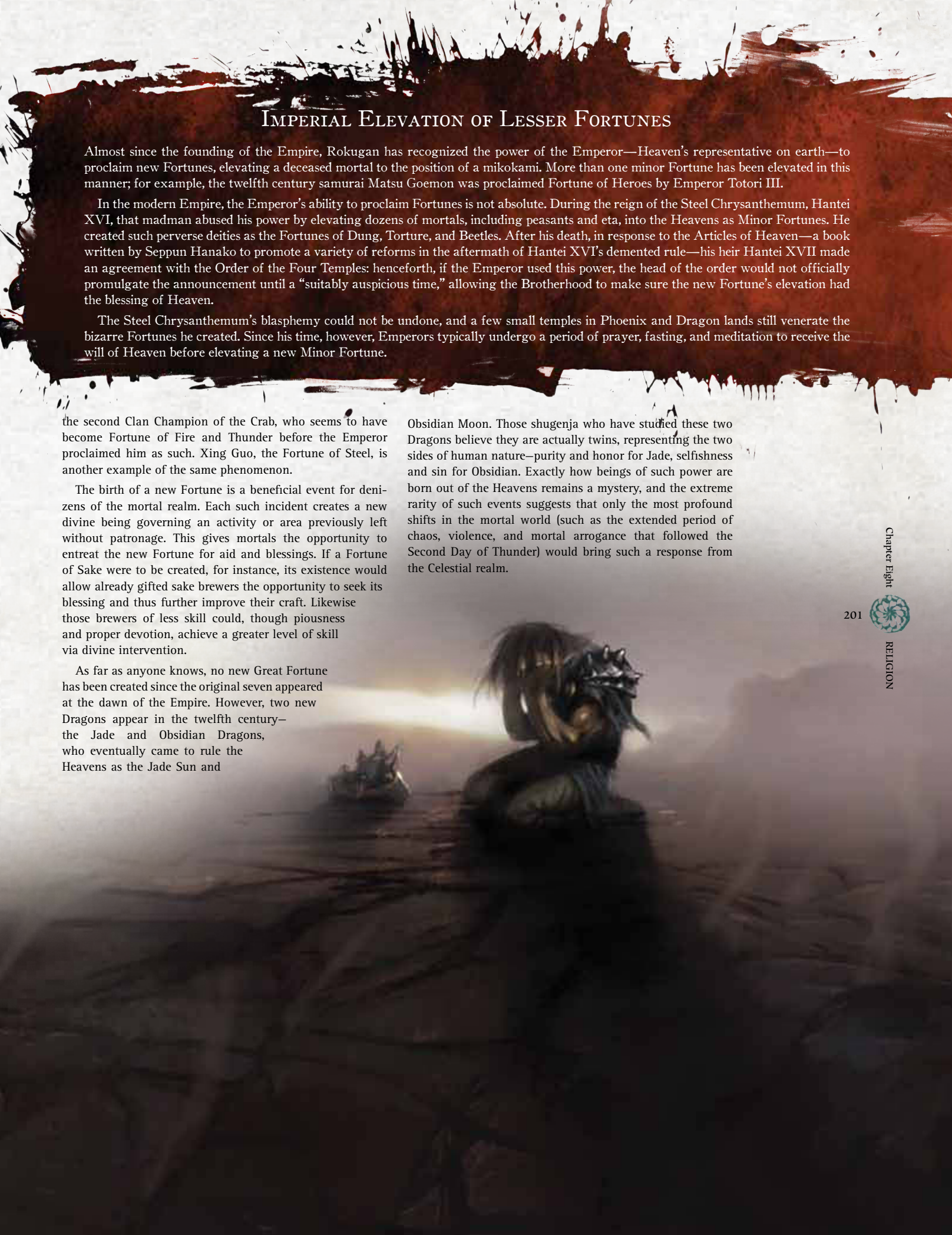
In the modern Empire, the Emperor's ability to proclaim Fortunes is not absolute. During the reign of the Steel Chrysanthemum, Hantei XVI, that madman abused his power by elevating dozens of mortals, including peasants and eta, into the Heavens as Minor Fortunes. He created such perverse deities as the Fortunes of Dung, Torture, and Beetles. After his death, in response to the Articles of Heaven—a book written by Seppun Hanako to promote a variety of reforms in the aftermath of Hantei XVI's demented rule—his heir Hantei XVII made an agreement with the Order of the Four Temples: henceforth, if the Emperor used this power, the head of the order would not officially promulgate the announcement until a "suitably auspicious time," allowing the Brotherhood to make sure the new Fortune's elevation had the blessing of Heaven.

The Steel Chrysanthemum's blasphemy could not be undone, and a few small temples in Phoenix and Dragon lands still venerate the bizarre Fortunes he created. Since his time, however, Emperors typically undergo a period of prayer, fasting, and meditation to receive the will of Heaven before elevating a new Minor Fortune.

the second Clan Champion of the Crab, who seems to have become Fortune of Fire and Thunder before the Emperor proclaimed him as such. Xing Guo, the Fortune of Steel, is another example of the same phenomenon.

The birth of a new Fortune is a beneficial event for denizens of the mortal realm. Each such incident creates a new divine being governing an activity or area previously left without patronage. This gives mortals the opportunity to entreat the new Fortune for aid and blessings. If a Fortune of Sake were to be created, for instance, its existence would allow already gifted sake brewers the opportunity to seek its blessing and thus further improve their craft. Likewise those brewers of less skill could, though piousness and proper devotion, achieve a greater level of skill via divine intervention.

As far as anyone knows, no new Great Fortune has been created since the original seven appeared at the dawn of the Empire. However, two new Dragons appear in the twelfth century—the Jade and Obsidian Dragons, who eventually came to rule the Heavens as the Jade Sun and Obsidian Moon. Those shugenja who have studied these two Dragons believe they are actually twins, representing the two sides of human nature—purity and honor for Jade, selfishness and sin for Obsidian. Exactly how beings of such power are born out of the Heavens remains a mystery, and the extreme rarity of such events suggests that only the most profound shifts in the mortal world (such as the extended period of chaos, violence, and mortal arrogance that followed the Second Day of Thunder) would bring such a response from the Celestial realm.



Religious Festivals of the Empire

The Empire hosts numerous religious festivals and celebrations over the course of each year. These festivals are celebrated by all Rokugani, but tend to be especially popular among the common folk—the *heimin* lead difficult and tedious lives, and the seasonal festivals offer bright and memorable (albeit brief) interruptions to their daily toil. Samurai, from whom Bushido demands a life of dignity and self-discipline, tend to be less openly enthusiastic about festivals... but there are plenty of exceptions. The Crab, for example, greet any festival as an opportunity to enjoy a good drink and blow off some of the accumulated tension from their grim duties. And the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari is known for its exceptionally vigorous celebration of the Bon Festival, with samurai joining the revelry right alongside the commoners.

Many of the Emerald Empire's festivals are named in honor of flowers, such as the Chrysanthemum, Iris, and White Orchid Festivals. The Rokugani perceive flowers as encapsulating both the universal laws of nature and the unending cycle of the Celestial Wheel: birth, death, and rebirth. Several major festivals, including the famed Setsuban celebration, also incorporate flower offerings to ward off illness and natural disasters.

New Year's Day (Oshogatsu)—First Day of the Hare

The year's festivals traditionally begin with the Festival of the New Year, held on the first day of the Month of the Hare, the first day of spring and thus a moment of rebirth. This is the most elaborate of Rokugan's annual festivals, and is generally regarded as the most important as well. All Rokugani celebrate their birthday on New Year's Day, regardless of when they were actually born, so this festival is also a major family celebration for samurai and heimin alike. Every city and town decorates its temples and streets, and every family takes this occasion to gather together, visit the local shrines, and pay formal calls on relatives and friends. (These latter activities can become quite elaborate among the samurai caste, with extensive exchanges of gifts and formalized well-wishes.) Flowers, symbolic of spring and fertility, are the favored decoration, and can be seen strewn across the streets and placed decoratively on every house. The festival concludes in the evening with parades, music, and fireworks. A pious and proper Rokugani family will spend the day after the festival at home, thanking the kami for another fruitful year.

In the Imperial capital, the New Year's Festival is traditionally accompanied by the Emperor's *shihohai* ritual in which he offers prayers for the well-being of the nation. The Emperor encloses himself in his private shrines after dusk on the first day of the Hare and spends the next twenty-four hours in meditation, speaking to the Fortunes on behalf of the Rokugani people. After his fasting and meditation end, a grand feast is held to celebrate the close relationship between the Celestial Heavens and their most beloved son. This aspect of the festival becomes somewhat problematic after the ascension of the Toturi Dynasty, whose connection to the Celestial Heavens is far less close than that of the Hantei Dynasty, but when the Celestially-endorsed Iweko Dynasty takes the throne the shihohai ritual regains its old significance.

When the shihohei ritual is performed correctly, the public traditionally is allowed into the palace grounds after the Emperor emerges to pronounce Heaven's blessings. For most Rokugani this is their only opportunity to see the glorious gardens and vistas of the Imperial palace. During the Hantei Dynasty many games and public ceremonies were held on the palace grounds at this time, including a popular game of chance called karuta.

7-5-3 Festival—Thirteenth Day of the Dragon

A lesser but still significant festival, the 7-5-3 Festival celebrates the children of the Empire and is venerated on the thirteenth day of the Dragon by heimin and samurai alike. The name of the festival is based around three numbers (7, 5, and 3) which are generally considered unlucky by Rokugani. Boys at the age of five and girls at the ages of three and seven are considered especially vulnerable to bad luck and evil spirits, and this festival is designed in large part to counteract such bad fortune. At dawn on the day of the festival, these children go to the local shrines, where the monks of the Brotherhood bless them and pray for their futures. The monks burn incense, ring bells, and light candles to pray for their safe and healthy future.

Traditionally, the children dress in their finest clothing for the occasion, and are accompanied by family members wearing white veils over their faces. It is believed these veils keep the spirits from paying attention to the family, so virtuous spirits and ancestors will see only the children and lavish their blessings solely upon them.

After the family visits the shrine, it is considered lucky to also visit the local markets and buy *chitose-ame* ("thousand-year candy"), thereby including the ancestors of the last thousand years in the celebration.

Cherry Blossom Festival—Twenty-third Day of the Dragon

This may be the oldest of the flower-oriented festivals of Rokugan, dating back almost to the dawn of the Empire. A book called the *Tale of Genji*—a tale from the second century which celebrates the glorious youth of the Shining Prince, Hantei Genji—records what may be the first cherry blossom viewing. An entire chapter of this revered work is dedicated to describing a cherry-blossom viewing party where members of the Emperor Hantei I's court gather under the blossoms to make merry with food, music, and poetry until late into the night. The book claims it is here the Shining Prince meets his eternal love, Oborozukiyo, the Lady of the Misty Moon, and this may be why romance and love are often associated with cherry blossoms.

Of course, Rokugan's veneration for cherry-blossoms predates the *Tale of Genji*. It is widely believed the celebration of cherry-blossoms began when Hantei I and his bride planted a cherry tree in the gardens of Otosan Uchi to celebrate the birth of their first son, Genji himself. However, this may be a later invention to justify a general spread of popular belief. The island of Jamausuki—a major island in the archipelago of the Islands of Silk & Spice—is said to have been one of the earliest

centers of religious faith in the Empire, and massive cherry trees cover the entire island, suggesting cherry blossoms have held religious significance from the very earliest times.

In modern times, much of the importance of the cherry-blossom festival is based on a legend about Daikaihime, a minor Fortune who is the daughter of Kuroshin, the Fortune of Agriculture. Daikaihime is viewed as a goddess of spring and vernal abundance. According to popular belief, she sometimes descends from the Celestial Heavens to take possession of a cherry tree, so people who gather under blossoming cherry trees offer up their prayers to Kuroshin for a plentiful harvest. It is believed Daikaihime will carry their prayers to her father's ears, ensuring they get a sympathetic hearing.

Iris Festival (also known as the Doll Festival or Kite Festival) —Twenty-Fifth Day of the Serpent

This festival is actually two separate events held simultaneously, one celebration focused on female children and the other on males. In the ancient past these were separate events, but over the centuries they merged together into a single festival celebrating the positive qualities of children (as opposed to the 7-5-3 Festival, which seeks to protect them from negative influences). In contrast to some of the other festivals, the Iris Festival tends to be more favored by samurai families than by commoners, although the wealthier *heimin* do try to participate to some extent. Rokugani of all castes see the Iris Festival as a celebration not just of children but of what children represent: purity, promise, and hope for the future.

The Doll Festival is the female side of the celebration, and girls participate by dressing in special green kimono and showing off elaborate displays of their dolls (which, among samurai, are quite expensive and are designed for decoration, not play). A favored activity is for the girls to arrange their dolls in the front room of their house, forming them into a "court" of tiered platforms complete with Emperor, Empress, attendants, and musicians. The girls also customarily visit their friends during the festival, expressing respect (sincere or otherwise) for the beauty of their dolls.

The long narrow leaves of the iris flower are thought to symbolize the sharp blades of a sword, and many Rokugani place iris leaves in boys' baths to give them a martial spirit. The male side of the festival focuses on encouraging symbols of manly strength and courage for boys who may well grow up to be warriors. Boys are expected to display warrior dolls outside their houses and to fly streamers and kites of brilliant colors and styles, symbols of success.

Typically, children of both genders receive expensive gifts from their families during this festival. These are not toys but rather things they will need as adults, such as weapons or court kimono. There are also customary foods associated with the festival, particularly various kinds of rice cakes, often filled with bean paste and wrapped in grass, oak leaves, or bamboo leaves.

Chrysanthemum Festival (Choyo no Sekku)— Sixth Day of the Horse

One of the most lavish festivals in Rokugan, second only to the New Year's Festival, the Chrysanthemum Festival takes place on the sixth day of the Month of the Horse, generally

believed to be the day the eight Kami first fell to the earth. The Chrysanthemum was the symbol of the Hantei dynasty, representing their ties to the Sun Goddess and Hantei's position as pre-eminent among all the Kami. Thus the Chrysanthemum Festival was a celebration of both the Emperor's family line and of the founders of the original Seven Clans.

After the fall of the Hantei Dynasty in the early twelfth century, the Chrysanthemum Festival's status becomes more uncertain. The Toturi Dynasty continues the festival, expanding it to a general celebration of the reign of both the Hantei and the Toturi Emperors. After the extinction of the Toturi the status of the festival was in doubt, but the ascension of the Iweko restored its spirit and grandeur.

In its full glory, the Chrysanthemum Festival is one of the most elaborate celebratory rituals in Rokugan. For seven days, four before the Festival and three after, almost all labor stops in the Empire—even peasants are not permitted to lift their tools. (The *hinin*, however, are exempt from this rule—garbage and refuse must still be collected, even during this sacred time.) Only on the day of the Festival itself can anyone work, and even then only in celebration of the Hantei and the other seven Kami. The actual celebration encompasses every sort of ritual and wonder, from pious prayers to spectacular fireworks and music.

It has long been rumored that on the fourth day following the Chrysanthemum celebration, the inhabitants of the Shadowlands stage a massive, bloody bonfire, hurling captives and other unfortunates into the flames to celebrate the prophesied return of the Dark One, Fu Leng. Thus on the fourth day after the Chrysanthemum Festival many Rokugani choose to remain indoors rather than tempt the attention of evil spirits.

Kanto Festival—Second Day of the Rooster

The Kanto Festival originated during the most primitive times of Rokugan's history, along with the Setsuban Festival and the Iris Festival, probably before the Kami had even completed organizing the people into clans. Scholars believe the Kanto Festival derives its name and purpose from a legend among the ancient tribes of Isawa, who believed "during summer, you are overcome by sleepiness from heat and intense labor and catch a sleep disease." Thus, on the second day of the Rooster, in the hottest part of the summer, the Rokugani common people raise *kanto*, great poles of lumber inlaid with chips of rose quartz, to drive the sleepiness away. These poles are decorated with colorful lanterns, which are kept lit night and day for three full days—supposedly to draw out the sleepiness and encourage hard work and productivity.

The festival has a secondary role as well: the *kanto* poles are traditionally carved in the form of ears from rice plants, expressing hope for a bountiful harvest in the fall.

Setsuban Festival—Eighth Day of the Monkey

Just as blossoming cherry trees are a revered symbol of spring, the bright tones of leaves turning in the autumn are symbols of the fall. Even in the very earliest days of Rokugan, expeditions to view autumn foliage were a popular entertainment, and with the passage of time these activities became formal-

ized into the Setsuban Festival. The festival's timing—at the end of summer—soon came to grant it further significance: since spring and summer were the seasons favorable to war, the arrival of autumn came to symbolize the arrival of peace.

The Setsuban Festival is held on the eighth day of the Monkey, a day considered especially lucky and auspicious. No man may shed blood on that day—all executions are put off, battles and campaigns are halted, and criminals may even be granted freedom and clemency. Many of the more pious clans forbid their samurai from even carrying weapons in public on this day, lest they inadvertently break the sacred truce. The Empire of Rokugan may be a place governed by warriors, but on this day it sets war aside to celebrate the coming of peace.

Bon Festival—Twenty-Eighth Day of the Dog

This ancient festival of reverence for the dead, sometimes also called the Paper Lantern Festival, is held on the last day of the month of the Dog. The Bon Festival pays honor to the dead, appeases the souls of the ancestors, and allows the living a time of remembrance: an opportunity to speak to their lost friends and family members and try to come to grips with the enigma of mortality.

The highlights of the Bon Festival are the great parades and displays which fill the streets of almost every major city in Rokugan. Representations of the Kami, the celestial Dragons, and innumerable ghosts, ancestors, and other beings of the spirit realms fill every city, transforming them into strange and mystical realms. Although these celebrations are especially popular among the common people, samurai do not hold entirely aloof, and in some places (such as Ryoko Owari and the Mantis Isles) they join into the event with the same enthusiasm as lesser folk.

The Rokugani believe that during the Bon Festival, when death and the spirit realms are celebrated and revered, the dead souls of the past come closest to their heirs in the living world. Every man and woman's ancestors look on every action they have taken for the last year, making this the time to atone for any mis-deeds and seek the ancestors' wisdom and blessings.

Although the Bon Festival is a celebration of mortality, this includes life as well as of death. Parades, music, traditional dances, and fireworks all figure prominently in the festival. Small cakes, made from bleached white rice and covered in brown sugar, are traditionally served during the festival, reminding people that death (symbolized by the color white) is a part of life and is always present, even if hidden.

Customarily, the end of the Bon Festival is signaled by lighting small colored paper lanterns, each marked with the name of someone who died during the past year. The Rokugani believe souls who are unable to leave the mortal world can follow these lanterns to Meido for judgment. They also believe these same lanterns can light the way back to Yomi for ancestral spirits who return during the festival.

Festival of the River of Stars—Ninth Day of the Boar

In the night sky above Rokugan is a bright star-filled arc known as the River of Stars (and sometimes as the "Necklace of Amaterasu"). On either side of this celestial road lie two exceptionally bright stars, veritable jewels of the sky, known to the Rokugani as the Weaver Star and the Cowherd Star. Legend claims these stars are lovers, able to meet only once a year on the ninth day of the ninth month.

In legend, the first star is named after Tanata, a weaving maiden from the Isawa tribes, while the second star has the name of Ujihata, a simple cowherd from the lands claimed by Akodo. The two were not allowed to marry, and prayed to the Fortunes to grant some way for them to be together. Supposedly, Tanata was so fine a weaver the Fortunes themselves were smitten by her skill and wished it for themselves. When Tanata and Ujihata died, the Fortunes took them into the Heavens and placed them by the River of Stars, so they could see one another across the star-road without dishonoring their families. Through the Fortunes' mercy, once each year the two are allowed to be together for a single night.

The Festival of the River of Stars is a festival for lovers and is considered the most romantic day of the year. Samurai and commoners alike turn out on this night to "chaperone" the two celestial lovers. Many mortal lovers take advantage of this to meet secretly while their friends and family are away. Because this night is considered most auspicious for those smitten by lover, many Rokugani write their romantic wishes on long, narrow strips of colored paper—prayer ribbons—and hang them on tree branches, often accompanied by small ornaments or other offerings. Of course, wise lovers make sure their wishes are written in an indirect or alliterative manner, since the unscrupulous or impious could take advantage of this tradition to acquire blackmail on them.

The Festival of the Moon's Wrath—Seventh Day of the Rat

The Festival of the Moon's Wrath is one of the few festivals celebrated during the winter months, when the Emerald Empire is covered in snow and gathering for celebrations is difficult. Snow (*setsu*) is the primary symbol of winter, just as cherry blossoms symbolize spring. The white color of snow, the color of death, is of course very symbolic for winter itself, which functions in the same manner for the turning seasons as death functions on the Celestial Wheel. However, snow can also become a symbol of rebirth, when a single flower or a tiny blade of new grass breaks the stark white of snow-cover. Many courtiers believe snow is the most essential symbol of Winter Court itself, when the samurai of the Empire gather peacefully to discuss the old year and make plans for the next one—plans which will emerge from winter's peace just as grass emerges from snow.

The Festival of the Moon's Wrath began in the earliest days of the Empire, and has survived (albeit with some changes) to modern times. The Rokugani both revered and feared the Moon, Lord Onnotangu, the jealous and vengeful husband of Amaterasu. Onnotangu had helped Amaterasu create the world, but he looked down with contempt and anger at the mortals who filled it, just as he had looked down on his own children when he tried to destroy them. Nor could his hostile attention be escaped—the moon was always in the sky, ever-watchful. The Festival of the Moon's Wrath was intended as much to appease him and turn aside his wrath as it was to venerate him.

After Lord Moon was destroyed and replaced by the ascended mortal Hitomi, the nature of this festival changed somewhat, though not as much as one might expect. Although Hitomi was a former mortal woman, and thus not intrinsically hostile to mortals in the way Onnotangu had been, she was nevertheless a mercurial and temperamental being, and the Rokugani found it wise to venerate and appease her in

much the same way as they had her predecessor. When Hitomi finally gives way to the Obsidian Dragon, the dark and sinful nature of that being likewise draws both awe and appeasement from the people of Rokugan.

The Festival of the Moon's Wrath is observed in an unusual manner, especially when compared with more conventional and positive celebrations such as the Iris, Chrysanthemum, or even the Bon Festival. Samurai surround themselves with friends and family and then cease all speech from sunset on the seventh day of the Rat to sunrise on the ninth day of that month. Not a single word is spoken by a samurai during those two days, showing their reverence for the Moon. Those who break this silence, it is said, draw the Moon's wrath—with fearful consequences.

New Year's Eve (Toshi no Ichi)—Twenty-Eighth Day of the Tiger

The counterpoint to the New Year's Day Festival is the festival of the year's end, called *Toshi no Ichi*, held on the final day of the old year (the twenty-eighth day of the month of the Tiger). This event is designed to prepare the Empire for the coming new year, and is observed with equal vigor by samurai and commoners alike. It is believed the Celestial Heavens look down with special favor on Rokugan at New Year's Day, so the end of the year is a time to cleanse and prepare for that moment. Houses are cleaned, streets are brushed clear, and daimyo customarily issue new clothes to all the peasants under their jurisdiction.

During these cleansing rituals, Rokugani peasants traditionally hang a rope of straw known as a *shimenawa* inside their houses, preventing evil spirits from entering the place. At the conclusion of the festival, these strips of straw are burned along with any other trappings or decorations from the festival, so all old spirits are purged and kharma is cleansed for the New Year's celebrations the next morning. Similarly, both commoner and samurai families create special altars within their houses known as *toshidana*, covered with rice cakes and bottles of sake, to honor the spirits of the New Year when they arrive the next morning.

At dusk during the New Year's Eve Festival, the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei conduct a great ritual cleaning of their temples. Throughout the Emerald Empire, temples are emptied, scrubbed, and cleansed with fresh water. Their bells are rung to drive out any lingering evil spirits. The bells toll a total of 49 times (seven times seven, for the benevolent and wrathful aspects of the seven Great Fortunes), the temples are fully cleansed, and visitors are welcomed back inside.

Playing a Shinmaki Monk

The Shinmaki monks are even more liable to violate the social norms of Rokugan than other monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. They tend to speak with complete honesty, and regard Rokugan's social conventions and traditional politeness as little more than distractions from what is important. Such a character has the potential to be a source of disruption and conflict within a group of samurai PCs, not to mention generating frequent confrontations with samurai NPCs. The GM and players should discuss such issues beforehand to make sure a Shinmaki monk will not disrupt the overall play experience.

That being said, Shinmaki monks can be a source of considerable entertainment in the proper group. They are liable to behave in an erratic and mystical manner, such as suddenly taking a vow of silence for the day, stopping to tell someone's fortune, or uttering bizarre statements such as "Only the dragonfly knows what is in the frog's heart." Besides such fun, they can also be an asset to a group, since they speak freely and openly with anyone and thus quickly gain the trust of commoners and eta who stay silent in the presence of samurai.

New Mechanics

This section offers two new mechanical options that showcase the extremes that religion can produce in the Empire. Although Shintao can be a source of strength and purity for its samurai and monks, there are other sides to those who revere the supernatural powers in Rokugan. The forces of the Shadowlands draw power from the dark strength of Jigoku, and the City of the Lost and its Spider Clan off-shoot that emerge in the twelfth century both openly worship Fu Leng, calling on his power to enhance their own capabilities. Spider samurai and monks embrace the ways of Shourido with religious fervor, giving birth to the sinister Dark Paragons. At the other end of the spectrum, those Brotherhood monks who devote themselves to the most obscure texts and beliefs can behave in a manner that alienates most Rokugani, as with the obscure but notorious Shinmaki sect.

New Monk School: Shinmaki Order

The monks who are admitted to the small Shinmaki sect spend much of their lives studying the controversial Diamond sutra and meditating on the Seven Thunders, who are supposedly avatars of Shinsei from other cycles of the world. They remain in their dark and isolated monasteries for years, and some of their practices there are highly controversial (for example, some claim they copy sutras onto dried flesh). However, they do occasionally emerge to explore the world or to gather for meetings of the entire sect.

Shinmaki Order

- **Devotion:** Shintao
- **Benefit:** +1 Void
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Skills:** Divination, Jiujutsu, Lore: Theology (Diamond Sutra), Meditation 2, any two Skills

Technique

The Diamond Sutra

The monks who study the Diamond Sutra are known for their strange and bizarre behavior and esoteric practices, but also for their extreme spiritual purity and lack of respect for conventional etiquette. You start play with the Disturbing Countenance Disadvantage for no points, but gain a +1k0 bonus to Meditation rolls, Fear rolls, and to all Social Skill Rolls involving members of the heimin and hinin castes. You do not lose Honor for touching dead flesh (but lose Glory or gain Infamy normally).

New Advanced School: The Dark Paragons [Monk]

There are those among the Spider Clan, particularly among the ranks of the Daigotsu bushi and the Order of the Spider monks, who have embraced their own sinister variant of honor and devotion. Even the touch of Jigoku itself can be used as fuel for their power, a power that strangely resembles the oneness many Brotherhood monks have with the universe. Some believe this is an indication that the path of the Spider, while radically different from the paths of the Brotherhood, is a true path to enlightenment. Those among the Brotherhood who are aware of the existence of the Dark Paragons vehemently refute this claim, insisting they are nothing but more seductive tricks of the Realm of Evil. The Paragons themselves insist instead that their power reflects their absolute mastery of themselves, and Jigoku has no reason to leave its mark on its servants when those servants are willing, devoted, and able to enact its will far more effectively without the constraints of the Taint.

Requirements

- **Rings/Traits:** At least one Trait at 5
- **Skills:** Lore: Theology 4+
- **Other:** Dark Paragon Advantage, Honor Rank 4+, must be able to make a melee attack as a Simple Action

Techniques

Rank One: Ruthless Determination

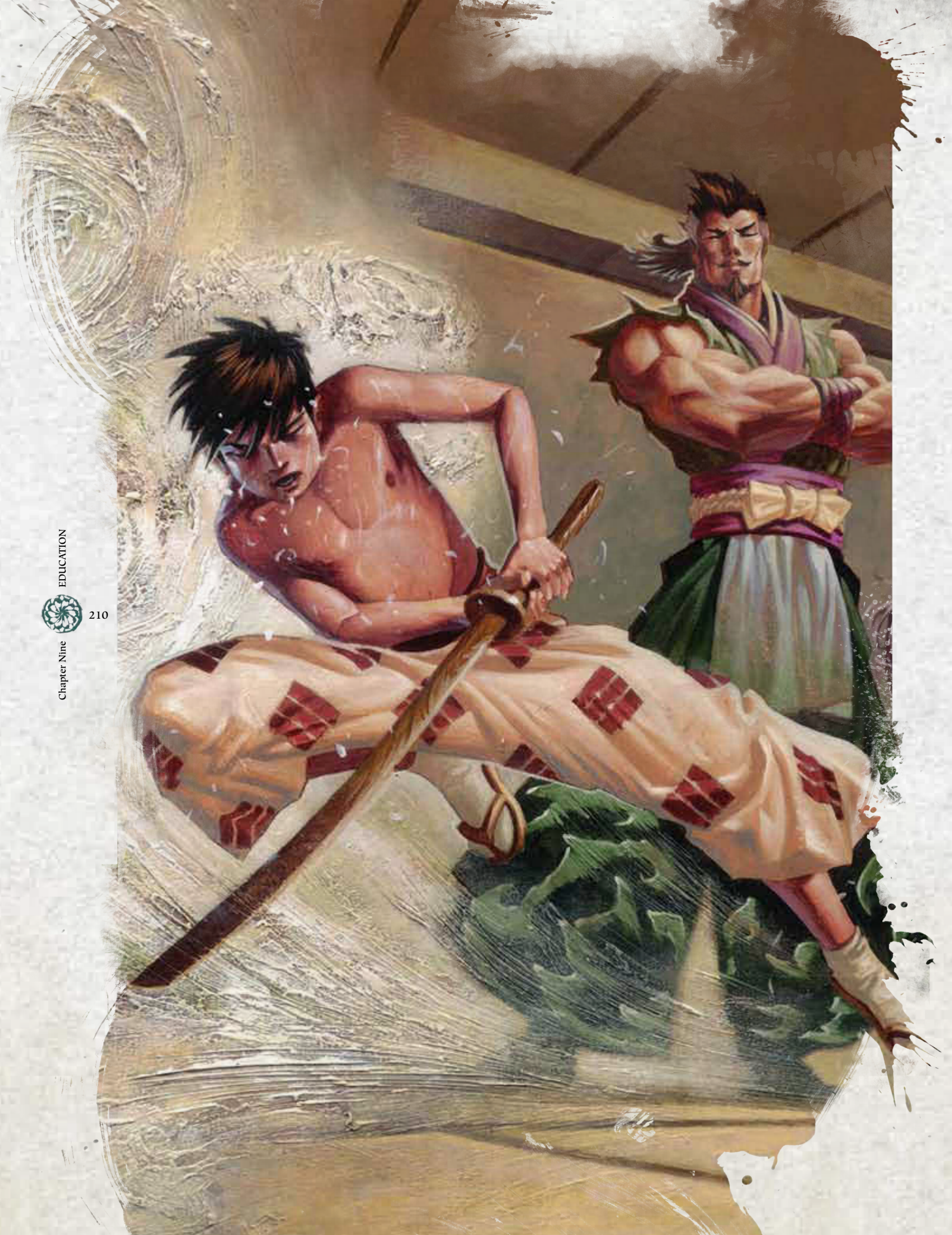
A student of the dark paths learns to flow from one thing to the next, and learns the secrets hidden in between. You gain two Kiho, for which you must meet all prerequisites. If you possess the ability to make a melee attack with a weapon as a Simple Action, you also gain the ability to make an unarmed attack as a Simple Action, and vice versa.

Rank Two: Rising Shadows

The strength of the pious is that surety of purpose can lead one to overcome virtually any failure if one is but strong enough in one's beliefs. A number of times per skirmish equal to your Void Ring, you may immediately re-roll any failed Bugei Skill Roll using your Lore: Theology Skill in place of the Bugei Skill originally used.

Rank Three: Absolute & Unwavering

A true paragon of darkness can eschew the restrictions of honor or even the touch of another realm in order to accomplish greater things in the mortal world, simply by tapping into his true connection to the universe. You gain two Kiho, for which you must meet all prerequisites. You may sacrifice 2 Honor points or voluntarily reduce your Taint by 1 point rather than spending a Void Point in order to activate any Kiho. You do not lose any physical deformities previously gained as a result of your Taint Rank in this manner, but you can lose Shadowlands Powers. If you gain subsequent ranks of the Shadowlands Taint, you regain lost abilities rather than getting new ones.



Education

The sensei was writing on a length of scroll with a calligraphy brush, seemingly lost in thought. He stopped abruptly and looked up at the student. "Is there something you wish to ask me, then?"

The student stood for a moment, carefully considering what he had been struggling with over the past few days. "Master," he finally began, "why are you here?"

The older man raised one eyebrow curiously. "That is a very strange question. Do you not find my presence of value?"

The boy frowned. "It is not that, master, of course not. To the contrary, I find your instruction so much more effective than my previous sensei that I find the two experiences hard to even compare to one another."

"Do not permit flattery to cause dishonorable commentary," the sensei cautioned.

"I mean no flattery, master," the boy replied. "It is simply a statement of how I see things. But the point of the matter is that... why are you relegated to duty as a sensei? You are a priest of the kami, and obviously learned in a wide array of subjects. I can only assume that you are also skilled with a blade or you would not have been appointed to a bushi dojo such as this." He paused, shaking his head slightly. "A man of your talents and abilities... could you not have much greater value to the clan stationed elsewhere?"

The sensei set his brush to the side and chuckled. "That is a very interesting question, is it not?" He looked at the student contemplatively. "What exactly would you consider as being a more robust duty for a man of my station?"

Here the boy simply shrugged. "I do not know. You could surely be the head of a shugenja temple or other similar facility."

"Tedious beyond imagining," the sensei observed.

"A general, then," the student said. "You could surely lead an army to victory."

"Perhaps," the sensei said. "How do you know I have not already done so?"

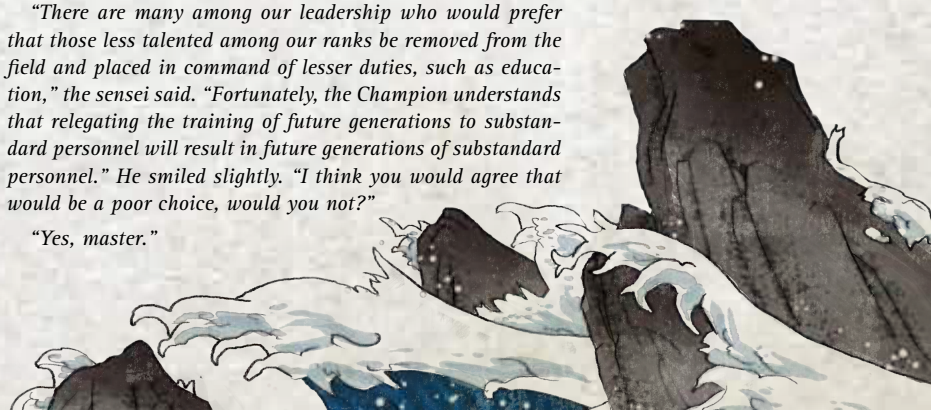
"A courtier," the boy pushed. "You see everything, understand everything. In court no one could stand against you."

Again, the sensei laughed. "You have not been to court, young one. There are men there who can strip the flesh from your bones in the most painful way imaginable, all the while smiling and asking after your family." He shook his head. "Court is entertaining on occasion, but for the long term I find it somewhat stressful." He drew a breath and looked about the room as if evaluating it. "No, I consider education a proper use of my talents."

The boy nodded. "And our lords agree with you?"

"There are many among our leadership who would prefer that those less talented among our ranks be removed from the field and placed in command of lesser duties, such as education," the sensei said. "Fortunately, the Champion understands that relegating the training of future generations to substandard personnel will result in future generations of substandard personnel." He smiled slightly. "I think you would agree that would be a poor choice, would you not?"

"Yes, master."



Education in Rokugan

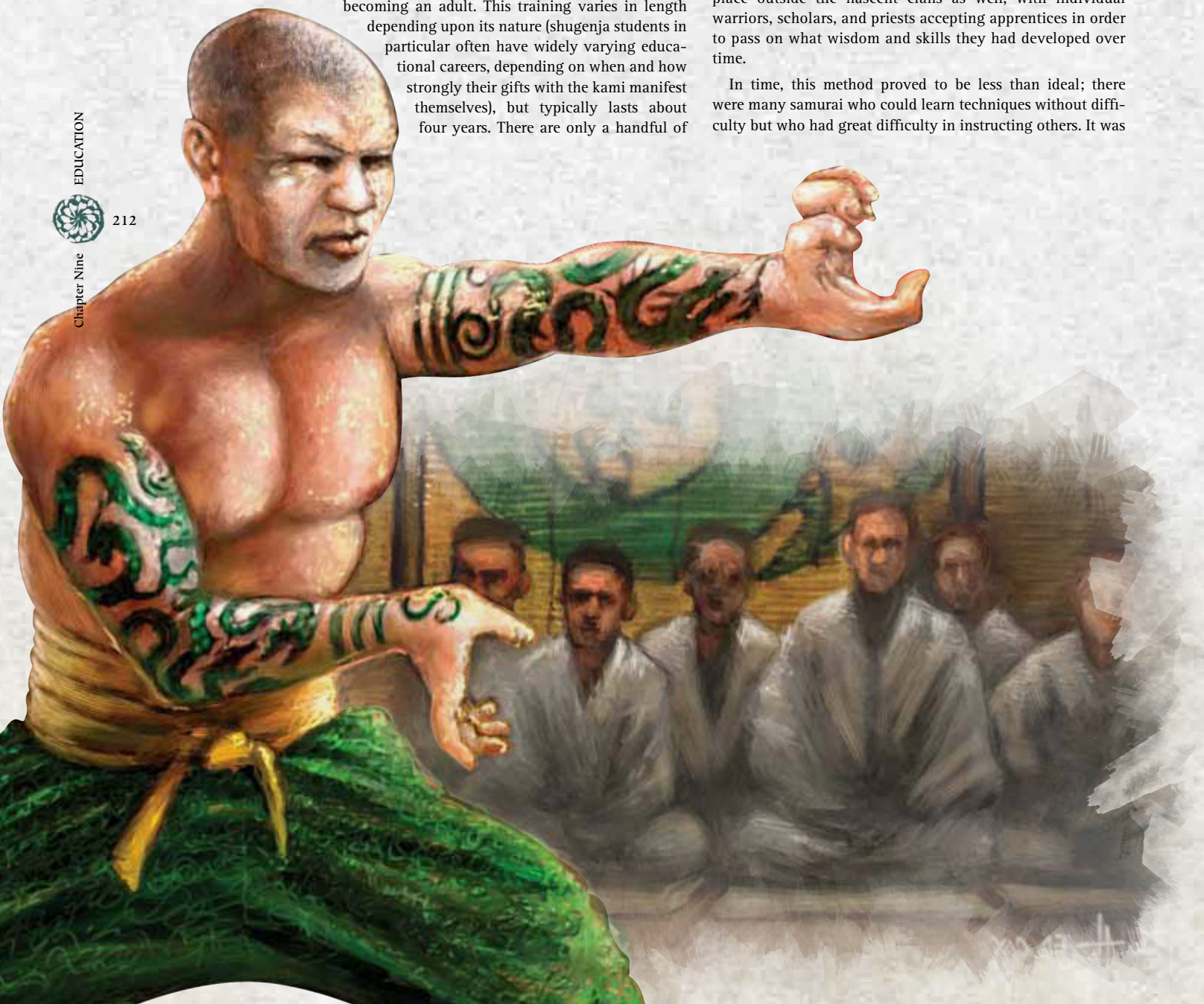
The education of new generations is one of the most sacred and vital elements of Rokugani society. Children born to samurai join the family and clan of their parents, and it is assumed those organizations will provide for the child's education. This is merely part of the way in which families and clans reward the service of their samurai, as well as a means by which the group replenishes its numbers.

Generally speaking, young children in Rokugan have very few expectations placed on them. They are allowed to do as they wish so long as they obey their parents' commands. This period of happy freedom lasts until somewhere between the ages of eight and twelve, when they enter formal studies to train for the responsibilities they will inherit upon becoming an adult. This training varies in length depending upon its nature (shugenja students in particular often have widely varying educational careers, depending on when and how strongly their gifts with the kami manifest themselves), but typically lasts about four years. There are only a handful of means by which Rokugani youth are educated, and all have lengthy and respectable histories.

The Apprentice System and the Dojo System

Although it once saw widespread use among the samurai caste, the ancient system of apprenticeship to learn the skills of one's trade has long since been largely relegated to the lower classes. In the early days of Rokugan, when highly skilled warriors were less common, the dojo system that now dominates the Empire had not yet been developed. Each of the Kami and their chief followers took on a small number of students, who later each took on a student of their own. This continued, with each student taking a student in turn, until it brought hundreds or even thousands of samurai into service with each of the Kami. This method was commonplace outside the nascent clans as well, with individual warriors, scholars, and priests accepting apprentices in order to pass on what wisdom and skills they had developed over time.

In time, this method proved to be less than ideal; there were many samurai who could learn techniques without difficulty but who had great difficulty in instructing others. It was



through the failures of this system that the dojo tradition was born, as the Kami began seeking out the most gifted among their pupils and tasking them with training other followers in larger numbers. While this approach takes longer (a single student can be trained much quicker than a group of twenty), in the end it is a far more efficient means of educating a new generation of warriors.

In modern Rokugan, the apprentice system is still widely used by the lower classes, the heimin and eta. Such individuals perform vital services in society, but there is no way they can afford to maintain educational facilities like the dojo used by samurai. Even if they could, few among them have the necessary skills to become teachers; rather, they convey their knowledge through a literal hands-on method, showing their apprentices directly how to perform their skills. Young commoners who show aptitude for a profession (an ability to judge spatial proportions for carpenters, for example) are sent by their families to apprentice to an individual working in that occupation. Apprentices follow their mentor for weeks or even months, observing every aspect of their duties, before they begin to take on minor tasks of the trade. This continues for an indefinite amount of time, depending on the complexity of the occupation and the demands of the senior craftsman; many artisans keep apprentices for years before allowing them to strike out on their own, for example, whereas most servants or laborers are considered trained and ready for their duties within a year.

The lower classes are not wholly alone in their use of the apprentice system. It remains in use by a few small samurai groups, typically those without the resources or manpower to conduct their training in a dojo. The most famous of these are in the Kuni family, where most students—whether they be shugenja or the notorious Witch Hunters—are trained personally by more experienced members of the family. Each Kuni enrolls an apprentice and trains him in the family's methods and techniques, often taking the youngster out on dangerous missions into the Shadowlands or across the Empire.

Many ronin have similar habits, training their children or occasionally other students personally while they travel the roads and wilds.

It is also not uncommon for artisans to spend a considerable time apprenticed to a master of whatever art they are choosing to study. This immerses them in their discipline, but among samurai the periods of apprenticeship are usually kept relatively short, never more than six months or so, to prevent the mentor's style from overwhelming whatever individual style and talent the student may be developing. Commoner artisans, whose individual style is less valued than their ability to consistently produce the work that samurai want, make long-term apprenticeships the norm.

Outside of these specific examples, all samurai in the modern Empire are educated in the various schools developed from the dojo tradition. The specific term "dojo" is actually only used for those schools teaching combat techniques, but the same traditions of group instruction by experienced teachers called sensei is used regardless of whether the students are training as warriors, monks, shugenja, or courtiers. The differences between the various types of schools are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Adventure Seed: Honored Master

Challenge

An aged sensei is ill and approaching death. He summons any of his former students and tells them he possesses one secret technique which he has never shared with anyone. He promises to teach this technique to the student who proves himself most worthy.

Focus

The various students, eager and in some cases desperate to learn the secret technique, begin frantically trying to find a way of proving themselves to their sensei. Those of a less honorable nature seek to sabotage their rivals, either directly or through the help of questionable allies (such as Scorpion courtiers or ronin assassins).

Strike

There is no secret technique; the sensei has staged this incident as a final test for his students, separating the honorable from the selfish and untrustworthy. He will reward the finest student by naming him as his successor in the dojo.

Common Methods of Instruction

Methods of instruction vary not only from clan to clan, but from family to family and indeed between individual sensei. Historians or philosophers seeking to document such practices could easily fill a library with examples and methodologies, but for the sake of brevity, this discussion will confine itself to the most common and best-detailed approaches that appear across the Empire.

Many sensei prefer to use the modeling method of instruction. This is most effective at the very basic level, when the student is essentially mimicking the movements and postures of his teacher. This method is used in most bushi dojo, as well as in basic instruction of aspiring artisans. The belief behind this approach is that it is the fastest method for getting young students to master entry-level techniques so they can quickly move forward to more advanced concepts.

Some sensei find the modeling technique stifling and instead rely on narrative instruction. In these cases, the sensei describes exactly what he expects his students to do, then observes as they attempt to follow his instructions. This method has substantially more room for error, but its proponents claim it allows a student's natural style and strengths to come to the fore immediately. They also point out that it allows sensei to more easily group their students according

Unconventional Dojo Studies

The descriptions of school practices and curriculums here represent the typical training regiment found in the majority of schools within the Empire. However, a number of clans deviate from these practices to one degree or another.

The bushi schools of the Unicorn Clan, for example, require their students to spend several months out of the year riding the plains of the Unicorn lands, learning to connect with their horses and with their clan's legacy of wide-ranging travel. Even the Ide and Iuchi students are expected to spend a few weeks riding their lands each year.

The Crab Clan is notorious for the lack of refined education it bestows on its bushi students. Few Crab warriors see any need to study the classics of art and literature, or even mathematics and literacy beyond the most basic and practical skills. The Kaiu, however, make an in-depth study of mathematics, literature, and history as part of their engineering education. If their skills were not so absolutely essential to the survival of the clan, most other Crab would probably scoff at them as weak and bookish.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Shiba bushi of the Phoenix Clan are notorious for spending more of their schooling in meditation, reading, and theological discussion than in practicing kata and fighting techniques.

The Dragon Clan, for its part, is known for oddly combining their military and spiritual training. Many of their Tamori shugenja—and in earlier eras, Agasha—train in the ways of the sword along with their academic and spiritual studies. The Mirumoto for their part are known to train in spiritual ways as well as the art of the sword, studying the kami with the Tamori and the ways of martial arts with the Togashi.

to skill level or natural ability. This method tends to be much less common in the instruction of bushi, but is far more likely to be seen in courtier, shugenja, and artisan schools.

For the most part, when young students begin their studies in a dojo they receive instruction in large groups. This serves a number of purposes, not the least of which is to acclimate the students to their new environment and the routines of their life in the dojo. It also serves as a sort of screening process, allowing the sensei to organize the students into smaller groups according to their abilities and inclination. This normally happens somewhere between six months and a year after a new class of students begins training at a dojo.

Of course, this sort of large-scale instruction is grossly inappropriate for courtier and shugenja students, but the number of students tends to be significantly lower in those institutions than in those which teach the path of the bushi, making it easier to form the students into smaller groups from the beginning of their time in the school.

Once most students have begun their smaller group instruction, the physical and/or mental conditioning that dominates the first years of dojo training is pursued in earnest. The tasks set before the students in this phase are grueling, but are more suited to the members of the smaller group, rather than just being general exercises designed to help the average student. This level of individualized instruction allows the students to achieve much more than during their previous year, and it is here that the true foundation of their education is laid. Bushi, for example, undergo a variety of physical exercises intermixed with rigorous sparring and endless repetition of kata. Shugenja spend many hours in prayer and meditation, supplemented with academic study and in-depth instruction in the sacred language of the kami. Courtiers study history, philosophy, art, and literature, as well as practicing the basics of etiquette, conversation, and debate.

Academic Studies

The most important facet of a Rokugani samurai's education is his professional training—weapon skills for bushi, communion with the kami for shugenja, history, current events and social skills for courtiers. But the samurai of Rokugan also consider themselves civilized people, superior in their sophistication and learning to both the heimin and hinin they rule and to the foreign barbarians they despise. Their education does not end—or even begin—with handling weapons or casting spells. In fact, the education of samurai children is at least as academic as it is professional; this holds true for almost every Basic School in every clan and family. Children are often taught basic literacy skills even before they enroll in a school, and all Rokugani samurai can read and write (unlike some heimin and most eta). They may not train much in the art of calligraphy, but they can at least read easily and write legibly. Basic writing technique and composition is taught by transcribing and imitating famous texts, whether poetry or prose. The pictographic characters used in Rokugani writing, called *kanji*, are numerous and often elaborate, and much practice is needed to be able to compose them consistently and accurately. Making them beautiful, of course, is an art that can take a lifetime to perfect.

Most sensei expect their students to study at least a little in the Empire's classic texts, such as Akodo's *Leadership* or Kakita's *The Sword*; many also require their students to read poetry and literature, although courtier schools emphasize this side of education more than bushi schools. Historical texts are also widely read, and literacy training effectively doubles as an education in history, a subject with great value to a people who revere their ancestors as the Rokugani do. Samurai children are also taught basic mathematics, at least enough to function on a day-to-day basis.

Apart from principles of mathematics, Rokugani treat any learning about the fundamental nature of their physical world as part of their religion, so theological education and scientific education are for them essentially the same thing. Children read excerpts from the Tao of Shinsei throughout their education. They are taught the basics of the Celestial Order at a young age, often before they ever enroll in a school, and their entire education stresses reverence for the Will of Heaven. And of course all samurai children are taught how to live according to the Code Bushido, how to comport themselves properly in public and what is expected of them in private. Because samurai parents are often too busy to spend much time with their children even during the early years, teaching the basics of etiquette often falls on household servants or lower-ranking samurai retainers. Many children do not fully grasp the traditions and ideals of their caste until they enroll in their school. Whenever possible, samurai schools design their curricula so that inculcating the virtues of Bushido overlaps with their academic training, such as by assigning reading from Akodo's *Leadership*.

Once a samurai is an adult, academic subjects tend to get less emphasis in his training, especially in the bushi schools. Even so, it is not uncommon for the more refined bushi dojo to make practice in skills such as calligraphy and review of academic subjects such as theology and history part of their training.

Educational Institutions

With few exceptions, all samurai are highly educated individuals, regardless of whether they are bushi, shugenja, or courtiers. The education of a samurai family's children is considered an exceptionally important aspect of the clan's traditions and rituals, and the institutions which pursue that duty are very highly regarded.

The Typical Dojo

Although the term "dojo" can technically be applied to any training facility in Rokugan, it is traditionally used to refer to institutions that focus on the martial training of bushi. They are far and away the most numerous educational facilities in the Empire. Only in the Phoenix provinces are dojo equaled in number by any other type of educational facility, and even then they are only rivaled by the omnipresent temples that dot the countryside.

Describing the typical dojo is a difficult proposition, primarily because they vary so much between different families, clans, and schools (sometimes even within schools). The most traditional sort of dojo—the basic template from which most variations are derived—can be found most frequently in the lands of the Akodo, the Kakita, and Mirumoto, all families with extremely straightforward and tradition-bound approaches to training and education. Typically, dojo maintained by these traditionalist families are simple affairs: a large courtyard surrounding a relatively small central building, adjoined by one or more barracks. The courtyard is used primarily for large-scale instruction, and during students' first year at the dojo the vast majority of their group exercises are conducted outside regardless of weather conditions. At the end of the first year, a new class of students arrives at the dojo and takes their place in the courtyard. The more experienced students are then assigned to training indoors with superior equipment, as well as occasional exercises conducted outside the dojo facility itself.

The main building, the dojo proper, is treated with reverence by students and teachers alike. Traditionally a dojo contains a large central chamber which mounts wooden plaques along its walls, listing the students enrolled each year. Most dojo also have a small shrine in this chamber, dedicated to the ancestors who founded it and the spirits and Fortunes who watch over it. In theory, a bushi is a spiritual warrior devout in his religious adherence—though in practice, this varies widely from family to family—and students are expected to bow and show reverence to the shrine each time they enter. These chambers are nearly omnipresent in the Empire's dojo, even in the lands of pragmatic clans like the Crab. In more educated and devout clans, this central chamber often has an adjacent library where the student will find religious tomes and treatises on combat and warfare.

Aside from its spiritual significance, the dojo serves both as a place to conduct individualized training and as storage for the school's equipment. Most dojo maintain a large assort-

ment of cheap basic weapons, along with plenty of padded or wooden practice weapons. Interestingly enough, dojo typically keep very few actual daisho for their students to use, since they have not yet completed their gempukku ceremony and thus are not yet able to wear the twin swords of an adult samurai. Only a handful of practice daisho are kept available, and these are only offered to the finest students—most sword training is performed with wooden practice swords called bokken. A wide array of other weapons are also kept on hand to facilitate training. These are often stored near the barracks so students may make use of them during their rare periods of free time.

Students of a dojo are expected to live on-site in the barracks, which are usually stark and simple affairs. Students live in large open rooms filled with tatami mats, with only a few shoji screens for privacy.

The average student at a bushi dojo arises at sunrise at the very latest, although many students awaken even before then. The day begins with various mundane chores that must be performed each day. These are not necessarily tasks that would normally be performed by servants, but they are always menial tasks the students have likely never had to perform themselves before arriving at the dojo. In some ways this is reminiscent of life in a monastery, and is done to instill in the students a sense of humility, discipline, and obedience. Once the chores are completed, the students have a quick morning meal and then hurry to the courtyard where they perform their morning exercises. This includes both calisthenics and basic fighting stances with a bokken or other practice weapon. This consumes most if not all of the morning, and may include sparring with other students or with an instructor, or practice with archery or basic unarmed fighting techniques.

The midday meal is followed by another set of chores, typically performed by the younger students to prepare the facility for use by their older classmates. After the afternoon's chores are completed, students go through another round of instruction, typically focused more on secondary pursuits such as archery, other melee weapons, advanced unarmed combat, or even the study of academic subjects. Students typically study a single topic or weapon for a month at a time, then rotate to something else. Bushi students are expected to adapt quickly to new tasks and to absorb new information as rapidly as possible, both to honor their sensei and families and to avoid wasting time.

When the afternoon classes are finished, the evening meal is served, followed by a precious few hours of relative inactivity. Most dojo expect their students to honor their ancestors with prayers and to cleanse themselves, both spiritually and physically, in preparation for the following day.

The Typical Temple

Temples are the training grounds for young samurai who possess the innate gift of communication with the kami. Such individuals are rare, even in magically oriented clans like the Phoenix, and are typically trained as shugenja from a younger age than those destined for other paths. Because of the rarity of suitable students, temples are fewer than other most other places of learning, although artisan academies tend to be rarer still.

Temples vary widely in design, so it is difficult to generalize about their layout. Each individual temple is constructed

separately, although there are some elements common to almost all of them. Taoist temples are the most common and uniform in design, whereas Fortunist temples tend to vary widely depending on the patron Fortune or Fortunes. Shrines to individual ancestors or groups of ancestors are also relatively common across all clans, but have widely varying construction depending on the customs of individual families. If anything about temple design can be considered typical, however, it is the use of one central chamber which contains the shrine or statue devoted to the temple's principle deity. Secondary shrines, private meditation chambers, libraries, and various living quarters are located off of the primary chamber, sometimes directly connected in a snowflake fashion, or else housed in nearby separate buildings.

Virtually every temple contains at least one copy of the *Tao* of Shinsei, as well as various prominent works that discuss the philosophy and ramifications of that seminal work. Likewise, most temples are careful to incorporate all five Elements into their construction in some way, ensuring the kami will be pleased and maintain a presence within the temple; this is a virtual necessity for shugenja, who spend hours of their day in deep meditation with the Elemental spirits.

A shugenja student in the average temple begins the day with a purifying bath and a lengthy meditation session before the morning meal. Following the meal, the students observe while their sensei conduct one out of the nearly countless rituals shugenja are expected to perform throughout their lives. These include the blessing of crops, the marriage ceremony, blessing a new birth, purifying a house against evil spirits, or even the gempukku ceremony, along with hundreds of others. It is through this observation that the students learn the basics of these rituals, and they are expected to commit them accurately to memory. After the ritual is complete, the sensei will discuss its history and traditions, paying particular attention to the symbolism and prayers used throughout. Afterwards, the students practice key elements of the rituals, then spend the remainder of their morning in meditation prior to the midday meal.

The afternoon at the temple sees the daily prayer service, followed by study in small groups. These groups delve into both the academic nature of their duties as shugenja as well as into the art of communing with the kami. The academic groups gather in the temple library, while those learning to speak with the kami usually assemble outdoors. Students are taught the ritualized prayers of their family's school, learning the language of the kami and the ways in which the kami answer it. Typically, they begin casting actual spells within a year or two of beginning their studies at the temple.

Evenings in a temple are divided between prayer and rigorous academic study. The sheer volume of religious writings and esoteric magical texts that exist in Rokugan make the life of a shugenja one of scholarly pursuit by necessity. In addition, all shugenja are expected to be familiar with hundreds or even thousands of Fortunes. Students are also trained in calligraphy, in the various ciphers used by their school, and extensively in history, especially the exploits of famed ancestors within their family and clan. In a clan like the Lion, studying the ancestors will often take pride of place over any other topic, while in the Dragon and Phoenix the study of the *Tao* is considered one of the most important topics for a young shugenja.

The Typical Court School

Students who are learning the ways of politics are trained in the court chambers of their clan. It should be noted that not all "Courtier Schools" train their students in this way—those who are focused on politics, such as the Doji, Bayushi, or Ide, do employ these methods, but schools such as the Asako Loremasters or the Kitsuki Investigators instead teach their students in a more academic environment that resembles an artisan academy more than a court chamber.

Court chambers where students are trained for politics are typically the same chambers used to actually hold court during different times of the year. Familiarity with the environment is essential, so even those sensei who are unable to bring their students to actual court chambers take pains to reproduce such locations, preventing their students from beginning their service to the clan at a disadvantage. It is not unusual for clans that have a strong emphasis on the political arena to maintain multiple court academies, each physically patterned after a different major court somewhere in the Empire. As their training progresses, students are moved to a facility with a replica of the clan court where they are most likely expected to serve after their gempukku.

Duplicate court chambers also allow the students to become accustomed to the style of decorations they can expect to see during their service to the clan. The Mantis, and to a lesser degree the Unicorn or Yasuki, consider lavish decoration and ostentatious displays of wealth to be perfectly acceptable, but most other clans consider this approach distasteful and even perhaps a bit dishonorable. The Crane, Phoenix, and Scorpion prefer to decorate their court chambers with tasteful displays of art and culture, while the Crab, Dragon, and Lion regard this as frivolous and unnecessary, restricting themselves to a few martial displays of weapons, armor, or the occasional painting of a famous battle. Regardless, a student who is prepared ahead of time for the style of a particular clan's courts is far more likely to be focused and effective when he arrives there.

Courtier students rise with the sun and prepare themselves for a long day of intense study and scrutiny. They eat their small morning meal before dressing so food stains will not befoul their attire in any way. A cleansing bath is followed by literally hours of arranging garments, preparation of hair, and occasionally the use of face-paint or other cosmetics, along with careful review of the day's schedule. Finally, the morning study sessions typically begin with a brief prayer. The students are taken by their sensei to study the topic of the day, which might be literature, art, fashion, history, or the political tactics of a particular opponent. Regardless of what they study during the morning, the students' appearances are carefully assessed and ruthlessly critiqued by their sensei. For the courtier, a flawless and carefully designed appearance is vital.

After a small midday meal, the afternoon is spent in practice exercises. These can take many forms, including debates or oratory contests between students, observation of mock debates between sensei, recreations of famous debates from history (and review of what made the arguments effective), or any number of other interactive competitions designed to foster quick thinking and demonstrate mastery of the curriculum.

After dinner, the students are free to pursue their own interests for the remainder of the evening, but they are encouraged to make effective use of their time by continuing to develop

their secondary skills or pursuing scholarly knowledge. Given the inherently ambitious nature of courtier students, most are eager to grasp any opportunity to improve their capabilities.

A school focused on more specialized or esoteric fields of endeavor will vary from this program, of course. The Kitsuki family school, for example, often presents its students with logic puzzles or staged investigations replicating famous cases from the past. The Yasuki and Yoritomo schools spend a considerable time studying the ways of trade and commerce, along with associated topics such as mathematics. The Asako Loremasters and Ikoma Bards both place a strong emphasis on historical study, though of course the choice of topics varies between them. Also, many schools encourage their students to engage in a small amount of martial or physical education, largely as a reminder that they are still members of the samurai caste even if they do not carry a katana.

The Typical Artisan Academy

The rarest training programs found in the Empire are those which teach artisans and craftsmen. Among the Great Clans, only the Crab, Crane, and Phoenix have devoted any significant resources to developing such programs; the Crab because of the vital importance of Kaiu engineers and smiths to their clan's war effort, the Crane because they consider themselves the caretakers of Rokugan's culture and arts, and the Phoenix because they believe pursuit of the arts is a vital part of their tradition of pacifism and their desire to find beauty in the natural world.

Academies for artisans tend to be a strange blend of temple and court, and also vary considerably depending on the specific topics being taught. Physically they are usually pleasant and well-maintained, much like court chambers, but the atmosphere tends to be more serene and pious, even somewhat ascetic. General instruction takes place in various chambers throughout the academy, and as students progress through their training and begin to display talent in one or more areas, they are organized into smaller groups, sometimes no more than two or three students per instructor, and undergo more intensive training with high quality materials. The ancillary chambers used for these small groups are generally referred to as studios, although the Crab prefer the term "workshop." Sometimes the school will simply refer to "the poetry chamber" or "the sculpture chamber" for simplicity.

As training in an academy progresses, the students undergo a series of apprenticeships to experienced artisans in their chosen field. These last anywhere from a month to six months, but seldom more, and instructors try to match students with artists of varying styles to ensure their natural style is not subverted by the style of one of their mentors. Typically, a student will study with three or four senior artisans during his time at the academy—sometimes as many as six, but seldom less than two. (The Crab are something of an exception to these rules, since their focus tends to be on excellence of craft rather than developing artistic style. It is not uncommon for a Kaiu smith to spend most of his school career apprenticed to a single instructor.)

These periods of apprenticeship are interspersed with intense classes on the history, forms, and techniques of the student's chosen art; among the Crane and Phoenix there will also be substantial education in secondary artistic disciplines. Much as in the other educational institutions, students rise at dawn and are allowed only a modest amount of free time in the evenings, time they often spend further honing their craft.

Graduation: The Gempukku Ceremony

Without question one of the most pivotal events in every samurai's life, the gempukku ceremony marks the end of their full-time education and the beginning of their adult life in service of their lord, their family, their clan, and the Emperor. A young samurai typically receives his gempukku between the ages of 14 and 18, depending on the school involved, family tradition, and aptitude. It is a proud moment for any samurai, the moment when he takes on his share of the burden his family proudly bears in the name of their ancestors. Such momentous occasions are frequently accompanied by celebrations for all who participate. Although there is almost infinite variety in the way gempukku ceremonies are conducted among individual families and clans, there are key common elements involved.

Many families place challenges before their young men and women before they are allowed to partake in the gempukku ceremony. In some cases these are extremely difficult, more so than the challenges of the ceremony itself; for example, the Crab require their bushi students to enter the Shadowlands and bring back the severed head of an enemy. The Matsu Berserker school of the Lion Clan is in some ways even more demanding, requiring its students to pass several challenging physical tests, such as enduring four hundred strikes from a bamboo sword. The famous Topaz Championship (discussed elsewhere in this book) also places considerable demands on those who enter it, although success brings great honor and glory to all who complete their gempukku in such a prestigious environment.

Most gempukku ceremony requirements are not so stringent as these, however. They generally require a display of prowess in some or all of the primary skills taught by the sensei at the dojo where the individual studied. For some, this is no more than a simple display of kata or the summoning of a kami. Other schools are more stringent, requiring demonstrations of numerous mental and physical tasks, and holding their youth to the ancient ideal of a samurai as an educated philosopher as well as a warrior, able to serve his lord in any number of capacities.

Once a young samurai has fulfilled any such requirements, he officially joins the ranks of his caste by participating in a brief but solemn ceremony. Typically a shugenja or monk performs the sacred rituals invoking the names of the student's ancestors. A high-ranking samurai such as a provincial governor or a hatamoto serves as the representative of the student's family and clan; it is to this person that the student swears his oath of loyalty.

Despite the importance of these events, family daimyo and Clan Champions rarely have the time to spend on dozens or even hundreds of such ceremonies each year, and so they are

usually present only by proxy. To have the opportunity to swear one's life and loyalty directly to such important individuals is considered a great honor and a powerful omen for a student's impending career.

Once the oaths of fealty are taken, the student is considered an adult. He is also bestowed with the badge of his new status: his daisho. The awarding of the daisho is a hugely significant moment in a young samurai's life. The katana represents his soul and the wakizashi his honor; together, the blades mark him as a member of the samurai caste and as an adult. Even if the young samurai is trained as a shugenja, courtier, or other non-violent occupation, he is traditionally awarded a daisho as a symbol of his membership in the samurai caste—of course, in these cases one or both swords are usually left at home in a place of honor, rather than carried. Some families or schools perform additional specific rituals to mark adulthood as well; for example, the Daidoji traditionally require their young samurai to have the family mon tattooed on the inside of their wrists.

In theory, the swords given to a samurai at his gempukku should be those carried by his grandfather. However, given the large size of the average family in Rokugan, usually only the eldest actually receives this honor. Other children receive additional swords possessed by the family (such as blades awarded to past family members for exceptional service), or receive new blades forged specifically for the occasion.

The Wandering Year

In some schools, especially those of the more educated and traditionalist clans and families (such as the Crane, the Dragon, and the Phoenix), it is not uncommon for a newmade samurai to be sent on a journey across the Empire, wandering freely without any special duty; this is seen as a chance for the young samurai to learn more about Rokugan, visit shrines and other famous locations, and perhaps to make a few contacts and allies for his future career in service to the Empire. Sometimes this is even done with students who have not yet passed gempukku, in which case they are permitted to carry a wakizashi (only) for self-defense, but more often it takes place during the first year after gempukku.

Of course, not all clans follow this tradition. The Crab cannot afford to waste resources by sending trained warriors into the rest of the Empire as tourists, and the Lion prefer to enroll their young bushi in their armies rather let them wander freely. Other clans take a more aggressive approach to the tradition: the Unicorn, for instance, embrace wanderlust throughout their clan's history, and young Unicorn samurai not only roam the Empire but sometimes venture into the Burning Sands to see the strange lands their ancestors roamed. Similarly, the Mantis use young samurai to help crew their ships, often granting them the chance to see not only the many ports and rivers of the Empire but also the distant exotic islands only the Mantis fleet can reach.

Ongoing Education

Although the primary work of a samurai's education is finished when he or she undergoes gempukku, no true samurai ever ceases trying to better himself. Samurai pursue self-study and other methods of personal improvement throughout their lives. A samurai's specific training regimen varies depending on his area of expertise, not to mention his duties to the clan. A bushi with a military appointment will train almost constantly, with daily formation drill and field maneuvers in addition to ordinary weapons practice. Sentries and border guards are likewise afforded regular training, since they are tied to a semi-permanent post that usually has an attached dojo for just such a purpose.

Other posts and duties, however, do not always afford such luxuries or opportunities. A courtier may have to pursue his skills in the arena of court, learning the intricacies of politics "hands on" as he negotiates on behalf of his lord. Likewise, artisans must work to perfect their skills while producing art or useful equipment for the clan. Even some bushi must take a more informal approach to training if they have duties that require them to travel, such as magistrates, yoriki, couriers, or yojimbo. Such samurai must slip their training in whenever they can, and often go years without the chance to return to their school.

Returning to one's school is important, for few samurai, bushi or otherwise, undergo gempukku knowing more than one Technique in their school. Instead, they return periodically to learn their next Technique from their sensei. Whenever a samurai returns to his dojo, he is expected to offer proper veneration to its shrines and then report to his sensei at the first available opportunity. This private audience gives the bushi a chance to demonstrate his ongoing progress in advancing his skills and abilities. If his progress is deemed acceptable and the sensei considers him ready to receive more advanced training, he is taught the next Technique in the school's progression. If not, he is offered either encouragement or criticism as the sensei finds appropriate, and told to return and demonstrate his skills again at a later date.

The relationship between samurai and sensei is a life-long one, and even the most powerful and experienced samurai will still bestow the greatest veneration and respect on his sensei.

GM's Toolbox: Students in Training

Youths who have not yet undergone their gempukku ceremony are not considered true samurai, though they are in fact members of the samurai caste by privilege of birth. A GM who wishes to run a game following samurai children from their enrollment in their school to their graduation (and beyond) may use the following guidelines in developing the campaign.

Students at a dojo or other educational facility are considered Insight Rank 0, and do not have access to their school's Techniques for the majority of their training. Trait benefits and Skills are likewise not available from the moment the student enters the dojo, but rather are learned over time. Indeed, part of the reason that adult samurai can readily learn new Skills is because of the years of study and conditioning while they are first being trained. Generally speaking, major student milestones are gained in the following order:

- *Family Benefit:* The natural hereditary tendencies of students begin to emerge after the first few months of rigorous conditioning (whether social, physical, or artistic) they receive in their school.
- *School Benefit:* The physical and mental attributes brought to the fore by a school's particular form of conditioning and instruction take a bit longer to manifest, and usually emerge roughly a year after the student enters the dojo.
- *School Skills:* Skill training in earnest begins only after the students have the basic mental and physical traits necessary to support it. At the beginning of a student's second year in the dojo, he begins to accumulate Skills at a rate of one every three to six months. The order and exact speed with which they are gained varies depending upon the particular school's traditions of instruction (and the aptitude of the student).
- *School Technique:* Most students become proficient in their school's first Technique three to six months prior to their gempukku ceremony. At this point, they are considered Rank 1 characters from a mechanical standpoint, although not yet from a social standpoint.

Dojo Days

In the Legend of the Five Rings RPG, learning School Techniques is not simply a matter of gaining "experience" until one day superior abilities suddenly appear inside the character's mind and body. School Techniques represent ancient clan and family secrets that sensei impart when they feel their students are ready to learn them. Thus, as mentioned above, Rokugani samurai continue training throughout their active careers; PCs who gain Insight Rank have to return to their old dojo to take the next step in their ongoing education in the mysteries of their school.

If you choose to incorporate a PC's time spent in training into your campaign instead of glossing over it, or perhaps to start play with untrained samurai in their first dojo, the following table (Table 9.1) is designed to offer ideas and suggestions for interesting events to liven things up at the dojo, perhaps even giving rise to further plotlines later on. Depending on preferences, you may use the chart to create random events, or just pick one you find interesting.

Table 9.1: Random Dojo Events

d100 roll	Event
01-05	Your sensei is displeased with your progress; you must extend your stay in the dojo before you can gain the next School Technique.
06-08	Your sensei is pleasantly surprised at your progress; you may shorten the stay in the dojo necessary to gain the next School Technique.
09-17	Another student challenges you to a friendly duel or contest.
18-20	Another student challenges you to an unfriendly duel or contest.
21-25	You are asked to witness a duel or to judge a contest between two other students.
26-32	Another student tries to befriend you, for no apparent reason.
33-35	You incur the enmity of another student, for no apparent reason.
36-38	You discover that a fellow student is misrepresenting his identity.
39-41	You hear a rumor that one of the sensei is misrepresenting his identity.
42-45	While performing drills, another student suddenly and mysteriously falls ill.
46-48	A sensei begins behaving erratically, for no apparent reason.
49-55	Another student declares his property has been stolen.
56-60	A sensei declares property of the dojo has been stolen.
61-67	Students try to enlist you in a prank against another student, or against one of the sensei.
68-75	Other students pull a prank on you.
76-80	The Clan Champion or family daimyo pays a surprise visit.
81-85	The master sensei announces a tournament or challenge to fill a vacant junior sensei position.
86-90	Another student provides you with an adventure hook related to his home town or village.
91-95	A student from another clan provides with you with an adventure hook related to his Clan's lands.
96-00	You receive the opportunity to study at another school's dojo in the future as an exchange student.

New Mechanics

This section offers new game mechanics for the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG 4th Edition*. Here we present the Taoist Swordsman, a school born from the unusual educational customs of the Dragon Clan.

New Basic School: Mirumoto Taoist Swordsman [Bushi]

Although the Mirumoto family are best know for following the twin-sword fighting technique pioneered by their founder (and defined most clearly in his famous book Niten), not all members of the family embrace Mirumoto's fighting techniques. The Dragon Clan's long association with the quest for enlightenment, not to mention the existence of a specialized monastic order right within its own ranks (the Togashi tattooed men) has given rise to other warrior traditions. The most notable of these are the Taoist Swordsmen, ascetic warriors who maintain small dojo deep within the most inaccessible mountains of the Dragon lands. There they pursue enlightenment and swordsmanship with equal dedication, often praying and training alongside small groups of Togashi monks. Taoist swordsmen are seldom seen outside their own lands, though on rare occasions they have been known to embrace the tradition of the "worldly monk" and travel the Empire in search of both enlightenment and experience with the sword.

Mirumoto Taoist Swordsman [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Void
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), Lore: Theology, Meditation, any one Bugei or High Skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Sturdy Clothing, Katana, Wakizashi, Tanto, Traveling Pack, 1 koku
- **Special:** All members of this school are considered to be Ascetic, but do not gain Experience Points for it. It does not count against their 10-point limit of Disadvantages.

Techniques

Rank 1: Aligned With the Elements

Students of the Taoist Swordsman school spend their days in the rugged mountains of the Dragon lands, enduring the harsh elements with little clothing and no armor, learning the ways of the sword in complete selflessness. When wielding a sword and wearing no armor, you gain Reduction equal to your School Rank +2. Additionally, you add +1k0 to your damage with any sword.

Rank 2: Fist and Blade

The Taoist Swordsmen train alongside the Togashi tattooed men, studying their unconventional methods of combat and learning to apply those methods to swordsmanship. When fighting with a sword, you may perform the Knockdown maneuver for 1 less Raise, and if you control a Grapple while holding a sword you may inflict damage with the sword instead of unarmed damage.

Rank 3: Strike of Harmony

The Taoist swordsman is now so skilled with his sword that it functions like an extension of his body. While wielding a sword, you may spend a Void Point on your damage roll. If the sword is a katana, this ability stacks with the natural ability to spend a Void Point on damage with a katana.

Rank 4: Master of Steel

The Taoist swordsman is now completely at one with his weapon, striking with the speed of thought itself. You may attack as a Simple Action while wielding a sword.

Rank 5: Balance in Nothingness

The final lesson of the Taoist Swordsman teaches the school's students to pour their entire soul into a single deadly strike. While wielding a sword, once per skirmish you may spend as many Void points on damage as you wish.

The sensei strode through the doors of the chamber with the first rays of sun. "What is the purpose of war?" he asked without preamble.

The student had been about to yawn, as yet unaccustomed to rising before the sun. He gulped it down and answered, "To earn glory and victory for one's lord, master."

The sensei seemed to consider the response for a moment. "I suppose after a fashion that is correct. It might be more correct to say you have identified the most basic and naïve purpose of warfare."

The boy gaped slightly. "Naïve, master?"

"Indeed," he replied. "War seems a simple matter, does it not? Avenge the insult, slay the enemy, end the feud, begin a dozen more... there are so many simple aspects of the concept." He made a dismissive gesture. "You have overlooked the truth that has dominated our Empire's history. Of course, you cannot really be admonished for such a thing, as you are yet quite young and have never seen war. Many men far older than you, men who should have the wherewithal to know better, have labored under the same misconception."

The boy frowned. "What is the truth of war, then, master?"

"War is manipulation," the sensei answered. "It is a matter made all the simpler by the fact that no one would ever imagine a war could be lost deliberately. Such expenditure of lives, supplies, and other resources... what could be worth such a price?"

The student was silent for several moments, but finally could not contain himself. "What could be worth such a price, master?" He fidgeted slightly. "I do not wish to seem naïve, as you say, but I would imagine that most worthy prizes could be acquired by less wasteful means."

"Many can, to be sure, but some cannot." The sensei gestured at a number of scrolls bearing historical seals. "Think for a moment of the return of the Unicorn Clan to the Empire some centuries ago. The political and military balance in the Empire was delicate at the time. When the Unicorn returned, the Scorpion met them on the field of battle, and the Scorpion lost. What would have been the result?"

The boy thought carefully for a moment. "The Unicorn would immediately be perceived as a greater threat," he offered. "As outsiders, they would have been naturally assumed to be less capable than any Great Clan. Defeating the Scorpion placed them at the head of the other clans' list of viable threats, I would imagine."

"You imagine correctly." The sensei seemed pleased. "And the Scorpion?"

"I suppose the Scorpion would have been completely dismissed as a military threat by the other clans," the student answered. "Victory against them would have become a foregone conclusion, and thus any action against them would have been made a secondary concern and, if executed at all, relegated to lesser forces."

The sensei smiled. "A terrible price for defeat, wouldn't you agree?"

A Bushi's Role in Rokugan

Bushi are the heart and soul of every Rokugani clan, from the most aggressive to the most peaceful. They protect their clan's borders, its strongholds, and its leaders. They take up their blades every day knowing their lives belong to their lord; thus they are in effect already dead, and each day may be the time when they must embrace that death in the name of lord, clan, or Empire. They protect their lords and wage war against their enemies without thought of disobedience or self-preservation.

Of course, war is not the sole calling of bushi—they are virtually no roles in which they do not serve their lords—but war remains their first and most important calling, and is among the most fundamental activities of the samurai caste.

Bushi Duty Posts

Ideally, duty posts for bushi are granted according to a particular samurai's skills and abilities, with no other considerations in mind. Unfortunately this is often not the case, and politics and social standing frequently play a part in where a bushi is assigned to duty. Influential samurai work to ensure their children receive appointments commensurate with the parents' social status, or call in favors and alliances earned through decades of service to secure prestigious posts for their heirs. Fortunately, nepotism does not always equate to promoting incompetence, since the thorough training delivered by the typical Great Clan sensei can compensate greatly for a lack of natural talent. Moreover, demonstrated lack of ability to fulfill one's duty is such a disgrace that only the most powerful connections can sweep it under the rug. Most often, a well-connected bushi who is clearly in over his head is quietly relocated to a post of equal prestige but more suited to his level of ability.

The most common assignment for a clan bushi is as a soldier—either a guard at a castle or city, or in the ranks one of the clan's armies. About three-fourths of all bushi in the Great Clans wind up serving in one of these roles at some point. Of these, however, not all are on duty at all times. While all the clans maintain strong standing armies in their castle garrisons and barracks, ready to muster and march at a moment's notice, many more bushi serve their clan and family in other ways while being kept in military reserve. In an emergency they will be expected to drop everything else and report for military duty. When the crisis passes, they are usually allowed to return to their former lives. So while the vast majority of bushi spend at least part of their lives on active military duty, not all of them make an entire career out of military service.

Castle guards and sentries combine some aspects of a common soldier's duties with those of a bodyguard (see below). Sentries and guards are required in large numbers throughout the Empire, at every major fortress, castle, city, and other valuable facility. While many of these locations use soldiers who have been temporarily detached from standard army duty, most lords prefer to maintain their own autonomous group of guards or sentries outside the traditional military structure, whose sole purpose is to keep watch over the appropriate location. This is especially common in large cities, where a sizable guard force is required to control gates and maintain public order. Many cities have their own independent military force, answerable to the governor or some other senior administrator, such as the Thunder Guard of Ryoko Owari or the *machi-kanshisha* guards of the City of the Rich Frog.

Some bushi are trained as scouts for their clan instead of serving in the main force of the army. This puts them in a somewhat complex position. On the one hand, scouts are an absolute necessity for any successful military campaign, a resource that talented commanders know how to exploit for maximum benefit. On the other hand, scouts are rarely in a position to accrue fame or glory, and few know their names even after a lifetime of distinguished service. What's worse, many Rokugani have a rigid and inflexible view of Bushido and believe that stealth or deliberate concealment from one's enemies is an unacceptable dishonor. Consequently, many scouts face a sense of disdain from traditional samurai. Fortunately the value military commanders place on skilled scouts ensures this disdain is seldom expressed aloud, but instead reserved for petty slights and personal grudges.

Another common duty for bushi is a posting as a *yojimbo* (bodyguard) to a shugenja or courtier. This is usually not considered particularly prestigious, except in the rare instances when someone is granted the honor of protecting a daimyo or other famous or important personage. However, most yojimbo protect ordinary lower-ranking courtiers or shugenja, or escort spouses and children. Duty as a yojimbo is notoriously uneventful, requiring steady nerves and a calm spirit. Those with a quick temper or an impatient nature rarely do well, since they are temperamentally inclined to make mistakes that can dishonor not only themselves but also those they protect. Successful yojimbo must also be skilled in the art of iaijutsu, since they will be expected to serve as champion if their charge is forced into a duel to resolve some argument or dispute. Although duels to the death are relatively rare, when they occur the charge must commit seppuku and follow his champion into the next life. Rare indeed is the courtier or shugenja capable of fighting a duel in his own defense.

A bushi assignment that is not found in all clans is that of the warden. A warden is similar in some respects to a magistrate, but has much more limited authority. Their role is to patrol the roads and borders of their clan's lands, inspecting travel papers and watching for roaming criminals, unauthorized travelers, and enemy invasions. Clans which have well-defended borders or limited military forces tend to eschew wardens, but the Crab and Lion both make heavy use of them, and the Scorpion and Crane also have lesser but significant warden forces. Wardens usually operate mounted, and thus receive cavalry training and some basic education in the law. They are not authorized to grant travel papers or to investigate and sentence criminals in the same manner as magistrates, but they can arrest any criminals they encounter on their patrols. Wardens typically operate in military-style squadrons and are considered soldiers in most respects, with unit designations and appropriate symbols of rank.

Military Traditions

The rare humorists among the samurai caste have been known to comment that there are very nearly as many traditions in the militaries of Rokugan as there are bushi who serve in them. While this is obviously an exaggeration, it is quite true that the individual clans have a seemingly limitless number of unique traditions and customs within their military institutions. What follows is a brief overview of the more prominent traditions for each clan and group in the Empire.

Crab Clan

For centuries the Crab have insisted their bushi be trained in a much broader variety of weapons than most other clans, with a decided emphasis on heavy weapons. This preference for weapons such as the tetsubo and dai tsuchi is more than a little controversial to other samurai who revere the daisho above all else. Of course, this emphasis on heavy weapons is an adaptation to the nature of the Crab Clan's chief enemy, the Shadowlands horde. Moreover, this harsh and dangerous duty has led the Crab of necessity to develop a number of military traditions that are considered distasteful or downright gruesome by other clans in the Empire. For example, the Crab are notorious for beheading their fallen comrades lest they re-animate through the Taint and rise to fight against their former allies. Crab military units deliberately maintain an aura of constant paranoia, watching each other for signs of Taint or demonic possession, and routinely testing strangers with jade to make sure they are not shapeshifters or bog hags.

The Kuni family is rumored to engage in dissections and other horrible practices in order to better understand the nature and strengths of various Shadowlands creatures. The Kuni are also the only family in Rokugan which has made a deliberate study of trauma-induced mental illness (which they refer to as *ranshin* or, more dramatically, "the false madness of Lord Moon"). Insanity is not an infrequent affliction for soldiers who spend years on the Kaiu Wall facing horrifying enemies and repeated brutal battles. Kuni Mataemon, the most famous student of this phenomenon, even developed treatment methods, most notably placing the victim of madness inside a cage while a comrade spoke to him from outside.

One Crab military tradition that is well-known throughout Rokugan is the Twenty Goblin Winter. When the Crab find their manpower flagging, they recruit ronin by giving them the chance to prove their prowess against the Shadowlands. Over the course of the winter, these ronin assemble in the village known as Shinsei's Last Hope, from which they enter the Shadowlands itself. Those who bring back the heads of twenty or more goblins by the end of the winter are allowed to swear fealty to the Crab Champion, joining the Moshibaru

vassal family of the Hida. Twenty Goblin Winters are traditionally rare, since holding one is effectively a confession that the Crab have lost too many casualties and are in a position of weakness.

Crane Clan

The Crane are not known as dedicated warriors, and prefer to avoid warfare whenever possible. Instead, they rely on their strengths in politics, diplomacy, and the arts to overcome the superior military strength of their enemies. When called to war, however, the Crane do not shirk, and their military prowess is doubted only by those who have not faced them on the battlefield.

The Crane are the masters of dueling and they go to considerable efforts to exploit this advantage in war. Prior to a battle, a Crane commander will often call out his opposite number, issuing a public challenge to a duel. Given the rhetorical skill of most well-educated Crane officers, it is usually very difficult for the enemy general to refuse without admitting cowardice, shaming himself before his men. Of course, once the enemy commander does accept the duel, the Crane can usually kill him easily, leaving the opposing army to fight without its leader.

Although most Crane approach the battlefield with honor and idealism, the Daidoji family has long been known for a more pragmatic and even ruthless approach—hardly surprising, since as the clan's chief warriors the Daidoji are far more acquainted with their enemies' superior numbers than the rest of the Crane. Daidoji scouts freely employ questionable tactics such as night ambushes, raids on enemy supply lines or command posts, or "scorched earth" tactics that destroy valuable economic assets rather than let them fall into an invader's hands.

One of the stranger traditions associated with the Crane Clan is that the commander of any military force fighting in war is expected to compose a poem regarding the outcome and submit it to his superiors along with his normal battlefield reports. The Crane believe that this will allow them to see not only what took place in a given battle, but how it affected the commander; this helps his superiors determine his habits of mind and his fitness to continue in command.

Dragon Clan

Although the Dragon have an army, they very seldom train their units in large groups, instead allowing each legion or lesser formation to train independently most of the time. The result is a unit structure much more variable than in other clans, with weapon choices and preferred tactics varying considerably even between small groups of soldiers.

Due to their remote location and traditional preference for defensive warfare, the Dragon consider extremely difficult environments to be ideal for training, and seek out the most frigid and rocky mountaintops for their men to practice maneuvers and fighting techniques. Dragon commanders believe the physical and mental toughness this breeds is far better preparation for their soldiers than any amount of conventional drill.

The Dragon have a long-standing tradition of allowing samurai to train alongside those of radically different professions, such as bushi studying the ways of the spirits alongside shugenja, or shugenja practicing swordsmanship with bushi. As a result, their armies tend to integrate magic into their tactics and strategies more readily than most other clans; only the Phoenix and certain elements of the Unicorn can rival the Dragon in using magic for war. Furthermore, most Dragon armies also incorporate a small number of their famous tattooed men with their esoteric and unpredictable powers.

Due to the strong tradition of individualism and idiosyncrasy among the Dragon, their army very seldom takes the field as a unified force. It is far more common for smaller Dragon units to engage the enemy in separate actions, taking advantage of the rugged terrain in their lands and the enemy's lack of familiarity with that terrain.

One tradition common among Dragon officers is to celebrate a successful battle, especially one in which all of the officer's men survived, with a commemorative tattoo. Although these tattoos do not have the magical properties of *ise zumi* tattoos, they are still important ways to remember the survival of one's own troops and the deaths of the enemy.

Lion Clan

The life of a warrior in the Lion military is highly ritualized. From the moment the soldier wakes up until the moment he lies down for sleep, every moment of his day is accounted for. Lion soldiers are expected to complete at least one full duty rotation each day; to spend at least an hour, frequently more, in the dojo practicing kata and fighting maneuvers; and to visit a shrine to pray for guidance from their ancestors at least once per day. These activities leave precious little time for personal pursuits, but Lion soldiers often have little interest in non-military activities (except for the occasional game of shogi, which can be justified as an exercise in tactical and strategic thinking).

The Lion maintain the Empire's only school dedicated to the specific study of war, the Akodo War College, and the students who learn there are revered across the Empire for their tactical and strategic skills. An interesting aspect of the War College's curriculum (and one which frequently baffles outsiders) is that the Lion do not study their past victories. Instead, they study their defeats, for they believe it is only through defeat that anything new can be learned.

Before a battle, it is common for Ikoma bards, known as *omoidasu*, to stand before the Lion formations and recite tales of the clan's greatest heroes and victories, whipping the army into a battle frenzy. Some Lion who have heard these tales claim to hear the voices of their ancestors on the battlefield, a phenomenon they describe as "hearing the song," driving them forward to commit deeds of superhuman bravery. The Ikoma also have a role after the battle, for it is they who listen to the final words of dying soldiers, carrying them home to their families.

Mantis Clan

Because of the Mantis Clan's rather haphazard origin, each of the clan's three main families—Yoritomo, Moshi, and Tsuruchi—maintains its own unique customs, with little coordination or harmony between them. Among the peaceful Moshi, for instance, there is no martial tradition at all, and young shugenja are instead expected to serve in temples or as navigators aboard the clan's many ships. Similarly, the Tsuruchi tend to eschew conventional military service in favor of training to become magistrates, wardens, or bounty hunters, traveling the Empire and experiencing the customs and cultures of other clans while learning to hunt the criminals of Rokugan. When the Kitsune join the clan later in the twelfth century, this adds yet another divergent tradition.

It is the Yoritomo who are the primary military force of the Mantis Clan. Their service takes place primarily aboard the clan's great fleet, fighting against pirates, smugglers, and other naval enemies—or, in earlier and less reputable eras of the clan's history, engaging in piracy themselves. As samurai they are expected to demonstrate proficiency with the katana, but their heaviest training is in weapons and fighting techniques suitable to use aboard a kobune on the open sea. All Mantis soldiers are expected to spend at least one season per year serving in a kobune crew. Mantis sailors are notoriously superstitious and make sure to appease the spirits of sea and sky before any major battle.

Mantis warfare emphasizes coastal raids, striking inland quickly to destroy a vulnerable target before retreating back to the safety of the ocean. These tactics can be quite devastating to the Empire's coastal clans, who are accustomed to the more conventional rhythms of land warfare. The flip side of this, however, is that the Mantis have much less ability to project military power against inland clans such as the Scorpion, Unicorn, and especially the Dragon.

Phoenix Clan

More so than any other clan, the Phoenix follow the ways of peace and enter into war only when all other options have been exhausted. Further, even when war erupts the Phoenix are often reluctant to fight all-out, preferring to wage a limited conflict in the hope that their enemies will see reason and accept a peaceful settlement. If a conflict proves intractable, however, the Phoenix will finally bring their full strength to bear on their opponent, unleashing the power of the Elemental Council and its elite units of shugenja, the Elemental Guard. Once this happens, the Phoenix turn loose their power without restraint, often shattering or transforming the land itself with the immense magical energies they unleash. This may be why when a Phoenix army prepares to engage the enemy, it is customary for the entire force to have a moment of silent prayer in which the soldiers and shugenja alike ask forgiveness for what they are about to do.

Continuing this tradition, the commander of any Phoenix army expecting battle is expected by custom to spend a day working humbly alongside the monks in the nearest temple, atoning for his role in the upcoming conflict. This tradition is not always enforced, of course, since the enemy does not always leave enough time to undertake this task. In such cases, after a conflict is concluded and the threat of subsequent fighting is minimal, the ranking officers each take their turn in a temple to seek purification and forgiveness.

Scorpion Clan

Many Scorpion view warfare as a game, and as such their military traditions seem somewhat out of place alongside those of other clans. The day or night preceding any large conflict, the Scorpion often send detachments from their army to move in divergent directions, confounding any enemy attempt to discern the army's overall intentions. Scorpion commanders also encourage discussions among the lower-ranking officers and even the rank and file about purely hypothetical or even plainly false battle plans, creating a sort of competition as to

The Imperial Histories: The Tale of Sun Tao

The ronin strategist who went by the alias "Sun Tao" is generally believed to have lived during the reign of Hantei Genji, although some versions of his legend claim he lived much later, as late as the reign of Hantei XVII. Likewise, tales of his origins and identity vary widely—in one version, he is a Lion descended from Akodo himself, while another tale claims he was an Isawa raised among the Lion as a hostage, and a third account claims he was actually the youngest son of the Emperor. There is even one story that suggests he was a gaijin. Whoever or whatever he was, Sun Tao began his military career among the Lion, where he deeply impressed the Akodo sensei.

As the story goes, after five years of study in the Lion schools Sun Tao was granted permission to read the original copy of Akodo's *Leadership*. He read the entire work in a single evening, and that night Akodo visited him in a dream. The Lion Kami praised Sun Tao for learning the ways of leadership, but told him his journey was incomplete. "Go out into the Empire," Akodo commanded. "Each clan has its lesson. You must learn them all."

The Lion were initially suspicious of Sun Tao's vision, but they could not deny the sincerity and selfless dedication of the young man, and they reluctantly allowed him to undertake his quest. In return, he promised to one day return and tell them all that he learned in the Empire.

The first clan Sun Tao visited was the Crane, who suspected him of being a Lion spy. To test his dedication, they gave him an "army" of fifty untrained man and told him to retake a minor castle that had been conquered by ronin bandits. Sun Tao accepted the duty without complaint, and returned three months later... victorious. Stunned by his talents, the Crane agreed to let him train with them. After five years among the Crane, Sun Tao and his small army left to seek knowledge elsewhere, but once again he promised to return and share his knowledge later.

The Phoenix were happy to welcome Sun Tao, and he spent five years learning in their libraries and schools, during which time the Phoenix were wholly free of war and strife. His men lived well and enjoyed their stay in the prosperous Phoenix lands, where they were well-treated. When Sun Tao prepared to leave once more, the Phoenix Champion asked him whether he was disappointed with his quiet stay in their lands. "Not at all," Sun Tao replied. "These five years of peace have been a greater test than all my time with the Lion and Crane." And again, he promised to return and share all he had learned.

From there, Sun Tao went to the lands of the Dragon, but they would not allow him into their high mountain lands. He made camp in the foothills and waited patiently for the Dragon Clan Champion to answer his request. His men were unhappy at such disrespect from the Dragon, but Sun Tao calmly waited and found ways to keep his men fed and in good spirits. Five years later, the Dragon Champion descended from the mountains and thanked Sun Tao for his patience. "Thank you for yours," Sun Tao replied, bowing low. "I will return to teach you all I have learned." The Dragon lord replied only, "I am pleased to have been of service."

From there, Sun Tao traveled to the lands of the Crab, where he and his followers fought against the terrible forces of the Shadowlands. Three out of four of his followers died there, slain by terrible enemies they did not understand. After five years, the Crab Champion demanded that Sun Tao leave. Although he respected the ronin's skills, he was tired of Sun Tao's constant quest for knowledge, and tired also of watching the ronin's men die in seeming futility. He gave Sun Tao a suit of Kaiu-forged armor and begged him to depart. When Sun Tao promised to return and share his knowledge, the Hida lord told him not to bother.

When Sun Tao left the Crab lands, the Soshi lord from the Scorpion Clan sought him out and invited him to learn with them. He accepted readily, and spent another five years with the Clan of Secrets, learning the ways of subtlety and deception. But once again he left, promising to return when his quest was complete.

"Is it not already complete?" the Soshi daimyo asked, for indeed Sun Tao had visited all six of the Great Clans who inhabited the Empire in that time. Sun Tao replied, "There is one clan I have not yet visited." Dismissing his remaining followers, the aged ronin set out alone for the Burning Sands, never to return.

Sun Tao left his armor and his many writings to his most loyal follower, a ronin named Terumuto. It was Terumuto who fulfilled his master's promise by collecting those writings into a single volume, the *Book of Sun Tao*, and making seven copies—one for each clan and one for the Emperor. Unfortunately, Terumuto was slain by bandits before he could deliver all the copies of the book; ultimately, only the Scorpion, the Dragon, and the Emperor received their copies.

The *Book of Sun Tao* is considered one of the greatest works of military strategy in Rokugan's history, and is studied by all those who wish to master the ways of battle and strategy. In fact, its influence extends beyond the field of war—many readers have found that the book supplies insights into every form of human conflict. The courtier Otomo Madoko, for example, wrote a book called *The Subtlety of the Court* that applies Sun Tao's lessons to the fields of diplomacy and politics. Other readers continue to find new insights within the book even to the present day.

who can imagine the most plausible plan that is nevertheless completely different from the actual plan. This custom would seem to breed dangerously independent thinking among bushi, who need to obey orders without question or hesitation. But it has served the Scorpion well, as they occasionally permit enemy scouts to draw close to their location and absorb completely false information about their plans.

Scorpion armies rely heavily on their own scouts, as well as more specialized units of infiltrators, saboteurs, and assassins, to ferret out their enemies' plans and to weaken and distract their forces once they take the field. Commanders facing Scorpion armies have been known to suffer sudden illness, or to find their secret battle plans strangely anticipated by their Scorpion foes. Of course, the Scorpion are always careful to make sure such tricks cannot be traced directly back to them.

Unicorn Clan

The Unicorn have always been a militant clan, a legacy of their long and dangerous journeys through the Burning Sands and their absorption of the aggressive Ujik-Hai tribe centuries ago. After the Moto displace the Shinjo in the early twelfth century, their legacy as ferocious steppe nomads makes the Unicorn Clan even more aggressive. It goes without saying that cavalry training is not only a tradition but an expectation in the ranks of the Unicorn armies, which rely on cavalry as their principle battle-winning force. This is not to say that the Unicorn have no infantry tradition; their armies need infantry to supply a base of maneuver for their cavalry. Their foot troops, however, are trained to ride horses to the site of battle to maintain the overall mobility of their armies.

Unicorn battle tradition has remained largely unchanged since their return to the Empire, and emphasizes using infantry and archers to pin enemy forces in place and wear them down until a decisive cavalry charge can break them. The spearhead of any charge is comprised of the clan's heaviest and most powerful cavalry units—the Utaku Battle Maidens and the most heavily-armored Shinjo and Moto units.

For most of their history, the Unicorn armies were organized and structured much like those of other clans, aside from their reliance on mounted troops. After the Moto took control of the clan in the twelfth century, however, they chose to reorganize the Unicorn forces into a new structure based on their experiences in the Burning Sands. The new design comprised three armies, the Junghar (which patrols and defends the Unicorn territories), the Baraunghar (which uses shugenja to enhance its mobility and battlefield capability), and the Khol (the clan's main heavy striking force). Younger and more inexperienced bushi are traditionally assigned first to the Junghar to toughen them up before they can earn duty posts in the Baraunghar or the Khol.

It is a tradition among the Unicorn to have wild revels the night before a major engagement, an act which most samurai would consider grossly inappropriate. Fermented mare's milk is shared freely and the soldiers sing, dance, race their horses, and otherwise disport themselves, though not to the point of impeding their ability to fight the next morning.

The Shadowlands

The Shadowlands has no real military traditions of its own, although the more organized groups of Lost (and their Spider Clan off-shoot) have retained some of the Rokugani military systems they once knew when they were part of the Empire. On an individual basis, Lost and Spider soldiers have any number of odd rituals and traditions, some of their own invention and some holdovers from their days of service to the Great Clans.

Lost and Spider soldiers never allow a defeated enemy to survive unless doing so offers greater benefits for their cause. As might be expected, this is a rare occurrence, and generally a victorious encounter for the followers of Fu Leng results in a field of blood and slaughtered enemies. Sometimes defeated foes will instead be captured and taken back for torture, devouring, or worst of all deliberate exposure to the Taint, a fate which most samurai would consider worse than death.

Military Organization

In truth, the samurai caste exists to wage war. Their other duties are in large part an outgrowth of boredom during periods of inactivity and relative peace. Even the most pacifistic among the samurai caste would sooner perish than fail their lord; those who believe otherwise generally shave their heads and join a monastery rather than risk shaming their family name and ancestors with their aberrant philosophy.

The closest thing to a standard military organizational scheme in Rokugan is the system created by Akodo One-Eye during the First War with the forces of Fu Leng. Akodo and his followers were so well organized and so effective that the other clans altered their own unique army configurations to more closely emulate Akodo's. Still, no one adopted the Lion style completely, and even the Lion themselves have made changes over time; the original model from which all modern clan armies are descended no longer exists in its true form, not even among the Lion or the Imperial Legions. And of course the Mantis were never direct participants in that tradition at all.

To describe each Great Clan army's structure and organization in detail would take up more space than is available here, but this section describes the basic essentials that apply across most forces, as well as the most frequent higher-level organization of each clan's armies.

Traditional System of Ranks

While Rokugan's unit structure has evolved from its early form, the system of military ranks established by Akodo is still in widespread use throughout the Empire. In fact, it is quite rare for any significant military structure not to use these ranks.

- *Hohei (Private):* This is the lowest military rank, assigned to all rank and file soldiers serving in clan armies, garrisons, and patrols.

- *Nikutai (Corporal):* There is little difference between this rank and that of hohei, save that a nikutai has the honor of assisting his gunso in the execution of his orders. The only other distinction is that in the event the gunso is killed or disabled, the nikutai assumes command until a permanent replacement can be made.
- *Gunso (Sergeant):* The rank of gunso is awarded to soldiers who demonstrate clear thinking and an ability to properly command others. Gunso are typically promoted from the rank of nikutai, but not always. A gunso has command of a squadron, the smallest component unit of a clan army.
- *Chui (Lieutenant):* A chui is responsible for overseeing a number of squadrons (the exact number varies by clan and circumstance). The group commanded by a chui is generally called a company, and is the smallest unit typically deployed in any military situation.
- *Taisa (Captain):* A taisa is typically given command of a legion. Although companies are sometimes deployed as discrete units, for administrative purposes they are always grouped together as legions, and an entire legion may be deployed to confront more serious threats. Legions are typically stationed at the same duty post for extended periods, months or even years at a time.
- *Shireikan (Commander):* Of all the traditional military ranks, shireikan is the least clearly defined. All clan militaries incorporate them in some manner, but they vary in their role. Almost universally, the shireikan oversees a number of legions, with the commanding taisa of those legions reporting directly to the shireikan. The number of legions overseen by a shireikan varies, ranging between four and twelve. Shireikan report directly to their commanding officer, a rikugunshokan.
- *Rikugunshokan (General):* The rank of rikugunshokan is the highest military rank bestowed by clan armies, and commands a go-hatamoto, or field army. It is not uncommon for family daimyo or Clan Champions to serve as rikugunshokan; however, daimyo or Champions who are not inclined toward military command may cede their authority to an appointed rikugunshokan who answers directly to them. Typically a clan will have between one and three samurai of this rank at any given time.

Traditional Unit Structure

The traditional Akodo military configuration is comprised of the following units and structures:

- *Squadron (Guntai):* The squadron is the smallest military unit. The traditional squadron consists of twenty soldiers commanded by a gunso.
- *Company (Kaisha):* Although squadrons allow for a degree of tactical flexibility, the company is the basic building block of an army. A company consists of seven squadrons led by a chui and his command staff, which typically comprises five additional officers. This brings the total membership of the average company to 153 officers and soldiers.
- *Reserve Company (Yobihei Kaisha)*—A reserve company is a smaller company made up of highly specialized troops. Reserve companies are typically deployed alongside a larger number of regular companies, most frequently as part of a legion. A reserve company traditionally consists of six squadrons of varying types,

such as shugenja trained in military applications of their magical abilities, engineers with siege weapons, scouts, or cavalry. A reserve company is commanded by a chui and his command staff.

- *Legion (Daibutai):* The legion is the largest autonomous unit in an army. A legion consists of six companies and one reserve company, amounting to roughly 750 troops, and is commanded by a taisa. A taisa and his legion answer to the shireikan in command of their section of the army.
- *Army (Go-hatamoto):* An army is the largest military organization maintained by the Great Clans. Traditionally, every Great Clan has at least one standing army, and the larger and more martial clans can maintain as many as three or four armies simultaneously. A standard go-hatamoto consists of 48 legions divided as desirable into sections or wings commanded by shireikan.

Command & Specialized Forces

In Rokugani warfare, it is normal for the commander of a military force of any significant size to maintain a small unit to serve as his personal command group. The composition of such groups varies considerably from clan to clan, but typically they include the commander himself, several yojimbo, one or more junior officers to serve as aides-de-camp, at least one shugenja, and a number of signalmen who use banners, flags, and other pre-arranged symbols (such as hummingbulb arrows) to send orders to the units under his command.

Command groups in the armies of clans like the Crane, Scorpion, or Phoenix often include a courtier or political adjunct of some sort as well. Their purpose is to offer counsel on the political ramifications of what is taking place on the battlefield. This is a time-honored tradition, especially in large-scale military campaigns, but not one that most military commanders find particularly useful. Most courtiers assigned to this duty recognize the generals they are supposed to advise don't like having them around, and only speak up when spoken to, or when they feel that their counsel is absolutely crucial.

All of the Great Clans have elite and specialized units, born out of each clan's unique traditions and training regimens. These vary widely from clan to clan, ranging from the unrestrained brutality of the Crab berserkers to the cold refinement of Crane Kenshinzen or the mystical prowess of the Phoenix Elemental Guard. The clans place great importance on these troops, and normal military strategies are frequently altered to maximize the impact of these specialized units on the battlefield.

Crab Clan

The Crab are an extremely militaristic clan, but unlike the Lion they maintain this tradition out of pure necessity rather than custom. Their duty to protect the Empire's border with the Shadowlands means they exist in a near-constant state of war that requires nearly every able-bodied samurai among them to be an active soldier in their armies. Through most of the Empire's history, the Crab have maintained four full strength armies and a fifth at close to full strength. Two of these armies are continually deployed along the Shadowlands border, manning the Great Carpenter Wall after its construction in the eighth century. A third army is divided between the major fortifications that lie near or at the border, including Razor of the Dawn Castle, Kyuden Hida, Shiro Kuni, Shiro Kaiu, and several others. The fourth army is distributed throughout the Crab lands as necessary, although most of its companies are usually still stationed along the border, as well as in key installations throughout the Crab provinces. The fifth serves as the clan reserve.

Crab units are relatively traditional in structure, since the Crab have little reason to alter them when sheer brute force and animal cunning are the most important elements required of their military forces. The first legion of every army is traditionally devoted to the Berserkers, Crab warriors who have lost everything to the Shadowlands and no longer care if they live or die; their only desire is to destroy as many enemies as possible.

The second legion of the first Crab army is the designated home of the Damned, warriors who have been Tainted by the Shadowlands but who remain loyal (for now). These units are closely monitored by the Kuni for any signs of advancing Taint, and are executed when necessary.

The Crab cavalry units are few, and fight more as mounted infantry than as true cavalry in the manner of the Unicorn. Crab line infantry, meanwhile, is generally heavily armored and fights primarily with heavy weapons. They are taught to fight defensively, holding their positions rather than letting the thrill of battle lead them into the jumble of individual skirmishes that characterizes Rokugani warfare.

Crane Clan

The Crane have a greater number of samurai than many of their friends and rivals, falling behind only the Lion and Crab in sheer numbers. However, due to the clan's emphasis on politics and the arts, there are generally fewer soldiers in the clan than in other clans with comparable populations. The Crane typically maintain two armies, one comprised primarily of Doji and Kakita samurai, the second made up predominantly of Daidoji troops. During especially peaceful times, they may condense the two into a single army. Regardless, the Crane have a very large number of bushi who are not directly affiliated with the military and are not called upon for martial service except in times of open warfare.

The first Crane army consists mostly of regular infantry, trained primarily in the Kakita style, and also including the majority of the clan's archers (an average of three archery squadrons per company). The first legion of the first army is also home to the Kenshinzen, the legendary master duelists of the Crane, known for their terrible efficiency on the battleground. Unlike other military units, the Kenshinzen have complete autonomy over their own recruitment and training, and generally only admit new members to their elite ranks when a Crane samurai defeats an existing Kenshinzen in an iaijutsu duel.

The second Crane army is maintained primarily by the Daidoji family, known as the Iron Crane, a title they earned from the Crab during the Battle of the Tidal Landbridge. As already mentioned, the Daidoji are known for their use of

unconventional and occasionally dishonorable tactics; they are also known for the ruthless effectiveness of their heavy spearmen, utilizing steel-reinforced spears to pierce enemy armor. The Daidoji make only limited use of archery, preferring the hand-hurled nage-yari.

Due to the pacifistic and reclusive nature of the Crane Clan's Asahina family, the Crane armies have virtually no shugenja support.

Dragon Clan

As might be expected given their enigmatic nature, the Dragon Clan does not maintain a traditional military establishment. Their army eschews the traditional legion structure in favor of something they call "divisions," each of which is commanded by a taisa. A Dragon division is comprised of five companies: two infantry companies of two hundred men each, one spearmen company of 200 men, one archery company of 100 men, and one cavalry company of 50 men. Each company is headed by a chui and made up of ten-man squadrons (nine men plus a gunso). The Dragon army usually consists of 48 divisions; the clan usually fields two armies, although it may field only one during times of extended peace.

The Dragon Clan encourages individual samurai to find their own paths during training, so there are numerous unique units within the clan's armies. These special units are typically assigned together to a specific company or, if they exist in sufficient numbers, to an entire legion. As with almost all clans, the first company of the first legion in each army is an elite unit, the so-called Mirumoto Elite Guard, the finest and most experienced soldiers within the clan.

The small Dragon cavalry units are known as the Dragon Storm, and are trained to fight with both sword and bow. The clan's heavy infantry, known as the Dragon Talons, are trained in use of the heavy sword known as the no-dachi, while the clan's elite archery units are referred to as the Dragon's Flame.

The Mirumoto family contains many duelists, and carries on a long-standing tradition of rivalry with the Crane Clan. The Dragon Swordmasters are among the most elite troops in their armies, and perform precision strikes against enemy leaders or key units.

It is not unknown for the Dragon to employ units of tattooed *ise zumi* against their enemies. These units are assembled on a volunteer basis only, since the Mirumoto would never dare impose military service upon the Togashi. It is far more common for the Dragon to deploy shugenja in their armies, for both the Agasha and the later Tamori make a habit of studying combat and training alongside the clan's bushi. Dragon battle shugenja, sometimes known as yamabushi, are easily among the most militant shugenja in the Empire and greatly enhance the overall battle prowess of the clan's forces. In addition to their own magical skills, they often bring a variety of alchemical potions and devices to the battlefield.

Lion Clan

For the most part, the Lion maintain a military establishment very similar to the original Akodo model described above. The clan usually maintains four armies, one each for the Akodo and Ikoma families and two for the Matsu. At certain points during their history the Lion have expanded their military strength far beyond this level—at one point prior to the Clan War, the Lion claimed to have an army of nearly

500,000 soldiers. The strain of supporting such vast forces badly depletes the clan's resources, however, leaving the Lion vulnerable to the economic manipulations of rivals like the Crane and Scorpion. Thus, through most of history it has been more common for the Emperor's Right Hand to maintain the four-army structure described above.

Regardless of army size, each family within the Lion Clan traditionally maintains at least one elite fighting force which serves as the first legion of an army. All three families maintain an Elite Guard unit of veteran bushi, for instance, and both the Akodo and the Matsu set aside one company per legion for the Deathseekers among their number. The Matsu also maintain the elite all-female legion known as the Lion's Pride, one of the most potent units to be found on any Rokugani battlefield.

All of the families maintain small mounted forces, and the importance and prestige of these units increased after the return of the Unicorn forced the Lion to adapt to cavalry tactics. The Ikoma also maintain a sizable force of wardens to patrol their borders with the Unicorn and Dragon clans.

Although the Lion have a sizable shugenja family in the Kitsu, they have relatively few battle shugenja—most Kitsu are priests who dedicate their lives to worshipping the ancestors, and only a minority of their number serve in the army. Those who do so, however, commit themselves fully to the task. Thus, each Lion army has only a few score shugenja serving among their bushi brethren.

Mantis Clan

Due to the Mantis Clan's small size, the geographical distance between its provinces, and the clan's predisposition toward navies rather than traditional land armies, the Mantis have an extremely unusual military structure. The clan maintains several legions of a traditional nature to garrison the Yoritomo family's island holdings, but the majority of their forces are organized differently. The Mantis use the kobune crew as their smallest tactical unit, rather than the squadron. Because kobune vary in size, there is no absolute rule as to how many men comprise a crew, but the number usually ranges between six and 24. Ship commanders are traditionally referred to as captains, but in terms of overall organizational authority they are similar to gunso in a land army. Individual ships and their crews are grouped into fleets, roughly corresponding to legions, with support ships for logistics and other non-combat functions. Multiple fleets are organized into groups called "storms," which can be considered to correspond to armies but typically are smaller in total numbers. In the era after they become a Great Clan, the Mantis normally maintain three storms, roughly 36,000 personnel in total.

Mantis crews are trained to fight on land, of course, but to round out their military structure the clan also maintains several specialized legions. The Yoritomo Elite Guard and the Storm Legion are the two most prestigious, with the Storm Legion being comprised of the most trusted and elite soldiers of the clan. The Tsuruchi, once a tiny family with only a couple hundred samurai, expand in later generations to maintain three full legions of archers.

The Moshi and later Kitsune are peaceful families, and prefer to avoid involvement in war whenever possible; shugenja support for Mantis units draws as much on the Yoritomo family's magical talents as it does on the Moshi or the Kitsune, and Mantis shugenja are usually distributed throughout their fleets. Both Moshi and Yoritomo shugenja are generally expected to serve at least a season aboard a Mantis kobune as part of their duty to the clan. Due to the Kitsune family's affinity for forest life, they are not required to make a similar commitment.

Phoenix Clan

Like their frequent rivals the Mantis, the Phoenix Clan has a relatively small number of samurai to call upon to serve as soldiers. Although the Shiba are far and away the largest of the Phoenix families, their duties are focused on serving the clan as yojimbo, sentries, and border guards rather than in large armies—not to mention the dominance of the clan by families who study magic and espouse pacifism. Fortunately, the sheer magical power of the large number of Phoenix shugenja more than compensates for the clan's military shortcomings when they are forced into action.

The Phoenix traditionally field a single army with 40 normal legions and eight legions heavily augmented by shugenja. The First, Third, Fifth, and Seventh legions are respectively known as the Avalanche Guard, the Firestorm Legion, the Hurricane Initiates, and the Tsunami Legion, and are collectively known as the Elemental Guard. These four legions are comprised almost exclusively of shugenja (mostly Isawa Tensai) with extensive battle training, each specializing in magic of the appropriate Element.

The Second, Fourth, Sixth, and Eighth legions of the Phoenix army are known respectively as the Legion of Stone, the Legion of Flame, the Legion of Wind, and the Legion of the Wave. These legions train alongside the Elemental Guard of the same element, and are skilled in tactics that both complement and are complemented by the Elemental Guard's magics. When these forces take the field, few enemies can stand against them, but due to the clan's pacifistic traditions it is quite rare to actually see the Phoenix's Elemental units in action.

There have been rumors for centuries of an additional legion of Elemental Guards known as the Void Guard, but if these individuals do exist, they are certainly exceptionally few in number and stand outside the clan's traditional military system.

Scorpion Clan

Ostensibly, the Scorpion maintain only a single army, although its exact size and composition are a mystery to outsiders. The truth would likely surprise most outside the clan: the Scorpion army is closer to a traditional army in structure than almost any other clan's forces save for the Lion. But while the Scorpion army contains the normal units one might expect to find elsewhere, the clan also fields several legions' worth of forces that do not fall within the normal military structure.

The traditional forces the Scorpion maintain are organized into legions, referred to somewhat ostentatiously as the Crimson Legions. The first legion of the army is comprised of elite forces such as the Bayushi Elite Guard and a group called the

Black Cabal, a company of exceptional swordsmen who wear polished black armor designed to strike fear into the hearts of their opponents. The legion also contains the Scor-

pion's Strike, the clan's elite spearmen. The Forty-Eighth Legion of the Scorpion army is known within the clan as the Scorpion's Claws, but their existence is little discussed even within the Scorpion Clan's own military establishment. This legion includes several units trained in the use of sai, which they anoint with the deadliest poisons known to man. The Scorpion's Claws are utilized only in the largest engagements, when the general chaos and the presence of other Scorpion units will conceal their presence.

Outside of their traditional military structure, the Scorpion maintain a large network of spies, assassins, and infiltrators whose capabilities are always at the disposal of the clan's military commanders. These forces wreak havoc on enemy military organizations before and even during major campaigns and battles, ensuring the Scorpion have a good chance of victory even against militarily superior enemies like the Lion, Unicorn, and Crab. More than one invading army has come to grief at the hands of such covert operatives, leaving it weak and demoralized when the Scorpion regulars finally confront it. Indeed, the Scorpion are noted as a clan which prefers to avoid open engagements unless assured of a strong position—more than one Scorpion general has found the wisdom in trading space for time while the clan's secret assets go to work on the enemy.

Unicorn Clan

Since their return to the Empire, the Unicorn have always maintained three armies. For most of their history these armies followed something approximating the traditional Akodo-inspired military structure, but after the Moto took control of the clan in the early twelfth century the armies were reorganized into three highly specialized forces: the Baraunghar, the Junghar, and the Khol. The Junghar defend the Unicorn provinces, the Khol attack the Unicorn's enemies, and the Baraunghar provide magical support and transportation needs for the other two armies.

The Baraunghar, by far the smallest of the three armies, consists of only five legions, each commanded personally by a shireikan rather than a taisa. Each legion consists of roughly 2,000 troops, organized into squadrons and companies of varying size depending upon their specialty. Slightly less than half of the Baraunghar are shugenja trained by the Iuchi family, with an emphasis on magic that augments the abilities of other soldiers or enhances movement. The other half of the Baraunghar are yojimbo and soldiers specially trained to work in coordination with their shugenja.

The Junghar army bears the closest resemblance to the traditional Akodo model, and prior to the arrival of the Moto all three Unicorn armies resembled the Junghar's structure. The composition and size of the Junghar is roughly the same as a traditional Rokugani army, except of course that it has an extremely large number of cavalry compared to other clan armies—roughly half the army's strength is trained and equipped for mounted combat. The Junghar reserve companies do not include shugenja squadrons; instead the army depends on the Baraunghar for such support.

The Khol is by far the largest Unicorn army—at its strongest it exceeds 75,000 soldiers, making it the largest single army in Rokugan. Like the Junghar, it is organized into units that roughly follow the traditional model, but the units are larger in size and more than half of them are cavalry. The Utaku Battle Maidens, the elite of the Unicorn heavy cavalry, comprise several legions within the army, and the First Legion is manned by the Moto family's infamous White Guard. Prior to the Moto reorganization of the clan armies, however, the White Guard is a much less prestigious force, bearing as it does the shame of the Moto family's near-destruction by the Shadowlands Taint.

Shadowlands Armies

For most of history the forces of the Shadowlands do not follow any sort of military organization that Rokugani would recognize. Armies form and break apart at random, brought together by powerful leaders such as Oni

The Imperial Histories: Hantei V at War

During the reign of Hantei V, also known as Hantei Fujiwa, a terrible Shadowlands force fell upon the Empire's southern border. The Crab Champion of the time was politically weak, beset by pressures and machinations from both the Crane and the Lion. A powerful demon called Usu no Oni sensed the Crab Clan's disarray, assembled a vast force, and attacked.

The Crab fought valiantly, but the threats from Crane and Lion had caused them to deploy much of their strength along their inland borders; by the time they could reassemble their forces, the Shadowlands had breached their fortifications and defeat seemed certain. The lord of the Hida sent word to the Emperor that the Crab had failed their duty, and urged him to rally the rest of the Empire for defense.

The young Hantei V instead came forth from the capital city and led the massed strength of the Imperial Legions southward, becoming the first Emperor since Hantei himself to lead an army against the Shadowlands. The Imperial and Crab forces fought side-by-side, halting Usu no Oni's advance at the gates of Kyuden Hida itself. It is said the young Emperor's sword glowed with the light of the Sun as he wielded it against forces of Fu Leng, and when the battle was finished, the awed Crab Champion fell to his knees in supplication.

After the war was finished, Hantei V levied severe punishments against the Crane and Lion, whose greedy political maneuvers had nearly destroyed the Empire. The histories record that both Clan Champions accepted their punishment honorably, but less than two decades later the Crane Clan would join with the Scorpion and Phoenix to form the Gozoku Alliance and reduce the aging Hantei Fujiwa to a figurehead.

Lords but then dissolving when those leaders die, conflict with each other, or simply lose interest. Battle tactics are minimal and organizational structure near non-existent, with most Shadowlands forces relying solely on ferocity, terror, and numbers rather than tactics or strategy. The most infamous example of this sort of army was the vast horde raised by the Oni Lord known simply as The Maw, who overran much of the Crab lands before finally meeting defeat at the Battle of the Cresting Wave.

Of course, individual Shadowlands creatures were and are capable of fearsome cunning and subtle trickery, and the more intelligent commanders within Jigoku's realm have been known to employ such creatures' talents in support of military efforts. Moreover, some of the Lost who retained military knowledge and experience from their former mortal lives, such as the infamous Moto Tsume, did employ something approximating Rokugani military structure, albeit usually only on a small scale. Tsume was notorious for terrifying raids against the Kaiu Wall, but seldom assembled a force large enough to actually threaten the Empire in a meaningful way.

After the rise of the City of the Lost and the later Spider Clan in the twelfth century, the forces of the Lost begin to create something approximating a real army, supplemented with whatever Shaowlands creatures they can threaten, dominate, or cajole into their ranks. Their forces are a strange amalgamation of military units and traditions cobbled together from the traditions of various Rokugani clans and the brutal experience of life in the Shadowlands. Individual leaders usually have the ability to tailor their units as much as they like, and no two legions within the Lost ranks are the same.

The forces of Daigotsu field something approximating a Rokugani army in numbers, possibly more, and the legions appear to be highly mobile. They seem to have a greater number of heavy infantry units, along with at least one powerful cavalry legion (commanded by former Unicorn) and archery units "recruited" from the finest archers of all clans, including the Tsuruchi family. Needless to say, the Lost and Spider employ maho, so their army's shugenja support is formidable.

After the creation of the heretical Order of the Spider, these brutal and corrupt monks are often found fighting alongside other Spider and Lost forces in small units. These monks are masters of both armed and unarmed combat, and possess incredible strength and speed; furthermore, their status as monks allows them to move unrestrained and virtually unnoticed throughout the Empire, functioning as scouts and spies as well as warriors.

The Imperial Legions

The Imperial Legions are the Emperor's own soldiers; as such, they are the most celebrated military units in the Empire. Each Legion operates with considerable autonomy, but ultimately they fall under the authority of the Emerald Champion (whose

office is responsible for their deployment, provisions, and training) and through him, the Emperor himself. After the creation of the Shogunate office in the late twelfth century, the Shogun also has call on the services of the Legions.

The size, number, and organization of the Imperial Legions has varied over the course of the Empire's history. During the long reign of the Hantei Emperors, the Imperial troops are organized into 50 small units, each called a legion although they are typically smaller than the traditional Akodo legion. The first ten of these units are called the Emerald Legions and are normally under the Emerald Champion's direct command, while the rest operate under the Emperor's personal command. Of course, the Emperor seldom takes the field in person, so more often these legions are posted as garrison troops in the Imperial capital. The officers and ranks of the Imperial Legion are filled mostly from the Great Clans, with appointments offered as a reward for exceptional character and/or honorable service. This system works well for centuries, as the clans vie with each other for the honor of serving the Emperor, who uses the Legions to siphon off strength from over-ambitious clans.

Although this system works well in theory, over time it grows bloated and unwieldy, especially in the latter half of the Hantei Dynasty when direct threats to the Emperor's rule are minimal. By the end of the dynasty almost 400 separate "legions" exist on paper, although in practice no more than 50 have any real standing strength, and none number more than 5,000 troops. Most of these so-called legions are little more than administrative cadres, ostensibly responsible for recruiting and bringing themselves up to strength if war should erupt.

The Toturi Dynasty chooses to make the Imperial army more efficient and purge lazy officers grown complacent with inactivity; the Legions are reorganized into ten miniature armies, each with a strength of at least 10,000 samurai of various arms—with ashigaru and other auxiliaries summoned in a crisis, it is not unusual for a Legion to number 20,000 or more. One Toturi-era Imperial Legion, in theory, can take on a typical Rokugani army by itself, and will find itself overmatched by none except a good-sized Lion or Unicorn army. Each Legion is designed to operate autonomously, and consists of every type of unit available, including cavalry and shugenja support. However, each Legion commander has considerable leeway in determining the composition of his command, and a Legion that remains under the same commander long enough will inevitably reflect his approach to his mission and the art of war in general.

Regardless of dynasty, it is extremely uncommon for the entire strength of the Imperial Legions to fight on a single field at the same time. Indeed, most Legion forces tend to be broken down into smaller units and split among whatever duties their commander is fulfilling at the time. When the entire strength of the Imperial army marches toward a single target, it is an occasion that gives pause to an Empire.

Waging War in Rokugan

"War is never as simple as it seems to the young, or as complicated as it seems when one looks back on a lifetime of campaigning."

— *Akodo*, Leadership

It is a popular and romantic notion that war revolves around the great pitched battles that live on in the annals of history, but every Rokugani general knows this is a partial truth at best. By the time a bushi has risen high enough in rank to command an army, he has seen enough close at hand to know the importance of the activities that prepare for and lead up to the decisive battle.

Logistics

"Every army needs brave warriors, but a truly wise rikugunshokan understands the limits of courage and the power of a full belly."

— *Akodo*, Leadership

Without weapons, arrows, and armor, an army cannot fight. Without food (or sandals, for that matter), it cannot advance. Without money, it cannot hire ronin mercenaries and keep them in service. These mundane matters, which seem so dull compared to the excitement of battle, are nonetheless crucial to success in war.

There are essentially two ways for Rokugani armies to get what they need to sustain themselves. One is to simply take it from local sources, by force if necessary. Armies that live off the land send small foraging parties into nearby settlements or out into the countryside along their line of march, looking for food and supplies and taking what they can find. This method is particularly effective in Rokugan, where laws and customs regarding the possession of weapons render peasants practically defenseless against armed samurai. And for clans that are poor in resources, this may be the only way for them to sustain an army in the field. When a Rokugani army needs to forage, it will generally detach one squadron from each legion, half of the troops led by the nikutai and the other half led by the gunso.

Appropriating supplies from local sources has its disadvantages, however. While it costs little in koku, it may cost in time and the goodwill of the locals. Foraging can also take up much valuable time, since supplies must be located, then gathered and transported back to the main army. Foraging parties may get lost if they are operating in unfamiliar territory, or fall victim to enemy scouts, bandits, or vengeful and desperate peasants. All of these are complications that only add to the burden of an army that is marching hard through enemy territory. And while samurai may well cow the local commoners into submission, gaining any useful intelligence from them will be all but impossible. Hostile locals can also create trouble in the rear after the main army passes through and leaves behind smaller bodies of troops, if anyone at all.

Taking supplies by force can be problematic even in friendly territory, since breeding discontent among one's own peasantry is never a good idea. The peasants will still be needed after the war is over, and even the most faithful and pious peasant has limits to what he will endure.

One way of getting around the negative consequences of confiscation is to pay for whatever the army needs, hoping to keep the local population calm. However, this method has its own disadvantages. First, the locals will likely raise their prices for whatever the army needs, making a long campaign excruciatingly expensive. Second, this method requires the army to carry large sums of koku with it, a valuable cargo that attracts enemies of all kinds and requires reliable troops to guard it.

Of course, no amount of cash or coercion will do much good when an army is operating in regions or during seasons when there just isn't much food to be found. This is a chronic difficulty of campaigning in the Dragon lands and certain parts of the Crab lands, neither of which are productive agricultural areas to begin with. Campaigning anywhere in Rokugan during a time of drought or famine presents the same difficulties, as does a winter campaign.

An army living off the land cannot afford to remain immobile, since it will quickly eat all the food that can be found in the area. Even if the army holds a strong defensive position, an enemy with a superior logistical situation can simply wait for it to starve. Eventually the army must move or die.

Unfortunately, the only alternative to taking whatever is needed from the local area is to carry everything along, or for a longer campaign, to set up a caravan system that will bring up supplies from home. Bringing enough supplies requires considerable organization and forethought, as well as a large, slow, and vulnerable supply train that requires guards, carts, draft animals, and drivers. The supply train not only slows the army considerably but it also presents a security problem—and the larger the train, the greater the problem. Supply trains are vulnerable to harassing attacks by enemy scouts, specialized units like the Shosuro Infiltrators, and even bandits. In an attempt to minimize this danger, each legion in an army is usually made responsible for its own supply train which marches with it. This reduces the hazards to the supplies but also tends to complicate the march of a large army.

Ultimately, however, it is almost impossible for a large army to carry enough food and supplies to maintain itself in the field. A Rokugani force that expects to be away from its base for more than a couple of weeks will have to either live off of the land or have additional supplies brought up from the rear. Supply lines present many of the same issues of security that apply to an accompanying train, but even more acutely, since large slow convoys moving through open country are extremely tempting targets to bandits and enemy scouts alike. The longer they must spend on the road, the more likely it is they will be spotted and attacked. Troops must be detached to guard the supply convoys, weakening the army's main force.

Armies advancing into enemy territory often try to mitigate this problem by establishing fortified supply depots closer to the front, minimizing the distance that supply convoys must travel through enemy territory. A successful army will often develop a whole chain of such logistical staging points stretching back to its home territories. Of course, these depots are also tempting targets to enemy raids, but they can be

Adventure Seeds: Logistics

The seemingly mundane business of keeping an army supplied can provide PCs with plenty of opportunities for activity, conflict, and adventure. In fact, they can provide more meat for a roleplaying campaign than the pitched battles handled in the mass combat rules. Logistical issues face an army every single day, and by their nature tend to involve smaller groups and smaller-scale challenges than a major battle.

Creative GMs can confront PCs with all manner of logistical problems, many of which can be handled through cunning and social skill rather than by fighting.

For example, what if a squadron from the army has looted a local village for supplies? The peasants are resentful and trouble is brewing, threatening a mass uprising that will badly disrupt the army's progress. A local monk has enough influence to persuade the peasants to remain calm... but the monk is also angry at the army for taking the supplies. The PCs must find a way to appease the monk or cow the peasants, or they may soon be fighting a battle of their own.

fortified and garrisoned to protect them. If an army must retreat, the depots are generally destroyed in order to prevent their contents from falling into enemy hands.

The samurai of the Crab Clan have become masters of logistics by force of necessity. They must maintain a very strong continual garrison along the Empire's southern border, and this requires a steady and well-organized stream of food and arms. Thus for all their bluster and truculence, they are actually masters of the quartermaster's quiet art. Fortunately, they rarely have problems with safeguarding their supply caravans, since they run through friendly territory to reach the border. However, on those occasions when the Crab attempt an advance against the Shadowlands—such as the various attempts to recapture Hiruma Castle from the eighth century through the twelfth—supply issues become much more acute. Large caravans guarded by at least a legion of Crab soldiers are sent out from the Wall to supply such missions, and these caravans must regularly fight off severe attacks from Shadowlands creatures. More than one mission to Hiruma Castle managed to capture the structure but then died or retreated when supply missions could not win through.

Maneuver and Battle

"Do not make the mistake of treating the approach march as a separate thing from the battle. If you can force the enemy to fight in a disadvantageous position, you have already won half of your victory."

— *Akodo*, Leadership

There is a very good reason why the two clans most devoted to the game of shogi—the Lion, who excel at it, and the Unicorn, who first introduced it to Rokugan—are also two of the most warlike of the Great Clans. Their long experience and devotion to the art of war has taught them to visualize the theater of operations as they would the game board. They understand the importance of maneuver, not just on the field of battle itself, but as it is planned out on regional maps spread out on camp tables in the rikugunshokan's tent and executed by the army on its way to battle. These clans understand that in war, as in shogi, the opponent always has a say in the flow of the game, and in the heat of the fight or the campaign, one must never lose sight of one's real strength and position relative to the enemy. To the great commanders of Rokugan, a clear mind is just as important in achieving victory as brute strength or numbers.

Although Rokugani armies maneuver on the battlefield in discrete units, they fight in fairly loose formations and open order, so each warrior can pick out his opponent when his unit comes to blows with the enemy. Once opposing units come to blows, command and control rapidly degrades and even a fighting withdrawal can be difficult to execute. Thus, Rokugani battles often see each side carefully committing a few legions (or smaller units) at a time, knowing that

once in the fight these troops will be difficult to retrieve. Once in the thick of battle, small units operate largely on their own, and it is up to junior officers to show initiative and clarity of mind. Indeed, even if a unit emerges victorious from its initial collision with the enemy, it may find itself cut off from friendly lines and forced to operate on its own.

Prior to the actual work of the battlefield, however, comes a much longer period of march and maneuver, as armies feel their way toward each other and seek to arrange a battle on favorable ground. A good general understands marching to battle encompasses almost as much activity as the battle itself, and Rokugani military campaigns play out over days and weeks. To the individual soldier very little seems to happen; there is only marching and carrying, hour after hour, day after day.

Scouts will come into their own on the march, and indeed have much more to do than on the actual day of battle. Gathering accurate intelligence on the enemy's position, numbers, and intentions is crucial. Samurai sometimes look down on the scout's trade as unworthy of respect, but everyone who rises to the rank of rikugunshokan understands such an attitude is ridiculous. As the main army marches, it is the scouts who keep them safe, locating the enemy, tracking his movements, and just as importantly keeping enemy scouts away. Patrols must be constantly sent out and debriefed on their return, and an army on the move is perpetually surrounded by a swarm of scout patrols. An army caught by surprise is half-beaten already, so good scouting often provides the difference between victory and defeat.

Scouts are commonly entrusted as messengers, since they tend to be more skilled in horsemanship and used to operating alone. Courier duty can be more dangerous than it sounds, since messengers must sacrifice alertness and stealth for speed. Scouts may also be given less honorable missions depending on the philosophy of the clan they serve. Sabotage and assassination are natural tasks for warriors who are trained in stealth and accustomed to operating alone or in small groups. The Scorpion and Crab are both quite willing to make ruthless use of scouts, and the Crane Clan's Daidoji family is also known to set Bushido aside in order to seek battlefield advantage in such ways. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine the Lion engaging in such underhanded tactics—although under the duress of war even the most honorable samurai may feel the temptation to do anything for victory.

Inasmuch as the different clans have different styles of warfare, there is some variation in their approach to strategic maneuvers. The Crab, true to their reputation for bluntness and ferocity, prefer the shortest possible path to reach the enemy and hit him straight on. Both the Crane and the Phoenix, with smaller standing armies than their chief rivals, tend to advance cautiously and try to avoid fighting on the enemy's terms; the Crane also like to feign retreat in the face of the enemy, then turn suddenly upon their foe's vanguard and defeat it in detail. The Dragon favor unpredictability as a guiding strategic principle, while the Lion may be counted on to conduct their campaigns according to military orthodoxy—but also to execute their conventional and predictable strategic plans with unmatched discipline and competence. The Mantis prefer to always fight along the mainland coast, where they can use their mastery of the waters to move troops by boat, much faster than any marching army, and strike at will wherever they please. The Scorpion make strategic deception a fundamental tenet of their art of war, and this extends to march and maneuver along with everything else. Every Scor-

Peasant Revolts

Peasant revolts are seldom mentioned in the official histories of Rokugan, where they are usually only mentioned as part of a Bloodspeaker uprising or similar blasphemy. In fact, peasant revolts are a regular and even somewhat expected part of Rokugani life, and are especially likely to occur during times of war, bad harvest, or natural disaster. Most revolts are local and easily put down, but on several occasions major uprisings have spread through the lands of entire clans or even threatened the stability of the entire Empire.

The tendency of armies to seize food and supplies without compensation, not to mention sometimes drafting farmers into ashigaru units or labor forces, often drives peasants into sufficient desperation to revolt. War may also drive peasants from their homes, destroy their farmlands, abuse their families, or otherwise leave them starving or outraged. Although war is a frequent cause of peasant revolts, it is not the only one; bad harvests or famines may also bring desperation and fury, especially if a callous local lord refuses to lower taxes or otherwise ease the burden on the suffering common folk. Since peasants are both devout and extremely superstitious, they may also blame poor harvests, droughts, floods, or plague on those higher up in the Celestial Order.

Somewhat more rarely, a charismatic or ambitious commoner may actively rally a peasant rebellion. In contrast to the other causes mentioned above, this often happens in time of great prosperity; for when the peasantry has more time for leisure, they also have more time to envy their superiors. Some lords actually raise taxes in times of prosperity to keep their peasants working hard. More crafty daimyo hold longer and more elaborate harvest festivals to distract their people.

Monks often become involved in peasant unrest. Sworn to poverty and simplicity, monks feel kinship for suffering peasants and will often speak on their behalf against a cruel or callous lord, or even lead revolts themselves. Rokugani unarmed martial arts, after all, originated from Togashi Kaze's determination to help the unarmed common folk defend themselves against abusive samurai. During times of unrest, some daimyo bar their provinces to members of monastic orders known for militaristic tendencies, such as the Order of Osano-Wo.

Not all peasant revolts end in large-scale bloodshed. After the initial wave of unrest and violence, many lords will surreptitiously make deals with their peasants, exchanging promises of better conditions for the lives of the revolt's ringleaders. Such compromises allow both sides to save face and minimize further destruction. When this is not possible, daimyo will try to put down the revolt with local militias rather than waste their samurai on such troubles—but since those militias are usually ashigaru and doshin from the local population, they can be unreliable. Calling on clan military assets to put down a revolt is a major confession of failure by a local daimyo, not to mention a serious diversion of resources if the revolt takes place during a time of war. (Some clans have been known to use peasant revolts as weapons against each other, sending in agents to foment unrest.) As a last resort, the Imperial Legions may be called in, although a daimyo reduced to such a step will probably have to commit seppuku to atone for his mismanagement of his province.

pion general makes it his primary goal to deceive the enemy about his true location, numbers, and direction of movement. The Unicorn also place a premium on achieving strategic surprise, but like the Mantis, prefer to gain it through speed of movement; their mastery of cavalry warfare allows them to move overland with a speed no other clan army can match, and in the twelfth century the special techniques practiced by their Baraunghar army only sharpen this advantage.

Both the Unicorn and the Lion have mastered the strategic art of coordinating separate columns moving along different axes of advance, concentrating only at the last possible moment and thus keeping the enemy in the dark as to where they intend to strike. The Unicorn can usually execute this strategy with greater speed, due to their superior mobility, but the Lion Clan's greater overall numbers allow it superior flexibility in applying this strategy.

Sieges

"As a form of warfare, reducing a fortification has only this to recommend it: After you have participated in a siege for the first time, whether as attacker or defender, many things in life will seem less troublesome."

— *Akodo*, Leadership

As discussed in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook's *Book of Air*, Rokugani sieges tend to be protracted and unpleasant affairs. With the exception of the Crab Clan, Rokugani siege weapons are fairly basic and often not up to the task of reducing a well-built castle, so most sieges become long and tedious affairs, dangerous and ugly but also boring and wearisome to both attacker and defender. However, the value of castles and other strongpoints makes them well worth fighting for; thus, many commanders feel they have little choice but to endure the casualties and squalor a siege inevitably entails.

Castles have both political and military value. Politically, they serve as symbols of a clan or family's prestige, and the loss of a castle can induce bitter long-term enmity. The Crane warlord Tsume Retsu's capture of Toshi Ranbo in the eleventh century triggered two generations of near-perpetual warfare between Crane and Lion. Militarily, castles allow a smaller force to hold off a much larger one, and they serve as excellent command centers, training facilities, and supply depots. Castles are the main bases from which armies operate; just about every Rokugani army, when in the field, will ultimately trace its line of communications back to a castle belonging to its clan. During a war castles also provide a safe rallying point for a defeated or retreating army, forcing the enemy to either stop its progress to lay siege to the castle or bypass it and leave the garrison to operate freely in its rear.

A lengthy siege can buy valuable time for a defender, while forcing an attacker to spend time he cannot spare. But these strategic considerations are often small consolation to an outnumbered garrison besieged in a castle. These men know there are only three ways for a siege to end, and two are highly unfavorable to them. Ideally the siege will lift, either because the attacker gives up or is forced to retreat. Many garrisons endure based solely on the hope that a relief force will drive away the besieging army. Absent such relief (or a sortie by the garrison that actually manages to drive away the besiegers), there are two likely outcomes. Either the besieging army will starve the garrison into submission, or it will take the castle by storm.

The Imperial Histories: The Night of Falling Stars

In the tenth century, a Lion army led by Matsu Aigito marched against the Crane, besieging the castle called Shiro no Yogin. The Daidoji defenders, outnumbered 10 to 1, retreated inside the walls and prepared to wait out a siege. The castle was small and had only limited food stores, but at first the Crane were able to bring in supplies through a network of underground tunnels. Eventually Aigito's men located the tunnels and sealed them, killing the supply runners.

The Lion claim they offered the garrison an honorable surrender that would let the women and children go free, but the Crane answered with taunts and garbage hurled from the walls, believing they would be saved by the Emperor's favor. The Crane claim the Lion attacked without cause, driven by the temper and blind pride of their commander. Whatever the truth may be, at the end of three weeks the supplies were running out and the Crane faced imminent starvation. Rather than surrender, the women, children, and elderly within the castle leaped from its walls, holding torches as they plunged to their deaths through the night air. The garrison fought to the death, and the castle came into Lion hands, where it remained.

For centuries afterward, Shiro no Yogin was haunted by the restless spirits of the Crane civilians who perished in an act of rage and despair. The great Crane general Daidoji Yurei, born on the field of battle, spent a lifetime trying to retake the castle for the Crane; he died unfulfilled, and his vengeful spirit joined the rest of Shiro no Yogin's *goryo*, vengeful ghosts, stalking the castle walls on the anniversary of the great slaughter.

Starving a castle out is a lengthy process, since most Rokugani fortresses maintain very extensive supply stores and have interior wells for water. Moreover, many castles have secret passages or secure back roads to slip more supplies or reinforcements inside, and cutting off all such routes into the castle can be a campaign in itself. Ultimately, if the attackers can maintain the siege long enough the garrison will either have to surrender or starve to death, if disease hasn't destroyed it already—though disease can be a scourge on the attacker as well.

Surrender, of course, is a disgrace according to Bushido. A garrison with no hope of relief is often more likely to attempt a suicidal attack on the besiegers, or commit mass seppuku rather than disgrace themselves by asking mercy of the enemy. On rare occasions a surrender may be negotiated, especially if one of the more pragmatic clans like the Scorpion, Crab, or Mantis is involved. Bushido notwithstanding, a garrison that surrenders is generally granted some honors of war—perhaps even the right to leave the castle and report to their superiors before committing seppuku. More often, though, terms are not so generous. Perhaps the senior officers will be granted the right to commit seppuku on the spot, with the rank-and-file either executed or disarmed and stripped of their position as samurai.

As noted, starving out a garrison can be a very long and drawn out process, and an advancing army may not have the time to waste. Thus, some commanders will try to force the issue and take the castle by storm. An assault on a well-designed and well-defended castle can be a very expensive proposition indeed, and some commanders will not attempt it at all unless they can call on special resources such as abundant siege weapons, powerful shugenja, or a traitor within the castle. A failed assault can actually weaken the besieging army to the point where it is no longer able to maintain the siege.

Whether successful or not, assaults are always terrible and bloody affairs. Even a badly compromised fortification can allow defenders to inflict substantial casualties on an attacking force. In return, of course, the defenders can expect no quarter from the attackers, and even women and children within a castle may be slain by attackers driven to fury by their losses. Either the attackers will be repulsed with much loss, or they will slaughter the garrison to the last inhabitant.

Siege Engines in Rokugan

Only the Crab and the Lion have any significant tradition of siege engineering, and they refer to their battle engineers as gishi hoi. Those of the Crab, needless to say, are generally regarded as the true masters of the art, although the Lion have done their best to learn their ways. Siege engines can improve the odds for the attacker, and they are a must for a besieging army that wishes to take a castle by storm.

Rokugani siege weapons are generally limited to basic catapults and battering rams, both used for breaking down walls and strongpoints. The physical effect of such weapons often doesn't amount to much, but the constant pressure of attack can wear down a garrison's morale. Siege ladders are widely used during assaults on fortified positions, and the Crab also construct siege towers to help their troops surmount a castle's walls and nullify their defensive advantage.

On some occasions, less scrupulous samurai have been known to make use of explosive devices (the so-called "gaijin pepper") to assist in a siege, although such methods are very much taboo and can only be employed in situations where none will survive to reveal the dishonor.

The Imperial Histories: The Origins of Kobo

The brutal Crab fighting style called Kobo Ichi-Kai, whose students call themselves the Hida Pragmatists, was one of the first off-shoots of Kaze's jiujutsu, but its origins are shrouded in mystery and controversy. Some histories claim the style was created by a man named Hida Shinmen, while others credit one of Shinmen's students, Kaiu Dokushojin, as the true founder of the style. What seems indisputable is that the Crab Champion of the time, Hida Tekien, was so determined for the Crab to learn the secrets of Togashi Kaze's fighting techniques that he commanded his own men to become peasants. Kaze's students would only teach peasants, so Tekien acted accordingly. Supposedly, his chosen men spent thirty years living as commoners, learning the basics of jiujutsu.

Once they returned to share their knowledge, the Crab quickly discovered that Kaze's ways of fighting did not always work very well against the creatures of the Shadowlands. Eventually, a small group of Crab samurai led by Kaiu Dokushojin decided to solve the problem in a straightforward manner. Dismissing any theories or academic studies with the simple words, "I am a pragmatist," Dokushojin and his chosen assistants spent another sixteen years criss-crossing the Empire, fighting all possible opponents, learning what worked and what did not against every foe and in every possible situation. Kobo was the result of their studies, and Dokushojin's iconic phrase inspired the name of the school they created.

The Crab have embellished this history with a highly controversial story: according to them, the Emperor himself demanded the aging Hida Tekien bring forth a warrior to demonstrate the new fighting style. Dokushojin chose a single student, Tekien's asthmatic granddaughter Hida Akemi. She spent two years in training. When the Emperor finally arrived to see the results, Akemi—who stood perhaps five feet tall in sandals—proceeded to blind and kill a captured ogre, followed by three armored samurai from each clan. As the Emperor and his court stared at the bloody slaughter in shock and horror, Hida Tekien handed his granddaughter the clan's ancestral wakizashi and commanded, "Teach that to my bushi."

Of course this story is merely a story, not recorded in any official history, and the Crab themselves will admit this in public. No Crab would ever endanger the Emperor, even slightly, by allowing him into the presence of a Shadowlands creature like an ogre. No Emperor (save perhaps the infamous Steel Chrysanthemum) would ever send 21 samurai to their deaths merely to demonstrate a fighting technique. The entire story is surely a myth perpetuated by Crab boasts and drunken tales, and in the calm light of day they will admit this.

But get a Crab into a tea-house at night, with a few cups of sake in his belly, and he will swear on his grandfather's sword that the whole thing is completely true.

Martial Arts in Rokugan

Samurai are masters of armed combat, masters of waging war with sword, spear, bow, and many other weapons besides. However, the human body is also a weapon, and the Way of the Open Hand is practiced by many Rokugani across the Empire. Although hand-to-hand combat is studied most frequently by monks, many samurai also study the basics, and a few clans have developed full-blown martial arts styles of their own.

Martial arts in Rokugan originated in the reign of Hantei III, when the Empire first proclaimed official edicts against peasants carrying weapons. Initially the results of this were distinctly mixed, for the samurai population was much lower in those days and protecting the entirety of the commoner population was difficult. Bandits, abusive samurai, drunken ronin, wandering goblins, and other dangers were rampant. Into this chaotic time stepped Togashi Kaze, a tattooed monk who had devised a new unarmed fighting style while he called *jiujutsu*, or "hands and feet." Kaze traveled the Empire, challenging and defeating abusive samurai, teaching his fighting techniques to peasants far and wide. He became hugely popular among the common folk, and hugely unpopular among the samurai caste. He refused to teach his techniques to samurai, declaring he would not do so until the Son of Heaven rescinded his edict. Finally, the Hantei Emperor summoned Kaze to the Imperial city.

The Emperor commanded Kaze to demonstrate his fighting techniques, but the tattooed man refused. Furious that one of his subjects would refuse to obey an order, Hantei III ordered the Emerald Champion to execute him... but when Kaze refused to defend himself, Emerald Champion Doji Kuzume committed *seppuku* rather than kill a defenseless monk. The Emperor immediately turned to the senior Lion in court, Matsu Noshin, and ordered him as the new Emerald Champion to kill Kaze. The Lion obeyed instantly, and Togashi Kaze died without ever teaching his fighting techniques to a single samurai. Only within the ranks of the peasantry and the tattooed *ise zumi* of the Dragon Clan did his methods survive.

Of course, in an Empire of warriors no fighting style could remain fully secret. Once it became clear that it was possible to fight effectively while unarmed, the samurai of the Empire began to study it. Although unarmed combat did not have the same prestige as fighting with weapons, it was still a useful skill for a samurai to have, and many clans made efforts to learn at least the basics of jiujutsu. In the modern Empire, simple jiujutsu techniques are taught in most bushi dojo, and a few families have developed their own unarmed fighting techniques—in some cases derived from Kaze's original discoveries, in other cases emerging from the clan's own martial traditions. The Crane, for example, developed the martial art called *Mizu-do* (the Way of Water) from physical acting techniques called *maya*, used in Kabuki and Noh theater. Mantis sailors devised a fighting style based on their practical experiences in drunken bar-brawls, while the Crab, for their part, developed the martial form known as *Kobo Ichi-Kai* by adapting the basic concepts of jiujutsu to the peculiar demands of war against the Shadowlands.

GM's Toolbox: Adapting the Mass Combat Rules to Siege Warfare

If the GM wishes to use the Mass Combat rules in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook to cover sieges, we suggest the following modifications:

- **Time:** Each roll on the Mass Battle Table normally represents a relatively short amount of time in a pitched battle, half an hour or so. For a siege, each roll should instead represent one day. For an exceptionally slow or wearisome siege, the GM may choose to have each roll represent two or three days, or even a week.
- **Determining the Advantage:** Due to the intrinsic advantages of defending a well-fortified castle, the defending general should receive a sizable bonus to his roll to determine whether he is winning, losing, or tied. A suggested starting point is +10 for a small or weak castle, +15 or +20 for a strong castle, and +25 or more for the Empire's greatest defensive positions, such as Shiro Mirumoto or Kyuden Hida.
- **Level of Engagement:** PCs who are defending may only choose to be Engaged or Disengaged. PCs who are in the attacking force may also choose to be in the Reserves. If one of the generals chooses to escalate the siege—a defender sorties to try to rout the attackers, or an attacker who tries to storm the castle—the Heavily Engaged level becomes an option, and all defenders must be either Engaged or Heavily Engaged.
- **Faction Effects:** The Crab are the acknowledged masters of siege warfare, and the GM can represent this on the Mass Battle roll by giving the Crab side a bonus based on the presence of Kaiu Engineers. The general on that side gains an additional number of unkept dice on his Battle roll equal to half (rounded up) the Engineer skill rank of the highest-Status Kaiu Engineer present.
- **Winning the Siege:** Success in a siege is difficult, and requires weeks at a minimum, if not months. Assuming the castle does not fall by storm, the GM should choose a "base" amount of time in which the castle might fall—we suggest three weeks for a small castle, six weeks for a medium-sized castle, and twelve weeks for a truly formidable Kyuden. Keep track of how many Mass Battle rolls are won by the defender and how many by the attacker during that time. If the besieger wins more rolls than the defender, the castle's defenses have weakened enough that it cannot hold out (although this does not mean it will fall easily—the defenders may launch a suicide attack, or the besieger may have to storm the castle to finally break the last crumbling defense). If the defender won an equal or greater number of rolls, the castle holds out; the besieger must either break off the siege or maintain it for the same length of time again. For each additional length of time the siege is maintained, the attacking commander gains a cumulative +10 bonus to the Battle rolls as the defender is weakened by starvation and despair.

Obviously, the GM can and should mix in additional challenges and variations to this basic structure, such as the arrival of a relief force from outside the castle, outbreaks of disease in one or both armies, attempts to overtake the castle through treachery, and so forth.

Heroic Opportunities for Siege Battles

The following section lists some additional potential Heroic Opportunities that are optimized for siege warfare. The GM is encouraged to create more such Opportunities tailored to the particular battle he is depicting.

Archery Duel

Enemy archer units have picked out your unit to concentrate their fire. You must fire back or take cover. The enemy archers may be samurai in numbers equal to the PCs, or ashigaru bowmen equal to twice the number of PCs. Whichever side is part of the defending garrison should receive Armor TN bonuses to reflect the cover afforded by the fortifications. If the PCs defeat the opposing archers, they gain 2 Glory and the opposing general suffers a -3 penalty to his next Battle roll.

Disease

Sieges do not lend themselves to maintaining proper sanitation, either in the besiegers' camp or in the castle. The PCs must make a Stamina Roll against a TN of 15. All who fail contract a disease of the GM's determination. Without proper treatment (Medicine rolls or a suitable spell) the disease will be debilitating and possibly fatal.

Foraging Party

The PCs are sent to forage for supplies (food, arrows, medicine, etc.) in the surrounding area. This mission may encounter opposition from enemy scouts, peasant rebels, or other such issues.

Messenger Duty

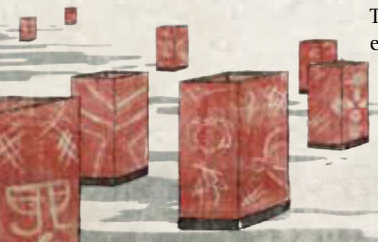
The PCs are assigned to carry an important message. If they are part of the garrison, this will require slipping through the besieger's cordon around the castle—a dangerous mission indeed.

Sortie

The garrison is making a probing attack against a section of the line to test the strength of the besieging army and, if possible, raid their camp. Although this is only a testing raid, it will still be a sharp and desperate fight regardless of which side the PCs are on. The PCs must fight a skirmish against appropriate opposition (a good starting point would be an equal number of samurai of the same Insight Rank). If the PCs defeat them, they will gain 3 Glory.

Too Close to the Walls

If the PCs are with the besieging force, they are ordered to advance and scout out a section of the walls to assess their defenses and the strength of the garrison—unless they perform the mission stealthily, they are caught by a small detachment from the garrison. Conversely, if the PCs are with the garrison, they are ordered to intercept a small party of enemy scouts spotted advancing close to the walls. In either case, the PCs must fight a skirmish against a suitable opposing force, most likely slightly weaker than they are. If the PCs defeat them, they gain 2 Glory.



New Mechanics

This section provides new mechanics for use in the L5R 4th Edition RPG. Here we present the Hida Pragmatist school, the oddly-named warriors who follow the traditions of Kobo Ichi-Kai.

New Basic School: Hida Pragmatist [Bushi]

The practitioners of Kobo Ichi-Kai, whose primary dojo is located in Clear Water Village, focus on unarmed combat above all other forms of martial conflict. Although sometimes considered a touch bizarre by other Crab warriors, they are nonetheless respected because of their sheer physical power and ability to devastate virtually any opponent in hand-to-hand combat. Pragmatists make fine yojimbo, since they can leave their weapons at the door and suffer only minimal loss of effectiveness when doing so. Even creatures of the Shadowlands can be overcome by a skilled Pragmatist, and indeed the school was originally developed out of the need to adapt jiujitsu to fighting inhuman opponents.

Hida Pragmatist [Bushi]

- **Benefit:** +1 Agility
- **Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons) 2, Kenjutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, any Bugei skill
- **Honor:** 2.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Heavy Weapon or Polearm, Traveling Pack, 3 koku

Techniques

Rank One: The Eternal Stone Unleashed

The Pragmatist is taught to endure terror and humiliation while killing his enemies with anything he can find. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to any roll made to resist Intimidation or Fear effects. You also gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of your attack and damage rolls when fighting unarmed or with improvised weapons. However, you must always keep high dice with any attack rolls or damage rolls that benefit from this Technique.

Rank Two: Wearing Down the Mountain

At this rank the Pragmatist learns to strike repeatedly at the same point, wounding even powerful opponents. When fighting unarmed or with an improvised weapon, you may make the Extra Attack Maneuver for only 3 Raises instead of 5.

Rank Three: Fury of the Avalanche

At this rank the Pragmatist learns to fight just as well with his bare hands or whatever is available to him as with the traditional weapons of the samurai. You may make attacks as a Simple Action when fighting unarmed or with an improvised weapon, or when wielding a Samurai keyword weapon.

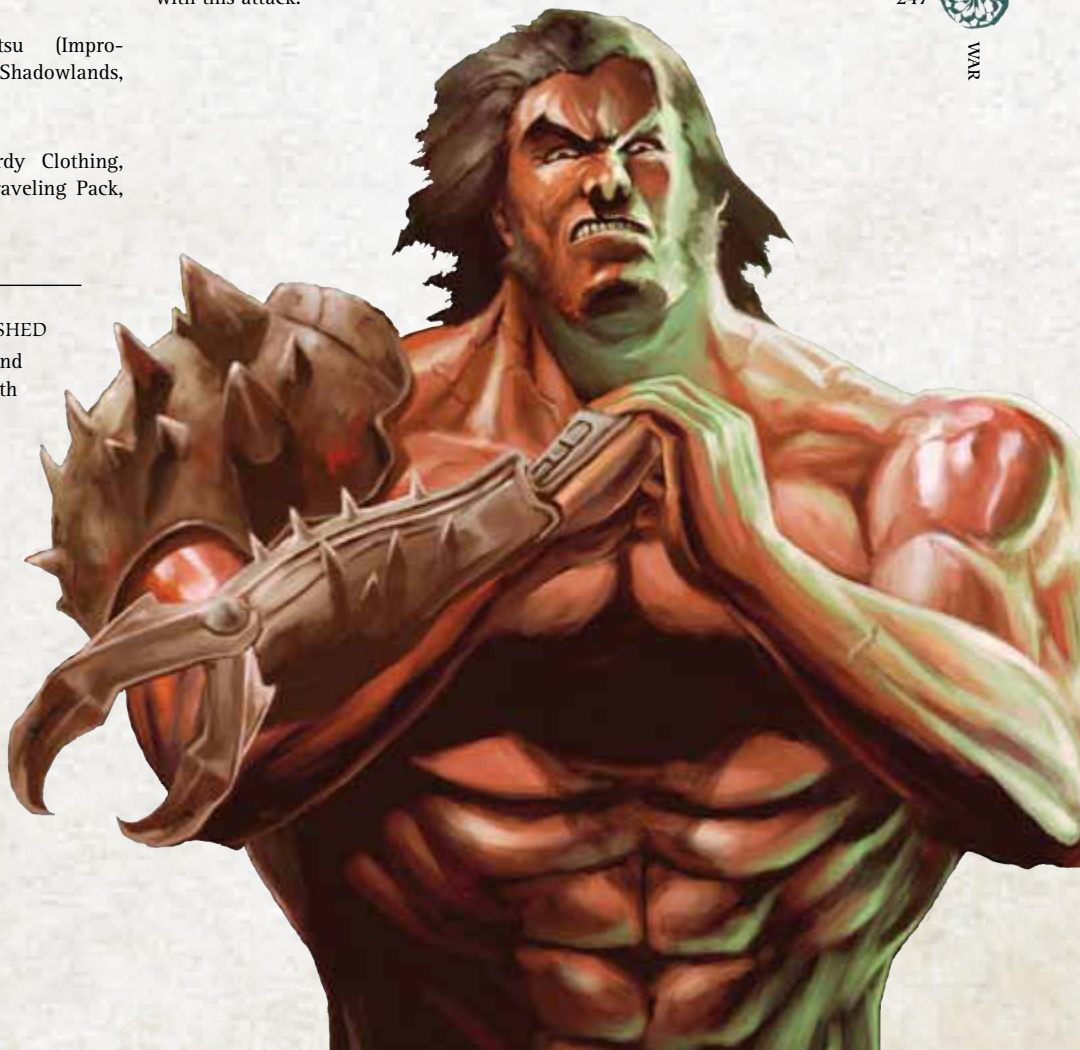
Rank Four: Stone Turns Steel Aside

The Pragmatist is taught he does not need a weapon when he can turn an enemy's weapon back on him. Regardless of your Stance, a number of times per skirmish equal to your Void, immediately after you are attacked with a melee weapon (after damage is rolled, if the attack hit) you may take a Free Action to make a Contested Roll using Jiujutsu /Agility against your enemy's (Weapon Skill) / Agility. If you win the roll, you immediately strike the enemy with his own weapon (thus, you use your own Strength when determining damage rolled with this Technique). You may Raise on this Contested Roll to perform the Increased Damage Maneuver.

This technique cannot be used during an iaijutsu duel.

Rank Five: Fight to the End

The final lesson of the Pragmatist teaches him to prevail no matter what the odds, killing his enemies no matter how severe his own injuries. At the start of your Turn you may spend a Void point to allow you make an attack as a Complex Action that ignores your Wound penalties (including Down and Out) and any restrictions or penalties from Status effects or physical Disadvantages you are currently suffering. You gain a +3k1 bonus to your damage roll with this attack.



The World Beyond

The student hesitated as he stared carefully at the map. It was an incredibly detailed representation of the Phoenix lands, with very specific boundaries drawn between the provinces. It looked a little bit like a spider's web with its careful array of symbols and notations. Finally, he leaned forward and placed three additional markers on the board, then stepped back. He glanced at the three tiny pieces of carved wood in his palm. "I am finished, master."

The sensei raised an eyebrow. "You have not placed all the markers."

"No," the student said. "I believe you gave me too many."

"Are you suggesting I was in error?"

"No," the student repeated. "I believe you simply wished to see if I would trust my recollections."

The sensei chuckled. "You believe correctly. The Phoenix lands can be somewhat confusing in their layout. I am pleased to see that you trusted your instincts, however. Be certain of what you know, and ignore all that casts doubt upon it."

The student bowed slightly in appreciation, then looked at the map again. He tilted his head curiously, then gestured to the edge of the map. "What lies beyond the Phoenix lands, master?"

Now it was the sensei's turn to bear a curious expression. "The Northern Wall Mountains, of course. You can see them there on the map."

"No, master, I mean... what lies beyond the mountains? What lies beyond the borders of the Empire?"

The sensei waved the comment away dismissively. "Nothing of consequence."

The student nodded, but then seemed to think better of it. "How can we know that?"

"Eh?" For the first time the sensei seemed genuinely puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"You have taught me always to question, always to seek knowledge, to crave certainty. How can we know that nothing of consequence lies beyond the borders? The Empire has little contact with the world beyond, is that not right?"

The sensei smiled broadly. "Quite right," he said. "This is not a subject I normally delve into, however, and I must confess that my experience in that regard is somewhat limited. But if you have questions, I will attempt to answer them."

The boy considered carefully. "I know that contact with gaijin cultures is forbidden without the express consent of the Imperial families, but what do we know about the gaijin? Surely they cannot all be of the same culture, the same race? And why is contact prohibited?"

"They are indeed a varied and assorted lot," the sensei agreed, "but they have much in common with one another. They are without honor and have no sense of decorum or decency. There are exceptions, of course, but as individual peoples and cultures, there is nothing to find admirable about the gaijin."

"On what is that assessment based, master? I do not doubt that you speak the truth, but how did you arrive at such a conclusion?"

The sensei nodded. "There was a time, centuries ago, when the gaijin were present within the Empire in a limited fashion. They had a presence in the Imperial City, but they revealed their treacherous and deceitful nature eventually, and were commanded to leave." He gestured at the map's depiction of the bay near Otosan Uchi. "A tremendous battle was fought in the city and the bay. The presence of the gaijin had corrupted a number of the Empress' vassals at that time. They are like harbingers of a plague, but rather than a sickness, they brought dishonor and shame." He shook his head. "All you must know of the gaijin, for now, is that they cannot, they must not be trusted. Not for any reason, or any price."

The Xenophobia of Rokugan

The term "xenophobia" is perhaps not the most suitable to describe the Rokugani attitude toward gaijin. Although the Empire's commoners certainly find foreigners terrifying, samurai regard them not so much with fear as with disgust, contempt, and sheer incomprehension.

The reasons for this are clear once one considers that Rokugan is an isolated culture with a powerful sense of its own civilizational superiority and its place at the center of the cosmos. All of the Empire's citizens, from the lowliest eta to the Emperor himself, are defined by their place within Rokugan and, by extension, within the Celestial Order. Further, Rokugan is a society where social change happens very slowly if it happens at all. The patterns and customs of Rokugani civilization were established by divine mandate at the dawn of the Empire, and changing them can be seen as not merely improper but verging on the blasphemous. In fact, the Rokugani belief in kharma means someone who violates the Celestial Order is not merely making a mistake in the current day but is also damaging the future state of his soul. Thus, changes to Rokugan's society and civilization tend to only "stick" if they are maintained and upheld by either earlier tradition or the mandate of divine will. For example, the endorsement of the Toturi Dynasty and, later, the Iweko Dynasty by the will of the Heavens allowed the Rokugani to accept their ascendance with relatively little complaint and indeed with celebration; a new dynasty which took power solely by its own strength would have met with much greater resistance and would probably have been forced to maintain its power through cruelty and military might.

Gaijin undermine the Rokugani view of society and indeed reality itself. They have no position within the Celestial Order, no reason to be part of the world. Worse yet, they themselves fail to recognize the Celestial Order, fail to worship the Fortunes or revere the kami. Such people simply do not "fit" into the Rokugani vision of the universe, and their very presence seems to damage its structure. Their traditions are bizarre and nonsensical, their bewildering variety of peoples and cultures are united only by their complete failure to understand things the Rokugani consider fundamental to civilized and moral human life.

Ideally, the Rokugani would prefer to ignore the outside world completely, to pretend there is nothing beyond the Empire's borders but empty wastelands and perhaps a few scattered primitive tribes. Unfortunately, history has not allowed them such a luxury, and Rokugan has endured more than one encounter with major gaijin cultures and civilizations. Many of these encounters have ended in hostilities, and even those which did not lead to violence have often had serious disruptive effects on the Empire's internal affairs.

There is probably no stronger or more basic example of this than the history of the Unicorn Clan, the clan born out of Shinjo's ancient Ki-Rin Clan at the dawn of the Empire. Shinjo was unique among the founding Kami for her curiosity about the outside world and her profound compassion for all of its inhabitants. When the First War against Fu Leng came to an end, she led her followers out of the Empire to learn about the rest of the world. The Ki-Rin spent eight centuries journeying through the lands outside Rokugan, and their experiences—including the adoption of many foreign tribes such as the Ujik-Hai into their ranks—changed them profoundly. After their return to Rokugan as the Unicorn Clan, they still exhibited a variety of gaijin influences, such as eating red meat, using leather horse saddles and fur garments, and fighting with strange weapons such as scimitars. The Unicorn Clan's ability to retain these alien customs while still rejoining the Empire, and even to impose some changes on

The Imperial Histories: The Gaijin and the Tortoise Clan

In the aftermath of the Battles of White Stag and the Raging Seas, hundreds of gaijin were left stranded in the territory they occupied north of Otosan Uchi. A Dragon samurai named Agasha Kasuga made covert arrangements to smuggle these gaijin back to their homeland, using bribed Yasuki merchants. Months later, he returned to the Empire and requested a private audience with Hantei VIII—after which the Emperor proclaimed him as the founder of a new Minor Clan, the Tortoise. Kasuga and his followers were granted the lands which had been occupied by the gaijin. (Where Kasuga's followers came from is something of a mystery.)

The exact duties of the Tortoise Clan, and the reasons behind their formation, are kept carefully secret from the Empire as a whole. Officially, they were appointed as protectors of the fortifications of Otosan Uchi and of the waters of the Bay of the Golden Sun. (The first duty lapsed when Otosan Uchi was destroyed, but the second remains in place even after that catastrophe.) It is widely known that the Tortoise engage in the more disreputable forms of commerce, including the sale of gaijin curiosities; they are also known to associate with commoners in ways most samurai find shocking. Only the direct protection of the Emperor has prevented the rest of Rokugan from destroying the Tortoise for their disgraceful behavior.

The truth about the Tortoise, however, is worse than most samurai would ever imagine. The clan's true duty is to keep watch over the gaijin, sending ships to foreign ports and trading Rokugani goods such as pearls, jade, silk, weapons, and art for gaijin items like scissors, spyglasses, books, and utensils. This covert trade allows the Tortoise to keep tabs on gaijin activities and make sure the Emperor is warned of any future invasion that might replicate the horror of White Stag. Each time a new Emperor takes the throne, the daimyo of the Tortoise visits the Son of Heaven, confesses all the improper actions the Tortoise have taken to protect the Empire, and offers his seppuku. The Emperor, of course, always refuses the seppuku and orders the Tortoise to continue fulfilling their duties.

other clans (such as forcing them to adapt to cavalry warfare), was and remains deeply unsettling to the rest of Rokugan. Some clans have never truly accepted the Unicorn as proper Rokugani, although political and military reality requires they treat them as such.

The Unicorn retain some contacts with the Burning Sands, and through their experiences the Rokugani have learned quite a bit about the cultures beyond the desert. In the twelfth century the Scorpion Clan also endured a brief but painful exile to the Burning Sands, leading to more contacts with those foreign societies. However, these contacts have for the most part been distant, intermittent, and non-violent. The great desert of the Burning Sands effectively serves as a shield, preventing direct contamination of Rokugan by those gaijin. For the most part, the Empire is quite happy with this isolation. The impact of the Unicorn is difficult enough to deal with—the Rokugani have no desire to confront further influences from the people across the desert.

The oceans also serve a function of protection from the rest of the world, but do so less reliably than the desert. Rokugan's most violent and traumatic contact with gaijin came by sea. In the fifth century, a fleet of strange ships arrived in Rokugan and requested permission to open trade and diplomatic communication with the Empire. Initially, Empress Hantei VII was willing to allow tentative contacts with the foreigners, but the strange and perverse ways of the foreigners quickly led to rising tensions and discontent. After two years, the Empress commanded the gaijin to depart on pain of death. Historical records differ as to exactly what incident or combination of incidents led to this decision—some tales blame the decree on in-fighting between different factions of the gaijin, while others claim the Miya family may have somehow provoked trouble when they were trying to mediate. (It is known that several Miya *shisha* were taken hostage on the gaijin ships and never seen again.)

Whatever the case, the gaijin answered the Hantei's decree with a full-scale military assault on the Imperial capital, occupying the peninsula north of the Bay of the Golden Sun, bombarding the city with cannon, and slaughtering thousands of Rokugani samurai with musket fire. Worst of all, their bombardment took the life of the Empress herself, a crime which filled the Rokugani with fury. After a desperate land battle known as the Battle of White Stag, the gaijin were finally defeated. Their fleet was likewise largely destroyed in a naval engagement known as the Battle of the Raging Seas, leaving only a few vessels to escape back over the waters. It was in the aftermath of this catastrophic incident that the new Emperor, Hantei VIII, issued the decree forbidding contact with foreign peoples, a decree which has remained more-or-less in force ever since.

The Battle of White Stag and the Battle of the Raging Seas were pivotal moments in the history of Rokugan's relations with the gaijin. Up until that point, the Rokugani had viewed gaijin as foolish and barbaric, but not necessarily dangerous. After White Stag, attitudes toward gaijin were far more hostile and many Rokugani regarded them as a real threat to the Empire's safety. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of White Stag "xenophobia" would be an accurate term for samurai attitudes toward foreigners. Although the passage of time (and the lack of any significant renewed contact with the overseas gaijin) eased this fear, the fundamental hostility created by White Stag never truly vanished, and doubtless contributed significantly to the hostility which the Unicorn faced when they returned to the Empire four centuries later.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries Rokugan's contacts with foreigners escalate in several ways. The exile of the Scorpion Clan to the Burning Sands lead to the growth of long-distance contacts (including trade) with the cultures across the desert—the Dragon Clan even goes so far as to establish an embassy in the vast gaijin city of Medinaat al-Salaam. The Mantis expand their covert contacts with foreign peoples as well, and even accept an oath of fealty from a gaijin named Rama Singh. At the same time, however, Rokugan faces terrible new threats from foreign sources—the invasion of the Army of Dark Fire in the north, followed by the even more devastating invasion of Kali-Ma's Destroyers from the south. Thus, despite the Empire's growing contacts with foreign societies, Rokugani fundamental hostility to the gaijin is unlikely to change any time soon.

The Known Gaijin Nations

The Rokugani have only limited knowledge of the differing cultures outside their borders. Although the Tortoise Clan does its best to keep tabs on foreign ports, most of what they learn never goes beyond their own ranks, with only the most vital information conveyed to the Emperor's ears. Many Rokugani are not even aware of distinctions between different gaijin peoples, seeing them all as an undifferentiated and repellant "other." Those who do recognize the existence of different gaijin cultures often have only fragmentary information on their specific nature, and this information is mixed together with gossip, rumor, and falsehood.

The Ivory Kingdoms

Far to the south and west of Rokugan, beyond the farthest reaches of the Shadowlands' influence and the demon-infested jungles that lie immediately beyond it, lies a realm of wonder and majesty known as the Ivory Kingdoms. Through most of the Empire's history this distant realm is known only to the Tortoise and the Mantis Clan, who maintain covert trade contacts with it. However, in the twelfth century the arrival of an ambassador allows the rest of Rokugan to gain at least some knowledge of the place. The Ivory Kingdoms are in many ways strikingly similar to the Empire itself, but they are nevertheless a gaijin culture and decidedly different from Rokugan.

The inhabitants of the Ivory Kingdoms have round eyes, dark tan or brown skin in many different shades, and dark straight hair. There seems to be considerable variety in their build and facial features, with some of them having thin builds and lean, narrow faces while others have far taller and more muscular bodies with broader faces. They dress in cotton garments, usually favoring loose shirts and pantaloons; the nobility sometimes wear silk as well, along with splendid jewelry. Nobles and common folk alike often wear turbans wrapped around their heads to shield them from the hot tropical sun of their land.

The history of the Kingdoms is largely a mystery to Rokugan, but it is known that the most powerful organizations in the Kingdoms are its noble houses, similar in many ways to the Great Clans. Each house is led by an extremely powerful noble known as a Raja, and each Raja rules over particular aspects of the Kingdoms, answering only to the supreme ruler. This position is often known as the Emperor or Maharaja, but in the Kingdoms' earliest history the monarchs were known as Ikshwaku. There have been numerous dynasties throughout the Kingdoms' history, perhaps as many as a dozen.

Like Rokugan, the Ivory Kingdoms are a caste society, and the various ruling dynasties and the nobility leading the individual houses belong to a noble warrior cast known as the Kshatriya. The Kingdoms' caste system appears to be just as rigid as that of Rokugan, possibly even more so. Citizens are not permitted to marry outside of their caste, and are strongly encouraged not to even associate with anyone above or below their own social strata—although in practical terms this is impossible given how the different castes must interact for society to function.

The Ivory Kingdoms are polytheistic, believing in several powerful gods who rule over various aspects of their concept of the universe. Two of the most powerful of these gods are Shiva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Preserver. Unlike the Fortunist faith of Rokugan, the Ivory Kingdoms' gods do not always cooperate with each other, and their priests and followers can find themselves in opposition. Each major god has at least one wrathful aspect which can arguably be seen as evil. These evil aspects often have cults associated with them, such as the Cult of the Destroyer, a particularly insidious group devoted to Kali-ma, the dark aspect of Shiva.

The people of the Ivory Kingdoms lack any sort of xenophobia, and they have explored much of their portion of the world, sending sizable trade missions and ambassadors to the Senpet Empire, the city-state of Medinaat al-Salaam, and other foreign kingdoms. In addition to their contacts with the

Emerald Empire, primarily through the Mantis Clan, they have also had past contacts with the fledgling Unicorn Clan many centuries ago.

In the twelfth century, the Cult of the Destroyer gains great power within the Ivory Kingdoms and unleashes the Kali-Ma Invasion against Rokugan.

The Kingdom of Merenae

Somewhere to the north and east, across the Sea of Amaterasu, lies a distant continent inhabited by many different gaijin nations. Chief among these, apparently, is the Kingdom of Merenae. The men and women who dwell there are pale-skinned gaijin with round eyes and dark curly hair. Their men grow abundant facial hair and seem to make little effort to shave or groom it. The Merenae dress in tight-fitting garments made chiefly from leather and various types of woven cloth, and often wear large wide-brimmed hats. They favor gaudy decorations on their garments, including abundant embroidery, lace, and large feathers in their hats. For armaments they carry blades and polearms of steel, and for protection they sometimes wear steel plates covering their torsos, along with oddly-shaped steel *kabuto* (helms) on their heads. However, their most notorious weapons are those which use the dreaded gaijin pepper: muskets and cannon. To the Rokugani these weapons are terrifyingly unnatural and indeed near-magical in nature, a sort of alien alchemy or sorcery that violates the proper order of things.

The Merenae encountered Rokugan in the fifth century when a fleet of their ships arrived at Otosan Uchi, requesting permission to establish an embassy and trade mission in the Empire. Relations with the gaijin visitors were difficult from the start, especially since the Merenae seem to feel little concern over their own cleanliness—all accounts from that time agree the Merenae were filthy people, who never bathed and stank abominably. Eventually, a breakdown in relations caused the Merenae to attempt a military attack on the Empire, leading directly to the Imperial decree ending all contact with the gaijin (as well as the creation of the Tortoise Clan, as described above).

After the Battle of White Stag, the Empire had no further contact with the Merenae until the end of the eleventh century, when a gaijin named Esteban Cornejo was marooned in the Mantis Isles. He claimed to be descended from Espada Cornejo, the first Merenae to invent gaijin pepper, which their people call *polvora*. Supposedly, Espada Cornejo not only invented the explosive powder but also the first weapon using it, a flintlock musket. The king of Merenae was so impressed by this invention he declared the weapon perfect, forbidding any further innovation—much to the frustration of the Cornejo family.

Most of what modern Rokugan knows about the Merenae kingdom comes from a mixture of half-remembered fragments from the Battle of White Stage and a few bits of more recent information from Esteban Cornejo and, later, from another member of the Cornejo family who briefly visited the Empire as an erstwhile ambassador. Of course, even this information is known to only a tiny minority of Rokugani—most of the Emperor's citizens do not even recognize the name "Merenae" and remember the gaijin of White Stag only as unnamed foreign villains. Aside from the Mantis, only the Tortoise Clan, which maintains covert contact with the major ports on the distant Merenae continent, has real knowledge of Merenae culture and history.

It is known that the Merenae are ruled by a king who they consider to have near-absolute secular power; however, this king is apparently not regarded as a semi-divine being or religious leader in the same way as Rokugan's Emperor. That being said, the king's power is quite formidable, demonstrated by his ability to halt further research on gunpowder weaponry by declaring the Cornejo design to be perfect. The Merenae apparently have several families of nobles (the Cornejos claim there are twelve such families, themselves being one of them) who rule portions of the kingdom under the authority of the king. The exact relationship between king and nobles is somewhat confusing, and some statements by Esteban Cornejo suggest there have been power-struggles between the nobility and the monarch. It also appears the social gap between commoners and nobles is narrower and more fluid among the Merenae than in Rokugan (although not so much as in their rival kingdom, the Thrane). Certainly Cornejo seemed quite baffled by the notion of "half-people" or "non-people."

The Merenae religious beliefs are obscure—no Rokugani has bothered to study their faith, since it is obviously false. It appears they do not believe in the Celestial Wheel or the concept of kharma. Instead, they seem to believe each mortal soul gets only a single journey through the world, and every soul is equally important regardless of what sort of life its body leads. All notions which the Rokugani find absurd and blasphemous, of course.

At some point between Rokugan's sixth century and twelfth century, the Merenae continent suffered a dire and monstrous plague. Exact details are sketchy, but information from the Tortoise suggests the plague struck around the beginning of the tenth century, and that half or more of the gaijin living on that continent were wiped out. Some accounts claim the plague originated from the Senpet Empire and was carried back by ship. Regardless, the Merenae Kingdom appears to have weathered the plague better than its neighbors, some of whom completely collapsed. However, the tight controls imposed by the Merenae king to hold his land together have made it difficult for them to regain normal prosperity and social function in the plague's wake. Perhaps this is why they have never returned to Rokugan in force despite the many centuries which have passed since their first visit.

The Senpet Empire

Far to the west, across the great deserts and wastelands of the Burning Sands, is a gaijin kingdom known as the Senpet Empire: an ancient realm located on the western edge of the desert, a strange and alien civilization that Rokugan has only encountered indirectly. During the early twelfth century, the Scorpion Clan endured exile into the Burning Sands, and during those years they were briefly enslaved by an army from the Senpet lands. A handful of Senpet later accompanied the Scorpion back to Rokugan, and most Rokugani knowledge about their land comes from these contacts.

The Senpet Empire, sometimes referred to as the Empire of the Scarab, is said to be primarily desert, with its arable land clustered around two large rivers; these rivers, however, provide enough agricultural productivity to keep a vast popu-

lation fed. Those who have met the Senpet say they have tan skins, dark straight hair, and round eyes, and dress in simple garments of white cotton; their nobles wear abundant gold jewelry and elaborate facial makeup, and their soldiers wear light armor and fight with either bows or spear and shield. They are an extremely militaristic people, but not conquerors, and generally leave their neighbors in peace so long as those neighbors do the same.

The Senpet civilization centers on the worship of the Ten Thousand Gods. These divinities are associated with the stars in the night sky, and are ruled by the sun and moon, Shilah and Kaleel. The Senpet believe the Ten Thousand Gods control all aspects of the world, encompassing forces such as deception, truth, love, justice, and death. Those who listen to the words of the Gods will prosper; those who ignore them will suffer. The Senpet do not do anything without consulting the gods and asking for their approval, and they will do anything to appease their deities—including conducting regular human sacrifices, a practice which horrifies those Rokugani who have heard of it. Indeed, the Senpet appear to dabble (both accidentally and intentionally) in necromancy, which Rokugani would consider blasphemous *maho* (blood magic). The *khadi*, the deathless sorcerers who remove their own hearts to gain immortality, originated in the Senpet lands, and it appears the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban may have visited the Senpet Empire to learn the secret of removing his own heart. The Senpet themselves claim to be wary of misusing this power, however, for fear of angering their gods.

The Senpet Empire is ruled by an absolute monarch known as a Pharaoh, who functions as both head of state and chief priest of the kingdom. When a Pharaoh dies his body is entombed in a giant stone pyramid, and many of these huge edifices can be found within the Empire's borders. Below the Parroah, the society is divided into several layers, including nobles, soldiers, craftsmen, and farmers. The Senpet also keep slaves, a practice strange and disturbing to Rokugani mores.

In the twelfth century, the Senpet Empire draws the hostile attention of the Yodotai, who conquer it after a bloody twenty-year war. Rokugani who have visited the Burning Sands since that time have reported seeing Senpet slaves laboring under Yodotai rule.

The Kingdom of the Thrane

The Thrane appear to inhabit a lesser kingdom from the same continent that is home to the Merenae. Information on the Thrane is extremely sparse and comes chiefly from Garen Hawthorne, a mercenary ship captain (or possibly admiral, depending on what version one listens to) who guided the Merenae fleet to Rokugan in the fifth century. Some accounts suggest Garen plotted to double-cross the Merenae commander, Teodoro Cornejo, but was exposed in court by the Mantis. After most of the gaijin fleet was wiped out in the Battle of the Raging Seas, Garen and his remaining ships sailed south in search of vengeance on the Mantis... but instead found the Sea of Shadows and fell to the Taint. In the twelfth century, the now-Lost Garen assisted the Dark Lord Daigotsu's assault on the Imperial city, Otosan Uchi, and later fell under the dominion of the Shadow Dragon. Although Garen said many things about his home kingdom, it is uncertain how much of it can be trusted—not only was he Tainted, but his information was hundreds of years out of date. This would be a minor matter for a Rokugani, but gaijin societies are unstable and changeable.

Aside from the legendary figure Garen, most information on the Thrane kingdom comes second-hand from the Merenae, or from the handful of secret Tortoise trade missions which have visited Thrane ports over the years. Furthermore, information gained from the Merenae is suspect because for most of their history they have regarded the Thrane as either rivals or outright enemies.

From what the Rokugani have been able to glean, it appears the Thrane are broadly similar in culture to the Merenae, but live in a more northerly region with longer winters, shorter summers, and frequent rainfall. Some stories suggest the Thrane actually inhabit a large island, while others claim they live on a peninsula. Regardless, their differing conditions cause them to exhibit paler skin and lighter hair colors than the Merenae (light brown, yellow, and even red hair are commonplace), and to favor heavier clothing made from wool or thick leather. Due to the rainy conditions in their land, and

The Imperial Histories: The War of Dark Fire

In the late twelfth century during the reign of Empress Iweko I, the Dark Oracle of Fire, Tamori Chosai, flees Rokugan into the northern mountains and steppes. There he uses his supernatural power to conquer and unite the Yobanjin tribes. Some of the tribes serve him willingly, seeing him as a god-like being who offers them power and conquest. Others do so under duress, recognizing his power as beyond anything they can resist. Five major Yobanjin tribes are forced into Chosai's so-called Army of Dark Fire, launching a full-scale invasion of northern Rokugan.

An army of Yobanjin would be a significant but not overwhelming threat to Rokugan on its own. The power of the Dark Oracle of Fire, however, makes them truly terrible foes. The soldiers of the Dark Oracle march faster than mortal men, driven by the supernatural fires within their bodies. Slain, they erupt in fiery blasts, killing their enemies as often as not. The Rokugani forces find themselves repeatedly caught by surprise by the speed, ferocity, and destructive power of the Army of Dark Fire. Large portions of the northern Empire are devastated, and major castles are destroyed in the Phoenix, Dragon, and Unicorn lands. Although the invasion is finally defeated, the damage it inflicts scars the northern half of Rokugan for generations.

their preference for sailing, they also like to cover their feet with heavy boots made from waterproof animal skins.

Although Thrane society does seem to be broadly similar to the Merenae, there are hints the Thrane monarch has considerably less power than the Merenae king, and Thranish culture appears to be generally much looser and less status-conscious than among their southern rivals. Garen Hawthorne, for example, was not of noble blood despite his high rank in the Thrane navy. The Thrane do have nobles, but the social distinction between their ruling class and ordinary commoners is much narrower than in most societies, and it is evidently very easy for wealthy and successful commoners to gain entry to the noble class. Indeed, the Thrane clearly esteem wealth very highly, even more so than the Merenae—which to the Rokugani is simply more proof of their barbarity.

Thrane religious beliefs are evidently similar to those of the Merenae, with a strong emphasis on the value of the individual soul and a refusal to acknowledge the existence of kharma or the Celestial Wheel. The Merenae have sometimes described the Thrane as "heretics," and there appears to be some sort of subtle religious difference between the two peoples which wholly escapes Rokugani understanding.

Although the Thrane did not invent *polvora* (gunpowder), they use it quite effectively and there are some hints that they may have advanced firearms design beyond what the Cornejo family achieved in the Merenae kingdom. However, the Thrane also seem to have been hit much harder than the Merenae by the great plague that scourged their continent. The Merenae claim the Thrane lands are devastated by the plague and many of their surviving citizens have fled to the Merenae territory—of course, they could well be lying, as so many gaijin do.

The Yobanjin Tribes

The Great Wall of the North Mountains form a natural barrier separating the Empire from the steppes and wastes to the north. If the winters of Rokugan are harsh, those of the northern steppes are indescribably brutal. It is in these lands, a realm of suffering and frequent death, that the barbarian tribes known as Yobanjin dwell. Their realm is spread across thousands of square miles of mountains, plains, and plateaus.

The Yobanjin dwell closer to Rokugan than any other gaijin people, and this makes them something of a sore topic for the Empire. Although most Rokugani find it easier to pretend the Yobanjin do not exist, this is not an option for clans which border the Great Wall of the North—the Unicorn, Dragon, and Phoenix, and the Minor Clan of the Badger (and later the Ox). The Phoenix, Badger, and Unicorn have occasionally maintained trade contacts with the Yobanjin at various times—in fact, the Phoenix even built a village for that purpose, Yobanjin Mura, inhabited by people of mixed Yobanjin and Rokugani blood. Not all contacts are friendly, however, for the Yobanjin are warlike and aggressive. More than one tribe has slipped through the mountains to raid the wealth of Rokugan. Thus, contact with the Yobanjin has been fairly regular throughout history, and they actually appear sometimes in Rokugani art and literature, the only gaijin culture to do so.

The Yobanjin are physically very similar to Rokugani, and indeed the Empire's early records suggest the tribe of Isawa may have been of Yobanjin extraction. However, their culture is quite primitive compared to that of Rokugan. They build villages and crude fortresses in the mountains around the edges of the northern steppes, and dress in thick, heavy garments made primarily from preserved animal skins and furs. They have some knowledge of metal-working, and can make iron tools and weapons, but rely heavily on bows and wooden spears for armaments. Their culture is tribal, and rivalries between different tribes are frequent and intense. Yobanjin shamans engage in a primitive form of the Rokugani veneration of natural spirits, and most Yobanjin also pray to powerful god-like spirits or animal totems which they consider essential to their tribe. For example, the tribe known as the Daughters of the Flame pay special veneration to an active volcano near their home.

The Yobanjin are famous for making use of unusual animals as fighting mounts. The most notorious of these are the huge and deadly serpents known as the Yobanjin Wyrms, which many of their warriors use as fighting mounts. Another famous example is the Tribe of the Sky, who domesticate the great northern hawks who dwell on the northern side of the Great Wall Mountains. These creatures are large enough to consume a man whole or dine upon livestock and steeds, but the Tribe of the Sky can raise, train, and ride them like mounts. Although the Hawk Riders (as the Rokugani call them) have come into contact with Rokugan only once or twice, the image of them flying to the attack is so captivating that they have appeared repeatedly in Rokugani plays, poems, and stories over the centuries.

The Yodotai Empire

The Yodotai Empire is a vast and powerful nation far to the west of Rokugan, beyond the Burning Sands and the various peoples who live there. The Yodotai believe they are directed by divine mandate to rule over all lands that exist, and have spent a thousand years slowly but steadily expanding, conquering hundreds of other cultures. Their rule is alleged to be an odd mixture of mercy and harshness, for their laws are applied justly but they demand complete and utter subservience to their government and religion from their subjects. Their armies are universally known for their vast size, well-drilled troops, and relentless courage. By all accounts the Yodotai do not use magic in any form Rokugan would recognize; rather, the spirits of their fallen fight on the battlefield alongside them, killing their enemies and blocking the effects of opposing magic.

For most of Rokugan's history the Empire had almost no knowledge of the Yodotai. Only in the twelfth century, when the Yodotai conquer the Senpet and send scouts to visit the Unicorn, does Rokugan become aware of their existence. Almost all the information the Rokugani have about the Yodotai comes second-hand from the gaijin of the Burning Sands, and whether any further contact will take place remains to be seen.

The Yodotai are short but hardy people, with olive-tan skins and dark hair that can be either curly or straight. Their facial hair is sparse and they prefer to keep it shaved. Yodotai civilians dress in loose robes which they refer to as togas—cotton for common folk, silk for nobility—and wear sandals. They are a very clean people, maintaining public baths in all their cities and washing daily, a sharp contrast to most other gaijin cultures. Like most gaijin, they eat red meat and many other strange and unnatural foods, and their favorite drink is *vinum*, a sour, biting liquid made from fermented fruit.

The Yodotai Empire is a warrior society, ruled by nobles who earn accolades for their families by fighting and succeeding in the Empire's endless Crusade to conquer the world. The quickest and surest method of advancement in status or caste is by entering the Yodotai legions and serving in war, and often soldiers who were peasants or traders by birth prove their worth in combat and are elevated to the nobility. Yodotai soldiers serve for years at a time, sometimes even decades. They wear segmented metal armor and helms, and carry large square shields; they are trained to fight in formation, locking their shields together into an impenetrable wall and efficiently slaughtering their foes with short swords and hand-hurled spears. When the Yodotai are planning to conquer a new land, they send their soldiers out to serve as mercenaries in the target country, allowing them to spy out its nature and secrets over the course of several years. Only when they have fully analyzed the target people's weaknesses do they dispatch their main army on its mission of conquest.

The Yodotai are in most respects a highly civilized people, and the few Rokugani who have grasped their capabilities have been appalled that gaijin could be so skilled and sophisticated. They rule their vast Empire from the capitol city of Octavion, using a highly efficient code of laws to facilitate governance. Their first and foremost rule is that conquered people must accept they are Yodotai citizens and worship the Yodotai gods. The Yodotai do not have names for their gods, for they believe naming the sons of Sky and Earth would bring Sky's fury onto their Empire. Instead, each god is named for the aspect of life or civilization it depicts. The most important god is of course Conquest, the God of War. During battles, Conquest sends the spirits of fallen Yodotai warriors to fight alongside their descendents, and sometimes even appears in person. The handful of Rokugani scholars who have studied this bizarre phenomenon believe the Yodotai dead go to Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter, but are somehow called back to affect Ningen-do through special prayers.

In return for religious and national devotion, the Yodotai supposedly allow their conquered citizens to maintain their own customs, traditions, and language (though they must learn the Yodotai tongue to speak with the rest of the Empire). In fact, they claim any Yodotai citizen may voice his grievances without fear of retaliation... so long as no citizen denounces the Yodotai Empire or professes allegiance to foreign gods.

The Yodotai Empire is ruled by an Emperor who is directly descended from the founder of the kingdom. He often takes the title of Warlord instead of Emperor, signifying his intent to take the field and lead armies in the ongoing Crusade. Likewise, Yodotai society encourages the nobility to enter the military and serve on the front lines, and those few who stay behind and do not join the army are often denigrated for being cowardly. Although there are social divisions below the nobility, they are loose and flexible, and anyone can rise to a higher station through military service. On the other hand, for most of their history the Yodotai keep slaves, and even when that custom goes into decline they still rely heavily on indenture systems to maintain their labor force.

Perhaps because of their relatively egalitarian society, the Yodotai Empire boasts of many scientific and engineering advances, although the Rokugani are dubious of such audacious claims. One aspect of Yodotai skill that cannot be denied, however, is their excellent road system. Superb stone roads cross the Empire in ruler-straight lines, allowing their armies to march swiftly to all corners of the realm.

There are only a handful of documented revolts in the Empire's long-established lands. These typically stemmed from anger at losing cultural identity, from a governor who ill-managed a region, or simply from grief at losing power. Each rebellion has been swiftly and brutally dealt with. The armies of the Crusade generally travel back through their own lands to face this threat, and the rebels cannot face the might of the Yodotai war machine for very long.

The Caliphate of Medinaat al-Salaam

The city of Medinaat al-Salaam is considered by its inhabitants to be the greatest metropolis in the world, and they call it by many names: Kala Jahir, the Jewel of the Desert, the City of a Thousand Stories, the City of Peace, the City by the River. It sits in the bend of the Nahr'umar River, a huge waterway that cuts through the bleak desert of the Burning Sands. The city is a nexus of trade for all the cultures in and around the Burning Sands, and its vast population—said to exceed one million—is a cosmopolitan mixture of native folk and innumerable visitors and immigrants. The people of Medinaat al-Salaam believe the Nahr'umar River is the longest in the world, and they may be correct—it stretches across the continent for over 4,000 miles, finally emptying into the sea in the Senpet Empire far to the south. Without it, the Jewel of the Desert would be just another barren patch of sand.

The native people of Medinaat al-Salaam are descended from a collection of tribes who founded the settlement over a thousand years ago as a subsistence farming community. They have dark tan skin and black hair, and tend to exhibit prominent and hawk-like facial features. Due to their residence in a land of desert heat, they usually dress in loose-fitting garments of cotton cloth; wealthy merchants and nobles wear high-quality versions of such garments, often enhanced with silk and jewelry. The city's soldiers wear light armor and carry swords and bows; ordinary citizens carry knives, and the art of *tahaddi*—knife-dueling—is considered the best way to settle matters of honor or vendetta.

The irrigated lands around Medinaat al-Salaam produce large crops of cereal grains and citrus fruits, and support great herds of livestock; however, the city's principle source of wealth is trade. The Jewel of the Desert stands roughly equidistant from four great empires, those of Rokugan, the Senpet, the Yodotai, and the Ivory Kingdoms, and it serves as a central nexus for traveling merchants from all those lands. The poet Dar as-Saydim described the city thusly: "It is as though this Jewel was all the world's marketplace, where nations come to buy orchards just as shoppers come to buy dates." The city regulates and taxes this trade to support itself, and while its cut on each purchase is small, the sheer volume of business ensures the city coffers are always full. To prevent fraud, all warehouses in the Jewel of the Desert are the property of the Caliphate.

The culture of Medinaat al-Salaam is a merchant culture, driven by the perpetual quest for money and success. Owning actual land is governed by numerous laws regarding what it can and can't be used for, with stiff penalties for mismanagement, but trade and commerce are available to any citizen and the city's politics and governance are heavily influenced by the wealthy, especially a group known as the Dahabi Merchant Kings. Below the level of the city's rulers (the Caliph and Sultan), there are very few true social distinctions—wealth, not birth, determines influence, and even a tenant farmer can theoretically earn enough to end his service to a landowner. Needless to say, most Rokugani find all this highly offensive, and for most of the Empire's history the only samurai to visit the city have been Unicorn traders and explorers. (Tortoise smugglers have sometimes tagged along as well, of course.) The Scorpion later gained some experience of the city during their exile to the Burning Sands, and in the twelfth century the Dragon Clan, concerned about external threats to its safety, decided to establish a small embassy in the city as well. Such contacts notwithstanding, the lifestyle which Medinaat al-Salaam epitomizes is anathema to the Rokugani.

The city is ruled by two nobles, the Caliph and the Sultan. The Sultanate is charged with creating and maintaining the laws of the city, while the Caliph enforces those laws and keeps the peace. Several councils and subsidiary organizations report to these nobles and help them perform their duties. For example, the Sultan is assisted by the Council for Trade, the Council for Grain, and the Council for Shelter, while the Caliph is supported the qadi (a collection of judges who administer justice), the city guard, and the city's huge number of administrative bureaucrats. It is rumored that the Caliph is also assisted by a secret force of assassins.

Medinaat al-Salaam has a checkered history. In ancient times a holy man called Mekham, a prophet of the gods, taught the citizens the ways of morality and introduced the basic structures of their government. The public histories of Medinaat al-Salaam list other luminaries of the young city such as Hanam the Architect, Yanad the Trader, and Akbar the Irrigator, but they would have been petty farmers all their lives without Mekhem's inspiration. The Jewel of the Desert thrived for hundreds of years based on the principles he espoused. However, in the eighth century a woman called Adira seized power in the city, using the sinister power of the khadi sorcerers to make herself into an immortal and ruling Medinaat al-Salaam with an iron fist. Her dictatorship was finally overthrown in the early twelfth century when a Senpet priest discovered her hidden heart and destroyed it, ending the life of the Immortal Caliph.

Emerald Empire Glossary

Agasha—A shugenja family that served the Dragon Clan through most of its history, but defected to the Phoenix Clan in the twelfth century over the actions of Dragon Champion Hitomi. The Agasha are traditionally known for their interest in alchemy, but after their defection to the Phoenix they more fully devote themselves to the study of multi-elemental magic, which had previously been a minor concern for them.

Akodo—The ruling family of the Lion Clan. The Akodo are master officers and tacticians descended from the clan's founding Kami, Akodo One-Eye. The Akodo are generally regarded as the finest military commanders in the Empire, and it is said no army led by an Akodo-trained general has ever lost on the field of battle.

Akutenshi—Literally, "evil angel." A term used by the Crab to describe extremely powerful and unique Lost.

Akutsukai—Literally, "user of evil," but sometimes also rendered as "servant of evil." A term used by the Crab to describe the Lost, especially those who exhibit greater power and self-control.

Amaterasu—The Sun goddess, also known simply as Lady Sun. Amaterasu occupies one of the two highest positions within the Celestial Order. She was mother to the ten Kami and assisted in the creation of the mortal realm and the other spirit realms. She is seen by the Rokugani to embody virtue, honor, and compassion. Lady Sun dies in the early twelfth century, committing jigai in shame over her own actions and those of her crazed husband, Lord Moon.

Asahina—A peaceful and monastic shugenja family which serves the Crane Clan. They were created from a marriage between a Crane Clan Champion's daughter and a Master of Fire from the Phoenix Clan. The Asahina are known for their gentle and pacifistic nature and for their great skill at crafting fetishes (*tsangusuri*), which are essentially single-use magical items.

Asako—A monastic family of samurai who serve the Phoenix Clan. They are peculiar in their endeavors, and many belong to an esoteric monastic order called Henshin who follow a mysterious philosophy known as the Path of Man. Many Asako also serve the Phoenix as scholars and courtiers. Some of them are Inquisitors, seeking out spiritual corruption both within and outside the clan in an attempt to maintain the Empire's purity.

Ashigaru—Ashigaru are peasant soldiers enlisted for service in clan armies. They comprise a significant portion of any major military force in the Empire of Rokugan. Although the perception of some samurai is that they are farmers, in truth no clan wishes to remove its farmers from the fields, so most ashigaru are recruited from towns or cities. They generally receive only rudimentary training in basic tactics and the use of spears and bows, and are not permitted to keep their weapons after their military service ends.

Bayushi—The ruling family of the Scorpion Clan and the descendants of the clan's founding Kami, Bayushi. They are regarded throughout the Empire as scoundrels and dishonorable villains, although few would dare say such things to a Scorpion's face. The Bayushi and the Scorpion as a whole embrace this role, as it meshes well with the clan's overall purpose of providing the Empire with a designated villain.

Bloodspeakers—A cult devoted to the precepts of the dark sorcerer Iuchiban (who was sometimes referred to as "the Bloodspeaker"). They have endured for centuries, operating in small cells throughout the Empire and remaining out of the public eye. On more than one occasion the Empire has believed the cult to be wiped out, only to see it return later.

Bonge—The general term for commoners or peasants, the bonge encompass all those who work as farmers, craftsmen, or merchants in Rokugan. The vast majority of Rokugani are part of the bonge. They are forbidden by Imperial decree from bearing weapons, although exceptions are made for special groups such as ashigaru.

Budoka—Samurai will sometimes allow a peasant to swear allegiance as a personal vassal, training the peasant in certain types of weapons. This is a specific exception to the normal rule that prevents peasants from carrying weapons. A budoka may serve his samurai master as a bodyguard or military assistant, or he may be assigned to help uphold law and order in a city or village (in which case he is referred to as a *doshin*).

Bugei—A general term for anything to do with the art of war. Skills dealing with weapons and warfare are *bugei* skills.

Buke—All samurai who are not part of the nobility (the *kuge*) are members of the buke caste. This encompasses the vast majority of samurai in the Empire. Generally the buke cannot aspire to any office higher than that of provincial governor, although rare exceptions do occur. Low-ranking buke are sometimes referred to impolitely as ji-samurai.

Bushido—Originally conceived by the Kami Akodo, Bushido is a code of conduct all samurai are expected to adhere to in order to conduct themselves with honor. The code teaches the virtues of Honesty, Courage, Honor, Compassion, Duty (or Loyalty), Complete Sincerity, and Polite Courtesy. Individuals who manage to exemplify all seven tenets are rare, however; most samurai are biased enough to conveniently overlook at least one of the seven.

Bushi—A samurai warrior, the most widespread and numerous profession in the samurai caste. A bushi trains in a dojo and learns the martial Techniques of his family or clan, then takes up the daisho and enters the service of his lord.

Champion—The term champion is most frequently used as part of the specific position Clan Champion, which denotes the absolute ruler of a Great or Minor Clan, an individual ostensibly answering only to the Emperor himself. The title can also be part of an independent position that can be won through a tournament, like the Emerald Championship, or conferred in recognition of an individual's prowess. Both the Brotherhood of Shinsei and the Emperor have recognized individual samurai as champions of Bushido in the past, for example.

Chikushudo—The Realm of Animals, of all the spirit realms the one that most closely resembles the mortal realm. The two realms overlap in many wilderness locations. Chikushudo is occupied principally by animal spirits, who bear a great resemblance to their mortal counterparts but are more cunning and often possess some supernatural abilities.

Chuda—Samurai family originally founded by Isawa Chuda when he was granted the right to create the Snake Clan after saving the Emperor's life. Unfortunately, the family's intention to understand their enemies was eventually perverted into practicing *maho*, and the Snake Clan was corrupted and wiped out. One retainer escaped, and after centuries of hiding one ambitious Chuda petitioned the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands to recreate the Chuda family as part of his new-built Lost society. The modern Chuda are masters of dark magic and are a significant threat to the Empire.

Chui—A military rank roughly comparable to a lieutenant. A chui reports to a taisa. Chui command a company of men, supervising the various gunso and nikutai who command individual squadrons within the company.

Courtier—A samurai who serves his clan primarily as a representative in any of the various courts maintained throughout the Empire. Politics is a very serious part of a clan's livelihood in Rokugan, and courtier serve as ambassadors, diplomats, and advocates to ensure their clan continues to prosper.

Daidoji—The name Daidoji translates to "Defender of the Doji," and that is the role undertaken by this Crane Clan family. The Daidoji form the bulk of the military might of the Crane, filling the ranks of the clan's armies and ensuring the noble Doji and Kakita families are well protected. The Daidoji have a reputation for embracing unconventional and occasionally dishonorable methods and tactics to ensure their clan is safe against larger and stronger enemies.

Daigotsu—An extremely powerful Lost, possibly an *akutenshi*, who proclaimed himself Dark Lord of the Shadowlands and forged the Lost into an organized society. He later created the Spider Clan in order to infiltrate Rokugan itself. The Daigotsu family consists of those who have sworn fealty to him. As a family they embrace the Taint and the code of Shourido, and worship Fu Leng, the Fallen Kami.

Daimyo—Technically, the title of daimyo means an individual has been given land to govern in order to ensure all taxes are paid and law and order are maintained. A Clan Champion is technically the daimyo of a clan, while family daimyo rule over all their family's provinces. A provincial daimyo oversees a single province or a large city, and this is generally the lowest ranking individual who is referred to by this title. (In some cases the term governor is used interchangeably, especially for those who rule over a single city.)

Daisho—The matched pair of swords, consisting of a katana and the smaller wakizashi, carried by samurai warriors. The daisho is the exclusive province of the samurai caste, and a bushi is expected to always carry it. The katana represents the soul of the samurai, and the wakizashi represents his honor. Carrying a daisho generally indicates the samurai in question is trained in its use and prepared to fight in his own defense, so many shugenja and courtiers choose to carry only the wakizashi.

Deathseeker—A tradition almost exclusively practiced within the Lion Clan. A Deathseeker is a samurai who has brought great shame and dishonor to his family, and who vows to cleanse that stain by achieving a glorious death in combat. Deathseekers are looked upon with a mixture of awe and pity due to their dishonorable origins but awesome military might—those who survive even a short time tend to become extremely competent warriors. Most Lion treat Deathseekers as if they are already dead.

Doji—The ruling family of the Crane Clan and the descendants of Lady Doji, the clan's founding Kami. The Doji are the stewards of Rokugan's social traditions, traditions Lady Doji created in the first place. Although they are frequently courtiers and artisans, the Doji have a strong bushi tradition as well.

Dojo—A training facility devoted to teaching and supervising the training of bushi. A dojo is overseen by one or more sensei, and can exist either as a stand-alone facility or part of a much larger network of dojo, all teaching the same skills and Techniques. Individual samurai Schools often maintain large numbers of dojo scattered throughout the clan's holdings to ensure all bushi who are members of that School can have ready access to additional training.

Doshin—A budoka (armed peasant) who has been assigned to uphold law and social order within a town or city, either alone or as an assistant to a samurai magistrate.

Elemental Council—The five most powerful and respected shugenja in the Phoenix Clan, one trained in each element, form the Elemental Council and effectively rule the clan. The Phoenix Clan Champion, who is from the Shiba family, traditionally defers to the Elemental Council in most matters of importance.

Elemental Dragons—Sitting just beneath the Sun and Moon in the Celestial Order, the Elemental Dragons are the embodiments of the elements themselves, the basic materials from which the universe is constructed. In addition to Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Void, there is a Celestial Dragon that represents the power of the Heavens, a Thunder Dragon who represents heroism and courage, a Jade Dragon who represents virtue, and an Obsidian Dragon who represents vice. In the late twelfth century the Jade and Obsidian Dragons take over the positions of Sun and Moon, becoming the new rulers of the Celestial Order. In the twelfth century there is also a Shadow Dragon who embodies the primordial power of the Nothing, but that entity is considered an abomination and despised by the other Elemental Dragons.

Emperor's Chosen—A group of special advisors and assistants who help the Emperor govern Rokugan. They are appointed to their positions by the Emperor and serve at his pleasure.

Eta—The largest group in the hinin caste. Eta are those born into the spiritually corruptive tasks of disposing of dead bodies, waste, and excrement, as well as the equally unpleasant duty of leatherworking. Other Rokugani treat them as less than nothing and frequently do not even notice if they are present.

Fortune—An exceptionally powerful divine being who resides within the Celestial Heavens. The greatest of their number, the Seven Fortunes, were never human and predate the existence of humanity. Presumably they were created by the Lady Sun and Lord Moon to aid in governing the universe. Lesser Fortunes, also called *mikokami*, are humans elevated to celestial status, usually by the authority of the Emperor. All Emperors who die with honor also ascend into the Heavens to become Fortunes.

Gaijin—A foreigner. All gaijin are regarded with deep suspicion and often outright fear. Trade and other dealings with gaijin are forbidden by Imperial law after the Battle of White Stage in the fifth century.

Gaijin Pepper—Gunpowder. The manufacture, possession, and use of gaijin pepper and of any devices or weapons that use it are forbidden under Rokugani law.

Geisha—An entertainer, usually female, who offers samurai the chance to relax, set aside the stress of duty, and be "merely a man" (or woman) for an evening. Geisha are technically of the hinin caste although they enjoy a prestige other hinin do not. They are not prostitutes, although their favors can be won with repeated gifts and attention.

Goju—A family of sorts, forever tied to the power of the Lying Darkness and the Nothing. The precise origin of their service to this dark power is unknown, and there are conflicting reports as to how the first Goju entered the service of Nothing. The Goju are individuals only in the barest sense of the word, a great portion of their identities having been consumed and destroyed by the Lying Darkness. They are, in essence, living vessels for the power they serve. After the rise of the Shadow Dragon, they serve that being with the same mindless devotion.

Gunso—A military rank roughly equivalent to a sergeant. A gunso leads a squad of several hohei during a large scale battle.

Gusei—The first Mantis Clan family name, created by an early Mantis Clan

Champion who succeeded in carrying a knife into the presence of the Emperor. The family name was purged after a poorly thought out attempt to kidnap the Emperor's heir.

Haiku—The primary form of Rokugani poetry.

Hanabi—Fireworks. Under Imperial law, Hanabi do not violate the proscription against the use of gaijin pepper because they are made with native herbs and alchemical techniques rather than foreign science.

Hantei—One of the ten Kami, the children of the Sun and Moon, and the one responsible for freeing his siblings from their father's belly after Lord Moon consumed them in a jealous rage. When the Kami arrived in the mortal realm, they held a tournament to see who would lead them, and Hantei was victorious. He became the first Emperor of Rokugan, and his family led the Empire for over one thousand years.

Hatamoto—A trusted personal retainer of a family daimyo or Clan Champion, generally treated as a second in command. Hatamoto are most trusted by their lords to handle important affairs in their stead. Although there is little in the way of formal recognition for such a position, others generally understand the importance of hatamoto and treat them appropriately.

Heichi—A family descended from the Crab, the Heichi rule the Boar Clan. They oversee a secluded portion of the Twilight Mountains and seek out rich mineral deposits for the Emperor. The Heichi family is destroyed by the enigmatic Bloodspeaker Agasha Ryuden, who uses their souls and the blood of the First Oni to create the Anvil of Despair, a legendary dark artifact of incredible power and danger.

Heimin—Literally, "half people." A more commonly used term for the bonge.

Henshin—A mysterious and very secretive monastic sect found exclusively in the Asako family of the Phoenix Clan. The Henshin desire to understand the mysteries of the universe, and possess methods that most find completely inscrutable. Their beliefs and powers are very different from the Brotherhood of Shinsei and their search for enlightenment. The Henshin actually follow a course of study known as the Path of Man, which allows the rare few who complete it to ascend directly to the Celestial Heavens as minor Fortunes.

Hida—The ruling family of the Crab Clan and the descendants of Hida, the strongest of all the Kami. As individuals, Hida samurai are perhaps the largest men and women in the Empire, and certainly among the most martially-minded. The Hida oversee the defense of the Empire from the forces of the Shadowlands, and the state of near constant siege under which they live has made them dour and somewhat crude.

Hinin—Literally, "non-people," the lowest caste in Rokugan. The hinin are primarily eta but also include geisha, other entertainers, and torturers.

Hiruma—A family in the Crab Clan, and probably the closest and most trusted servants of the Hida family. They serve primarily as scouts and archers, sneaking deep inside the Shadowlands to gather information on the clan's enemies and, when possible, to eliminate threats before they can become too great.

Hitomi—A sect of tattooed monks, also sometimes called the *kikage zumi*, who serve the Dragon Clan. They are similar in most respects to the Togashi order, including mystical tattoos, but are notoriously angrier and more violence-prone than the Togashi order. Their tattoos tend to match their visceral natures as well. The Hitomi order is created early in the twelfth century and reabsorbed into the Togashi a few decades later.

Hohei—A rank in the standard military structure of Rokugan, hohei is roughly equivalent to a private. The rank of hohei in a Rokugani army indicates the samurai has completed all training in a satisfactory manner and is considered a full participating soldier in his unit.

Horiuchi—A shugenja family created from the Iuchi some years prior to the Clan War. The Horiuchi are the smallest independent family in service to a Great Clan anywhere in the Empire. They are notable for their philosophy of adopting orphans created by the Empire's various wars, and their temples serve as impromptu orphanages. They are eradicated by plague in the late twelfth century.

Hoshi—An order of tattooed monks serving the Dragon Clan, sometimes called the *tsurui zumi*. The Hoshi order, like the Hitomi order, is split off from the Togashi order in the early twelfth century and reabsorbed a few decades later. The Hoshi are known for their introspective and somewhat withdrawn philosophy, and they are far less likely to be involved with the Empire than the other tattooed orders.

Iaijutsu—The formal dueling system in Rokugan. When a debt of honor, criminal accusation, dire insult, or other serious disagreement must be resolved and no other means can be used, the iaijutsu duel determines who is in the right. Two combatants face one another without moving, waiting until the right moment, then both leap forward and strike. Traditionally their swords are kept sheathed until the moment of attack, although a few fighting styles diverge from this custom. Duels to first blood are most common, but the more serious the disagreement, the more likely it is for a duel to be to the death. The victor of a duel is considered to be correct in the preceding disagreement, regardless of what other evidence may exist.

Ichiro—The ruling family of the Badger Clan, descended from the Hida. Hida Ichiro was granted the right to form his own family and clan when he was awarded the privilege of defending the Empire's northern border from gaijin aggression, a duty the Badger have maintained for centuries. The Ichiro have suffered repeated calamities in their history and have been on the brink of extinction more than once.

Ide—A peaceful and social family which serves as the Unicorn Clan's representatives in court. Although they embrace a number of strange customs, such as wearing fur, they are skilled diplomats and are more acclimated to the social intricacies of Rokugan than the rest of the Unicorn. The Ide are generally well-regarded by other clans despite their eccentricities.

Ikoma—The storytellers, historians, and diplomats of the Lion Clan. They also have a martial tradition and are known to serve the clan as soldiers, magistrates, and border guards, among other things. The Ikoma are said to be the soul of the Lion, and they alone in the clan are allowed to freely express emotion so the other Lion families can remain stoically devoted to Bushido.

Imperial—A term used to describe individuals who serve the Emperor directly without other oaths of fealty (such as to a Clan Champion) interfering with their loyalty. This most

frequently applies to the members of the three Imperial families (the Miya, Otomo, and Seppun), but can also apply to others who achieve a position of great power within the Imperial bureaucracy, such as the Jeweled Champions.

Inkyo—A monk. Monks are not priests, but instead are dedicated ascetics who pursue religious devotion and the path of enlightenment by embracing meditation, self-denial, hard work, and devoted study. Most monks belong to the Brotherhood of Shinsei, although some clans have monastic sects within their ranks as well.

Inquisitor—A special type of Phoenix Clan magistrate who pursues the Shadowlands Taint and the practitioners of maho. The Inquisitors are primarily from the Asako family but can include any Phoenix sufficiently dedicated to the cause. They are considered to have some limited authority outside their own clan lands, although not as much as an Imperial magistrate.

Isawa—The main shugenja family of the Phoenix Clan, and generally considered the most powerful shugenja family in the Empire. The Isawa are more numerous and powerful than any shugenja family in the other clans. Although the Shiba technically rule the Phoenix, in reality the Isawa Council of Elemental Masters largely direct the Phoenix Clan's policies.

Ise Zumi—The name given to the Togashi monks of the Dragon Clan. They possess mystical tattoos that grant them supernatural abilities.

Iuchi—The shugenja family of the Unicorn Clan. The Iuchi are known for their unconventional nature; they are frequently found in the Unicorn Clan armies, for instance, in contrast to the more peaceful traditions of other shugenja families. They also have knowledge of many gaijin magical traditions they encountered during the clan's centuries of wandering outside the Empire.

Iweko—The Iweko Dynasty is the third Dynasty to rule the Emerald Empire, taking over after the end of the Hantei and Toturi Dynasties. Empress Iweko I, formerly Kitsuki Iweko, is appointed to her position directly by the agents of the Celestial Heavens. She is referred to as the Divine Empress and Child of Heaven.

Jeweled Champions—Powerful servants of the Emperor who are chosen through victory in an assortment of competitive tournaments, such as the Emerald Tournament.

Jigoku—The Realm of Evil. This spirit realm is the antithesis of the Celestial Heavens and the principle source of evil and chaos in the universe of Rokugan. It is populated by countless demonic oni, as well as by *yokai*, human souls who have been consumed by the Taint or who have committed such evil they are forever damned. Jigoku seemingly possesses an inherent self-awareness and actively craves the corruption and destruction of other spirit realms, especially Ningen-do and Tengoku.

Jiujutsu—Hand-to-hand unarmed combat. Most samurai do not regard jiujutsu as having the same prestige as fighting with weapons, but it is still useful enough for them to study it, and a few warriors specialize in its methods. It is also very popular among the various monastic orders and sects in Rokugan.

Kabuki—A form of stage theater characterized by elaborate costumes and flamboyant action. Kabuki plays are more likely to be comedic than noh plays, which are uniformly tragic.

Kaeru—One of the Empire's rare ronin families to possess a name recognized by the Emperor. The Kaeru oversee the City of the Rich Frog, a wealthy settlement outside of clan borders, located between the Lion and Unicorn holdings. The family was noted for its use of a ronin band called the mashi-kanshisha to defend the city and enforce law within its boundaries. The Kaeru are absorbed into the Lion Clan in the twelfth century, becoming a vassal family of the Ikoma.

Kagaku—A minor semi-magical item created with alchemical techniques. These one-use items are primarily the domain of the Agasha and Tamori families.

Kaiu—A family in the Crab Clan known as the Empire's foremost experts on weaponsmithing, siege warfare, and engineering. They serve the Crab Clan in all these capacities and, after the eighth century, also maintain the Great Carpenter Wall. The Kaiu constantly innovate new means of fighting the forces of the Shadowlands.

Kakita—A Crane Clan family, closely tied to the Doji family that rules the clan. The first Kakita was the husband of Lady Doji, and the two allowed each of their children to choose which name they would bear. The Kakita are renowned throughout the Empire for their prodigious duelists, masters of the art of iaijutsu. Although less famous than their sword-wielding kinsmen, the Kakita artisans are also recognized as some of the finest artists in Rokugan.

Kami—A term that applies to two very different things in Rokugan. When not capitalized, it refers to the basic elemental spirits that make up the universe. The kami are the spirits shugenja speak to and invoke for magical effects, coaxing the kami into specific actions. When capitalized, Kami refers to the ten children of the Sun and Moon: Hantei, Fu Leng, Ryoshun, and the seven who founded the Great Clans.

Kanji—The pictographic characters used in Rokugani writing. There are thousands of kanji, many of which have multiple meanings and can be pronounced in several different ways.

Kansen—A kami corrupted by the Taint, making it a spirit of the Shadowlands. Some believe the kansen originate in Jigoku itself. These evil spirits often teach mortals the dark secrets of maho. A shugenja who attempts to cast a spell within the Shadowlands may accidentally summon a kansen instead of a kami, which can have disastrous results for all parties involved.

Karo—An important personal assistant to a daimyo or other person of power. Unlike a hatamoto, a karo is primarily tasked with assisting his lord with various personal and professional duties throughout the day. Karo also handle many of the wearisome administrative tasks which their lords do not have time to pursue. A karo might best be described as an executive assistant (whereas a hatamoto is more of a vice president).

Kasuga—The samurai family of the Tortoise Clan. They control several major holdings in the city of Otosan Uchi and the surrounding Hub Cities, but have no formal land elsewhere. The Kasuga associate with merchants and commoners, and otherwise engage in disreputable activities, but their unspoken true duty is to spy upon and provide misinformation to the gaijin cultures outside the Empire.

Kata—A series of repetitive motions used to assist in learning fighting techniques. A trained warrior in the midst of battle can maintain his poise and defeat his foes by relying on his memories of kata from the dojo.

Katana—The larger of the two swords which form the daisho set.

Kenjutsu—The skill of swordfighting, considered to be the most prestigious of combat skills among bushi.

Kenku—A semi-mythical race of bird-men, possessed of magical powers such as the ability to shapeshift. The kenku are also said to be great swordsmen and occasionally teach human students; some legends claim Kakita himself was taught by a kenku. The kenku are often associated with Shinsei and the path of enlightenment, but they are also frequently depicted as mischievous tricksters who enjoy playing pranks on foolish humans.

Kiho—Mystical abilities based on tapping directly into the power of the five elements, usually assisted by meditation and intense physical or spiritual training. Kiho are usually studied and used by monastic orders, especially the Brotherhood of Shinsei, but shugenja sometimes learn them as well.

Kitsuki—An extremely odd family even for the Dragon Clan. The Kitsuki were founded by Agasha Kitsuki, who won the right to form his own family after thwarting the assassination of the Mirumoto daimyo. His descendents follow his unique philosophy, which emphasizes logical deduction and forensic study—things no other clan finds important in the slightest.

Kitsune—A samurai family descended from the Shinjo, the Kitsune are the lords of the Fox Clan until they join the Mantis Clan in the late twelfth century. They reside in the Kitsune Mori, a forest in the southern Empire with a reputation for being home to many different spirits. The Kitsune have a close bond with the wilderness and with the fox spirits whose name they share.

Kitsu—The shugenja family of the Lion Clan. The Kitsu are actually descendants of mystical non-human creatures called kitsu. The lion-like kitsu were nearly driven to extinction by Akodo, but when he realized his mistake he offered his daughter in marriage to the surviving kitsu; they took human form and created the Kitsu family. The pious Kitsu are noted for their ability to speak with ancestor spirits and to journey into other spirit realms.

Kobune—The kobune is the primary Rokugani ship used to cross large lakes and seas. Kobune are relatively small and lack a keel, making protracted sea travel difficult unless the crew is particularly skilled. Typically only the Mantis use the ships for anything other than coastal work.

Kolat—The conspiracy known as the Kolat is as old as the Empire itself. Its founders were leaders of men who were ousted from power after the Kami formed the Great Clans. The Kolat conspire against the leadership of the Empire, ostensibly because they believe men should overturn the mandates of the Celestial Order and form the universe according to their own wishes.

Komori—The samurai family that rules the Bat Clan, named after the koumori, the bat spirits believed to escort the spirits of the dead to the next realm. The Bat Clan was created after a Mantis shugenja performed a great service for Emperor Toturi III, allowing him to speak to the spirit of his dead sister and predecessor, Toturi II. The Komori hold a small island near the Mantis islands.

Koutetsukan—The koutetsukan are specialized warships built by the Crab Clan. They are larger than kobune and usually have significant metal plating for armor. The word koutetsukan means "iron turtle." As might be expected, koutetsukan are extremely slow vessels.

Kuge—The elite nobility who rule over the rest of the samurai caste. The kuge are a very small group, only a few hundred at the most.

Kuni—The shugenja family of the Crab family. The Kuni have a terrible reputation among most in the Empire due to shamelessly embracing the study of the Shadowlands. The Kuni believe this is their duty in order to understand the foe the Crab must face. They are rumored to engage in all sorts of horrible activities, such as capturing and dissecting Shadowlands creatures.

Kuroiban—The "Black Watch," a secretive organization within the Scorpion Clan which hunts for signs of Taint or maho. The Kuroiban are known to coordinate their activities with the Kuni family, a rare example of Crab-Scorpion cooperation.

Kyuden—Roughly translated, "palace," the term kyuden is used to describe the largest castles and estates in the Empire. It is traditionally only applied to those estates that are large enough (at least theoretically) to host the Imperial Court. In some eras it is only applied to estates that have hosted the Imperial Court already, although that tradition falls out of practice around the ninth century.

Kyujutsu—The skill of archery. Most samurai show great respect for archery, although it is generally not considered to be as prestigious as swordsmanship.

Legion—The smallest autonomous force capable of large-scale battle in the standard Rokugani military model. A legion is typically commanded by a taisa, with a number of chui, gunso, and nikutai under his command. The exact size of a legion varies depending on the clan organizing it, but it typically numbers around 750 troops.

Lost—The term Lost applies to those humans who have succumbed to the Shadowlands Taint but have retained their minds and memories. When the Taint becomes the dominant portion of their soul and personality, their identity is transformed by its power and they become evil creatures, servants of Jigoku's malign power. Although they remember who they are, they are now completely driven by the impulses of the Realm of Evil. They also tend to be physically more powerful than their previous selves, and frequently exhibit disturbing or horrifying physical mutations.

Lying Darkness—A primordial entity of great power, also known as the Shadow. According to legend it is a scrap of the empty nothingness that existed before the universe came into being. Possessed of a certain level of awareness, the Lying Darkness could and frequently did corrupt and eventually absorb mortals into itself. These absorbed persons became its agents, and notably included the Goju and Ninube "families." The Darkness was eventually destroyed in the early twelfth century, but the power of Nothing it embodied could not be wholly annihilated and it was absorbed and reconstituted in the Taint-corrupted Air Dragon. The resulting gestalt creature became known as the Shadow Dragon.

Magistrate—The magistrate is the basic law enforcement official in Rokugan. Depending on jurisdiction, a magistrate's authority may extend over a single city, a province, an entire clan's holdings, or even the entire Empire. Anyone who bears the title daimyo or governor is authorized to appoint magistrates to assist in maintaining law and order in their domain.

Maho—Maho is "blood sorcery," the practice of using blood to summon evil spirits (kansen) and create dark and powerful magic. This is considered one of the most heinous crimes imaginable in Rokugan, an act of both treason and blasphemy, and is grounds for immediate execution.

Maho-tsukai—A maho-tsukai or "blood sorcerer" is someone who practices the blasphemous sorcery of maho. Being labeled a maho-tsukai is essentially a death sentence in the Empire of Rokugan, although proving guilt is not always as easy as it seems.

Matsu—The largest samurai family in the Empire, the Matsu form the majority of the Lion Clan armies. They are descended from Lady Matsu, the Lion Clan Thunder and the first follower of Akodo One-Eye. Modern Matsu samurai are known for their passionate and angry disposition, and are generally very easy to push to acts of violence.

Meido—The spirit realm also known as the Realm of Waiting, where the spirits of mortals go after death. There, the souls are judged by the Celestial entity Emma-O, the Fortune of Death. (In the twelfth century and afterward, Emma-O is assisted by the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, also known as the Lords of Death.) Once a sentence is passed, a soul either ascends to Yomi, is condemned to another spirit realm for sins or corruption, or is assigned to wait a certain amount of time before being reincarnated. The more virtuous the person was, the more his kharma is cleansed and the less time before reincarnation.

Miharu—A special term for Seppun bodyguards who protect the senior ranks of the Imperial families and the person and family of the Emperor himself.

Mirumoto—The bushi family of the Dragon Clan, descended from Mirumoto, the hero and Thunder from the dawn of the Empire. The Mirumoto comprise the largest portion of their clan's numbers. They are famous for their use of the Niten Technique, the fighting style pioneered by their founder, which involves wielding the katana in one hand and the wakizashi in the other. They are the only family in the Empire to practice this style of fighting.

Miya—One of the Imperial families, honored to serve the Emperor directly without fealty to any clan. The Miya serve the Emperor as his heralds, bringing his word to the people of the Empire.

Morito—The ruling family of the Ox Clan, created by the ronin hero Morito, a former Unicorn. Like their founder's old clan, they practice extensive use of cavalry tactics, favoring heavy cavalry over quicker and more agile forces.

Moshi—The ruling family of the Centipede Clan. They are reclusive theologians descended from the Phoenix, and revere Lady Sun (and in later eras, her successors) with great devotion. They are a matriarchal family, ruled by their women, and traditionally only females are permitted to study in their

shugenja school. After the Clan War, the Moshi become a family of the Mantis Clan.

Moto—The Moto family have a complex and sometimes sordid history. They were originally gaijin who were adopted into the Unicorn Clan during their travels, although they come to closely resemble the Rokugani over the centuries. They are dedicated warriors with a tendency toward dark mindsets and gaijin tactics in battle. After the Unicorn returned to the Empire, a sizable portion of the family invaded the Shadowlands and fell to the Taint, becoming the infamous Dark Moto. However, when the Lady Shinjo returned to the Empire and purged the Kolat from the Unicorn Clan, she placed the remaining pure Moto in charge of the clan.

Naga—A race of serpent men who ruled the lands of the Empire long before the rise of mankind. The Naga entered a Great Sleep countless centuries ago in order to survive until they could aid in crises against the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness, which they had foreseen. The Naga share a sort of communal mind known as the Akasha, allowing them to sense each others' emotions and surface thoughts at all times. They are proud warriors and philosophers, and have a difficult time relating to humans. After the defeat of the Lying Darkness, most of the Naga return to the Great Sleep once more.

Naginata—A Rokugani polearm which mounts a long curved blade at the end of a spear-shaft. The naginata is considered the most noble and admirable of polearms and many Rokugani samurai regard it as nearly as honorable a weapon as the katana. Naginata are especially popular weapons among the Phoenix and among female samurai in the more traditional clans like the Lion, Crane, and Dragon.

Nemuranai—The Rokugani term for an item of magical power. Numeranai are described as "awakened items" because the elemental spirits within them have gained energy and focus, have in effect "woken up," due to their use by humans. Any item which is used with reverence by mortals may awaken, though this is most likely to occur when the item is employed by those of great skill and honor. It is possible to craft an item in such a way that it already possesses magical qualities, but these items are usually weak and one-use in nature unless they are created by an artisan of truly legendary skill.

Nezumi—The Nezumi are a race of ratlike humanoids, sometimes called "ratlings" by the Rokugani. It is believed they were once a food source for the Naga race, but exposure to the Naga's powerful pearl magic caused them to evolve rapidly into a sentient race. The Nezumi Empire was destroyed when Fu Leng fell from the Heavens and crashed into their capital, creating the Festering Pit of Fu Leng. Afterwards they became primitive tribal creatures, living mainly in the Shadowlands.

Nikutai—Nikutai is a military rank roughly equivalent to that of corporal. They are the lowest ranking officers in the Rokugani military model, and typically a company of samurai has a significant number of them present to assist in its day to day activities.

Ningen-do—The Realm of Mortals, the lynchpin around which all other spirit realms seem to revolve. Ningen-do is the home of mankind, the favored creations of Lady Sun and Lord Moon, who alone are capable of altering the fabric of the universe itself. Only mortal men have ever slain a god or created a new spirit realm, and for this reason denizens of the other realms look upon them with admiration, animosity, or fear (or possibly a combination of all three).

Ningyo—A reclusive and mysterious race of aquatic serpent men who make their homes beneath the sea. They have had only intermittent contact with mankind over the centuries, and Rokugan knows little about them. They bear many physical similarities to the Naga, but the two races do not appear to be related.

Ninja—A term of superstition and half-knowledge, used by both peasants and credulous samurai to describe stealthy assassins, doppelgangers, and thieves. Ninja are often credited with superhuman powers and tremendous fighting skills. These ninja legends are partly the result of activities by secretive and specialized Rokugani military forces (such as the Shosuro Infiltrators of the Scorpion Clan) and partly due to the activities of the Lying Darkness and its minions, the Goju and Ninube.

Ninube—One of two "families" who serve the Lying Darkness and later the Shadow Dragon. Ninube bear the name of Doji Ninjube, a twelfth century Crane maiden who was abducted and replaced by the Darkness. Ninube are similar to the Goju and work closely with them, but the Ninube seem more likely to be shugenja and have the appearance of more free will. However, their seeming self-will is merely an illusion allowed by the Lying Darkness for unknown purposes.

Niten—The twin-sword fighting technique developed by Mirumoto at the dawn of the Empire and passed down through his family to modern times. *Niten* is also the name of the book Mirumoto wrote, describing his technique and its methods.

Noh—A form of Rokugani stage theater characterized by tragic storylines, restrained costumes, and stylized performances. Noh is performed with minimal dialogue and music, sometimes even in complete silence.

Omoidasu—The Lion term for the storytellers of the Ikoma family, which translates loosely to "bard." Omoidasu are noted for their ability to tell compelling stories and to recall the past without fail. They are also permitted to show emotions in public without suffering a loss of honor.

On—Literally, "face." The Rokugani samurai concept of dignity and self-control, mastering one's emotions and showing the world only what you wish it to see. Maintaining face is vital for samurai, since losing control of one's emotions like a "lower person" is shameful and dishonorable.

Oni—The demonic natural inhabitants of Jigoku, the Realm of Evil. They crave the destruction of other realms, eager to share their misery and suffering with all other living things. Oni can enter the mortal realm through physical portals such as the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, or by being summoned by foolish mortals.

Oni Lords—A summoned oni which steals the name of its summoner becomes an Oni Lord, an immensely powerful demonic creature. Thankfully, there are only a handful of known Oni Lords in the history of the Empire.

Onikage—Horses which succumb to the Taint become onikage, monstrous and demonic horse-like creatures. Powerful Lost frequently use onikage as mounts.

Onnotangu—Onnotangu is the first Lord Moon, the husband of Lady Sun and the father of the ten Kami. It was he who, along with his wife, gave names to all of creation and in doing so created the mortal realm and the spirit realms. Onnotangu was a jealous and sinister figure, however, and may have deliberately avoided naming the Lying Darkness, giving

rise to a threat that would endanger all of creation a thousand years later. In Rokugan's twelfth century, Onnotangu was slain by the Dragon Clan Champion, Hitomi, who took his place as Lady Moon.

Otokodate—Literally, "manly fellows." A term usually used for a ronin band, a group of ronin who join together either for good purposes (such as protecting a local village) or bad ones (such as forming a bandit gang). Sometimes used more generically to describe any group of samurai who band together to pursue some greater goal.

Otomo—The "senior" Imperial family, outranking the Seppun and Miya chiefly by virtue of their focus on political authority rather than any specifically granted status. The Otomo maintain the Imperial bureaucracy that keeps the Empire functioning, and secretly work to keep the Great Clans at one another's throats to ensure they will not plot against the Emperor. Members of the Emperor's family who do not inherit the throne are expected to swear fealty to the Otomo in order to prevent dynastic quarrels.

Otosan Uchi—The site of the first Hantei Emperor's capital, Otosan Uchi was for almost a thousand years the Imperial Capital and the largest city in all of Rokugan. It was home to the Imperial families and the Imperial Palace, as well as dozens of other cultural and historical locations of great importance. The city was attacked numerous times throughout history and suffered extensive damage both from military action and from periodic earthquakes. During the twelfth century the city was devastated from a Shadowlands attack and never recovered. Soon after the city was proclaimed to be cursed; the Lion finished razing it to the ground, and Toshi Ranbo was selected as the new Imperial Capital.

Rikugunshokan—A military rank roughly analogous to general, denoting the supreme acting commander of an army. The position is generally of such power and prestige that it can only be appointed by a Clan Champion (or someone of even higher rank). Certain clans have multiple armies, and if an army is maintained by a single family, the family daimyo may also appoint the rikugunshokan of that army. The Clan Champion's approval is generally required, however.

Ronin—A ronin, or "wave man," is a samurai who has no master to serve. A ronin is created either when a samurai is cast out from his clan for some disastrous failure of duty, or when someone is born as the illegitimate and unrecognized child of a samurai. Samurai may also become ronin if their lord dies and no other lord is willing to take them into his service. The lives of ronin are generally difficult, and many of them become bitter or turn to crime as a result.

Ryoko Owari Toshi—Also known as the City of Lies, the City of Stories, and the City of Green Walls. Ryoko Owari Toshi is the second-largest city in the Empire and one of the most important holdings in the Scorpion provinces. Although generally regarded as a den of vice and iniquity (and not without reason), Ryoko Owari is still a major center of trade and manufacturing.

Ryoshun—The tenth Kami and the only one other than Fu Leng and Hantei not to form a Great Clan. Ryoshun was unknown to most mortals for the majority of Rokugan's history, mainly because he did not survive being consumed by his father Onnotangu and thus never came to the mortal realm. His spirit has spent the time since in the realm of Meido, assisting Emmo-O and the other celestial entities there in governing the dead as they wait to be reborn.

Sake—Rice wine. The most popular and widespread alcoholic beverage in Rokugan. Cheaper types of sake are usually served hot to reduce their harshness, but extremely high-quality sake is actually best served chilled.

Sakkaku—The spirit realm of mischief, home to a variety of trickster spirits such as mujina and kappa.

Sampan—A small boat, used mainly for fishing.

Samurai—Literally, "those who serve." All members of the buke and kuge classes are considered samurai, regardless of whether they are bushi, shugenja, courtiers, scholars, or serve the Empire in some other more specialized manner. Under Rokugani law, only samurai are permitted to bear arms (although exceptions are made in a few cases).

School—In Rokugan, the term School usually applies to a formalized learning institution that teaches specific Techniques to those who are accepted. A samurai child begins training at a School at somewhere between eight and twelve years of age, depending on the family and clan.

Sempai—Literally, "senior," a term used to address a person in the same school, profession, or military unit who is of the same social rank but more experienced and, hence, more respected. Sempai are expected to take their juniors "under their wing" and share the benefits of their experience.

Sensei—Sensei is a highly honored position in the samurai caste. The term literally means "teacher," but generally it is used only to describe those teachers responsible for instructing young samurai in their Techniques (whether bushi, courtier, shugenja, or otherwise). Monks use the term for respected members of their sects, and peasants also frequently use the term to honor monks who assist them in life. The term can also be used as a term of flattery for any older, wiser person.

Seppuku—Ritual suicide, practiced only by members of the samurai caste, for the purpose of purging their own dishonor and thereby sparing their family the shame of their deeds. It is performed by cutting the belly open with the blade of a wakizashi. The samurai performing seppuku must complete the ritual without crying out, so traditionally a "second" is present who beheads the samurai at the first sign of distress, ending the ritual with honor. Non-bushi samurai, especially women, are allowed a less painful form of ritual suicide in which they stab themselves in the throat with a knife—this is called *jigai*.

Seppun—An Imperial family who serve the Emeproor directly without owing fealty to any Great Clan. The Seppun are tasked with protecting the person of the Emperor, as well as his immediate family and his estate. The Seppun Guardsmen or *Miharu* are known for their dedication to duty and their inflexible honor.

Shadowlands—The Shadowlands is the blighted region south of the Empire of Rokugan. It centers around the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, the location of Fu Leng's fall to the mortal realm, where he literally punched a hole into the Realm of Evil, Jigoku. This massive portal remains open constantly, allowing the influence and Taint of Jigoku to spread into the mortal realm and create the twisted, corrupted, and inhospitable region known as the Shadowlands.

Shiba—Theoretically, the ruling family of the Phoenix Clan. In fact, the Shiba are bound by a thousand-year-old oath to protect and serve the Isawa family, essentially rendering them subservient to the Isawa in most matters. The Shiba are known for being extremely philosophical and introspective for a bushi family, as well as being some of the finest yojimbo in Rokugan.

Shinden—A shrine, usually a major shrine or temple dedicated to a Fortune or to some other tenet or power respected by the Rokugani.

Shinjo—The samurai family descended from the Kami Shinjo. The Shinjo family ruled the Unicorn Clan for more than one thousand years, but after Lady Shinjo exposed their infiltration by the Kolat conspiracy she removed them from power. They are known for their compassion and skill, as well as for successfully leading the clan through eight hundred years of wandering the world beyond the Empire's borders.

Shinobi—Another term for "ninja." Often used to describe the students of the Shosuro Infiltrator school.

Shinomen Mori—The vast Shinomen Forest which lies on the western edge of the Empire. Most of the remaining Naga settlements are within the Shinomen. The forest is widely regarded as haunted, and is home to numerous dangerous spirits and unnatural creatures, as well as the Naga and some tribes of Nezumi. Certain portions of the great forest are known to be Tainted as well.

Shinsei—Also known as the Little Prophet or the Little Teacher. The man known as Shinsei appeared during the darkest days of the Empire's first war with Fu Leng. He spoke at length with the Emperor, and the contents of their conversation were recorded by the Kami Shiba and became known as the Tao of Shinsei. Shinsei gathered together seven Thunders, one from each Great Clan, and led them into the Shadowlands to defeat Fu Leng and turn the tide of the war. His fate afterwards is unknown, but his influence on the Empire is still felt in the twelfth century.

Shintao—The religious philosophy based on the teachings of Shinsei, as embodied in the Tao. Shintao is the official religion of Rokugan. It teaches that mankind may become Enlightened, attaining a higher spiritual state, through understanding of the elements and the true nature of the universe, while casting off the distractions and sins of the material world. There are many different sects of Shintao which take different approaches to its teachings and methods.

Shireikan—A military rank that roughly corresponds to major or perhaps colonel. An army commanded by a rikugunshokan will have several shireikan who coordinate the movements of the army's different legions. The number of shireikan in an army is variable, but typically numbers between six and a dozen. They are sometimes coordinated by a chief shireikan who acts as the rikugunshokan's second in command.

Shiro—Roughly translated, "castle." Usually used to describe a large estate or fortress. Shiro are among the largest buildings in the Empire, typically exceeded only by the size and splendor of a kyuden.

Shochu—A harsher and more powerful form of rice-wine, usually served hot. Favored by Crab samurai, as well as by anyone who is more interested in getting drunk than in enjoying the process of doing so.

Shogun—One of the Emperor's Chosen, a supreme Imperial general appointed to command of the Imperial Legions. The Shogun is a theoretical position (proposed in the writings of the ronin strategist Sun Tao) until the twelfth century, when Emperor Toturi III appoints his half-brother Kaneka as the first Shogun.

Shosuro—A family in the Scorpion Clan, often described as the clan's unseen hand. They serve as infiltrators, spies, and assassins. Publicly they are seen as a lesser bushi family within the clan, although many suspect they are guilty of sinister acts against the clan's enemies.

Shourido—An alternative to Bushido, Shourido is a code of self-centered action and striving to gain more power. It focuses on the precepts of Control, Determination, Insight, Knowledge, Perfection, Strength, and Will. Shourido first appears among the Lost in the early twelfth century, and infiltrates the Empire from there.

Shugenja—A priest of the kami, a religious official in the ranks of the samurai caste, and the only samurai capable of invoking powerful spells that entreat the kami to action. To become a shugenja, an individual must be born with the ability to speak to the kami, for such cannot be taught. Because of the nature of their abilities, shugenja must be intimately familiar with both the Tao of Shinsei and Fortunes.

Soshi—The primary shugenja family of the Scorpion Clan, and as such perhaps the greatest shugenja in the Empire when it comes to using their craft for deception and infiltration. Ironically, the Soshi are also the principle magistrate family within the clan.

Sun Tao—A mysterious ronin strategist from centuries ago. The exact time in which he lived is uncertain, and varies depending on which story one reads. His collected writings on military strategy are known as the *Book of Sun Tao*.

Suzume—The Suzume are descended from the Crane and are the lords of the tiny Sparrow Clan. Because of the extreme poverty of the Sparrow lands, their main forms of entertainment and artistry are oral history and storytelling. They are also known for being very philosophical for a bushi family.

Taisa—A military rank roughly comparable to a captain. A taisa commands a legion. He is assisted by chui and reports to either a shireikan or the army's rikugunshokan.

Tamori—The modern shugenja family of the Dragon Clan. They are far more militant than most shugenja families, and are known to take up weapons and fight alongside their Mirumoto brethren. The Tamori were created after the clan's previous shugenja family, the Agasha, defected to the Phoenix Clan.

Tao—More formally known as the Tao of Shinsei, one of the most important written works in Rokugan's history. Originally the Kami Shiba's record of the conversation between Shinsei and the first Emperor, it is later expanded by many learned commentaries and collections of other stories about Shinsei's teachings. The Tao is the basis for much of Rokugan's religion, and studying it is what allowed the first shugenja to master the art of speaking to the kami.

Taryu-Jiai—The art of dueling with magic, practiced mainly by the shugenja of the Phoenix Clan but sometimes employed by other shugenja as well.

Technique—A Technique is a secret ability taught by sensei to samurai as part of their training to become servants of their family, clan, and Emperor. Each individual School has its own Techniques, which are only taught to students of that School. Teaching a Technique to an outsider is grounds for death.

Tengoku—The spirit realm better known as the Celestial Heavens. Tengoku is the source of all order and law within the universe, and the home of such divine entities as the Sun and Moon, the Fortunes, the Kami, and the Elemental Dragons, among others.

Tofu—Soybean curd. A major source of protein in Rokugan, especially in regions where seafood is unavailable.

Togashi—Technically the ruling family of the Dragon Clan, although in truth they are not a family and rule the clan in name only. The Togashi are an order of monks who follow the philosophies of Togashi, the clan's founding Kami. They possess mysterious tattoos that confer supernatural abilities, and frequently wander the Empire in search of experience and knowledge. The Dragon Champion is a descendant of Togashi himself and the head of the Togashi order, but frequently leaves the day-to-day running of the clan to the Mirumoto.

Toku—The ruling family of the Monkey Clan, descended from the ronin hero Toku. They are a simple folk beloved by many because of their lengthy and distinguished service to the throne, and were said to be the favored vassals of the Toturi Dynasty.

Tonbo—The ruling family of the Dragonfly Clan, descended from both the Dragon and Phoenix. They dwell in the foothills south of the Dragon mountains and serve as a buffer for any who would wish to travel to see the Dragon. They are a shugenja family known for their talent at divination. The Lion have a long-standing grudge against the Tonbo due to the controversial circumstances of the family's founding.

Toritaka—The Toritaka family and their clan, the Falcon Clan, were created in gratitude for preventing an attempt on the Emperor's life. They are known for their keen powers of perception. Due to the region where they live being rife with spirits, they are experts on ghosts and spirits of all sorts, and their spirit hunters are in demand throughout the Empire. They are absorbed into the Crab Clan during the twelfth century.

Toshigoku—The Realm of Slaughter is a spirit realm of indescribable violence and perpetual war. The spirits there were once human, and perished in battle while their hearts were full of rage and hatred. In Toshigoku, they become immortal and mindless, living only to destroy over and over again, recovering from any injuries almost instantly to re-enter the endless cycle of battle.

Toshi Ranbo—"Violence Beneath Courtliness City." For most of its history, a very small city on the boundary between the Lion and Crane territories, but of great strategic and emotional significance to both clans. Toshi Ranbo has been fought over more than any city in the Empire. Upon the destruction of Otosan Uchi and the ascension of Emperor Toturi III to the throne, however, the two clans agreed to use Toshi Ranbo as the new Imperial City. It grew rapidly thereafter and by the end of the twelfth century it is probably the largest city in Rokugan.

Toturi—The second major dynasty of Rokugan (after the Hantei). The Toturi Dynasty consisted of only three Emperors. Emperor Toturi I, the Lion Clan Thunder, ascended to the throne following the chaos of the Clan War. After his sudden death there was a war of succession among his four children, one of whom briefly assumed the throne as Toturi II. Finally, the youngest son Naseru became Toturi III and ruled for almost a decade before perishing in battle with the Shadowlands; the subsequent deaths of his two surviving brothers effectively ended the dynasty.

Tsi—One of very few ronin families in Rokugan. This particular family was created because of the extraordinary skill of its founder at smithing. He was an assistant to a renowned

Crane smith and permitted to craft the tsuba on a blade that eventually became a gift for the Emperor. The Emperor was so impressed he granted the man his own family name. In the twelfth century, the Tsi are finally granted the right to create their own Minor Clan, the Oriole.

Tsuno—Dangerous, malignant, and ferociously violent spirit creatures, descended from the Kitsu. The Tsuno dwell mainly in Toshigoku but travel through all the spirit realms, and practice a strange magic based on their understanding of those realms. During the twelfth century, some of them enter the Shadowlands and become Tainted allies of the Lost.

Tsuruchi—A samurai family descended from the Lion and Scorpion, and known to be among the greatest archers in the Empire. Their founder, Tsuruchi, won the sponsorship of the Emerald Champion and was granted the right to create the Wasp Clan. Decades later, after a long and prosperous alliance with the Mantis Clan, the Wasp were absorbed into the Mantis as the Tsuruchi family.

Ujina—The tiny Ujina family are the vassals of the Usagi family and the only other family in the Hare Clan. The first Ujina was a ronin who assisted an important Usagi magistrate in an investigation in the Imperial City; as a result, he was granted the oath of fealty and the right to create his own family. The Ujina are well known for their skill at stealth and with the use of knives.

Usagi—The first Usagi was a ronin, granted the right to create his own Minor Clan after valorous service to the Empire during the second war with Iuchiban. The Usagi have had difficult times since then and were nearly destroyed on two occasions. They are generally well regarded, however, and known for having both good luck and a burning hatred of the Bloodspeaker Cult.

Utaku—A matriarchal family in service to the Unicorn Clan. Originally called the Otaku after their founder, but changed their name in later years. The Utaku are best known for their tradition of shiotome, or Battle Maidens, who are unquestionably the finest cavalry in Rokugan. They raise and ride the exclusive Utaku steeds, a rare breed of horse only the Utaku are permitted to ride... although the Emperor has his own small herd as well.

Wakizashi—The short sword traditionally carried by members of the samurai caste. It is believed to symbolize the samurai's honor and is the weapon used to commit seppuku. Unlike the katana, the wakizashi is often carried by shugenja and courtiers as well as bushi, as a mark of station.

Wako—Pirates. Wako are a perpetual threat on Rokugan's rivers and coastal seas.

Winter Court—During winter, travel in Rokugan comes almost to a standstill, so most samurai spend the winter in the court of one or another great lord. Winter court is the time of diplomacy, when courtiers come into their own.

Witch-Hunter (tsukai-sagasu)—A small mystical order within the Kuni family, dedicated to hunting maho-tsukai and other Tainted threats within the Empire. Witch-Hunters are notorious for their lack of respect toward other clans' mores and social conventions, and are seldom welcomed at any court they visit.

Yasuki—A samurai family serving the Crab Clan. The Yasuki are the closest thing the Crab have to courtiers, but might better be described as enthusiastic merchant patrons or, if one is uncharitable, as unrepentant con artists. The Yasuki love haggling and excel at all things mercantile. The family once served the Crane but defected during the third century when the Crane refused to permit their more questionable activities.

Yogo—The secondary shugenja family of the Scorpion Clan. Yogo was a vassal of the Phoenix but fled the clan during the dawn of the Empire after he suffered a terrible curse from Fu Leng. Bayushi took him in and allowed him to create a family within the Scorpion Clan. The Yogo curse follows his descendants, and each is doomed to betray the one they love most in the world. As might be expected, this tends to make the Yogo a rather dark and bitter family.

Yojimbo—Roughly translated, "bodyguard." A bushi may be appointed as a yojimbo for an important person such as a family daimyo or Clan Champion. Yojimbo are also assigned to other samurai who lack training in combat, such as shugenja and courtiers. In such cases the yojimbo is also expected to champion his charge in any duel which might take place.

Yomi—The Realm of Blessed Ancestors, the spirit realm which awaits those mortals who manage to achieve their destiny. It is believed to be an absolute paradise, and is the goal of all honorable men and women. A samurai is believed to gradually work his way toward Yomi by honorable service throughout the cycle of reincarnation known as the Kharmic Wheel.

Yorei—A ghost. Yorei are the spirits of mortals whose unfulfilled emotions keep them in the mortal world, instead of departing to Meido for Emma-O's judgment. Ghosts of a more vengeful nature are called *goryo*.

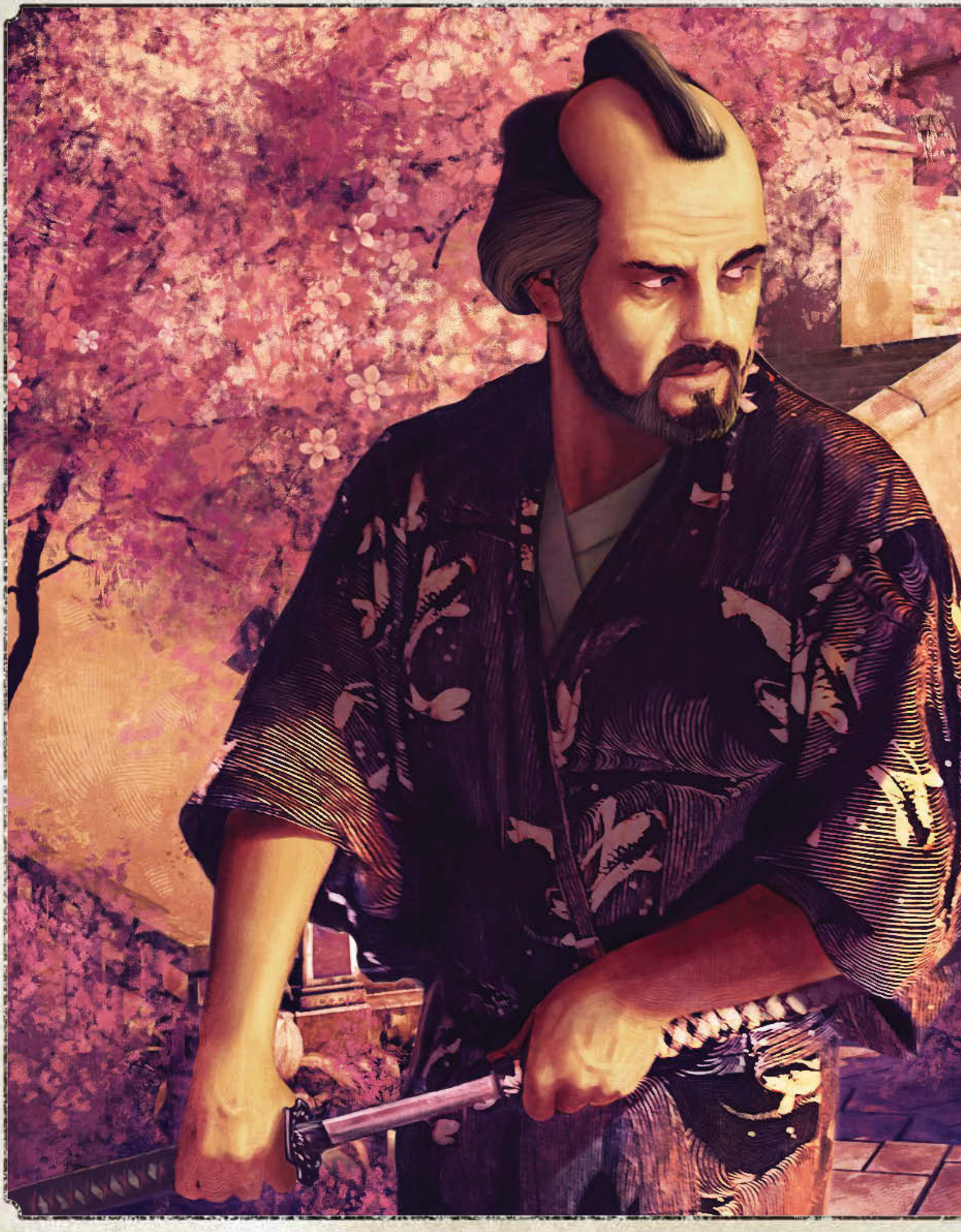
Yoriki—A samurai who serves as an assistant to a magistrate. Yoriki are used primarily in large provinces or cities where the local magistrate cannot investigate all crimes and problems on his own.

Yoritomo—The ruling family of the Mantis Clan in modern times. The name comes from the hero Yoritomo, who won Great Clan status for the Mantis at the end of the Clan War. As a family, the Yoritomo are fiercely independent and ambitious, the only samurai in history to successfully rise to Great Clan status from Minor Clan beginnings.

Yotsu—A ronin family inhabiting Otosan Uchi in the twelfth century. The wave-man Yotsu was granted permission to have a family name after he sacrificed his own son to save the Emperor's heir.

Yume-do—The Realm of Dreams, perhaps the most inscrutable spirit realm, and in some ways the most accessible. Mortals can visit it in their sleep, as can many other types of creatures, including oni. The dreams of particularly powerful creatures can create small sub-realms within Yume-do which others may inadvertently visit in their dreams. The spirits native to this realm, such as the baku, are bizarre even by comparison to the creatures of other spirit realms.

Zokujin—A peculiar race of subterranean humanoid creatures that bear some superficial resemblance to the goblins of the Shadowlands; hence, sometimes called "copper goblins." The Zokujin are poorly understood by most humans, and the only clans with any real contact with them are the Dragon and the Lion. The Lion have used them as slave labor in their copper mines for many years, ensuring they have little love for humans.

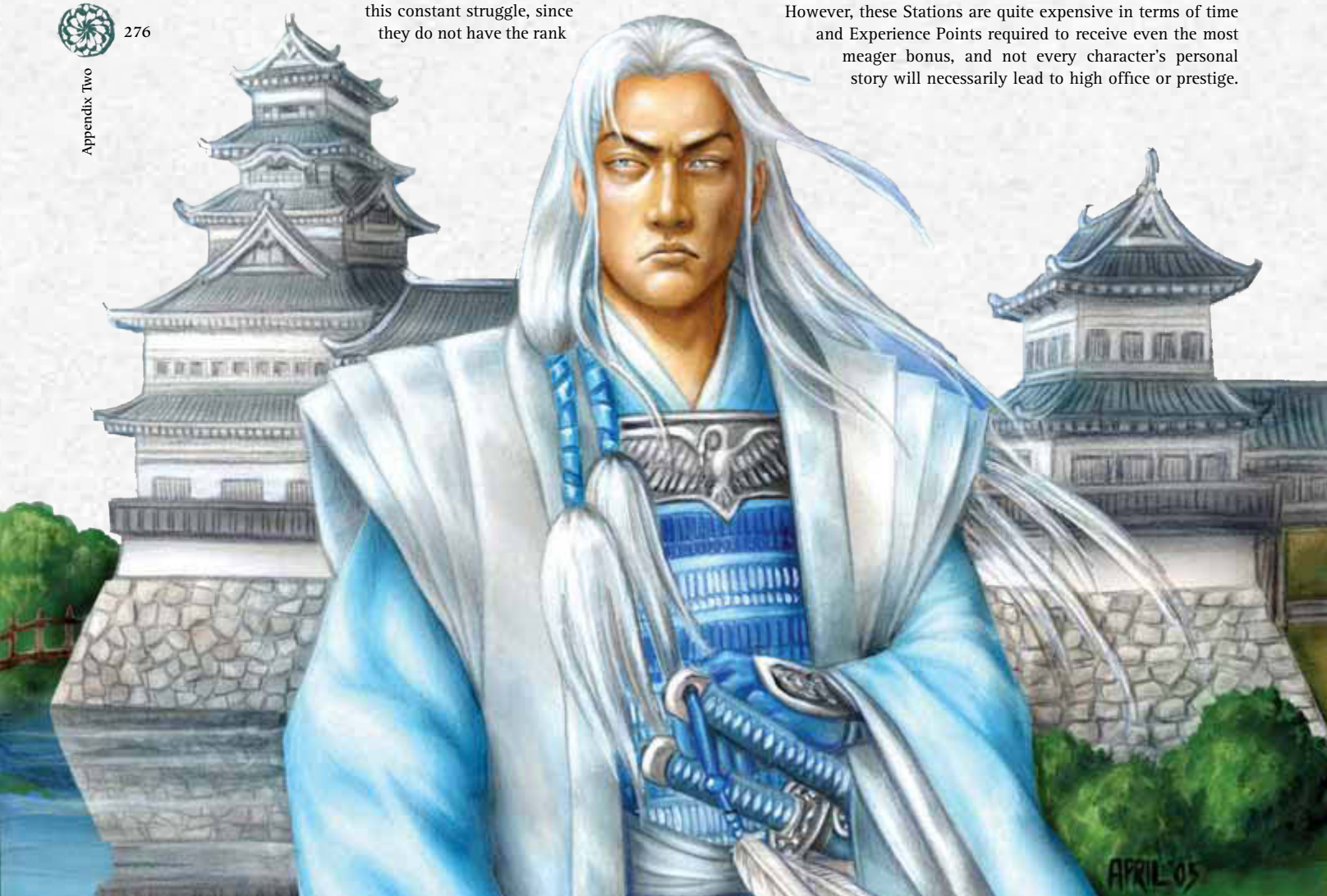


Way of the Daimyo

Playing at Higher Stakes

Thousands of nobles vie for attention and power within Rokugan. As the ruling class, samurai constantly compete for the power and authority to control the world. However, normal player characters in the *Legend of the Five Rings* role-playing game seldom even see this constant struggle, since they do not have the rank and responsibilities that would let them interact in such rarified spheres. This section offers an assortment of different optional rules that allow players and GMs to have characters interact at these rarified Empire-forming levels of society. GMs may use as many or as few of these rules as desired, depending in the needs of their individual campaigns.

The rules here allow PCs to ascend to high Stations within the Empire, positions such as Ambassador or Governor. The rules do not make any prior Status requirements for the PCs to gain the benefits and responsibilities of these Stations. Any character can progress into one of these Stations, or even into multiple Stations, should he have the opportunity and dedication to do so within his personal tale. Thus, it may be tempting to delve into these abilities with every character. However, these Stations are quite expensive in terms of time and Experience Points required to receive even the most meager bonus, and not every character's personal story will necessarily lead to high office or prestige.



Thus, it is recommended these optional rules be used only if gameplay within the GM's campaign will give the character's experiences proper attention.

It should also be remembered that not all players will be interested in pursuing these Stations with their characters, and if only some characters are rising in the hierarchy of the Empire while others are not, this may lead to frustration within the group. A GM who is considering using these rules should discuss the idea with the players beforehand, making sure everyone will be able to enjoy such a storyline.

Samurai Stations

If the GM does introduce these rules into the game, the following Stations are available for samurai PCs:

Ambassador

Seeking greater power and privileges for his clan, the Ambassador tackles the greatest battle of all: the perilous world of the courts. The Ambassador may not step onto the physical battlefield, yet his entire life is shaped by war. He is a wordsmith, able to turn an errant phrase into a death-blow to an opponent's career.

Those who reach this Station learn the methods of trading favors and manipulating bureaucracy to accomplish their goals. Most characters who wish to become an Ambassador are trained in courtier Schools.

Governor

One of the greatest responsibilities a samurai can hope to earn is to become the ruler of an area within his clan's provinces. A Governor oversees a city, town, province, or village, trying to bring glory and honor to his clan. He must nurture growth, increase trade, and protect his people from the predations of bandits, Shadowlands attacks, and the murky criminal underworld. In many ways a Governor must juggle all the responsibilities of the other Stations. It is a thankless position, but one that must be filled to ensure a healthy Empire.

Characters of any School may become a Governor. The responsibilities of running a city may be too overwhelming to shugenja and monk characters, however, since they must spend many hours each day maintaining their spiritual harmony. A magistrate, on the other hand, would consider this Station a natural progression from his current duties.

Keeper of the Temple

The Keeper of the Temple is often a shugenja, priest, or monk, and frequently does not belong to the samurai class. He has abandoned such human ambitions for greater spiritual goals. As the leader of a temple, monastery, or library, the Keeper is responsible for fostering an environment of peace, harmony, and meditation. His greatest goal is to attain a higher understanding of the spirits and elements around him.

Most characters who wish to become a Keeper of the Temple are trained in shugenja or monk Schools. It is certainly possible for a person with no spiritual background to reach this Station, but few such characters have the dedication to become a true Keeper of the Temple.

Master Sensei

It is said those who control the future have the greatest power of all. As the one who shapes the next generation of samurai, the Master Sensei has more real power than many of the other Stations. His moral and philosophical influence may not be visible for decades, yet it will ramify through the Empire for decades to come as it changes his students' actions and beliefs. The Master Sensei imbues his students with the wisdom and power needed to become the Warlords, Governors, and Ambassadors of the next age.

Master Sensei can be characters of any School type. Also, this is the only Station that can easily suit a character who is not even a samurai. After all, wandering peasant teachers have surprising wisdom to teach those who would listen. The mechanics listed in this section specifically support bushi Master Sensei over other types, but the Station is not restricted to that type of character.

Merchant Patron

Matters of money and economy are supposed to be beneath a noble's notice, yet Rokugani society relies on thousands of daily transactions to keep strong. Without the exchange of money and goods, the Empire's great cities and centers of culture would never flourish. The Merchant Patron conquers the treacherous field of trade and harnesses its great power for his clan's needs.

Since these sorts of matters are not widely appreciated within polite samurai company, few characters of the samurai caste choose this road. Those who do are often from courtier Schools, since they view the economy as just another extension of their constant maneuvering for favors.

Warlord

The warriors who achieve this rank are the masters of the battlefield. They learn tactics that allow them not only to conquer other generals who challenge them in direct combat, but also to understand the thousand details required to maintain and control an army. The Warlord has risen through the ranks of his clan's army, either through sheer brilliance, political maneuvering, or the weight of experience. A proud noble of the samurai class, the Warlord has made battle his mistress.

Warlords are most often from bushi Schools, although the occasional exception does exist.

Duty Points: An Overview

A character may begin his progression within these Stations as soon as he earns Duty Points. Duty Points represent the character's ability to call on favors to develop his venture into the ruling nobility. Using these Duty Points, the character can purchase the Features of his Station at the costs listed, thereby improving his abilities. He may only have one of each Feature unless otherwise specified. He may increase the points spent in the Feature at any future time, up to the maximum listed with each Feature.

The first time a character uses Duty Points, he must choose one Station to act as his primary Station. When spending Duty Points for any Station other than the primary one, he must spend additional Duty Points equal to the Feature's level. (This only applies to the initial purchase, not to any subsequent increase in the Feature's level.) Finally, a character may not purchase Level Three Features in any Station unless he has the Advantage called The Daimyo's Path.

Example: *Mirumoto Sumisu is a fledgling Warlord and has been granted the honor of reinforcing a village along the Phoenix border. He decides to purchase the Governor Feature "Defenses" at one Duty Point to strengthen the town's walls. Since Defenses is a level 1 Feature and his primary Station is not Governor, he must spend 2 Duty Points to purchase it. He pays this penalty only once, even if he decides to increase Defenses at a later date.*

There are three main methods to gain Duty Points. There are also special cases which are listed with specific Stations.

- **Status:** When a character increases his Status, he is increasing his standing within his family and clan. He gains the ability to call for favors, even without choosing to focus on a Station. Starting with Status Rank 5, the character gains 3 Duty Points with each increase in Status Rank. Thus by Rank 7, the character should have 9 Duty Points to spend on the Features of whichever Station he wishes. While the character continues to receive these Duty Points past Status Rank 7, at such high ranks the character's position within his clan should already grant him all the advantages he could possibly require to nurture his chosen project.
- **Advantages:** In addition to the Advantages listed below, several Advantages found in the Fourth Edition Rulebook grant additional Duty Points. These alterations are listed below.
- **GM Discretion:** If a character gains responsibilities during game play, the GM can and should give the character access to a small number of Duty Points as an appropriate reward. For instance, a character who suddenly must muster troops to defend a village from bandit attacks could gain a free Advantage (worth 3 Duty Points), or could simply gain 2 Duty Points without cost, to help him accomplish his task.

There are also many ways in which a character can lose the Duty Points he spent on Features. One prime example is the Warlord Station, since a Warlord will suffer casualties—thus losing the units he spent Duty Points to get—every time he steps onto the field. Since Duty Points are very difficult to get, the GM should probably allow characters some opportunities to recoup their losses. Some suggested methods to regain lost Duty Points are listed here:

- An Ambassador who alienated his Explorer connection may make a Courtier (Manipulation) roll to find a way to win his trust once more.
- A Governor who needs to combat a fire could garner the resources to do so from his clan by making an Etiquette (Bureaucracy) skill roll.

- A Keeper whose monks are too distressed by a new thought to work could calm them with a Lore: Theology (Shintao) skill roll.
- A Master Sensei who is losing students to a virulent disease could make Medicine skill rolls to heal them, or make Courtier rolls to find other ways of combating the threat.
- A Merchant Patron who had a shipment stolen can make Commerce (Trade) rolls to avoid suffering a penalty to his income.
- A Warlord who has lost his troops can call more warriors to his banner by making a Battle roll, although this may require several weeks or months of time depending on the severity of the losses.

New Advantage: The World of the Daimyo [Social] (5 points)

You continue your path into a dangerous part of Rokugan: high society. You gain 5 Duty Points, which may be used to purchase any Station's Features.

This Advantage may be purchased multiple times; the Experience Point cost increases by three for every additional level of the Advantage.

New Advantage: The Daimyo's Path [Social] (10 points)

Your continued efforts have gained you respect and trust from your superiors. You gain 8 Duty Points, which may be used to purchase any Station's Features. Additionally, you may purchase Level Three Features of your primary Station. You may not ever purchase Level Three Features from Stations that are not your primary Station.

You may only purchase this Advantage if you already possess The World of the Daimyo Advantage.

Changes to Existing Advantages

These suggested alterations are completely optional and at the GM's discretion.

- *Allies:* Gain one Duty Point.
- *Balance:* Gain one Duty Point that can only be spent on Keeper of the Temple Features.
- *Blackmail:* Gain one Duty Point that can only be spent on Ambassador Features.
- *Darling of the Court:* Gain one Duty Point that can only be spent on Ambassador Features.
- *Enlightened:* Gain three Duty Points that can only be spent on Keeper of the Temple Features.
- *Gentry:* Gain three Duty Points at the Village rank, and an additional three Duty Points for each additional rank of your holding. These points may only be used on Governor Features.
- *Leadership:* Gain one Duty Point.
- *Prodigy:* Gain one Duty Point that can only be spent on Master Sensei Features.
- *Tactician:* Gain one Duty Point that can only be spent on Warlord Features.

Ambassador Options and Features

This section describes the Features of the Ambassador and offers an optional rules system for Court Battles, allowing Ambassadors to call on their Features to outwit their opponents in court. The GM may also choose to use the Court Battle system without the Ambassador rules, should he wish to offer the players a more mechanical approach to courtly role-play. Note that the Court Battle system is somewhat complex—GMs who follow a more free-form approach to play will most likely prefer not to use it.

Ambassador's Optional Rules: The Court Battle System

A verbal battle in court can be a wild affair, with the conversation drifting from topic to topic as characters attempt to pounce on any weaknesses in their opponents' arguments. The length of such a battle of wills can vary wildly, as the conversation can last as long as all sides can maintain their focus on the discussion.

Court Battle takes place in a series of Turns, each representing an indeterminate period of time—most likely several minutes. "Damage" sustained during a Court Battle is represented with a new mechanic called Willpower Wounds. Physical damage obviously does not occur in court (unless things go very badly), but courtiers may feel exhausted and defeated when they lose too many conversations. Willpower Wounds represent the character's ability to continue on even when he is losing arguments. A character's total Willpower Wounds are equal to his Willpower Trait x 10. Damage to a character's Willpower Wounds disappears as soon as a specific Court Battle is over—such abstract "injuries" are not permanent in any way.

Each Turn in a Court Battle consists of four stages: Declaration, Determination, Conflict, and Resolution.

Stage One: Declaration

During the Declaration Stage, all characters participating in the battle of words should determine their level of involvement. Each character may choose to be in one of the following levels: Passive, Engaged, or Heavily Engaged. A Passive character is disengaged from the fiery back and forth of the discussion, while a Heavily Engaged character has decided to throw himself into the very heart of the argument. Committing to one or the other side of an argument allows the character to greatly affect the discussion, but makes him an easy target if he loses the dispute. During this Stage of a subsequent Turn, a character may choose to change to any other level of engagement in the conversation.

Characters at the Passive level suffer less Willpower damage if they are defeated, but they are required to call a Raise for no effect on their roll during Stage Three. Characters in the Engaged level suffer no penalties and gain no bonuses. Characters in the Heavily Engaged level gain a +5 bonus to their

Sample Courtier Battle Topics

Adventure: Discuss the characters' recent experiences. Player characters tend to get into unusual situations that do not fit the norm.

Army Movements: Unannounced movements of troops along any clan border can cause great concern in the courts.

Art: Different interpretations of a particular painting or song can serve as an excellent battleground for snide insults and backhanded compliments.

Beauty: Who can truly say if a sculptor's work is genius or folly?

Bushido: Nobody can agree on the most important tenet of Bushido.

Fashion: Is black truly in style this summer?

Food: This tends to be a popular topic in every court, since it varies from place to place.

Gempukku: Which clan hosts the best gempukku ceremonies, and which clan's gempukku is the most effective at creating competent samurai?

History: Who was the true victor of the Battle of Fifteen Blades?

Law: In a society ruled by tradition, law is a very popular (and incendiary) subject.

Marriage: The court as a whole has begun to consider who could be the most appropriate partner for a specific person. This person is chosen when the Lead chooses this topic.

Nature and Pets: Exotic fish, dogs, and other such animals can lead to very serious discussions.

Romance: Love is unsuitable for true samurai, but romances make great tales (and great gossip).

Ronin: Wave men are not considered to be appropriate for polite company, but their antics can be a fascinating topic.

Rumor: The topic of conversation does not necessarily need to be truthful to begin a Court Battle.

Scandal: A famous samurai from one of the Great Clans has recently made a public faux pas, and you have chosen to discuss the repercussions.

Shintao: Which interpretation of Shinsei's words is correct?

Winter Court: What would be the appropriate location for this year's most prestigious event?

rolls during Stage Two and Three, but suffer more Willpower Wounds if they are defeated.

Stage Two: Determination

With the characters' involvement determined, each player rolls one die (this die can explode as normal) and adds it to the total of his character's Awareness and his Etiquette Skill Rank, if any. He gains +2 to this roll if he has the Conversation Emphasis and +5 if he is in the Heavily Engaged level. The characters with the highest total roll on each side are the Leads of the conversation. The Lead with the highest total chooses the topic of conversation (an assortment of sample topics are offered in the sidebar below), which serves as the battlefield for all the characters in the Court Battle. His side is considered the attacking side and uses the Courtier Skill for the rest of this Battle Turn where indicated. Those who oppose him automatically become the defending side and use the Etiquette Skill for the rest of this Battle Turn.

Note that in Rokugan, courtiers tend to follow their clan's position and support their side in almost all situations, regardless of personal belief. Thus, courtiers may often find themselves arguing a position they do not truly believe because their enemy Great Clan has taken the other role, or because they must support one of their allies. This is why characters must choose sides before the topic of conversation has been chosen.

Stage Three: Conflict

All characters have the opportunity to take a dramatic role in the dispute by role-playing their contributions to the discussion. Each character may speak his piece and attempt to change the flow of conversation into his point of view. The Lead from the attacking side speaks first. The Lead from the defensive side retorts, and the conversation proceeds in descending order of the rolls from Step Two. If there are more combatants on one side than the other, the GM may choose to allow characters from the smaller side to speak multiple times (in order) to continue to rebut the opposing arguments.

Each character who speaks must make a Skill roll after his speech to see if he has swayed audience opinion. Each speaker should make a Skill roll appropriate to the argument or tactic applied. For example, a poignant poem would use a Perform: Poetry roll, while a lie would call for Sincerity (Deceit). If no skill recommends itself, Courtier is the default skill for attacks and Etiquette the default skill for defense. Anyone may use the Lore skill applicable to the current subject.

The TN for these rolls should be set by the GM, choosing as appropriate for the difficulty of the argument, the skill of the role-play, or the attitude of the audience. Each character who succeeds in the Skill roll adds a +1 bonus to the Resolution Roll (Step Four) for his side.

Stage Four: Resolution

The Turn concludes with the Leads on each side making a Resolution Roll. This is again one die rolled and added to the Lead's Air Ring and his Ranks in either the Courtier or Etiquette Skill, as appropriate. Any modifiers garnered from the previous Steps are added as well, and this roll can explode as usual. The higher roll determines the victor for this Turn of the battle.

Victorious characters do not suffer any penalties for losing. The losers suffer 10 Willpower Wounds. (Characters at the Passive level of conversation suffer only 5 Willpower Wounds, while characters at Heavily Engaged suffer 15 Willpower Wounds.) Characters who do not have Willpower Wounds left are forced to withdraw from further Turns of the Court Battle, but if there are characters on both sides ready and able to continue, the Battle proceeds for another Turn and begins once more at Stage One.

Once the battle is completely finished, all victorious characters gain 1 point of Glory, and all defeated characters lose 1 point of Glory. The GM may increase these awards and penalties for an especially prominent discussion, or one held in a very important court (such as the Imperial Court).

Level One Ambassador Features

Ability: Iron Will (1 -2 points): You are inured to the chaotic arguments in court and can withstand its pressures. You gain +5 Willpower Wounds for every Duty Point spent in this Feature.

Ability: Matchmaking (2 points): You are skilled at choosing the right spouses for samurai of all types. You gain 2 Glory Points, and your side adds +2 at the Resolution Roll if the Topic of a Court Battle is *Marriage.*

Ally: Bureaucrat (2 points): You may call on the abilities of a scribe or librarian who can help sort out the past. Your connection may perhaps bend the law from time to time in your favor. As Lead, you may add +2 to your Resolution Roll if the Topic of a Court Battle involves bureaucracy, history, or law.

Ally: Clergy (2 points): Your ally is a shugenja or monk in a monastery. While he may remove himself from civilization, he still can help you understand the elements. You gain a +2 bonus to the Resolution Roll if you are the Lead during a discussion on religion.

Ally: Explorer (2 points): This ally can describe the splendors of the Spine of the World Mountains and the Islands of Silk and Spice with equal ease. You gain a +2 bonus to the Resolution Roll if you are the Lead during a discussion on nature.

Ally: Informant (1–5 points): This ally is skilled at discreetly uncovering information about other courtiers. For each Duty Point in this Feature, you have learned juicy tidbits about one of the opposing courtiers at court. You gain a +1k0 bonus to your Stage Three roll if he is a part of the conversation. This is not cheap, however; you must spend 1 koku a year per Duty Point to keep your Informant happy.

Service: Couriers (2 points): You have the ability to reliably send word across the Empire. You may act, confident in the knowledge your superiors can contact you and tell you the right course of action if you stray. At the beginning of the battle, you may ask your superiors for a +3 bonus to the Resolution Roll of any one Topic (because this must be chosen before the battle, this bonus may perhaps be wasted if that Topic does not get discussed during the battle).

Service: Favors (1–5 points): You pull strings with a high official to help sway the crowd's opinion. Choose one courtier. That courtier decides to move to the Heavily Engaged level of Court Battle. You must lose one Duty

Point from this Feature every time you wish to invoke its ability.

Service: Theatrical Connections (3 points): You obtain all the tickets to the most popular Noh or Kabuki theater in the area. You may trade these tickets for favors, money, or other bonuses with other courtiers. Furthermore, you gain 3 points of Glory for becoming a patron of the arts.

Service: Writs of Passage (1 point): You have the ability to grant travel papers throughout your clan's lands, making you important to those who may need to establish trade routes or visit an important temple. You gain 1 point of Status.

Level Two Ambassador Features

Ability: Rumormonger (3 points): You are a master of half-truths. If the Topic of the Court Battle is rumors or gossip, your side adds +3 at the Resolution Roll.

Ability: Secrets (4 points): You are privy to official clan secrets, though whether you are authorized to divulge them to others may hamper the power of this Feature. Of course, you are free to ignore such limitations should you decide to trade your secret for a political boon. If you decide to tell the opposing Lead this secret, you can negotiate for him to allow you the edge in the argument, negating the opposing Lead's Skill bonus during the Resolution Roll. Exposing a secret may have other ramifications, of course, as chosen by the GM.

Ally: Out-of-Clan Official (3 points): You are well respected, even outside of your own clan. You gain a +1k0 bonus to your roll during Stage 3 while in the Engaged level of Court Battle.

Ally: Secretaries (2 points): Nothing can ever get accomplished without the assistance of skilled aides. You are able to call on scribes, locate scrolls, and get other such tasks dealt with efficiently.

Service: Unseen Ally (2 points): When you decide to use this Feature, you may choose to use it as any other Level One Feature for one Court Battle. The bonus stacks if you already have the chosen Feature. Your Unseen Ally Feature disappears after one use.

Level Three Ambassador Features

Ally: Imperial Connection (4 or 8 points): You have an established link to one of the Imperial Families either through marriage, school, personal ally, or some other means. You gain +10 Willpower Wounds, gain 5 points of Glory, and may add +1 to your Resolution Roll if you are Lead. These bonuses double if you spent 8 Duty Points in this Feature.

Ally: Yojimbo (1–4 points): You can call on the services of a skilled iaijutsu duelist to champion you should it prove necessary. One Duty Point could represent a samurai fresh from gempukku, while four Duty Points could represent a duelist of Insight Rank 4.

Governors face a great variety of challenges to their position and to the lands they rule. A clever and inventive GM can build an entire campaign around a Governor's trials and tribulations. Of course, given the huge power and importance of playing a Governor, the GM may not wish to cast a PC in this role—or, conversely, may wish to create a campaign in which the other PCs pursue their own Stations while assisting the reign of the Governor PC.

Level One Governor Features

Location (1–5 points): If your character has been assigned to rule over a new stronghold, or the GM allows you to choose the location of an existing stronghold to rule, you must spend at least one Duty Point in this Feature. A prime location could mean the difference between a thriving metropolis and a starving village. Easy access to running water, defensible positions, and other such considerations shape this Feature. One Point represents a remote location, while five Points could represent a high-traffic location, close to the heart of your clan.

Stronghold (1–5 points): When your character becomes a Governor, you must spend at least one Duty Point in this Feature. One Point means that you are the head of a small village or other minor settlement, while five Points represent a large castle or a sprawling city filled with thousands of inhabitants.

Accommodations (1–5 points): You understand the importance of hosting important guests in your stronghold. Each Duty Point allows you to host ten additional visitors. High profile guests can bring prestige to your stronghold, earning you Glory points.

Defenses (1–5 points): Fortified positions, watchtowers, and a standing army can be enough to discourage any bandits intent on preying on easy pickings. One Duty Point could represent wooden walls, dragon's teeth, and a small force of ashigaru defenders. Five Duty Points on this Feature could represent stone walls, an extensive field of traps surrounding the settlement, a moat, and skilled samurai warriors. If you are using the Army Battle Rules outlined in the Warlord Station below, each Duty Point in this Feature increases the defense's Resolution Roll total by 1.

Farmlands (1–5 points): Rice paddies and fields of grain can increase tax revenue and help feed the settlement. More importantly, an extensive set of fields can attract the working class to your stronghold. The taxes from the Farmlands supply a meager income each month, totaling one koku per Duty Point in this Feature.

Marketplace (1–5 points): The marketplace stimulates your settlement and makes sure the money keeps flowing between the workers and the noble class. For each Duty Point spent in this Feature, you gain an income of three koku per month.

Monuments (2 points): You have erected statues of war heroes and Fortunes around your settlement, increasing morale and boosting productivity among the people. Your people consider you a generous person and a kind ruler. You gain 2 Glory points.

Peasant Quarters (3 points): The heimin and leatherworkers need a place to rest after their long days at work. You increase morale among your working class people, increasing all benefits provided by other Features by one. If the Feature has benefits per Duty Point, it only increases the overall benefit by one.

Sake Houses (1–5 points): Sake houses can increase criminal activity within your holding but also provide an area where people can relax and socialize. Your base income per month increases by five koku per Duty Point and your settlement's morale increases.

However, there is a dark side to distributing alcohol among the masses. For each Duty Point spent on this Feature, your stronghold gains one criminal organization. Also, each month your settlement suffers one major criminal outbreak for each Duty Point you have in Sake Houses that is not counteracted by a Duty Point in the Magistrate Station Feature.

Example: *Your city has 4 Duty Points in the Sake Houses Feature and 2 in the Magistrate Station Feature. Because you have 2 more Duty Points in Sake Houses over Magistrate Station, your city will suffer 2 major criminal outbreaks per month (a riot, fire, smuggling ring, etc).*

Shrines (2 points): Because the people are highly religious, places of worship are required to show proper deference to the kami. Improved shrines also prove to the common people that their rulers hold the same love near to heart.

Firemen (3 points): The threat of fire is the greatest danger any Rokugani settlement can face, and a vigilant fire squad is the best way to minimize damage. Firemen increase safety within your stronghold. Just as importantly, the populace begins to trust the authorities, fostering a cooperative environment within the walls.

Garrison (2–6 points): A settlement appears more valuable as it gains importance and wealth. A standing army, trained from the best of the clan's forces, can deflect assaults from all but the strongest adversaries. Each Duty Point spent in this Feature grants you 1 free Duty Point that may only be spent on the Warlord Personnel Features. While using these points, you do not need to pay the additional penalty for having a primary Station that is not the Warlord.

If your primary Station is not the Governor, you must pay an additional penalty of 1 Duty Point for this Feature.

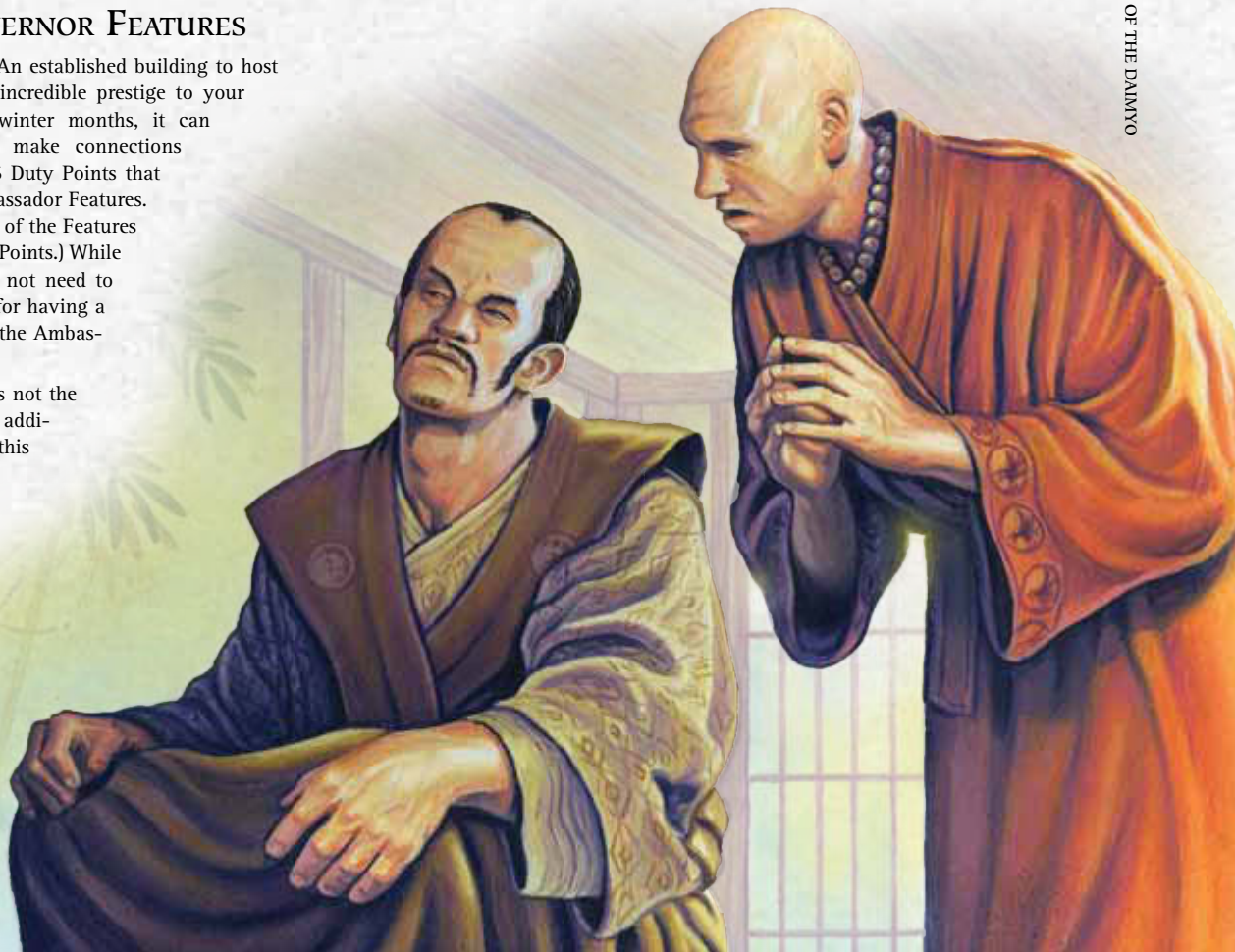
Magistrate Station (2–5 points): Crime is a problem that only grows as your settlement grows larger and more prosperous. A Garrison can be a temporary stopgap, but most of the bushi who make up these defenses are not trained to handle the insidious dangers of smuggling rings, bandit gangs, and opium dens. Each Point spent on the Magistrate Station Feature adds 5 magistrates to your settlement, and counteracts 1 Point's worth of negative effects from the Sake Houses Feature.

Willow World (3 points): A neighborhood with geisha houses, tea houses, and theaters caters to the noble class, giving samurai a place to relax and enjoy life. Since there are few times samurai are allowed to show emotion, these places are extremely socially valuable. You may purchase the following Features at one less Duty Point: Court Chamber, Magistrate Station, Garrison.

Level Two Governor Features

Court Chamber (3 points): An established building to host a Winter Court can bring incredible prestige to your holding. During the non-winter months, it can attract courtiers eager to make connections with your clan. You gain 5 Duty Points that may only be spent on Ambassador Features. (You may not purchase any of the Features marked "Ability" with these Points.) While using these Points, you do not need to pay the additional penalty for having a primary Station that is not the Ambassador.

If your primary Station is not the Governor, you must pay an additional 2 Duty Points for this Feature in addition to the normal penalties.



Level Three Governor Features

Forum (5 points): A forum is not only a marketplace but also a place of discussion and learning. Many social gatherings filled with philosophy and political debate take place at this location. You gain 8 Duty Points that may only be spent on Merchant Patron Features. While using these points, you do not need to pay the additional penalty for having a primary Station that is not the Merchant Patron.

You do not have direct control over the forum or its everyday activities.

School (5 points): You have decided to fund and support a dojo within your stronghold, knowing it can draw your clan's favor. You gain 8 Duty Points that may only be spent on the Master Sensei Features. You may not purchase any Kata Creation Features with these points. While using these points, you do not need to pay the additional penalty for having a primary Station that is not the Master Sensei.

You do not have direct control over the dojo or its everyday activities.

Keeper of the Temple Options and Features

This section includes not only Features for characters in the Keeper of the Temple Station, but also offers an optional system for characters to create their own kiho and spells. These rules require cooperation between GM and players, of course, and GMs who are wary of allowing too much power into players' hands should probably refrain from using them.

Much like a Governor, a Keeper of the Temple's duties may become the focus of an entire campaign as the PCs deal with religious controversies, spiritual problems such as ghosts or angry kami, and various types of outside threats.

Optional Rules: Basic Spell/ Kiho Creation Rules

Many of the Features in the following section refer to Kiho Creation, but this system can also be used for creating new spells, and a shugenja Keeper of the Temple will probably prefer to create spells instead. The rules listed here are intended as a basic guideline for utilizing the Station mechanics to create new kiho and spells, but the GM should be prepared to adjust them as needed. Cooperation between players and GM is vital for creating functional, fun, and balanced character abilities.

Step One: Features

You must purchase the following Keeper of the Temple Level 1 Features before you can create a new spell or kiho: *Kiho Creation: Element, Kiho Creation: Mastery, Kiho Creation: Effect*. If you are creating a kiho, the *Kiho Creation: Special* Feature is also mandatory. You may only create one spell/kiho; in order to create another one, you must purchase the Library Feature, then buy the creation Features again for the second spell/kiho. (GMs may choose to allow you to create more spells/ kihos based on your in-game accomplishments, of course.)

Step Two: Determining the Effect

Any spell or kiho must be created in conjunction with the GM. The powerful aspects of a spell or kiho effect are obvious—damage rolls, enhancements, etc. To determine the Mastery Level of a new spell or kiho, the simplest method is to look up existing ones of the same element and similar effect. An effect can be strengthened without increasing the Mastery Level by putting a restriction on when or how the power can be used. Some of the following restrictions may be considered for such balancing effects:

1. Limited Area of Effect (such as radius of 5')
2. Duration: Concentration
3. Harms allies as well as opponents
4. Raises have little effect
5. Requires difficult Range (touch only, or at least 50' away)
6. Requires Void Point use

Step Three: Determining the Cost

Creating a new spell or kiho costs additional Experience Points equal to its Mastery Level.

Step Four: Research

To successfully a spell, you must make a Skill roll of Spellcraft (Spell Research) / Intelligence with a TN equal to 10 plus the new spell's Mastery Level x 10.

Researching a new kiho instead requires a roll of Lore: Theology (Shintao) / Intelligence, with a TN equal to 10 plus the new kiho's Mastery Level x 5.

In both cases, making this roll requires a number of weeks of uninterrupted study equal to the new spell/kiho's Mastery Level.

If the Skill roll fails, the GM may allow the character to try again (spending more weeks in study), or may rule that this new discovery is beyond the PC's powers.

Level 1 Keeper of the Temple Features

Kiho Creation: Effect (2 points): See the creation rules listed above.

Kiho Creation: Element (1 point): Your kiho or spell exemplifies the qualities of one of the Elemental Rings. You cannot have a Deficiency in the chosen element, nor can you choose Void without the Ishiken-do Advantage.

- **Air:** Spells and kiho from this element emphasize speed, illusion, and communication.
- **Earth:** Spells and kiho from this element emphasize resilience, defense, and physical/spiritual purity.

- **Fire:** Spells and kiho from this element emphasize attacks and creation.
- **Void:** Spells and kiho from this element defy definition, though many emphasize understanding.
- **Water:** Spells and kiho from this element emphasize healing and movement.

Kiho Creation: Mastery (1 point): You must choose the strength of the kiho or spell; the higher the mastery, the more powerful its effects. See the creation rules listed above.

Kiho Creation: Special (2 points): You may choose the category which best describes your kiho: Internal, Kharmic, Martial, or Mystical. If you are creating a spell, you may choose one of the following keywords to attach to your spell (if appropriate): Battle, Craft, Defense, Divination, Illusion, Jade, Thunder, Travel, or Wards.

Temple Building (1–5 points): You must spend at least one Duty Point in this Feature to start your temple or monastery. More points spent represent a larger facility, capable of hosting more priests and monks at the same time. One Duty Point could represent a tiny shrine, while five Duty Points can create a large and opulent sanctuary.

Location (1–5 points): You must spend at least one Duty Point in this Feature to start a new shrine or monastery, or to choose the location of an existing one assigned to your care. An advantageous location can guarantee your temple's success before it even is built. Temples, shrines, and monasteries are unusual in that remote locations can be considered very fortuitous if the site is spiritually strong or inspiring. The location rarely changes once it is set, though you may purchase this Feature again if you decide to relocate. One Duty Point spent could represent an area unsuited for a temple (such as the merchant quarter of Ryoko Owari), while five Duty Points could represent an area that is both serene and spiritually powerful.

Garden (3 points): A garden can soothe monks' souls or provide manual labor to increase discipline. Your monks or priests can purchase the Meditation Skill at a discount of 2 Experience Points per Rank (to a minimum of 1 Experience Point).

Living Quarters (1–5 points): Each point spent in this Feature increases the number of people able to function at the temple. Without this Feature, the place can support ten priests/monks. Every point spent in this Feature increases this limit by ten.

Staff (1–5 points): Each point spent in this Feature either increases the number of spiritual aspirants living at your facility or increases the support available for them. Choose one of these options each time you spend a point in this Feature.

- 5 monks/priests
- 10 unskilled laborers
- 3 skilled workers (carpenters, craftsmen)
- 5 guardians (soldiers, sohei)

Supply (1 point): No temple can function if it does not have the tools and materials to continue its work. While such details are not glamorous, a shrine or monastery does need things like blank scrolls, ink, food, incense, cleaning and carpentry tools, and other necessary items. Each purchase of this Feature can sustain a temple for an entire year, and this Feature can be taken multiple times.

Level 2 Keeper of the Temple Features

Learned Shintao Sect (2–5 points): Your monks have become famed across the land for championing a new understanding of Shintao. Many people disagree with their thoughts, but just as many understand the unique insights of their position. Your temple receives many new visitors each month, and while your monks' daily rituals are interrupted by the distractions, they may come to a greater understanding of the world by speaking to these new minds. Additionally, the visitors generously donate to the temple, giving you an income of two koku per month for each Duty Point spent in this Feature.

Renown (2–5 points): Your temple's fame is increasing among the people, causing visitors to arrive from all across the Empire in search of a moment of enlightenment or blissful serenity. You gain five Glory Points per Duty Point spent on this Feature.

Research Library (2–5 points): You have decided to create a great building to store all the knowledge your monks and priests have attained. While you cannot write enlightenment into a book, recording wise thoughts can help others follow the path. You may create an additional spell or kiho for each Duty Point spent in this Feature. You must purchase all creation Features anew; this Feature simply creates an additional opportunity for you to learn.

Temple Allies (2–6 points): This Feature represents outside groups that are interested in the future of your temple. These could be officials from your clan who grant your temple funding, people from out of the clan who increase your standing, or secret allies who could defeat your temple's opponents. You may use this Feature as a temporary boost to any of the temple's other Features, increasing the other Feature's Duty Point level by the number of Points spent in this Feature. Once this Feature is used, the Duty Points spent on it are lost.

Unusual Resources (2–6 points): There are many unique objects that can help the members of your temple reach enlightenment. A copy of an ancient and revered Shintao text could increase the monks' understanding of the world, or an artwork created by a warrior could give priests insight into the heart of battle. These resources and their effects should be one-of-a-kind, and should be created through discussion with your GM.

Level 3 Keeper of the Temple Features

Legendary Monk (3 or 6 points): You have convinced a famed holy person of your temple's worthiness or the beauty of your personal spiritual vision. He joins your monastery, enriching its fame, efficacy, and harmony. All the monks/priests in your facility gain ten Points of Glory and two additional Experience Points (either at character creation or when you purchase this Feature). This bonus doubles if you spend 6 Duty Points on this Feature.

Spiritual Connection (5 points): There is some intangible quality that has draped itself over your temple. Members of your temple may purchase kiho at a discount, spending two less Experience Points. This does not change prior game-mechanic limitations already in place; for instance, monks are still unable to learn spells and shugenja may only purchase kiho if your GM follows the optional Non-Brotherhood Kiho rule (found on page 266 of the L5R Fourth Edition Core Rulebook).

Additionally, if you decide to research a spell or kiho you gain a +10 bonus to your Research roll during Stage Four.

Master Sensei Options and Features

A Master Sensei is less likely to become the focus of an entire campaign than a Governor or even a Master of the Temple, but can play an important role as an ally or friend to a character following one of those Stations. Since the Master Sensei position is one most likely associated with bushi, we have also included optional rules here for the creation of new kata.

Optional Rule: Basic Kata Creation

The rules listed below are a basic guideline on how to utilize the Station mechanics to create new kata for bushi. Master Sensei of non-bushi schools do not have the option of teaching Kata, since they are strictly a bushi mechanic, but Sensei players can easily adapt these rules to the creation of new Alternate Paths, or even new Schools or new Advanced Schools. As always, cooperation and discussion between player and GM is mandatory to create functional, fun, and balanced abilities that will work within your game.

Normally, you may only create one kata, but if you purchase the Additional Kata Feature you may create more. The GM may also permit the creation of additional kata based on in-character accomplishments.

Step One: Features

You must purchase the following Level One Features before you can create and teach a kata: *Kata Creation: Ring, Kata Creation: School, Kata Creation: Effect.* The other Kata Creation Features are optional, though each Feature enhances the design in some way. The new kata begins with a Mastery of 3, unless other Features are purchased to increase this amount.

Step Two: Determining the Effect

The most crucial portion of the Kata is, of course, its effect. The following is a guideline: to have a balanced kata effect, you should reach a neutral total after adding together the values of all the attributes (based on the values listed below). Any positive points remaining increase the Kata's Experience Point cost by five times the excess.

- +1: +1k0 to a specific Skill or attack roll
- +2: +1k0 or +3 to Initiative or damage

- +3: An effect equivalent to a Raise, or minor Reduction in limited situations
- -1: Stance limitation on the effect
- -1: Mastery 4
- -2: Harsher limitation: for example, cannot make Raises while the kata is active
- -3: Mastery 5

Step Three: Determining the Cost

Unless Features are used to directly reduce the cost, creating the new kata costs Experience Points equal to double its Mastery Level. Add any extra cost from the previous step (if any) to determine the final cost of the Kata.

Step Four: Teaching

Once you have spent the Experience Points to create the kata, you may begin teaching it to other bushi, who may purchase it in the normal manner.

Level 1 Master Sensei Features

Dojo Building (1–5 points): You must spend at least one Duty Point into this Feature to start your own academy (or to take possession of an existing one). More points spent represent a larger dojo, capable of teaching more students. One Duty Point could represent a tiny training room, surrounded by temporary housing for the students. Five Duty Points would represent a very large dojo, capable of hosting a student body of a hundred or more.

Location (1–5 points): You must spend at least one Duty Point into this Feature to start your academy or to choose the location of an existing one for which you are now the master. This Feature must be purchased before you can purchase any other Features. An advantageous location can guarantee your school's success before it even begins. The location of a dojo rarely changes once it is set, though you may purchase this Feature again if you decide to relocate. 1 Point could represent a dojo in a small town or remote area, while 5 Points represents a prime location within a major castle or metropolis.

Living Quarters (1–5 points): Each point spent in this Features increases the number of students and teachers able to function at the dojo. Without this Feature, the dojo can support ten students and one teacher. Every point spent in this Feature increases this limit by ten more students and two more teachers.

Staff (1–5 points): Each point spent in this Feature either increases the number of sensei available to teach at your dojo by one, or increases the support staff available. Choose one of these options each time you spend a point in this Feature:

- 1 sensei
- 10 unskilled laborers
- 3 skilled workers (carpenters, craftsmen)
- 5 guardians (bushi)
- 1 skilled student of Insight Rank One

Supply (1 point): No dojo can function if it does not have the tools to continue on. While such details are not glamorous, every dojo needs weapons, tatami mats, food, and other such necessary items. Each purchase of this Feature will sustain your dojo for an entire year; this Feature can be purchased multiple times.

Kata Creation: Effect (2 points): See the creation rules listed above.

Kata Creation: Ring (2 points): Your Kata exemplifies the qualities of one of the Elemental Rings.

- **Air:** This Ring emphasizes the importance of speed and defense.
- **Earth:** This Ring emphasizes the importance of resilience and endurance.
- **Fire:** This Ring emphasizes the importance of attacking.
- **Void:** This Ring emphasizes the importance of peace, calm, honor, and iaijutsu dueling.
- **Water:** This Ring emphasizes the importance of movement and change.

Kata Creation: School (2 points): You must choose a School or Path for the Kata with the following restrictions: it must be a bushi School, and you must have at least one Technique from the School. You may purchase this Feature multiple times to increase the Kata's flexibility but you must meet the restrictions each time.

Kata Creation: Reduced Cost (1 point): The Kata's cost in Experience Points is reduced by 2, to a minimum of 2. You may purchase this Feature multiple times.

Level 2 Master Sensei Features

Allies (2 –6 points): This Feature represents outside groups interested in the future of your dojo. These could be officials from your clan that may place your students in beneficial positions after graduation, people from out-of-clan who could help increase your fame and standing, or a secret ally who could defeat your school's opponents. You may use this Feature as a temporary boost to the Point value of any of the school's other Features, subject to GM approval.

Famed Teacher (2–6 points): One of your teachers has become celebrated far and wide for his unique lessons, drawing attention from those far beyond the local area. All TNs for Lore: Heraldry rolls to recognize students from your school are decreased by 5 for every 2 Points spent in this Feature.

Renown (2–6 points): The school's name is increasing among the people. You gain 5 Glory points per Duty Point spent on this Feature.

Unusual Resources (2–6 points): There are many unique objects that help a student focus or help the sensei teach. A copy of an ancient text that pertains to the training program could increase students' morale. A garden can soothe students' souls or give them manual labor to increase discipline. The exact nature of the resource and the benefits derived from it should be discussed with your GM.

Kata Creation: Additional Kata (1–3 point): Your dojo may create an additional kata to be taught to your students—one kata per Duty Point. Before you can begin teaching this new kata, you must purchase all appropriate Features anew.

Level 3 Master Sensei Features

Legendary Teacher (3 or 6 points): You have convinced a famed teacher of your dojo's superior qualities or the beauty of your personal vision. He joins your dojo as a teacher, enriching its fame and efficacy. The students of your dojo gain ten points of Glory and two additional Experience Points (either at character creation or when you purchase this Feature). This bonus doubles if you spend 6 Duty Points on this Feature.

Demonstration (3–5 points): Your students have successfully proven the strength in your style and teachings. Their skills reflect well on you as their teacher. You gain three points of Glory for each Duty Point spent on this Feature.

Merchant Patron Options and Features

The greatest objective of a Merchant Patron is to build a financial empire for his clan. While there may be other concerns as well, the Merchant Patron usually focuses on this task above all others.

These rules are designed for simplicity and ease of play rather than realistically simulating the ups and downs of a real economy. Players and GMs who prefer a little more danger and excitement in their economic storylines may replace all the koku values listed hereafter with dice, with 1k1 equivalent to 5 koku per month.

There are two important aspects of a Merchant Patron's duties to consider.

- *Income:* You may have a shop that draws in money every day, but for the purpose of game mechanics you gain your earnings at the end of each month. Most of the Merchant Patron's Features are designed to interact with this income in some way. The most important of these for this purpose are *Product, Supply, Traveling Peddler,* and *Blessings of Ebisu.*
- *Glory:* Your business has its own Glory Rank, as if it were a character. It can be recognized outside of the local province and grant you special privileges and opportunities for growth that would otherwise be missed. Likewise the store has its own Infamy Rank as well.

Level 1 Merchant Patron Features

Building (1–5 points): You must spend at least one Duty Point in this Feature to start your mercantile career. 1 Point could represent a small wooden shack filled with goods. 5 Points could represent a large series of connected buildings, each with its own set of specialized products.

Your Product Feature (see below) can never be more than 2 Points higher than your Points in this Feature, since your business cannot handle more merchandise than you have room available within your building.

Location (1–5 points): You must spend at least one Duty Point in this Feature to start your mercantile career, either choosing a location for a new business or for an existing one which has fallen under your supervision. A prime location is absolutely crucial to a business' prospects. The location of a business rarely changes once it is set, though you may purchase this Feature again if you decide to relocate. 1 Point could represent a business in a remote village far from the major trade routes, while 5 Points could represent a prime position within a major castle, port, or city.

Your Supply Feature can never be more than 2 Points higher than your Points in this Feature. This limitation is waived as soon as you purchase the Additional Storefront Feature.

Black Market Connections (1–5 points): Illegal methods can be very dangerous but also very lucrative. Black market supplies are cheaper to obtain and can open up interesting product lines otherwise unavailable, such as gaijin gear, opium, or stolen art. However, these connections will bring magistrate attention on your dealings.

Your base income per month increases as follows:

1 Duty Point: 3 koku + 2k1 koku
2 Duty Points: 6 koku + 3k2 koku
3 Duty Points: 9 koku + 4k3 koku
4 Duty Points: 12 koku + 5k4 koku
5 Duty Points: 15 koku + 7k5 koku

These benefits come with strict repercussions. For every Duty Point spent in this Feature, your business gains 5 Infamy Points. If the store's Infamy Rank is ever higher than its Glory Rank, your store automatically falls under the scrutiny of the local magistrates, since they consider you a greater danger than any other local threat. The role-playing implications of your black market career are considerable, as well; as soon as you delve into the black market, you will be constantly plagued by criminals, thugs, and other men of questionable morality as they seek to garner whatever advantage they may from your business.

You may purchase this Feature multiple times.

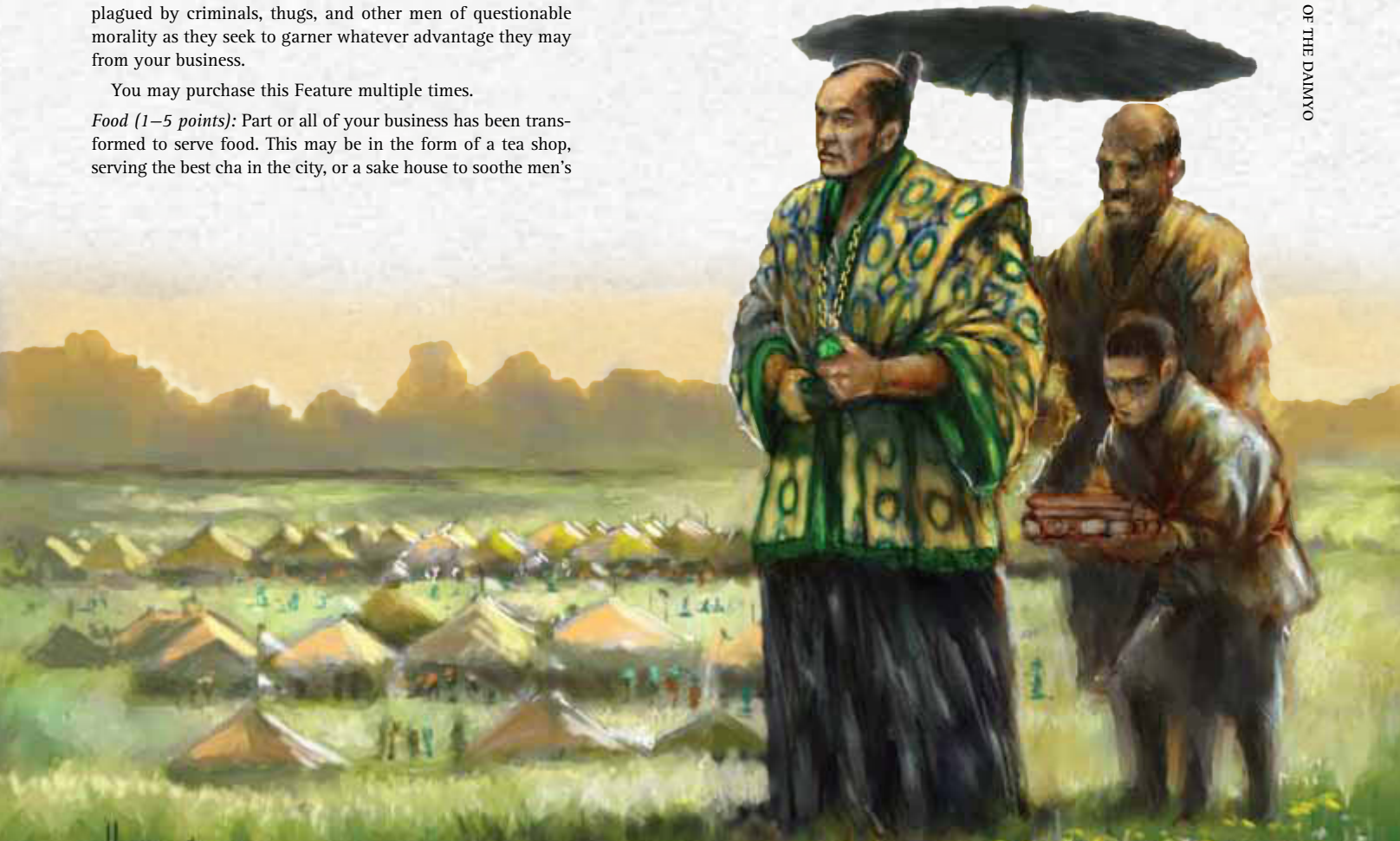
Food (1–5 points): Part or all of your business has been transformed to serve food. This may be in the form of a tea shop, serving the best cha in the city, or a sake house to soothe men's nerves after a hard day's work. While this does not maximize your profits, it does increase your store's name among the populace. For each Duty Point spent, your store gains 3 points of Glory and your base income increases by 1 koku.

Hostess (2 points): You have decided to employ comely men and women to draw crowds to your store. Your clientele increases drastically, and more importantly you gain valuable information that could come in use in the future. You may purchase this Feature multiple times. Every time you purchase this Feature, you may choose from one of the following benefits:

- You gain the Blackmail Advantage on a local official or samurai.
- You gain a small Glory boost for hosting a geisha.
- You gain a small Glory boost and increased traffic for sponsoring an artist.

The Kobune Captain as Merchant Patron

The Kobune Captain Advanced School found in this book can be used in conjunction with this rules system to simulate a merchant empire. The School grants 3 Duty Points per Technique, in addition to its usual benefits, if you are using this optional system.



Product (1–5 points): Each Point spent in this Feature represents more merchandise available. Your base income per month is equal to five times your combined Product Duty Points. You may purchase this Feature a number of times equal to the number of stores you control (see Additional Storefront).

Renown (1–5 points): The quality and consistency of your goods has earned you a reputation as a wonderful source of top quality products. Your store gains five Glory Points per Duty Point spent on this Feature.

Security (1–5 points): Each Point spent in this Feature adds five ashigaru guards, dedicated to the safety of your shop. At four or five Duty Points spent, the GM may allow samurai guards to substitute for some of your ashigaru sentries.

Supply (3 points): You have established a trade line that travels across Rokugan, spreading your name and reach everywhere. Your store gains 5 Glory Points, and you may purchase additional stores using the Additional Storefront Feature.

Traveling Peddler (1–5 points): You have invested in wagons or boats that move around Rokugan, selling your wares. Each Duty Point in this Feature increases your base income per month by 2 koku and grants your store two Glory Points.

Level 2 Merchant Patron Features

Additional Storefront (2–5 points): You can expand your empire by creating new stores, as long as you have the Supply Feature. These may be established in different cities across the Empire. Follow the Store Building Feature rules, listed above, using additional Duty Points as needed. The new store uses the same Security Features as the original store, and can immediately begin to make koku.

The first of your expansions costs 2 Duty Points, with each additional store afterwards costing one Duty Point.

Allies (2–5 points): This Feature represents outside groups interested in the future of your business. This Feature may be purchased multiple times, but you must choose one of the following aspects each time.

- *Local Protection:* You have friends among the local magistrates. You gain points of Infamy equal to the Duty Points spent in this Feature. However, the magistrates discern your story as having an Infamy Rank a full rank lower for each Duty Point spent for this purpose.
- *Influx of Koku:* You may use this Feature as more income, though it will not be a steady or reliable flow. You gain twenty koku for each Duty Point spent on this Feature.
- *Temporary Boost:* You may call on favors to temporarily boost any of the store's Features by an amount equal to the Duty Points spent in this Feature, with GM approval.
- *Territorial Connection:* You have connections, within your clan or without, that help you ease the problems that arise with establishing supply lines, new stores, and other aspects of your business. This will ease the cost or requirements of other Features as the GM chooses. For example, this Feature could act as the Location Feature of an Additional Storefront.

Educated Staff (3 points): An informed workforce, learned in reading and writing and with an understanding of your products, can increase sales. Your Products Feature is considered to be 2 Points higher; this bonus does not apply to the limitation regarding the Product and Store Building Features.

Famed Crafter (2–5 points): You have negotiated an exclusive agreement with an extremely gifted artisan or crafter. You spend koku per month equal to five times the Duty Points spent on this Feature; in return, your store gains 5 Glory Points per Duty Point.

Unusual Products (2–5 points): There are many unique objects that do not fit within the usual products or supply systems. This may be a supply of nemuranai, a stash of exotic weapons, or a specific tea or food from a unique source. The exact nature of these products, their beneficial effects and income, and any possible negative side-effects should be discussed with your GM.

Level 3 Merchant Patron Features

Blessings of Ebisu (5 points): The Fortune of Honest Work approves of your work and has decided to keep an eye on your affairs. Your store's base income doubles if your Glory Rank is higher than your Infamy Rank.

Zaibatsu (3 points): You have made alliances with other businesses within the same market or industry to create a monopoly. This allows you to set your own prices and raise them at will. Your store's base income doubles if your Infamy Rank is higher than your Glory Rank, and you gain Infamy Points equal to your Infamy Rank.

Warlord Options and Features

A Warlord may represent a shireikan or other mid-ranking officer within a clan army, or a truly high-ranking position such as a rikugunshokan. The more prominent and successful a Warlord becomes, the more troops he will be able to call to his banner. This section also offers an optional variant on the Mass Battle rules for those who wish to focus on commanding an army rather than on fighting within its ranks.

Optional Rules: Army Battle System

The Mass Combat rules in the L5R Fourth Edition Core Rulebook are designed to simulate the experience of war on the front lines. The Army Battle System offered here is designed to be used when one or more characters hold positions as commanders, able to dictate the course of the battle. This is a relatively simple rules system, and can be modified to add more depth and complexity if the GM and players prefer.

One specific rule which has been heavily abstracted is the scale of units and armies. The Personnel Features are combat units, but there are no numbers listed for each unit. This deliberate vagueness allows the GM and players to use the Army Battle System for engagements ranging from a few hundred warriors to hundreds of thousands, as the needs of the story dictate. A unit of Archers can represent 10 samurai or 100 samurai with equal ease.

To resolve a battle using the Army Battle System, the GM and players go through six stages, as follows:

Stage One: Compare Army Composition

The battle begins with the armies facing each other on the battlefield (the approach to battle should be handled through role-play and story development). Each side totals the Strength of the forces available to them, based on the strengths of units listed under Personnel (under the Warlord Features below), and compares the two numbers. The difference between the two armies becomes a bonus to the larger army's general during the Resolution Roll in Stage Five.

Stage Two: Terrain, Traps, and the Field of Battle

The chosen battlefield can significantly affect the end result of the fight, sometimes more than tactics if the terrain is seriously disadvantageous to one side. The GM should determine which side of battle has the upper hand in terms of terrain (although role-play prior to the battle may affect this as well). The GM grants a bonus to the advantageous side for the Resolution Roll in Stage Five. Most battles should have a terrain bonus of +5, and the most extreme bonus should only be +10 to one side.

Traps complicate the battle. The defender can place traps to remove the attacker's options for assault. The effects of traps apply to the Tactics roll in Stage Three.

Stage Three: Tactics

The two generals must make a Contested Battle (Mass Combat) / Perception Roll to determine which of them uses superior tactics. Modifiers may be applied to this roll based on the units available to each side (see Personnel Features below). If there are traps on the battlefield, the attacker must counteract them by calling a Raise (or two, if the traps are cleverly placed) on the roll.

Take the difference between the two rolls and divide in half. This total becomes a bonus to the better general's army during the Resolution Roll in Stage Five.

Stage Four: Heroic Opportunities

Heroes can change the course of battle itself with the smallest events on the battlefield. At this point, the GM may opt to allow any PCs who are personally fighting in the battle to roll on the Mass Battle Table and resolve any resultant Duels or Heroic Opportunities. Each successful Heroic Opportunity

Other Events in Battle

Random factors can change the outcome of a battle, regardless of how much planning takes place and how many clever tactics are employed. The GM may use such events to complicate the course of a battle. The following chart offers suggestions for such events and the sort of modifications they may apply to the Resolution Roll.

Table A2.1.: Miscellaneous Battle Events and Modifiers

Event	Modifier
Cavalry	+5 bonus on open terrain if the enemy do not have any cavalry of their own
Charge the Archers	Negate the special ability of enemy archer units
Death of a General	Penalty equal to the general's Glory Rank
Inspiring Speech	Bonus equal to general's Glory if the general succeeds on an Oratory roll
Supply Shortage	-5 penalty to the unsupplied general (penalty may increase for a large army or an extended period without supplies)
Surprise Assault	-5 penalty to the surprised general

or Duel grants a bonus of +2 to the Resolution Roll on that character's side.

Stage Five: Resolution

Finally, the generals make one final roll, the Resolution Roll, to determine the result of the battle. Each general rolls one die (which can explode as usual) and adds the result to the combined total of his Water Ring, his Battle Skill, the combined Strength of his army, and any modifiers garnered from the previous Stages (such as for terrain, tactics, or Heroic Opportunities). The higher roll determines the victor of the battle. A difference of more than 10 indicates a massacre.

It is recommended that this roll not be modified by any means other than those listed here—allowing Techniques, Advantages, and other such factors to influence the roll will skew the results too widely.

Stage Six: Casualties

The difference between the two Resolution Rolls represents the casualties taken by the losing side. The defeated army loses a number of units whose combined Defenses (see Personnel Features below) equal the difference. Of course, the victorious army cannot avoid casualties as well. The winner normally suffers one-fourth of the casualties taken by the losers, unless the victory is considered a massacre, in which case the victor only suffers only one-sixth of the loser's losses. (In special circumstances, the GM may rule that a battle is unusually bloody—causing the winner to lose one-third, one-half, or even two-thirds of the loser's casualties.)

If the Resolution Rolls are tied, the GM may require a re-roll or simply declare the battle a draw, with appropriate casualties to both sides.

Each general assigns half of the casualties taken by each side. Thus, the best and worst units of each army will suffer damage during battle.

Example: *Bill's army suffers 6 Defense worth of casualties. His opponent chooses 3 Defense worth of kills, and Bill chooses 3 Defense himself. The enemy general chooses Bill's Hida Berserkers, and Bill chooses 3 of his Ashigaru Spearmen.*

Multiple Rounds?

A battle resolved with this method generally takes only one round. However, after casualties are suffered, the GM may decide to have the armies can start once more from Stage One if he feels a decisive victory has not yet emerged from the fighting.

Level 1 Warlord Features

Personnel: Archers (1 point): Samurai archers can shower the battlefield with a rain of death. Each archer unit adds +1 to the general's Battle Skill roll in Step 3 of Army Battle, to a maximum of +5.

Strength: 1 Defense: 1

Personnel: Ashigaru Spearmen (1 point for 2 units): Ashigaru spearmen form the mainstay of any Rokugani army, for well-trained ashigaru warriors are both useful and plentiful.

Strength: 0 Defense: 1

Personnel: Cavalry (2 points): Cavalry provide much-needed mobility to a standing army.

Strength: 2 Defense: 1

Personnel: Light Infantry (1 point): These warriors make up the bulk of the samurai units available to any Rokugani army.

Strength: 1 Defense: 1

Personnel: Ronin Warriors (2 points): These mercenaries are used as skilled but expendable units.

Strength: 2 Defense: 3

Support: Dwelling (1–5 points): An army has two types of dwellings: permanent barracks and temporary camps erected on the march. More points spent on this Feature upgrades both the temporary and permanent housing solutions; one Point could represent hastily crafted wooden shacks, while five Points could represent camps surrounded by a stockade, stables, and a standing night watch that can spot danger before it strikes the resting army.

Support: Corpsmen (1–3 points): A well-staffed unit of samurai trained in medicine and healing spells can help

an army function long after it has been ground down by the brutality of war. Each level of this Feature counts as 1 Defense when counting casualties. These units are not lost from casualties.

Support: Scouts (1–5 points): Reduce terrain bonuses your opponent might gain for advantageous terrain, by one per Duty Point.

Support: Signal Corps (1 point): The Signal Corps makes sure the army is able to fully understand and execute the general's orders. Gain a +3 bonus to your Battle (Mass Combat) / Perception roll during Step Three of Army Battle.

Support: Supply Train (1 point): An army cannot march on an empty stomach. A collection of wagons, horses, weapons, and extra materials follows the army to make sure it has everything it requires. A supply train negates the basic penalty for being short of supply, although more serious situations may still apply a partial penalty.

This Feature may be purchased multiple times.

Level 2 Warlord Features

Personnel: Heavy Cavalry (2 points): Heavy cavalry can overwhelm an army's defenses with a devastating charge.

Strength: 4 Defense: 2

Personnel: Heavy Infantry (2 points): Heavily armored warriors can withstand punishment far beyond what others can sustain.

Strength: 3 Defense: 4

Support: Command Staff (3 points): You may reroll your Battle (Mass Combat) / Perception roll during Stage 3. You must accept the second roll.

Support: Smith (1 points): Your army gains +2 Strength overall.

Support: Stronghold (2–5 points): Your fortress is your strongest defense, and more importantly, your home. While you are defending your Stronghold, your army gains additional Strength equal to 3 + the Duty Points spent on this Feature. The Stronghold has a Defense rating equal to the Duty Points spent on this Feature.

Level 3 Warlord Features

Personnel: Clan Special Forces (4 points): Each Great Clan has access to highly trained warriors that represent the clan's greatest weaknesses and strengths. The GM and player may develop these units together, but the following are some of the more famous examples.

Crab: Hida Berserkers

Strength: 7 Defense: 1

Crane: Iron Warriors

Strength: 3 Defense: 5

Dragon: Talons

Strength: 4 Defense: 4

Lion: Lion's Pride

Strength: 5 Defense: 4

Mantis: Storm Riders

Strength: 4 Defense: 3

Phoenix: Elemental Guard

Strength: 4 Defense: 3

Scorpion: Bayushi Elite Guard

Strength: 3 Defense: 4

Unicorn: Utaku Battle Maiden. Battle Maidens count as heavy cavalry.

Strength: 5 Defense: 3

Support: Siege Works (2 points): War engines and those trained to use them are necessary to destroy unyielding walls. You negate any bonuses the defensive army may receive from a stronghold, city walls, or other such fortifications.

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"Let this be called Rokugan, the Emerald Empire, and let it reflect all the glory and majesty of the Heavens themselves."

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First Emperor of Rokugan

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